

Lagos State Market Women's Literacy Level and Awareness of Right to Education

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Abstract

This study examines the extent to which market women in Lagos State have exercised their right to education with regard to government policy on literacy programmes to give them the opportunity to leadership positions. One market was randomly selected from each of the old five divisions of Lagos State. One hundred market women were targeted to be interviewed in each market, but a total of four hundred and eighty participants were involved. Structured interview questions were used to extract the required information. Four research questions and three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistical were employed for data analyses. All the hypotheses were rejected, as results revealed that majority of the market women were unaware of the existence of continuing education centres that offer literacy programmes, they were unaware of their rights to education under the literacy programmes, they do not make enough profit to consider returning to school to back up their aspiration to leadership positions, neither have they taken advantage of the provision of the continuing education centres where literacy education is provided. It was recommended among other things, that government (especially at the Local Government level) should endeavour to empower market women to enable them take advantage of the literacy programmes that are provided. Also, that enlightenment campaigns should be mounted to create the awareness that education is a right and that the continuing education centres are available to everyone at various locations.

Key words: Right to Education, Literacy programme, Leadership, Empowerment

Introduction

The right to education has been entrenched in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria: 1999) at Chapter II Section 18(1). It reads in part, "Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all level". "Further down, in the same section, it states the "Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy". Similarly, the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) enumerates the goals of education to include the desire for an egalitarian society. The opening paragraph of the policy document describes education as an instrument 'par excellence' for achieving national development. One of the indices for measuring national development is the level of education of the citizenry. It is an established fact that any nation which

desires sustainable development has to ensure the education of every citizen. That realization would have prompted the Nigerian government to set up the National Commission for Mass Literacy and non-formal Education as well as Adult Education Centres. The establishment of these centres is in line with the provision in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria: 2004) for mass literacy, adult and non formal education "especially for the disadvantaged gender". Ewuzie (2011) points out that the first provision for adult education in Nigeria was in the 1975-1980 National Development Plan. According to Asaolu (2010) there are 2000 Adult Education centres across the country.

Literature Review

Much has been written by various authors and researchers concerning the enhancement of women's leadership position through education. This study is anchored on Amartya Sen's theory of capacity building. Sen (1991) argues for five components in assessing capability, the last of which according to him, is 'concern for the distribution of opportunities within society'. When equal opportunity is given to every member of the society to achieve their potentials, equity is assured. Furthermore, every member of that society is able to work for the common good of all.

It is believed that when education policies favour women, the nation is the better for it because the educated women in a leadership position is better able to handle the living condition of the people around her. One of the ways of measuring national development is through the improved standard of living of the individual brought about by government policies. Another is the ability to be financially independent. Nigerian women are very hard working as one finds traders among them in the market places, trying to heck a living. It may be difficult for these market women to aspire to leadership positions and contribute meaningfully to national development, if they do not read or are unable to read in order to exercise their minds. The poverty level in the country would be a major challenge to many people who survive on the pittance they get from their petty trade. According to Etuk (2005), poverty is a life condition where an individual's income cannot adequately meet his basic needs or those of his family members. The Central Bank of Nigeria (1999) outlined the causes of poverty as:

- i) the state of economic and social development
- ii) low productivity
- iii) market imperfection
- iv) physical or environmental degradation
- v) structural shift in the economy
- vi) inadequate commitment to programmes implementation
- vii) illiteracy
- viii) political instability
- ix) corruption.

Women appear to be the hardest hit by the factors outlined above. The patriarchal system which is prevalent in the Nigerian society has help to ensure that women are discriminated against to the extent that many lack self confidence. In an article on women's literacy in Sierra Leone, by Powerful Information (2007) the view was expressed that the consequences of discrimination are devastating as it further entrenches many into "poverty, forces some to stay in violent relationships, contributes to homelessness, and severely compromises women's ability to properly care for themselves and their children".

Leadership opportunity among women is narrowed down due to limited or lack of education. Leadership itself requires that a person within a group has the capability of giving direction to other members of that group in order to achieve pre-determined goals. The best way of giving the woman the opportunity to leadership position is by being empowered. Empowerment itself starts with the acquisition of a form of education which will enable an individual to organize his/her life for positive living. According to the United Nations Population Information Network (2011) women's empowerment has

five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and determine choices; their right to *have access to* opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change in order to create an acceptable social and economic order, nationally and internationally. Furthermore the United National Development Programme (UNDP) (2009) posits that "Women's economic empowerment requires bold and sustained action to advance women's opportunities and rights and to ensure that women can participate and be heard".

Statement of the Problem

This study tries to determine the educational level and the extent to which market women in Lagos State are aware of their rights to education and the provision made available for continuing education, their willingness to take advantage of continuing education and the acknowledgement of gender equality in the acquisition of education and how these factors may be influenced by the educational as well as the economic status of the women. A walk through any general market in Lagos State reveals that there are more women than men in these markets. From observation, one would notice that some of these women look unkempt and many operate in dirty and unhygienic environments and they appear to be living below the poverty level which has been put at \$1.00 (one dollar, about N150.00) a day.

With this in mind, this study finds answers to the following questions:

1. What is the common educational qualification of market women in Lagos State?
2. Are the market women in Lagos State aware of:
 - a. Government policy, provisions and right to education?
 - b. Continuing education centres that are provided in their localities?
3. Are market women economically buoyant enough to pay for continuing education fees?
4. What is the perception of Lagos State market women about gender equality in access to education and leadership positions?

Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁: There is no significant association between market women educational status and their awareness of their right to education
- H₀₂: There is no significant association between market women educational status and their awareness of opportunity for adult's education
- H₀₃: There is no significant association between market women educational status and their aspiration to go back to school.

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted, in which interview was the major basis for obtaining data about the level to which market women in Lagos State have exercised their right to education by embracing the adult education centres provided by the government. A sample of 500 market women, drawn from one market each of the old five divisions of Lagos State (Badagry, Epe, Ikorodu, Island and Mainland) was targeted but 480 market women finally participated. The multistage sampling technique was used to select the participants. Open-ended interview questions were used for gathering information by research assistants who had been trained for the purpose. The participants responded to 22 questions and descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage were used to answer the research questions and chi-square statistics was used to test the null hypotheses. The results obtained are presented below.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the common educational qualification of market women in Lagos State.

Table 1: Educational Qualification of Lagos State Market Women

Educational level	F	%
No formal education	116	24.2
Primary school certificate	193	40.2
Junior Secondary level	30	6.3
School certificate	94	19.6
No indication	47	9.8
Total	480	100.0

Table 1 reveals the educational qualification of market women in Lagos State, it shows that only 19.6% of them have secondary school certificate, 6.3% completed junior secondary school and 40.2% have primary school leaving certificate. 24.2% of them have no formal education and 9.8% failed to indicate their educational level. With this it could be inferred that majority of the market women in Lagos State have primary school certificate. Figure 1 below depicts this in a chart.

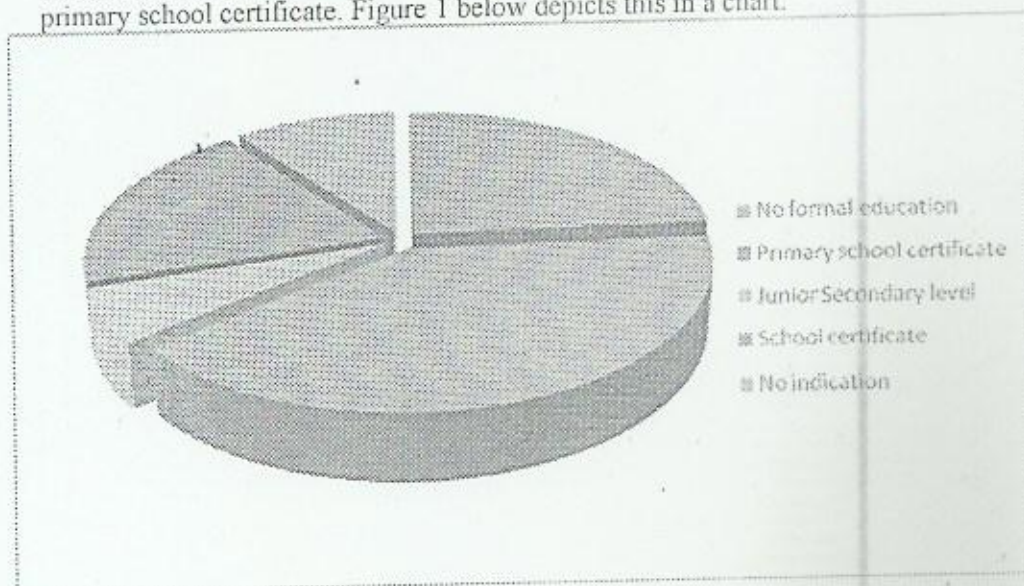


Fig. 1: Pie Chart Showing Educational Qualification of Lagos State Market Women

From the above analysis, the largest proportion of market women in Lagos State dropped out of school after primary school, few after junior secondary and some after secondary education. None of them indicated that they have post secondary education. This shows that large proportion of the women still need to further their education. The little education they have is not enough to influence their job, life style and socio-economic status. Therefore, these set of people need to further their education to be able to contribute significantly to the economy of this nation.

Research question 2: Are the market women in Lagos State aware of:

- Government policy, provisions and right to education?
- Continuing education centres that are provided in their localities?

Table 2: Lagos State market women Awareness of Government Policy, Right to Education and Continue Education Centres in Their Communities

Statement	Option	F	%
GOVERNMENT POLICY			
Do you know that adult can still return to school?	No	79	16.5
	Yes	401	83.5
Do you know that before the law, all Nigerian citizen are equal?	No	81	16.9
	Yes	352	73.3
RIGHT to EDUCATION			
Do you know that education is a right in Nigeria?	No	279	58.1
	Yes	154	32.1
PROVISION OF CONTIUNE EDUCATION CENTRE			
Are you aware that there is a continuing education centre in your locality?	No	434	90.4
	Yes	46	9.6
Are you aware that government has provided these continuing schools for every one?	No	464	96.7
	Yes	16	3.3
Do you know of anyone who attends a continuing education centre?	No	433	90.2
	Yes	47	9.8
Do you believe that continuing education can help women to develop skills	No	54	11.3
	Yes	426	88.8

Table 2 shows that majority of the market women are aware of the government policy on continuing education. 83.5% knew that adults can go back to school and 73.3% knew that all Nigerians are equal before the law but larger proportion of these women 58.1% did not know that education is a right for all citizens. 90.4% did not know that there is a continuing education centre in their locality; 96.7% did not know that government has provided continuing education for all and 90.2% did not know of anyone attending continuing education centre, but 88.8% of them believed that continuing education can help them to acquire some skills. With these, it could be concluded that Lagos State market women are aware of government policy about adult education but they are not aware of the establishment of any continuing education centre in their locality and they did not know that education is the right of all include adults.

Research Question 3: Are market women in Lagos State economically buoyant enough to pay for continuing education fees?
To answer this question, the profit made per month by the market women is analysed and the table below presents this

Table 3: Profit Made by Lagos State Market Women Per Month

Profit made per month	F	%	Mean Profit	Std. D
Not regular/No account	310	64.6	N4 231.90	6.48
N6 000.00	16	3.3		
N 7 500.00	30	6.3		
N10 000.00	77	16.0		
N20 000.00	47	9.8		
Total	480	100.0		

Table 3 reveals that largest proportion of the market women in Lagos State (64.6%) have no record of their profit or claimed that the profit is not regular; 9.8% do make up to N20 000.00k per month; 16% do make around N10 000.00k per month and 9.6% make less than N10 000.00K per month. The average amount made by these market women could be estimated to N4,231.90K. This amount is expected to take care of their feeding, house rent, transportation and other expenses within the month. Therefore, they are not buoyant enough to pay for continuing education school fees.

Research Question 4: What is the perception of Lagos State market women about gender equality in access to education and leadership positions?

Table 4: Perception of Market Women about Access to Education and Leadership Positions

Statement	Option	F	%
Do you think a woman should be a leader when men are available?	No	111	23.1
	Yes	369	76.9
Is it necessary for a woman to attain high level of education?	No	74	15.4
	Yes	379	79.0
Are you happy with women who are leaders?	No	-	0.0
	Yes	480	100.0
Is the government doing enough in the area of education to encourage women to become leaders?	No	319	66.5
	Yes	140	29.2

Table 4 reveals that the market women believed that a woman could be a leader even when men are available (76.9%) and that it is necessary for a woman to attain high level of education (79%). Though all of them (100%) are always happy with women who are leaders but they think government is not doing enough in the area of education to encourage women to become a leader (66.5%). From all these, it could be inferred that Lagos state market women have positive perception about gender equality in access to education and leadership positions.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant association between market women educational status and their awareness of their right to education.

Table 5: Summary of Chi- Square Analysis Showing Association between Educational level and Awareness of Educational Right of the Market Women

Educational Level	Do you know that education is a right to all in Nigeria?				X ²	df	Sig.	Remark
	No response	No	Yes	Total				
No indication	47	0	0	47	621.21	8	.000	Significant
No formal Education	0	52 (44.8)	64 (55.2)	116				
Primary Education	0	133 (68.9)	60 (31.1)	193				
Junior sec. Schl. Education	0	0	30 (100.0)	30				
School Certificate	0	0	94 (100.0)	94				
Total	47	185	248	480				

Table 5 reveals that there is a significant association between level of education and the awareness of education as the right of the entire citizen by market women ($X^2 = 621.21$; $df = 8$; $P < 0.05$). Majority of those with no formal education (44.8%) and those with primary education (68.9%) are not aware of the fact that education is the right of all while all those with Junior secondary (100%) and those with secondary education (100%) are aware of this fact. Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant association between market women educational status and their awareness of opportunity for adult's education.

Table 6: Summary of Chi- Square Analysis Showing Association between Educational level and Awareness of Opportunity for Adult Education

Educational Level	Do you know that adults can still go back to school?			X ²	df	Sig.	Remark
	No	Yes	Total				
No indication	0	47	47	296.7	4	.000	Significant
No formal Education	79	37	116				
Primary Education	0	193	193				
Junior Secondary School Education	0	30	30				
School Certificate	0	94	94				
Total	79	401	480				

Table 6 reveals that there is a significant association between level of education and the awareness of opportunity for adult education of the entire citizen by market women ($X^2 = 296.7$; $df = 4$; $P < 0.05$). Majority of those with no formal education (68.1%) are not aware of the fact that there is opportunity for adult education all while all those with primary education (100%) Junior secondary (100%) and those with secondary education (100%) are aware of this fact. Therefore, the null hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no significant association between market women educational status and their aspiration to go back to school.

Table 7: Summary of Chi- Square Analysis Showing Association between Educational level and aspiration to go back to school

Educational Level	If you get the chance, will you like to go back to school?			X^2	df	Sig.	Remark
	No	Yes	Total				
No indication	0	47	47	164.87	4	.000	Significant
No formal Education	70	46	116				
Primary Education	163	30	193				
Junior sec. Schl. Education	0	30	30				
School Certificate	0	94	94				
Total	233	247	480				

Table 7 reveals that there is a significant association between level of education and their aspiration to go back to school by market women ($X^2 = 164.87$; $df = 4$; $P < 0.05$). Majority of those with no formal education (60.3%) and those with primary education (84.5%) do not aspire to go back to school while all those with Junior secondary (100%) and those with secondary education (100%) do aspire to go back to school. Therefore, the null hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The first research question sought to know the educational qualification of market women in Lagos State. It was found out that majority of them have primary school leaving certificates. This finding could be as a result of the fact that many of the people in the market have started for long, since they have dropped out of school and the reason for that could be varied. From the interview conducted, majority of the market women claimed that there was no sponsor that was the reason they could not continued their education. This finding is in line with the submission of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), (2002) that there are 60 million Nigerians who are illiterate. Hallak (1990) argues that beyond individual development which could be brought about by education, the social and political development of a nation is determined by the level of education of the citizens who form the human capital. In essence, he is suggesting that everyone should be educated in order to participate in the social, cultural, political and other aspects of life that will bring about the development of the nation.

The second research question sought the know if the market women in Lagos State are aware of government policy, provisions and right to education and also aware of continuing education centres that are provided in their localities. The study found out that Lagos State market women are aware of government policy about adult education but they are not aware of the establishment of any continuing education centre in their locality and they did not know that education is the right of all include adults. Their awareness of government policy about literacy could be as a result of their experience while they were still in primary school in which then they could have heard about adults going to school or that government want adults to go to school but their for them not to know about continuing education centres in their localities might be that then they were too young to identify one. And now that they grown up, their business might not allow them to take note of such development around them. Besides, the publicity given to such centres might not reach the market areas. This finding could not be jettisoned because it corroborates the submission of Ubek (2010) that for women to have a change of attitude, they must enroll for some form of literacy programme. Furthermore, according to a World Bank report (World Bank, 1999) poverty level in Nigeria contradicts the country's immense wealth.

The third research question sought to know if market women in Lagos State are economically buoyant enough to pay for continuing education fees. This study found out that they are not buoyant enough to pay for continuing education school fees because their profits in a month is hardly enough to

put food on their table. This could be as a result of the fact that majority of them started the business with very small capital, some as small as a thousand and five hundred naira. The total capital of such business is too small to make a meaningful profit. This finding is in line with World Bank (1999) submission about the level of poverty in Nigeria.

The fourth research question state that, what is the perception of Lagos State market women about gender equality in access to education and leadership positions? This study found out that the market women in Lagos State have a positive perception about gender equity in access to education and the leadership position. They believed that women should have equal opportunity to education and leadership positions. This could be as a result of the common saying among the people that what a man can do a woman can even do better. Besides some women leaders have emerged in Nigeria recently and have been contributing meaningfully to the development of the nation. This might have sensitised them about what women can do.

The first hypothesis states that, there is no significant association between market women educational status and their awareness of their right to education. This hypothesis was rejected because level of education of the market women was found to have associated with their awareness of their rights. Those that have a little more education, up to Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary schools were aware of their right to education more than those without formal education or have a little education. This finding corroborates previous findings of the study.

The second hypothesis states that, there is no significant association between market women educational status and their awareness of opportunity for adult education. This hypothesis was also rejected because there was an association between the market women level of education and their awareness of opportunities for adult education in their locality.

The last hypothesis states that there is no significant association between market women educational status and their aspiration to go back to school. This hypothesis was also rejected because it was found out that the association exist. Those without formal education at all were found not to have aspiration to go to school at all while those with little formal education before want to go back. It could well mean that those who had never been to school did not miss what they had never enjoyed while those who had had a taste of schooling value education.

Conclusion

The picture that has been painted appears to be gloomy but the study has only focused attention on market women which tends to be a focus on the lower class of people in the society. At the same time, since this class of Nigerians form part of the larger society, it is necessary to investigate their educational status which has a bearing on other aspects of their social, economic and political lives among other things, with a view to helping them to have a sense of belonging.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made based on the findings of this study:

1. Government should endeavour to empower market women financially to enable them take advantage of the literacy programmes that are provided.
2. Enlightenment campaigns should be mounted to create the awareness that education is a right and that everyone should take advantage of local continue education centres.
3. Discrimination against women in the area of education should be legislated against by government to ensure that girls are educated before they become women.

4. Since nomadic education already exists in Nigeria, arrangements could be made to employ teachers who will go to various markets on certain days of the week to teach the market women in their own environment.
5. Leadership training could be organised in market places through the market leaders in order to give the market women decision-making skills and boost their self confidence.

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