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AN IMPACT EVALUATION OF SKILLS ACQUISITION PROGRAMS ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN GIWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE

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Abstract
Despite the government's efforts at empowering women via skills acquisition initiatives to alleviate poverty, poverty has remained pervasive especially among women in Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna state. This has denied them access to the basic requirements (food, shelter, clothing, education, health, etc.) necessary for a decent life and therefore leaves them at the mercy of their husbands or other male folks. This study is, therefore, an attempt to evaluate the skills acquisition programs initiated by the Giwa Local Government Area in collaboration with the state government to empower women and alleviate poverty in the area. This study adopts a survey research approach using primary data generated from both interview and questionnaires for analysis. Results showed that the programs have appreciably empowered women as the income level of a sizeable number of them have risen and they can now afford the basic necessities such as food and clothing; afford to acquire basic household items; and also afford to visit health centres for treatment when the need arises without their spouse's support. Notwithstanding, the programs are marred by poor and inconsistent funding, inadequate working tools, shortage of technical personnel and non-involvement of women in planning the programs. The study therefore recommends adequate and timely funding, engagement of qualified and experienced trainers, engagement of women in the planning and designing of the programs, provision of adequate working tools, and the provision of soft loans or microcredit.

Keywords: Skills Acquisition, Women Empowerment, Poverty Alleviation

Introduction

As a result of the age long marginalisation of women by men, women empowerment and gender equality has continued to be a dominant theme in global and regional treaties, covenants and declarations. Evidence abounds in studies that gender inequality has created wide gender gaps in many countries of the world with very devastating social, economic and health consequences on especially women who have been intensely marginalised and relegated to the background (Abegunde, 2014; Ejumudo, 2013; and Abara, 2012). The

promotion of women empowerment is now globally accepted as a development strategy for the reduction of poverty levels among women and men, improving health and living standards and enhancing efficiency of public investments (National Gender Policy, 2006). The United Nations Declaration of 2000 sees the attainment of gender equality especially through women empowerment as not only an end in itself and a human right issue, but as a prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development. Women empowerment therefore has been generally acknowledged as very critical to the attainment of gender equality and poverty reduction.

In Nigeria, women who constitute approximately half of the about 170 million population produce about 60% of the food crops and are involved in 90% of food processing are yet the most affected by poverty (Comfort *et al,* 2013). The high level of poverty among women is a result of the unequal situation in the labour market, their subordinate status in the society and poor access to education, opportunities and resources. In view of this, they are at great disadvantage, and to ease them this burden and promote gender equality which has been recognised as pertinent to sustainable development, women empowerment strategies have been put in place by various governments at the national, state and local levels.

This research is therefore concerned with assessing the impacts of skill acquisition programs on rural women in Giwa Local Government Area as a strategy for empowering women to reduce poverty levels and improve their living standards.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite several efforts of the government at integrating the woman's question into the development agenda, gender inequality has remained pervasive i n Kaduna state and GiwaLocal Government Area, in particular. The unequal status and power relations between women and men in the society has perpetuated incessant and increasing level of poverty among the female folks. The high level of poverty among women especially in the rural areas has denied them access to the basic requirements (food, shelter, clothing, education, health, etc.) of a decent and desired life. Most of the women in Giwa Local Government Area of the state lack these basic life requirements and are therefore at the mercy of their husbands or other male folks. They have also been relegated to their traditional roles of home keeping with little or no income to sustain themselves and their children. Consequently, they are disempowered and denied the ability to live a decent and desired life.

In an attempt to address this situation and empower women to live a decent life, women empowerment programs have come to be a dominant development strategy aimed at reducing poverty levels among women and promoting gender equality. Giwa Local Government Area in collaboration with the state government have keyed into this development strategy and introduced skills acquisition programs as a means of empowering women to alleviate poverty. But the issue remains that, to what extent have the skills acquisition programs empowered women in the area to live a decent and desired life? This formed the basis of the study.

1.3 Research Questions

The study raised the following questions:

i. To what extent have the skills acquisition programs introduced by the Giwa LG improved income level of women in the LGA?

ii. To what extent have the skills acquisition programs introduced by the Giwa LG empowered women in the LGA to afford basic necessities of life?

iii. What are the challenges encountered in the execution of the skills acquisition programs introduced by the Giwa LG?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The central objective of the study is to examine the impacts of the skills acquisition programs introduced by the Giwa Local Government on women in the area in terms of empowering them to alleviate poverty. In achieving this, the following specific objectives are borne in mind:

i. to determine the extent to which the skills acquisition programs introduced by the Giwa LG have improved income level of women in the LGA.

ii. to determine the extent to which the skills acquisition programs introduced by the Giwa LG have empowered women in the LGA to afford basic necessities of life.

iii. to identify the challenges encountered in the execution of the skills acquisition programs introduced by the Giwa LG.

1.5 Research Proposition

The study was guided by the following proposition:

H_0: the skills acquisition programs introduced by the Giwa LG council have not empowered women in the LGA to afford basic necessities of life via increase in income capacity.

1.6 Context of the Study

The study was conducted in three communities of Giwa Local Government Area of Kaduna state. The communities are Shika, Fatika and Kadage. The study focused on skills acquisition programs introduced between 2012 - 2016 by the Giwa Local Government in conjunction with the state government to ameliorate the plights of women and empower them to live a decent life. The various skills acquisition programs introduced by the Local Government include milling and grinding, sewing and knitting, tie and dye, hair dressing, soap making and event management.

2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Women Empowerment

"Empowerment" has been used to represent a wide range of concepts and to describe a proliferation of outcomes. The term, according to Malhorta *et al.* (2002), has been used more often to advocate for certain types of policies and intervention strategies than to analyse them. It is generally believed to have derived its origin from the word "power", which involves the ability or capacity to have control over a given situation. Rowlands (1997) conceives power in four different dimensions. They are "power over", "power to", "power with", and "power from within".

According to him, power-over refers to a relationship of domination and subordination. It represents a zero sum game where the increase in power of one means the loss of power of another. This concept involves a dynamic of oppression that characterises decision-making and the way influence is wielded. A gender analysis shows that power is wielded predominantly by men over women. In terms of "power-over", women's empowerment will therefore imply less power for men, and any change in power relations is therefore seen as necessarily involving conflict (Rowlands, 1997). This as posited by Rowlands explains why women's empowerment is sometimes seen as a threat for men. Men's fear of losing their patriarchal control constitutes an obstacle to women's empowerment. "Power-to" does not necessarily involve domination. It relates to having decision-making

authority, power to solve problems and can be creative and enabling (Oxaal and Baden 1997). According to Kabeer (2001), "power-to" refers to people's capacity to define their own life-choices and to pursue their own goals. "Power-with" involves people organising with a common purpose or common understanding to achieve collective goals while "power from within" refers to the mental and spiritual strength which stems from the inner deepness of an individual. This type of power relates in particular to self-acceptance and self-respect (Williams *et al.*, 1994). A very important quality of power-from-within, as posited by Kabeer (2001), is that such power cannot be given; it has to be self-generated. Empowerment is basically conceived in terms of power-to, power-with and power from within. It is seen less in terms of power-over.

Empowerment has so far defied a consensus definition. The term has been used by several writers and development agencies in different ways mostly to suit different situations. Kabeer (2001), quoting an NGO activist, posited that the value of the concept lies in its fuzziness which gives a breathing space to work it out in action terms before pinning it down to what it means. It is pertinent at this juncture to therefore examine some of the definitions put forward by some of these writers and development organisations.

The United Nations emphasises that empowerment should be about participation. That people must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives (HDR, 1995: 12). Moser (1993) defines empowerment as the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength. This is identified as the right to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change through the ability to gain control over material and non-material resources. To Batliwala (1994), empowerment refers to the process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the sources of power. It is manifested as a redistribution of power between nations, classes, castes, races, and gender.

A very popular definition of empowerment was given by Kabeer (1999). To her, empowerment should be conceived in the context of disempowerment and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. As stated by her, it is only those who have been disempowered that can be empowered. In other words, empowerment involves a process of change which seeks to expand people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. Strategic life choices according to her refers to those critical choices which determine people living the kind of life they want such as choice of livelihood, where to live, whether to marry, who to marry, whether to have children, how many children to have, freedom of movement, etc. This ability to exercise strategic life choices, according to her, should be thought of in terms of three dimensions: resources (pre-conditions), agency (process) and achievements (outcomes). Agency represents the process by which choices are made and put into effect. It is, hence, central to the concept of empowerment. Resources are a medium through which agency is exercised and achievements refer to the outcomes of agency.

Sen et al. (1995)'s work on human capabilities stresses empowerment as both a means and an end. It is a process of developing individual capacities through gaining education, skills, etc. in order to improve the life-chances of individuals and empower them so they can have a better quality of life. He argues that poverty is an indication of the inability of people to meet their basic needs which could either be tangible (food, shelter, etc.) or intangible (agency,

achievements like participation, empowerment. and community life).

2.2Process of Empowerment

In attempts to develop a comprehensive understanding of the empowerment process, various writers have broken down the process into several key components. According to Kabeer (1999), the empowerment process involves three inter-related dimensions: resources, which is the preconditions necessary for making choices; agency which is at the heart of the process through which choices are made; and achievements resulting from the wielding of agency, represent outcomes.

Chen (1992) describes "resources, perceptions, relationships, and power," as the main components of empowerment. Batliwala (1994) characterizes empowerment, on the other hand, as the "control over resources and ideology". Resources and agency (in various forms and by various names, e.g. control, awareness, voice, power), according to Malhorta *et al.* (2002), were the two most common components of empowerment emphasized in literatures of development.

In most submissions, however, resources are not treated as empowerment per se, but as catalysts for empowerment or conditions under which empowerment is likely to occur. In the perspective of policy and evaluation, as posited by Malhorta *et al.* (2002), it may be more useful to think of resources as "enabling factors"; that is, as potentially critical inputs to foster an empowerment process, rather than as part of empowerment itself. And, in fact, many of the variables that have traditionally been used as "proxies" for empowerment, such as education and employment, might be better described as "enabling factors" or "sources" of empowerment" (Kishor, 2000a) cited in Malhorta *et al.* (2002). In the context of evaluation, Malhorta *et al.* argued that achievements are best treated as outcomes of empowerment, not as empowerment per se (just as resources may be more usefully construed as enabling factors or catalysts for empowerment).

Drawing on the above discussions, one can conclude that resources are better seen as conditions that bring about the ability or capability of those who have been denied opportunity to make choices to now do so from a vantage point without severe consequences. In other words, resources should not be seen as empowerment per se but as factors needed to promote empowerment or equip the disempowered to make strategic life choices aimed at living a desired life. Women empowerment can therefore be seen as a process which seeks to expand women's capability of making strategic choices by helping them to acquire skills and knowledge, gain access to and control over productive resources, etc. which enables them to participate actively in development and live a desired life (achievement or outcome).

2.3Measuring Empowerment

The process of empowerment is not only difficult to define and conceptualize; it is as well difficult to measure. Kabeer (1999) submits that not everyone accepts that empowerment can be clearly *defined*, let alone be measured. A problem with measuring empowerment is to find appropriate indicators. This problem becomes even more critical given the fact that different indicators are needed for measuring different levels and dimensions of empowerment. For instance, empowerment at local and national levels cannot be measured with the same indicators. Similarly, different indicators are needed for measuring individual and collective empowerment. Oxaal and Baden (1997) divided indicators of empowerment into two categories: those which measure empowerment at a broad societal level, and those

which measure the empowerment effects of specific projects and programs.
Programs as specific empowerment indicators that have been used by empirical studies include: involvement in decision-making, freedom of movement, education, occupation and women's access to and control over resources(Roy & Niranjan, 2004, cited in Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007); access to basic facilities such as schooling, access to professional training and higher education, employment, property ownership, household work and decision-making (Sen, 1999); contribution to household income, access to resources, ownership of assets, participation in household decision-making, perception on gender awareness, and coping capacity to household shocks (Parveen & Leonhauser, 2004); mobility, economic security, ability to make small purchases, ability to make larger purchases, involvement in major household decisions, relative freedom from domination within the family, political and legal awareness, involvement in political campaigning and protests. (Hashemi & Schuler, 1994 cited in Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007)
As evident from the above indicators of empowerment developed by various studies to assess performance of programs and projects, one can conclude that though there are similarities in these indicators which signify power and control (agency), they cannot be applied universally. It is imperative and has therefore been the practice, as evidenced in the studies, to develop indicators based on prevalent circumstances to better ascertain the impact of programs and projects in empowering women. Appropriate indicators for measuring women empowerment should therefore be conceived within a gender system. For the purpose of this study, therefore, women empowerment is seen in the following perspectives: increase in income level; affordability of basic necessities such as food and clothing; increased contribution to family upkeep, acquisition of basic household items; and access to health facilities.

2.5 Theoretical Framework: An Empowerment Approach

The empowerment approach is adopted for the study. The approach was made prominent by the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) in the mid-1980s. It is a relatively new approach in women and development discourse. According to Moser (1993), cited in (Tasli, 2007), the empowerment model originated from researches of the First World women and emergent feminist writings as well as grassroots organizational experience of the Third World women, particularly, DAWN. The approach points to the existing structures in societies as sources of women's subordination and marginalisation, and puts a strong emphasis on the necessity of challenging them in all areas and at all levels. It acknowledges that women do possess some power and, if mobilised, can use this power to bring about positive change.
The empowerment approach therefore involves the radical alteration of the processes and structures which produce and reproduce women's subordinate position as a gender, as well as building capabilities and creating opportunities for women to attain self-actualisation. It concentrates on programs designed to increase women's employment and income-generation (i.e. skill training) as well as their access to productive resources (i.e. credit).

The approach is relevant to this study as the skills acquisition programs by the Giwa LG in conjunction with the Kaduna state government is aimed at empowering women to reduce poverty levels and improve living standards.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Survey Design

The study adopted the survey research design where data were collected from population a fraction of the population through interviews and questionnaire techniques.

3.2 Population of the Study

Adult female population who are beneficiaries of the skills acquisition programs constituted the study population. The LG in collaboration with the state government have empowered a total of ninety-seven (97) women in the LGA within the period of study. (Information Office, Giwa LG Council, 2015)

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

The study adopted the simple random sampling technique to draw its respondents from the study population. This technique was chosen in order to afford beneficiaries equal chance of inclusion in the sample size.

In deriving its sample size from the target population of beneficiaries, the study employed the Krejcie and Morgan formula to arrive at a sample size of seventy-five (75). The formula is given as follows:

$s = X^2NP(1-P) \div d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)$.

s = required sample size.

X^2 = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841).

N = the population size.

P = sample the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum size).

d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05) Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

3.4 Sources and Method of Data Collection

Data for the study was generated from both primary and secondary sources. Primary source of data for the study involved the conduct of interview and administration of questionnaires while secondary data source include documents, textbooks, journals and reports. The study employed interview and questionnaires to generate data for analysis. Interviews were conducted with the Director, Social Welfare of the LG and Women leader of the area. Questionnaires on the other hand were administered to adult female beneficiaries from the LGA to generate data in assessing the impact of the programs. The questionnaire is a 20 item questionnaire made up of two sections. Section A was on personal data while section B sought the opinion of respondents about the programs as well as on empowerment measures. The modified Likert type scale was used for the questions contained in the questionnaires.

3.5Methods of Data Analysis

Data generated from the questionnaires administered were processed and presented employing descriptive statistical tools such as frequency tables and percentage. Personal data and characteristics of respondents is presented using frequency tables and simple percentage while responses of the respondents based on their opinion of the empowerment programs are computed and tabulated using frequency, percentage and mean for easy comprehension and analysis. Interview responses on the other hand were analysed qualitatively. In the test of hypotheses, the research employs the chi-square non-parametric tool. The choice of this statistical tool was its suitability for the test of dependence or otherwise of the variables contained in the hypothetical conjectures. The chi-square test statistical formula is given as

follows:

$$X^2 = \Sigma \frac{(Fo - Fe)}{Fe}$$

Where: X^2 *= chi-square,* O *= Observed frequency,* E *= Expected frequency,* Σ *= Summation of the items,* Df *= Degree of freedom*

Decision rule: Reject null hypothesis if the calculated chi-square (X^2) value is greater than the critical value and accept null hypothesis if the calculated chi-square value is less than the critical value.

4. 0Presentation of Data and Analysis

4.1 Questionnaires Administration

A total of seventy-five (75) questionnaires were administered to beneficiaries of the program in the LGA. Out of these questionnaires, sixty-one (61) were found to be correctly filled and returned and were therefore used for analysis. This figure represents 81.3% of the total number of questionnaires administered.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age	F	P	Marital Status	F	P	Qualifi-cation	F	P	Occup-ation	F	P
20-30	6	9.8	Single	0	0	Pry Sch	35	57.4	Trade	9	14.8
31-40	44	72.1	Married	49	80	Sec Sch	20	32.8	Farming	0	0
41 above	11	18.1	Divorce	9	14.8	NCE/ ND	3	4.9	Housewife	41	67.2
			Widow	3	4.9	HND/ DEG	3	4.9	Others	11	18
Total	**61**	**100**		**61**	**100**		**61**	**100**		**61**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2017 **F**=frequency, **P**= percentage

The data contained in table 4.1 above shows that majority of the respondents are married women, mostly within the ages of 31 and 40 with minimal level of education (i.e. primary and secondary). As further contained in the table, a preponderance of the women are full time housewives who do not really engage in any economic activity except for a couple of them that are into petty trading.

4.2 The Empowerment Programs by the Giwa LG

This section presents responses of the respondents to questions contained in the questionnaires administered regarding their awareness as well as participation in the empowerment programs introduced by the LG.

Table 4.2: The skills acquisition programs respondents have benefitted

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sewing & Knitting	26	42.6
Hair Dressing	6	9.8
Milling & Grinding	9	14.8
Tie & Dye	9	14.8
Others (cosmetology, beads making, fish processing, & honey making)	11	18
Total	**61**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The data presented in table 4.2 above shows that a preponderance of the respondents (42.9%) have been trained in the art of sewing and knitting while the least of beneficiaries (9.8%) are in hair dressing. This is an indication that most of the women seem to have more interest in sewing and knitting as a craft.

Table 4.3: Receipt of take-off grants or starter packs

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	61	100
No	0	0
Total	**61**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The data in table 4.3 reveals that beneficiaries were all given working tools after the training. This is what the LG does to enable those trained in various crafts to immediately start a venture in order to become self-reliant and empowered. Interview report revealed that few of the women were given incomplete starter pack due to shortage. For instance, some trained in milling and grinding were given either the grinder or engine.

4.3 The extent to which the programs have empowered women in the area

This section presents the responses of respondents to questions contained in the questionnaire which seeks to elicit information necessary in determining the extent to which the beneficiaries have been empowered to reduce poverty levels and enhance their living standards.

Table 4.4: Increase in income level of respondents due to the empowerment program

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	52	85.2
No	9	14.8
Total	**61**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The data contained in table 4.4 above reveals that a large number of the women's income level has risen as a result of the skills acquired from the various skill training programs. A total of 52 (85.2%) of them attested to this, while 9 (14.8%) responded that their income had not increased. It is therefore obvious that majority of the respondents now earn more income than they used to prior to the introduction of the programs. This is a good omen as increase in income should translate into self-reliance and empowerment. However, the 14.8% of the respondents who claimed that their income level had not risen should equally be a source of concern, as it is an indication that the programs still have some considerable lapses.

Response	Table 4.5: The extent of increase in income level Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very high	3	4.9
High	12	19.7
Average	24	39.3
Not high (minimal)	13	21.3
No opinion	9	14.8
Total	**61**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

One can deduce from the data in the table above that a sizeable number of the beneficiaries have experienced a measureable increase in their income level. This is a good sign as one of the objectives of the programs is to increase the income generating capacity of women in the area. Income level is seen as a very important indicator of empowerment. The higher the income level of a woman, the more self-reliant and empowered she would be.

Table 4.6: The extent to which respondents can now afford basic necessities such as food and clothing

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very much	7	11.5
Just much	16	17.6
Not much	21	34.4
Not at all	8	13.1
No opinion	9	14.8
Total	**61**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

As contained in the table 4.6 above, a sizeable number of the women can now afford basic necessities, such as food and clothing, without the support of their spouse even though not all of them can do this much. 11.7% and 17.6% of them can do this very much and just much respectively while 13.1% and 14.8% opined 'not at all' and 'no opinion' to this. One can deduce from the distribution here that majority of the respondents can now afford basic necessities, such as food and clothing, more than they used to prior to the introduction of the skills acquisition program by the LG. Interview report corroborates this as the women leader gave instances of women who are doing well in their areas of craft and now take good care of their families with or without the spouses' support.

Table 4.7: The extent to which respondents can now afford to purchase basic household items?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very much	3	4.9
Just much	9	14.8
Not much	27	44.3
Not at all	13	21.3
No opinion	9	14.8
Total	**61**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The data contained in table 4.7 above reveals that only a minority of the women can now afford to acquire basic household items as indicated by the 4.9% and 14.8% of them who can do this 'very much' and 'just much' respectively. Majority of them which represent 44.3% manage to afford these basic household items while others can't afford at all. One can deduce from the data here that many of the respondents still lack the capacity to acquire basic household items on their own. The extent to which women can acquire or own property/assets is a very crucial determinant of women empowerment. Improvement in their financial status is expected to result in their ability to afford certain household necessities in order to live a comfortable life.

Table 4.8: The extent to which respondents can now afford health services when the need arise without supports from their husbands

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very much	8	13.1
Just much	24	39.3
Not much	17	27.9
Not at all	3	4.8
No opinion	9	14.8
Total	**61**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The data contained in this table are evidence that the beneficiaries now have increased capacity to afford health services than they used to. This portends well for the program. The extent to which women can seek medical attention when the need arises without waiting for financial assistance from their spouses is very essential to women empowerment.

4.4 Test of Hypotheses

H_0: *The Skills Acquisition Programs introduced by the Giwa LG have not empowered women in the LGA to afford basic necessities of life by increasing their income capacity.*

In order to generate relevant data for the test of this hypothesis, respondents' opinion were sought on measures of empowerment as presented in table 4.10 below

Table 4.9: Contingency Table of Respondents' Opinion to Measures of Empowerment

Proxies of Empowerment	Very much	Just much	Avera -ge	Not much	No opinion	Total
The extent of increase in income level	3	12	24	13	9	61
Affordability of basic necessities such as food and clothing	7	16	21	8	9	61
Acquisition of basic household items	3	9	27	13	9	61
Affordability of health services	8	24	17	3	9	61

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.10: Chi-Square Test Statistics

	The extent of Increase in Income Level	Affordability of basic necessities such as food & clothing	Acquisition of basic household items	Affordability of health services	
Chi-Square Value	90.838[a]	69.461[a]	53.007[a]	34.709[a]	298.398[a]
df	4	4	4	4	
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	
95% Confidence level Critical Value at 5% Sig.	9.488	9.488	9.488	9.488	47.44

Source: Computed SPSS Product

The calculated chi-square value in table 4.10 above is 298.398 as against the critical or table value of 47.44. The calculated value is therefore greater than the critical value. As it is the decision rule practice whenever the calculated value is greater than the critical value, this hypothesis can therefore be rejected as there is a significant association between the skills acquisition programs of the LG and women empowerment. This shows that the skills acquisition programs have appreciably empowered women in the area to alleviate poverty, as their income level has risen, and they can now afford the basic necessities such as food and clothing, acquire basic household items, and have increased capacity to afford health services when needed.

4.6 Discussion

It was proposed that the skills acquisition programs being implemented by the LG in collaboration with the state government have not empowered women in the area to alleviate poverty. Efforts to generate data needed to test this proposition revealed that the programs have appreciably enhanced women empowerment in the LGA, though not as it ought to. Table 4.3 through to 4.8 contain these data. As a result of the programs, a sizeable number of the women's level of income has risen visibly and they can now afford the basic necessities such as food and clothing; afford to acquire basic household items; and also afford to visit health centres for treatment when the need arises without their spouses' support. These, according to Roy and Niranjan (2004), cited in Ibrahim and Alkire (2007), are the salient indicators of empowerment.

Interview response revealed that the execution of the programs have been marred by several obstacles. These challenges include poor and untimely release of funds; shortage of technical personnel to coordinate and supervise the programs; shortage of materials and working tools resulting from poor funding; nonchalant attitude of beneficiaries; dearth of professional trainers; poorly equipped state of the women centre; and lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanism. This finding is in line with the observations of Zanna (2000), cited in Comfort et al. (2013), who pointed out that inadequate and inconsistent funding has been one of the major problems of skills acquisition programs in alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

Interview report further uncovered that some of the women trained were given incomplete starter packs (working tools), e.g. some women trained in the art of fish processing were given only the oven without stove, while some trained in milling and grinding were given only grinders without engines. The same applies to others who were trained in the art of sewing and knitting. The study also revealed that few of the women had lukewarm attitude to the programs as they showed no zeal in learning the skills, while others went as far as selling the working tools (starter packs) given to them after the training. This problem could be traced to the non-involvement of the women in the planning stage of the programs because some of the women responded that they would have preferred other economic activities such as poultry, animal husbandry and loans to engage in trades of their choice. Again, a few other women who could have done better in the practice of skill acquired complained of inadequate finance to enable them expand their ventures.

4.7 Major Findings

From the data generated and analysed, the study has the following as its major findings:

I. The skills acquisition programs introduced by the Giwa LG have appreciably increased women's level of income, as a sizeable number of the women (beneficiaries) in the area now earn more than they used to prior to introduction of the programs.

ii. The study also revealed that the programs have empowered women in the area to some extent as they can now afford the basic necessities such as food and clothing; afford to acquire basic household items; and also afford to visit health centres for treatment when the need arises without their spouses' support.

iii. The study further revealed that implementation of the programs has been marred by some challenges which include poor and untimely release of funds, shortage of technical personnel to coordinate and supervise the programs, shortage of materials and working tools resulting from poor funding, nonchalant attitude of beneficiaries, dearth of professional trainers, poorly equipped state of the women centre and lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The current concern for empowering women to alleviate poverty and promote gender equality through skills acquisition and other empowerment programs is laudable; however, the effectiveness of their implementation is in doubt. The skills acquisition programs introduced by the Giwa LGA of Kaduna state, Nigeria have no doubt brought about some degree of improvement in the lives of these women, as their income level has visibly risen and they now contribute more financially to their family upkeep. Nevertheless, the programs have been marred by some challenges which demand urgent attention if the goal of poverty alleviation would be achieved.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are thus put forward:

i. Adequate as well as timely release of funds should be ensured in order to provide the sufficient materials and working tools required.

ii. Soft loans or micro-credit scheme should be made available to beneficiaries as this would provide capital needed for expansion in their various areas of skills acquired.

iii. Only qualified, experienced and successful artisans should be engaged to train beneficiaries as this would not only bestow good skills on the women but these professionals would act as a source of encouragement to them.

iv. Women should be engaged in the process of formulation and implementation of these programs as this would avoid introducing programs that women have little interest in.

v. An effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism should be put in place in order to monitor the progress of beneficiaries as well as encourage them.

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