
EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN IN ILA-ORANGUN THROUGH ENTREPRENURIAL SKILLS ACQUISITION: PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO POVERTY ERADICATION

By

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Abstract

The central focus of this research is women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurial skills development and acquisition. This is a gateway to expanding women's ability to succeed, improving market system and advance economically. The need to assess the socio-economic conditions and problems of rural women and developing their entrepreneurial skills cannot be over emphasized. It is on this note that various means of merchantable areas and required entrepreneurial skills capable of transforming the rural women status have been identified. These areas include production of Soap (both liquid and solid), Hair Fresher, Body Cream/Hair Treatment Cream, Tie and Dye, as well as Izal. Sometimes, the money earned by man as the head of the family is not sufficient to meet the demands of the family. The added earnings of woman help to sustain the family. The intervention revealed that entrepreneurial skills development is an important tool in empowering rural women and eradication of poverty among this important gender fold. Also, from the study it is concluded that entrepreneurial skills acquisition have significant relationship with self reliance, self empowerment, social empowerment, self employment, poverty eradication and increased self esteem among rural women.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Skills, Empowering Women, Poverty Eradication, Skill Acquisition

Introduction:

The rationale behind empowering women and indeed rural women stemmed from the need to alleviate or at least reduce the poverty level which no doubt has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerians. Empowering women entails or involves enlarging the capacity of women to be self-sustained and self-reliant through practical and practicable skill acquisition. Poverty is not something that can be alleviated by taking superficial measures and fire brigade approaches as being done in Nigeria presently just to please the western countries and their financial institutions (Ahmed et.al 2005). Measures taken to alleviate poverty in Nigeria are mostly aimed at superficially attacking the symptoms and leaving the real cause unscratched. These include the provision of monthly stipends of between Five and Ten thousand naira to a few selected people mostly errands of politicians, thugs, pimps and praise singers in the name of a monthly allowance. In most cases, these allowances are given in cash without any form of training or acquisition of skills (Akinwale, 2005). To fully appreciate the actual causes of poverty in Nigeria, there is need to understand the production system and form of government.

Research have shown that Nigerian women are significantly involved in farming, food production, animal husbandry, food processing in addition to home management and child bearing functions (Uche and Nwanene Kezi, 2007). But never the less, vast majority of the rural poor consist of rural women, who can be empowered for self-reliance. It is therefore very important that for any true poverty alleviation programme to be successful in term of achieving the objectives, it has to start by empowering the powerless through skill acquisition and other incentive measures to own and establish a small and medium scale enterprise. One of the fundamental decisions in the Beijing Declaration as declared by U.N members (Nigeria inclusive) in order to foster domestic and global peace and ensure equality in development is women empowerment having recognized the need (Ihebereme, 2010).

Conceptual Framework of the Study:

Entrepreneur

The word entrepreneur is a French word meaning "one who undertakes innovations, finance and business acumen in an effort to transform innovation in economic goods. Meredith (1983) defined an entrepreneur as a person who possesses the ability to recognize and evaluate business opportunities, assemble the necessary resources to take advantage of them and take appropriate action to ensure success.

An entrepreneur brings about innovations and embarks on business activity where none exist. He discovers new markets and goes ahead to supply his product to the markets in order to make profit. The entrepreneur is largely viewed as that individual who takes upon himself, the risk of going into business with the expectation of earning all the profits or losses. He is in economics regarded as a special type of labour that assembles all other factors of production namely, capital, land, labour and endeavours to ensure optimal combination of these resources to maximize profit.

Entrepreneurship refers to a process that brings about innovation, creativity, wealth and growth. Stevenson and Jarillo (1991) defined entrepreneurship as the pursuit of opportunity beyond the resources you currently control. According to Onifade (2004), it is the act of floating, investing in and managing a business for self-employment and with profit motive.

Suffice to note that, entrepreneur is the individual and entrepreneurship is the process. To use the words of Akanwa and Agu (2005), the entrepreneur is the person venturing into business

organizing and managing, entrepreneurship is the service rendered by the entrepreneur. In addition, entrepreneurial refers to the attitudes, skill and behaviours.

Empowerment

Empowerment is to challenge injustice which is forcing people to take part in society on conditions which are unfair, or in ways which reject their right (Oxfam, 1995). Empowerment, means the power to select and requires change in the structure of society that form power relations and unequal distribution of resources and opportunities in society. Empowerment has two inter-related elements: resources and agency. Resources include both tangible and intangible assets. Tangible resources are financial and material assets, and intangible resources are knowledge, skills and ability, and participation in political and social activities. Agency is power by which people set their goals and objectives and achieve them (Kapitsa, L.M, 2008).

Poverty

Poverty can be seen as condition of human deprivation, disempowerment and disablement. It is not just about low income, but poor nutrition which retarded and deformed women and their children. It is about low consumption and poor health and educational facilities. Poverty can also be described as a condition of chronic daily illness and disablement by all forms of disease, illiteracy and lack of skills. It is a total dehumanisation and degradation characterised by tattered clothing, wretched housing and lack of sanitation and ventilation. It is actually dehumanizing, degrading and rendered its victim to permanent insanity and instability in forms of relationship such as family, community and even ability to perform religious duties (Usman 2002).

Project Goals:

The overall or ultimate objective of this laudable project is to reduce the number of poor and malnourished women in the society thereby making them self/sustained. To achieve this objective, the following specific objectives were proposed for actualization.

- To impact both theoretical and practical skills into some randomly but purposively selected rural women.
- To equip rural women for self/sustainability through Entrepreneurship skill acquisition.
- To educate the prospective Trainees on the financial windows/openings available to establish and sustain the perpetual practice of their acquired skill.

Project Impact:

Socially, the project if successfully implemented will keep beneficiaries engaged as well as making them to have sense of belonging in their respective societies. Moreover, social vices will be curtailed in their respective communities. Economically, the project will be a source of livelihood for the beneficiaries and as well source of income for the government at all tiers.

Technologically, the project will advance technology as the beneficiaries will continuously be developing in their skill areas in such a way that maximum profit can be realized through minimum cost utilization.

Literature Review:

"Women perform 66% of the world's work, and produce 50% of the food, yet earn only 10% of the income and own 1% of the property. Whether the issue is improving education in the developing world, or fighting global climate change, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women is a critical part of the equation" (Bill Clinton, 2009).

Investing in women is not only the right thing to do but the smart thing to do (Ban Ki Moon, 2008). Small numbers of women work and for the same work they earn less than men (Duflo, 2011). A large number of women has entered in the Labour force but not been treated as equal to men. They earn less than men and have less opportunity for growth (Goldin, C., 1990). Women have always been granted secondary roles in the family and society. Women are aware of gender inequality and are trying to fight them (Panigraphy, & Bhuyan, 2006). Women should have access to resources and right to participate in decision making. Increase in power of women will hurt power of men (Oxaal, & Baden, 2015).

Almost in every country, women have longer working hours as compared to men, but their income is less and they have poor living standard. Unpaid work badly affects the health and welfare of the children and other home members. Poor women have more unpaid jobs, longer working hours and have poor working condition during bad times to support their families. Parents think women have less paid job, they have an intention to spend less in their education, leads to further women poverty. Bradshaw and Linneker (2003) highlight three factors that are responsible for women poverty: women have fewer job opportunities, women have less decision making power and women can make decisions but it must benefit others first.

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According to some, there are three elements of empowerment: Self-empowerment, Mutual empowerment and social empowerment, these three elements are related to each other. Self-empowerment means individual effort, Mutual empowerment means relationship with others and social empowerment is generated by removing social, political, legal and economic hurdles to get individual influence. Concentration on one or two elements of empowerment is not sufficient for achieving important change (Kenneth, 2002). Development is not only made of people but they must contribute to it. People should participate actively in the decision and actions of their lives. Investment in women skill and giving power to make their own selection is not only important but also lead to economic growth and development (UN, 1995). Empowerment is explained by how much people participate in the decision and actions of their lives (Oxfam, 1995).

Women empowerment eliminates wrong value system and oppression beliefs from the society. It creates a situation where there is no gender discrimination and both males and females use their skills to build friendly society (Akathar, 1992) women empowerment can be

achieved through educating girls. Education develops skills, knowledge and confidence in women that can help them in achieving opportunities in economy. Free concession and needy scholarships for girls at school has helped a lot in empowering women. Vocational training programmes will help in providing better skills and good jobs to women (Tornqvist, and Schmitz, 2009).

The aim of women empowerment is equal distribution of power between the sexes. Both men and women should be provided equal economic, social, legal and political opportunities for their development. To get empowerment, women should increase their self-esteem, self-confidence and understanding their own potentials, appreciate themselves and value their knowledge and skills. Women should obtain equal distribution of power and involvement in decision making at home, in society, economy and politics through women empowerment (Panigraphy, and Bhuyan, 2006).

To increase opportunity for women in economy, they must have an access to better skills, a business environment that support them in practicing the skill, access to financial sector that meet their needs and, job security in time of crisis. Economic empowerment helps women to provide access to resources and opportunities in the economy. Skills and education are the resources that women can get easily which will lead to their development in the society.

Research Methodology

This research is practical oriented; hence, qualitative methods were employed. The targeted number of beneficiaries is 150 women from the various communities. The first port of call was the Head of the community who assisted in gathering the women together. Next was very brief "Literacy Confirmation Test (LCT)" for all the women. This involves asking them to write some simple thing like their names, ages, addresses. The purpose of this was to select those who can read, write as the training involves some jottings. Other criteria for selection include age as old women were not considered. Concerning data management and analysis, the pre-test was for selection, and post-test (evaluation) for certification. The percentage of the beneficiaries that are certifiable was determined.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanism involves periodical monitoring of the beneficiaries to ensure continuity and quality control.

Dissemination strategies adopted were:

- 1) The products were displayed in the market.
- 2) Community rally was organized for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries where the beneficiaries showcased their skills to the amazement of non beneficiaries

Study Area:

The area of study is Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria. The study covered Osun Central Senatorial District, comprising of ten Local government of the total thirty Local government councils in Osun State.

Study Design and Methods

Since the research is practical oriented, the procurement of equipment and materials for use are of paramount importance. The equipment include: Small and big bowl, Stove/Bunner, Stiring rod, plastic bowls, mixing pool, just to mention a few as well as material items like for the production of the following home management product, namely; Soap (both liquid and

solid), Hair fresher, body cream/hair treatment cream, tie and dye and Izal. The training section will be carried out by a team of five experts.

The beneficiaries were classified into three groups, each group consisting of 50 women. The training for the first group commenced in the first of the six months after which monitoring and evaluation was carried out for the certified beneficiaries during the second month. The second and the third groups will have their own training

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There will be no significant relationship between the selected entrepreneurial skills acquirement (Soap Making, Hair Freshener, Body Cream, Hair Cream, Tie and Dye and Izal) and women empowerment (Self Reliance, Self Empowerment, Social Empowerment, Self Employment, Poverty Eradication and Increased Self Esteem) in Ila – Orangun.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix analysis on relationship between selected entrepreneurial skills acquirement (Soap Making, Hair Freshener, Body Cream, Hair Cream, Tie and Dye and Izal) and women empowerment (Self Reliance, Self Empowerment, Social Empowerment, Self Employment, Poverty Eradication and Increased Self Esteem) in Ila – Orangun.

C o r r e l a t i o n s						
	Self Reliance	Self Empowerment	Social Empowerment	Self Employment	Poverty Eradication	Increased Self Esteem
S o a p	1	.234**	.224**	.159**	.258**	.330**
Air Freshener	.234**	1	.312**	.240**	.253**	.352**
Body Cream	.224**	.312**	1	.317**	.251**	.309**
Hair Cream	.159**	.240**	.317**	1	.165**	.282**
Tie and Dye	.258**	.253**	.251**	.165**	1	.396**
I z a l	.330**	.352**	.309**	.282**	.396**	1
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

The above table shows significant relationship between selected entrepreneurial skills acquirement (Soap Making, Hair Freshener, Body Cream, Hair Cream, Tie and Dye and Izal) and women empowerment (Self Reliance, Self Empowerment, Social Empowerment, Self Employment, Poverty Eradication and Increased Self Esteem) in Ila – Orangun.

The values are as follows:

Soap Making and Self Reliance (0.001), Soap Making and Self Empowerment (0.234), Soap Making and Social Empowerment (0.224), Soap Making and Self Employment (0.159) Soap Making and Poverty Eradication (0.258) and Soap Making and Increased Self Esteem (0.330).

Body Cream and Self Reliance (0.224), Body Cream and Self Empowerment (0.312), Body Cream and Social Empowerment (0.001), Body Cream and Self Employment (0.312) Body Cream and Poverty Eradication (0.251) and Body Cream and Increased Self Esteem (0.309).

Hair Cream and Self Reliance (0.159), Hair Cream and Self Empowerment (0.247), Hair Cream and Social Empowerment (0.317), Hair Cream and Self Employment (0.165), Hair Cream and Poverty Eradication (0.165) and Hair Cream and Increased Self Esteem (0.282).

Air Freshener and Self Reliance (0.234), Air Freshener and Self Empowerment (0.001), Air Freshener and Social Empowerment (0.312), Air Freshener and Self Employment (0.240), Air Freshener and Poverty Eradication (0.253) and Air Freshener and Increased Self Esteem (0.352).

Tie and Dye and Self Reliance (0.258), Tie and Dye and Self Empowerment (0.253), Tie and Dye and Social Empowerment (0.251), Tie and Dye and Self Employment (0.165), Tie and Dye and Poverty Eradication (0.001) and Tie and Dye and Increased Self Esteem (0.396).

Izal and Self Reliance (0.330), Izal and Self Empowerment (0.352), Izal and Social Empowerment (0.309), Izal and Self Employment (0.282), Izal and Poverty Eradication (0.396) and Izal and Increased Self Esteem (0.001).

These findings corroborate the submission of Madan, Gulyani, and Benson (2014) in their study that entrepreneurship is an important tool to empower the women in the country by increasing Family, Economic, Financial and Social Status. Basargekar, 2010 in his paper emphasized that stimulating entrepreneurship among women especially from lower socio-economic strata is seen as an effective tool to alleviate poverty, reduce gender bias and empower them by many micro finance institutions.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant relative contribution of entrepreneurial skills acquisition on poverty eradication among selected women in Ila – Orangun.

Table 2: Regression analysis on relative contribution of entrepreneurial skills acquisition (soap making, air freshener, body cream, hair cream, tie and dye, izal) on poverty eradication among selected women in Ila – Orangun.

M o d e l	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	B e t a		
(Constant)	19.738	2.287		8.630	.000
Soap Making	.435	.092	.233	4.739	.000
Air Freshener	.399	.084	.240	4.766	.000
Body Cream	.319	.088	.281	3.602	.000
Hair Cream	.309	.086	.287	3.543	.000
Tie and Dye	.273	.094	.253	3.523	.000
I z a l	.193	.098	.243	3.422	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Poverty Eradication					

Table 2 shows that soap making ($\beta=.233, p<.05$), air freshener ($\beta=.240, p<.05$), body cream ($\beta=.281, p<.05$), hair cream ($\beta=.287, p<.05$), tie and dye ($\beta=.253, p<.05$), and izal ($\beta=.243, p<.05$) had relative contribution on poverty eradication among selected women in Ila –

Orangun. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant relative contribution of entrepreneurial skills acquisition on poverty eradication among selected women in Ila – Orangun is rejected. The implication is that Soap Making, Hair Freshener, Body Cream, Hair Cream, Tie and Dye and Izal independently contributed to poverty eradication among women in Ila - Orangun.

The findings from this intervention is in line with the findings of Mazumdar and Ahmed (2015) who in their study stated that Women’s entrepreneurship contributes to the economic well-being of the family and communities and also reduces poverty. It ensures country’s economic growth and development. The empowerment of women to a large extent depends on taking part in some development activities. Therefore the promotion of micro and small scale enterprises has been recognized as an important strategy for advancing the economic empowerment of women. At the household level, women’s microenterprises and small scale businesses play an important role in ensuring the survival of poor household and in building up women’s confidence, skills and socio economic status.

CONCLUSION

The central focus of this intervention is women’s economic empowerment through entrepreneurial skills development and acquisition. Women empowerment is a gateway to expanding women’s ability to succeed, improving market system and advance economically. The need to assess the socio-economic conditions and problems of rural women and developing their entrepreneurial skills cannot be over emphasized. The issues of women empowerment has become a serious subject all over the world in the last few decades. From the findings of this intervention it is concluded that entrepreneurial skills development is an important tool in empowering rural women and eradication of poverty among this important gender fold. Also, from the study it is concluded that entrepreneurial skills acquisition have significant relationship with self reliance self empowerment, social empowerment, self employment, poverty eradication and increased self esteem among rural women.

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