



Original Research Article

Awareness and participation of rural women in the selected development interventions in Imo State, Nigeria

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The study examined awareness and participation of rural women in selected development interventions in Imo State of Nigeria. The study determined the socioeconomic characteristics of rural women, level of awareness and participation of rural women in the development projects. Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire from 402 rural women in the three agricultural zones of Imo state through a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as mean, percentages, frequency distribution and Ordinary Least Square (OLS) multiple regression technique. The result showed that the majority of the rural women were aware of development intervention. The main source of awareness of development interventions among the rural women was through radio. Majority of the rural women fully participated in Maternal Health Programme (mean = 2.34); Women in Agriculture programme (mean = 2.23) and Special Programme on Food Security (mean = 2.06). However, the majority of the rural women had low participation in the following development interventions; FADAMA (mean = 1.60), National Poverty Eradication Programme (mean = 1.55), Rural Micro Credit Programme (mean= 1.33), Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) (mean = 1.30), SURE P (mean = 1.06) and European Union Micro Projects Programme (mean = 1.06).The mean level of participation in development intervention was 1.84 out of the acceptable mean level of 2 indicating a low level of participation. The OLS result showed that women's age, years of education, household size, major occupation, income and years of experience showed significant contributions in the level of participation in rural development. Therefore, the study recommended that the development interventions should be improved by the government in order to boost agricultural productivity and ensure food security as a means of reducing poverty among rural women since farming is their major occupation.

Key words: Development interventions, women, awareness and participation.

INTRODUCTION

Rural women are involved in both farming and non farming activities and they are the key development actors, playing a significant role in the domestic and socio-economic life of the rural society by supporting their households and communities in achieving food and nutrition security, generating income, and improving rural livelihoods and

overall well-being. However, despite the contributions of women to development, much attention has not been given to these rural women. These women often face more serious constraints than men; have little or no access to land, credit, health facilities, experience diseases, hunger, and are ignorant. Development interventions are designing,

programmes and activities undertaken by government, NGOs, international agencies to improve and enhance the productivity of an existing production system. Rural development has been described in different ways by different authors, depending on the discipline or line of thought of the person concerned and providing their socio-economic needs ranging from improvement in agricultural production, employment, qualitative health care, improved nutrition, good quality education (Obasi, 2010).

Some agricultural interventions in Nigeria are National Agriculture Land Development Authority, Strategic Grains Reserve Programmes, Small-Scale Fishery, Small Ruminant Production, Pasture and Grazing Reserves, Accelerated Crop Production, Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme and Agricultural Development Programmes, FADAMA, Root and Tuber Expansion Programme, Special Programme on Food Security. These programmes promote utilization of land resources through subsidized land development, the supply of farm inputs and services and credit extension to farmers, plus institutional support for product marketing cooperatives. Interventions in non-farm opportunities include Small and Medium Enterprises, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) etc. Health scheme interventions in Nigeria are: Diseases Eradication Schemes, Expanded Programmes on Immunisation, Primary Health Care (PHC) Scheme, which aims at providing at least one health centre in every local government and the Guinea worm Eradication Programme, with the assistance of donor agencies including UNICEF, which supports health interventions to control diarrhoea diseases, eradicate guinea-worm, and promote changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices relating to water use, excreta disposal and general hygiene (Lewu, 2008).

Since independence, various governments established programmes targeted at developing rural areas but not much impact has been made on the rural lives as poverty is still endemic in the areas. Each regime comes with its own programme and policy, thereby neglecting the old ones. The governments hardly involved the participation of the rural communities in decision making and their approach had been top down. Those who designed the programmes did not involve the poor who are the prospective beneficiaries. It is believed that the target group should have been involved in the planning and designing stages. Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) identified one major factor that has contributed to the failure of rural development agencies to achieve their noble goal of poverty eradication in Nigeria today as the policy of the centralized control of the programmes of rural development set up by members of the elite who do not have the data available from the deprived social groups or even from the private sector.

For the success of any development intervention, the participation of people is very important. Failure of past development interventions has been hinged on to the lack of people's participation. Participation means involvement of the people from the beginning of the project in the

planning, implementation and evaluation (Masanyiwa and Kinyashi, 2008). The development of rural areas is of importance to national development since rural development is the pillar in the fight against rural poverty and enhancement of food security. However, it is sad to observe that the government effort in developing rural areas has not been fully achieved (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012). Therefore, rural development needs to be given priority attention especially issues affecting rural women who form bulk of the food producers. The broad aim of participation in development is to actively involve people and communities in identifying problems, formulating plans and implementing decisions over their own lives (DFID, 2002). Participation of rural women in food production, processing and marketing is very crucial in order to achieve food security (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), 2004). Women's participation can increase the efficiency, effectiveness, self-reliance, coverage and sustainability of development projects and programmes (Kumar, 2002). However, despite the importance placed upon people's participation in development programmes, Masanyiwa and Kinyashi (2008) reported that many agencies still experience poor participation of women in development interventions. The specific objectives of the study were to: describe the socio-economic characteristics of rural women in the study area; identify selected development interventions for rural women in the area of study; determine the level of awareness, sources of awareness of the selected interventions and level of participation of rural women in the intervention programmes.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the rural women's socio-economic characteristics and their level of participation in the rural development interventions in Imo State.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Nigeria with a special focus on rural women in Imo state in the South-east region of the country. The population of the study was the entire rural women in Imo State, Nigeria. This study used a multi stage random sampling technique. The three agricultural zones of the state were covered in the study. Three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from each zone of the state. Three autonomous communities were randomly selected from each of the LGAs. Fifteen (15) women were randomly selected from each of the rural communities sampled from the list of the rural women compiled by the key informants and community leaders. The entire sample size was four hundred and five (405) rural women and 402 useful copies of the questionnaire were used for this study. Data for the study were generated from primary source. The primary data were obtained

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of rural women

Socio-economic characteristics	Frequency /mode	Percentage	Mean
Age (Years)	51-60	47.3	49 years
Marital Status	Married	70.9	
Level of Education	Primary Education	34.3	
Household Size	5 to 8 persons	50.3	7 persons
Major Occupation	Farming	65.2	
Farm Size Hectares)	Less than one	66.9	0.7 hectares
Years of experience	> than 15 years	38.6	12.6 years
Income (Naira)	20001 to 30000	34.1	₦15,752
Member of Social Organization			
Yes	382	95.0	
No	20	5.0	

No. of respondents = 402; Field Survey, 2016

through the administration of the structured questionnaire. This was complemented with personal observation and interview. In order to achieve the objectives of this study and test the research hypotheses, the data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentage, mean scores and standard deviation (S.D) were used to describe the data and present them in tables. For inferential statistics, Ordinary Least Square (OLS) Multiple Regression Analysis was used. The OLS model of the regression analysis was explicitly stated as follows:

$$Y = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, X_7, X_8, X_9, X_{10}, X_{11} + e) \quad \text{Where}$$

Y = Level of participation (Total rating scores for participation in the intervention programmes)

X₁= age (number of years of respondents)

X₂= educational level (number of years spent in school)

X₃= marital status (dummy variable 1 for married, zero for otherwise)

X₄= household size (number of persons in a household)

X₅= occupation (farming = 1 and non farming = 0)

X₆= membership of social organization (1= membership, 0 = non-membership)

X₇= membership status (ordinary member = 1 and executive member = 0)

X₈= years of experience in the major activities

X₉= income (average income of in Naira)

X₁₀= Savings (yes = 1 and no = 0)

X₁₁ = access to credit facility (yes = 1 and no = 0)

e = stochastic error term.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristic

Table 1 shows that the mean age of the respondents was 49 years while 93.5 percent (aggregate) of the women were married. Also, 88.8 percent of the rural women had one level of formal education or the other, the results agrees

with Ijatuyi et al. (2017) who highlighted that respondents also had one basic form of education in a similar study, the average household size was 7 members. The average farm size cultivated was 0.7 hectares, this therefore means that meaningful development intervention in agriculture cannot take place and the impacts of the interventions will not be felt by the women since they have little access to land. The average years spent on their primary occupation which was farming was 12.6 years. These findings indicate that majority of the rural women had long years of experience in farming and they must have fully participated as well as perceived the effect of development intervention very well. The average monthly income of the rural women was ₦15,752.

Awareness of Rural Women in Development Interventions

The result in Table 2 indicates that the majority of the respondents were aware or had knowledge of Women in Agriculture (78.1%) since the programme is directed at alleviating the socio- economic condition of the women. The rural women were also aware of FADAMA project (50.7%); Awareness of women in Rural Micro Credit Scheme was (56.5%), even though some women admitted that it is not available in the community but their activities are not really noticeable as they are looking for the presence of micro finance bank. Micro credit tends to reduce economic dependence of women on their husbands, enhance them in full support of their household and thus enhances economic autonomy. For Maternal Health Programme (90.5%), majority of those interviewed were highly aware of this government Maternal Health Programme. The majority of the rural women were not aware of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) (67.2%). Therefore, poverty alleviation programmes of the government lack adequate public enlightenment, and should be reinforced and strengthened. Also, the majority of the rural women were not aware of the Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) (81.1%), few of

Table 2. Distribution of rural women according to their awareness of development interventions

Development Interventions	Not Aware	Aware
Women in Agriculture	88 (21.9)	314 (78.1)*
FADAMA	198 (49.3)	204 (50.7)*
Rural Micro Credit Programme	175 (43.5)	227 (56.5)*
Maternal Health Programme	38 (9.5)	364 (90.5)*
National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)	270 (67.2)	132 (32.8)
Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN)	326 (81.1)	76 (18.9)
Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS)	171 (42.6)	231 (57.4) *
SURE P	380 (94.5)	22 (5.5)
European Union Micro Projects Programme (EU MPP6)	330 (82.1)	72 (17.9)

Figures in parentheses are percentages; N = 402
Source: Field Survey Data, 2016.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to sources of awareness of the interventions programmes

Source of Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	236	58.7
Friends	108	26.9
Development agency	17	4.2
Extension agents	147	36.6
Television	23	5.7
Women leaders	110	27.4
Church organization	33	8.2

Multiple responses were recorded
Source: Field Survey, 2016

the rural women in the study area were aware of the development intervention (18.9%). This implies that government intervention in improving small scale industry is not being felt in the rural areas. It is like their activities are majorly in the urban areas while women that are into diverse economic activities to improve the standard of living of their household are being neglected despite the enormous investment of government in the programme. However, rural women were highly aware of the National Programme on Food Security (57.4%), since the programme is targeted towards agriculture and farming is the major occupation of the rural people. Thus, any intervention targeted towards improving production of food is always received and accepted by the rural people. Furthermore, few of the women were aware of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE P) (5.5%) and European Union Micro Projects Programme (EU MPP6) (17.9%). Some of the women were just hearing of the intervention for the first time at the time of administering the questionnaire as the activities of the intervention agencies are concentrated in the urban area neglecting the rural women whose population are higher.

In general, the majority of the rural women were aware of the Women in Agriculture, FADAMA, Rural Micro Credit Scheme, National Programme on Food Security and Maternal Health Programme while majority of the women

were not aware of the National Poverty Eradication Programme, Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria, the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme, European Union Micro Projects Programme (EU MPP6).

Sources of Awareness of Development Interventions

Table 3 shows the sources of awareness of development intervention among the rural women. Ijatuyi (2016) also found radio as a useful source of information for respondents in a similar study. The main source of awareness of the development interventions was radio (58.7%). Radio is an effective channel through which a large number of rural people get access to information. The source of radio as the most popular source of awareness of rural development programmes among the respondents was in agreement with Tologbonse et al. (2013) that use of radio by the rural women is the most popular source of information, all the related information would be made available to them even without electricity, thereby making use of cheap dry cell batteries as a source of power. Another source of awareness of development interventions was through extension agent (36.6%) this shows that extension agents have a big role to play in passing information to women. Also, awareness through

Table 4. Level of Participation in Rural Development Interventions

Development Interventions	Not Participated	Partially Participated	Fully participated	Mean	S.D
Women in Agriculture	113 (28.1)	85 (21.1)	204 (50.8)	2.23*	0.616
FADAMA	227 (56.5)	107 (26.6)	68 (16.9)	1.60	0.763
Rural Micro Credit Programme	275 (68.4)	88 (21.9)	39(9.7)	1.34	0.663
Maternal Health Programme	70 (17.4)	125 (31.1)	207 (51.5)	2.34*	0.758
NAPEP	236 (58.7)	110 (27.4)	56 (13.9)	1.55	0.724
SMEDAN	328 (81.6)	27 (6.7)	47 (11.7)	1.30	0.667
SPFS	131 (32.6)	117 (29.1)	154 (38.3)	2.06*	0.823
SURE P	384 (95.5)	8 (2.0)	10 (2.5)	1.06	0.489
EU MPP6	377 (93.8)	20 (5.0)	5 (1.2)	1.04	0.307

*Accepted Level ($M \geq 2.0$); Mean Level of Participation = 1.84; Figures in parentheses are percentages; Total number of respondents is 402

Source: Field Survey, 2016

development agency was 31.3 percent, the other sources of rural women's awareness of development interventions were indicated as women leaders (27.4%), through friends (26.9%), church organization (8.2%), while few rural women (5.7%) were aware of development interventions through television. The success of rural development programmes depend on access to information, if people are aware of an intervention there is the probability that they will participate in the programme and the programme can now have positive impacts on the lives of the people, so the source of information is very necessary. Effective information service delivery and coordination is the essential ingredient for development.

Level of Participation in Rural Development Interventions

The distribution of rural women according to level of the participation in rural development interventions is presented in Table 4 The result shows that most of the rural women fully participated in Women in Agriculture programme (50.8%) and the mean score for participation was 2.23 which indicated high level of participation because rural people are predominantly farmers and any intervention targeted towards improving agriculture will attract high participation. This result is supported by Odurukwe et al. (2006), that women participated in cassava processing and utilization- pancake, flour and odourless fufu; processing and storage of maize, garri; cassava flour, tapioca, maize flour, malted maize drink, corn meal, pap (wet and malted maize flour); processing and utilization of soybean into soymilk, flour paste and soy meal; processing and storage of fresh tomatoes into tomato paste, rabbit meat processing and utilization. Also rural women participated in the processing and storage of melon; women also participated in the processing and utilization of cocoyam for soup thickening and cocoyam chips also. Furthermore, women also participated in dry season vegetable gardening.

There was also a high level of participation in the

Maternal Health Programme (51.5%). The mean score was 2.34 and most rural women participated in health care activities such as child bearing, delivering and immunization. Women contribute immensely to health development in the society through their unwavering and relentless effort in promoting healthcare delivery. Also, Ekesionye and Okolo (2012) noted that women are often first in health care delivery especially for children. He also noted that women are at the forefront of child survival revolution and that the success of the expanded programme on immunization launched in Nigeria in 1985 depended much on the high participation and cooperation of the women in the programme. Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS) mean score for participation was 2.06. This implies that some rural women participated in SPFS. The result is supported with the findings of Adesope et al. (2010) that women fully participated in SPFS activities such as garri processing and partially participated in palm oil processing, cassava retting, tomatoes/fruit juice processing and rice milling. The NSPFS is all-encompassing because the intervention is concentrated on women's involvement in crop production, animal production and agro-processing to tackle post-harvest losses in agricultural production (Adesope et al., 2010).

Meanwhile, from the table above, there was low participation in FADAMA (mean score = 1.60). Despite the federal government intervention in the FADAMA programme, rural women did not participate fully in the programme. Rural Micro Credit Programme mean score for participation was low (1.34) majority did not participate in the programme even though rural women were aware of the micro-credit scheme, rural women have little or no access to land that they can use as collateral for obtaining loan and this affects their extent of involvement in their economic activities. Micro-credit schemes give poor people access to small amounts of financial credit to assist them in economic activities, micro-credit programmes have become an increasingly important intervention for addressing poverty, through a strategy of direct lending or of financial intermediation (Nwanesi, 2006). Therefore, government

intervention in improving the rural life condition by providing small credit to women is not effective in the rural areas.

The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) had mean score of 1.55 which indicates low participation as majority of women (58.7%) did not participate in the programme, 27.4 percent of rural women admitted that they moderately participated in the programme despite great awareness of the programme while 13.9 percent of rural women participated in the programme. NAPEP as an anti-poverty agency of the government has no doubt pursued the realization of its goals. This result agrees with Oladimeji and Said (2012) that stressed that not all the beneficiaries from the NAPEP programme are people who are actually poor, indeed, some of the beneficiaries of the programme were already employed while the poor are denied access to the scheme.

The Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) also had participation mean score of 1.30 which is very low, most of the respondents were not even aware of the intervention and could not participate in the programme. This is in line with Oduyoye et al. (2013) that reported low participation in SMEDAN. This means that government intervention in enhancing and boosting small business had not being felt in the rural areas. SURE P had participation mean score of 1.06 with a high percentage of rural women that did not participate in the intervention (95.5%). The activities of the intervention agency were not felt in the rural area. Lastly, the European Union Micro Projects Programme had the lowest mean score of participation, mean score of 1.04. The result further shows that all the standard deviations values were less than 1.0. This signifies that all the respondents' individual scores related to the level of participation in rural development interventions did not vary much from the mean scores, the respondents were in agreement with one another.

Generally, the level of participation of the women in the rural development intervention was 1.84 out of the maximum of 3 points which indicated a low level of participation of the rural women in development interventions in Imo State. This implies that despite the effort of the government in developing interventions to improve the quality of rural lives, the respondents were not deeply involved in the development interventions. The finding corroborates that of Masanyiwa and Kinyashi (2008) who reported that despite the importance placed upon people's participation in development programmes, many agencies still experience poor participation of women in the development interventions thereby limiting the success of the programmes. Deji (2007) also viewed that the participation of women is inevitably significant to the success and sustainability of rural development projects and that the level of their participation determines the extent to which the project succeeds.

Table 5 shows the OLS multiple regression analysis which produced the t-ratios that that were used to test the

hypothesis. Four functional forms of the multiple regression model; linear, semi-log, double -log and exponential functions were tried. The result shows that the exponential functional form produced the lead equation and the result was confirmed by the F-ratio value of 10.617 which was significant at 0.05 probability level which gave a good fit to the data. The level of participation in the rural development interventions by the women is significantly related to age, years of education, marital status, household size, major occupation, membership of the social organization, income, years of experience in major occupation, savings, access to credit and membership status.

The result shows that six out of the eleven multiple regression coefficients of the independent variables: age (X_1) = 0.33, years of education (X_2) = 0.493, household size (X_4) = 0.213, major occupation (X_5) = 0.031, income (X_7) = 0.992 and years of experience in major occupation (X_8) = 0.794 were significantly related at 5% probability level with the participation of rural women in rural development interventions. These variables are important for rural women participation in development interventions.

The regression coefficient for age was positively and significantly related with level of participation of women in development interventions. This implies that as the age of the rural women increases their level of participation in development programme increases. This could be that older women are more mature and are better in making decision in participating in development intervention that will improve their living condition. This is in line with Ogunbameru et al. (2006) who identified age as one of the factors affecting women participation in development programme. Number of years spent in school had positive and significant relationship with level of participation in development programmes. This implies that the quality of education a woman has increases her chance in participating in development programmes. Angba et al. (2009) finds out that as one attain a higher level of education, attitudes towards participation in community development is likely to be more favourable.

Household size was negatively and significantly related with participation in development interventions. This implies that small household size can influence women's participation in development programme. This confirms the findings of Imoh et al. (2009) who observed that as household size decreases, participation in community development programs increases and confirms to prior expectations that community members with small household size will participate more than large households because of the heavier burden of household sustenance. The major occupation was positively and significantly related with level of participation in development intervention. Income of the women had positive and significant relationship with level of participation in development interventions. The higher the income of the rural women, the more they participate in development

Table 5. Result of Ordinary Least Square Regression Analysis of Relationship between the level of participation in development interventions and socio- economic characteristics of respondents.

Explanatory Variables	Linear function	Semi-log function	Double-log function	Exponential function
Constant	14.923 (9.033)*	14.290 (12.197)*	2.634 (36.382)*	2.673 (26.154)*
Age (X ₁)	0.542 (3.878)*	2.015 (3.495)*	0.123 (3.460)*	0.33 (3.842)*
Year of education (X ₂)	0.362 (2.325)*	0.240 (2.110)*	0.330 (2.113)*	0.493 (2.362)*
Marital status (X ₃)	-0.221 (-0.975)	-0.370 (-0.604)	-0.013 (-0.351)	-0.010 (-0.720)
Household Size (X ₄)	0.221 (-3.013)*	0.420 (-3.211)*	0.141 (-3.106)*	0.213 (-2.995)*
Major occupation (X ₅)	0.442 (2.095)*	0.791 (1.890)	0.057 (2.202)*	0.031 (2.353)*
Membership of Social organization (X ₆)	-0.116 (-0.153)	-0.001 (-0.001)	0.005 (0.072)	-0.005 (-0.098)
Income (X ₇)	0.348 (2.246)*	0.880 (1.811)*	0.757 (1.897)*	0.922 (2.346)*
Years of experience (X ₈)	0.237 (2.579)*	0.534 (2.484)*	0.430 (1.897)	0.794 (2.371)*
Savings (X ₉)	0.382 (0.697)	0.672 (0.538)	0.497 (0.633)	0.020 (0.753)
Access to credit (X ₁₀)	-0.561 (-0.590)	0.291 (0.325)	0.232 (0.038)	-0.071 (-0.505)
Membership status(X ₁₁)	1.424 (-0.302)	1.138 (0.146)	1.051 (0.428)	-0.243 (-0.612)
R ²	0.389	0.327	0.398	0.403
F Statistic (F value)	10.236 *	9.542*	10.465*	10.617*
Sample size (n)	402	402	402	402

Figures in the first row are regression coefficients; Figures in parenthesis are t-ratios

* t-ratios significant at 0.05 probability level

Field Survey, 2016.

interventions. This is in line with Chesoh (2010) who reported that individual and economic security variable especially income were major factors affecting people's participation in development interventions. Years of experience was also found out to be positively and significantly related with level of participation in development interventions. This implies that that the higher the number of years spent in their occupation, the more experienced they are. Years of experience increases women participation in development interventions.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study emphasized that rural women participated in development interventions that are agriculturally related such as Women in Agriculture programme, Special Programme on Food Security and FADAMA. Also, rural women participated in Maternal Health Scheme, while rural women participated less in development interventions of Rural Micro Credit Programme, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN),

SURE P, European Union Micro Projects Programme as majority of them were not aware of the development interventions. Participation of women is significant to the success and sustainability of rural development projects and that the level of their participation determines the extent to which the project succeeds. However, this study found out that there was a low level of participation of the rural women in development interventions in Imo State despite the government effort in improving rural lives, the rural women were not deeply involved in the development interventions.

Based on the findings and conclusion of this work, this study recommends that the intervention in rural development should be improved by the government in order to boost agricultural productivity and ensure food security as a means of reducing poverty among rural women since farming is their major occupation. Also, intensive campaign in education should be reinforced by the government in order to enable rural women to make adequate use of opportunity available to them and also have access to better health care and information that will help them in improving their access to credit so as to expand their income base.

Conflict of interests

The author declare that there is no conflicting interests.

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