

## Training Ekiti Women for Economic Resilience at the Ekiti State Women Development Centre

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### Abstract

*The use of the training facilities of the Ekiti State Women Development Centre to build economic resilience in Ekiti State women was examined. This was borne out of the need to boost productivity, increase economic diversification, realize gender and income equalities. Three sets of respondents – Women graduates of ESWDC, randomly selected full-time housewives and their husbands who could benefit from the ESWDC program according to the authors' observation – and three different instruments were used in this study. The instruments were administered on 30 respondents in each set. Field observation revealed that many of the women in the State were living in abject poverty thus validating their need for empowerment. Eight different skills are taught at the Centre with the admission requirements being flexible and accessible to any woman. Acquisition of these skills possessed the potentials to alleviate poverty among the women. While most of the full-time housewives demonstrated their willingness to participate in the training programmes of the Centre, their husbands felt contrary and served as a disincentive to their wives. Sustainable strategies capable of circumventing the identified disincentives and building economic resilience in the women were prescribed.*

### Keywords

economic resilience; women development centre; Nigeria



## I. Introduction

The Ekiti State Women Development Centre, Igede-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria (ESWDC) was established by the state's Ministry of Women Affairs on 17th May, 1999. The Centre was upgraded through the assistance of the UNDP that supplied skills acquisition training equipment to the centre. The main objective for the establishment of the centre was to train womenfolk on skills to enable them to be self-reliant. It was also meant to train girls who dropped out of school or were late starters and full-time housewives in various skills so that they can be better equipped to live meaningful lives and contribute to the development of their communities. At present, the centre provides skills in computer studies, secretarial studies, fashion design, textile technology, hair dressings and cosmetology, and catering and hotel management. It also provides general education in English Language, Mathematics, Economics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The centre has a flexible admission policy to enable it cater to various categories of women.

It has now become popular knowledge that women who constitute more than half of humanity, need to be empowered to be able to contribute their quota to national development by being able to maintain themselves and their families.

## **II. Review of Literature**

Women are at the heart of development in Nigeria as they control most of the non monetary economy (subsistence, agriculture, bearing children, domestic labour etc.) and play an important role in the monetary economy (trading, wage labour, employment, etc) (Yawa, 1995). Everywhere in the world, women work both around outside the home. The most topical issue in international developmental programme now is women.

The woman as a person is an agent of reproduction of life itself. This places her in the position of the lifeblood of the entire humanity. She is the first teacher, the sustained and maintainer of the home, the peacemaker, the symbol of beauty and major moulder of the character of the child (Ogunjemilua and Familugba 2015). She is a mother of the human race. As mothers and wives, women do exert considerable impact on the productivity of male workers. By their sheer psychological, physiological, and intellectual make up, they perform more than mere complimentary roles in the production process (Jeminiwa, 1995). Unfortunately, most of the contributions by women had not been recognized until recently when the United Nations declared the Decade for Women (1976-1985) making it mandatory for governments to focus on women as integral component of national development. In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Consequently, subsequent conferences on women were held in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1980, Nairobi in Kenya in 1985 and Benjing in China in 1995. However, the full implementation of all the strategies and recommendations of these various conferences on women issues were yet to be achieved, especially in Nigeria, and many other developing countries.

Much of women's work remains invisible, unremunerated, and unrecognized because they were not valued and yield no economic benefits (Anam 2020). However, women are now challenging the status quo. Mechanisms to right the so-called "cultures wrong" are being put in place. Women's voices are now being heard clamoring for an improvement in their socio-economic status and for the recognition of their immense contributions to national development (Ali 1998).

In Nigeria, gender inequality exists and it is influenced by different cultures and beliefs (Abegunde 2014, Oluyemo2014)). Women are seen as mothers, sisters, daughters and wives (Okeke et. al. 2012). Though their roles in the country differ according to religious and geographic factors, they are generally considered as being subordinate to the males. They are best suited as home keepers and play supporting roles to their husbands. The female gender, in Nigerian society, is disadvantaged in economics, politics, education, inheritance and income generations. This discrimination against women remains a major obstacle to economic development.

Women economic contributions are not valued. They are mostly unemployed and many rely on male breadwinners for survival which limits their abilities to influence decisions at household level (Manser and Brown 1980, Dibie and Okere 2015). Women constituted the majority of informal sector workers. Many of them are involved in subsistence agriculture and off farm activities yet many lacked access to land. Also the Nigerian labour markets are gender-biased. Majority of those in formal employment are men (Okojie 2002). The income gap between men and women is very wide (Oyelere, 2007, Dibie and Okere 2015). A range of barriers, including reproductive roles, lack of access to productive assets, and issues related to education, combined to account for the observed gender disparities in income (World Bank 2009). Women are discriminated against in politics; they cannot contribute freely to political matters (Pereira 2009). They lacked access to collateral (Okemakinde 2014) hence have difficulties in accessing loans.

The precarious situation of women described above perpetuates poverty among them. 54% of Nigeria's 162.5 million people still live in poverty (BC 2012). 49% of this population are girls and women. Recent initiative now considered women in the country as hidden resource hence investment in them will increase the country's productivity and promote sustainable growth, peace and better health. Thus women empowerment is imperative in the country (Obayelu and 2020). This will reduce women's vulnerability and dependency in all spheres of life. Also, the empowerment is a poverty reduction measure.

Various approaches to poverty alleviation have been suggested (Olayemi 1995). These include the economic growth strategy; basic needs fulfilment strategy and the rural development strategy (Adedokun and Kayode 2019, Adeyemo and Kayode 2020). Economic growth strategy of poverty alleviation assumes that economic deprivation is at the root of poverty while non-economic causes of poverty like education, health etc. are secondary. Consequently, attention is focused on rapid economic growth (real per-capita gross domestic product), stability and declining unemployment or increasing employment. Attainment of these objectives requires the harmonisation of fiscal and monetary policies to achieve a trickle-down effect to the poor (FOS 1996, Oluwatayo 2010). The basic need fulfilment strategy emphasised the meeting with the basic necessities of life i.e., food, clothing and shelter while the rural development approach strategy advocated the total emancipation and empowerment of the rural sector as a disproportionate high percentage of the poor are located in the rural areas.

The ESWDC is an institution set up to provide trainings in skill acquisitions to women. This institution adequately fit-in into this poverty alleviation programs. Skill acquisition offers opportunity to be gainful employed, create jobs, develop social and psychological maturity, all of which are prerequisites to the development of economic resilience in women.

## **2.1 Statement of the Problem**

Over the years, women contributions to economic development have not been valued in Nigeria. The society does not recognize nor reward their efforts and the impact of their efforts. This is borne out by Nigerian society bequeathing inferior status on her women who are treated as subordinate and second class citizens who should submit themselves to the control of men (their husbands). According to FMWACD (2006), the discrimination against women knows no boundary or barrier and is not dependent on social, educational or economic status of women in Nigeria.

The African society believes that, no matter how well a woman works, she cannot be considered as being equal to a man (van der Gaag 2014), because a man is stronger physically than a woman (Miller et. al. 1993). In one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women; in the other direction, continuing discrimination against women can, as it has been forcefully argued, hinder development (Duflo 2012). That is why the need to break this gap is imperative. The ESWDC, Igede-Ekiti, Ekiti State is capable of impacting skills that will enhance economic resilient in Ekiti women.

## **2.2 Purpose of the Study**

Exploring sustainable strategies that would enhance economic resilience of Ekiti women using the potentials inherent in ESWDC, this study seeks to attain the following objectives:

1. Define the potentials inherent in ESWDC for the evolvement of economic resilience in Ekiti women.

2. Evaluate the willingness of Ekiti women to take advantage of the opportunities inherent in ESWDC.
3. Ascertain the willingness of husbands of married Ekiti women to support their participation in ESWDC trainings

### 2.3 Research Questions

The followings research questions were raised for the study:

1. Does ESWDC possess the potentials to develop economic resilience in Ekiti women?
2. Are Ekiti women willing to participate in the activities of the ESWDC to enhance their economic resilience?
3. Are the husbands of Ekiti women willing to support their wives in participating in the activities of by ESWDC to enhance their economic resilience?

### 2.4 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were generated for the study;

1. There is no significant relationship between the activities of ESWDC and economic resilient of Ekiti women
2. There is no significant relationship between Ekiti women's participation in the activities of ESWDC and their economic resilience.
3. There is no significant relationship between the supports of husbands of full time house wives and the women's participation in the activities of ESWDC.

### 2.5 Significance of the Study

This study attempts to prescribe sustainable means of empowering a large population of unemployed full-time housewives living in poverty that abounds in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The researchers assume as well that the study may be useful to policy and decision makers in the immediate setting of the study and beyond.

## III. Methodology

A multistage sampling procedure was used to select the samples used for this study. This approach is useful when stages of selection are involved. Three sets of respondents – Women graduates of ESWDC, Full-time housewives and Husbands of full time housewives - and three instruments tagged 'Questionnaire for Graduate of ESWDC QFGE', 'Questionnaire for Full Time housewives QFHW' and 'Questionnaire for husbands of full time house wives QFHH' respectively were used in this study.

Stage I involved the selection of 30 purposively selected graduates of ESWDC, Igede-Ekiti who reside in the state on who the QFGE was administered. Stage II involved the selection of 30 purposively resource-poor full-time housewives. 10 each of these women was selected from each of the three senatorial zones of Ekiti State and QFHW administered on them. Stage III involved the selection of 30 purposively selected resource-poor husbands of full-time housewives. 10 each of these women were selected from each of the three senatorial zones of Ekiti State and QFHH administered on them.

Each instrument was made up of two sections, A and B. Section A described the socio-economic classification of the respondents while section B the topic of the study, as it affects these sets of respondents, using the respondents' degree of agreement with the statement contained in the respective instruments that were structured in modified Likert 4-point scale as follow:

- |    |                  |            |
|----|------------------|------------|
| SA | - Strongly Agree | - 4 Points |
| A  | - Agree          | - 3 Points |

- D - Disagree - 2 Points
- SD - Strongly Disagree - 1 Point

The scores obtained above were weighted to give their means; the means interpreted as follows:

- 0.00- 0.09 = U= Undecided
- 1.00- 1.49= SD = Strongly Disagree
- 1.50 – 2.49 = D = Disagree
- 2.50 – 3.49 = A = Agree
- 3.50 – 4.00 = SA = Strongly Agree

The face and content validity of the instruments were established by experts’ in community development at the Department of Adult Education and Community Development, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti , and the test re-test method was adopted to achieve the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficients of 0.86. 0.88 and 0.85 for QFGE, QFHW and QFHH respectively. The data collected was analysed descriptively using mean.

Key informants, three officials of the ESWDC, Igede-Ekiti, Nigeria were interviewed. Information obtained from the instruments and the interactions was recorded and data generated from them were analyzed.

## IV. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

#### a. The Respondents and the Centre

The results from this study were obtained from the questions answered and were supported with information obtained from the key informants and field observation to support or refute the questionnaire analyses. Respondents were of diverse socio-economic classifications (Table 1). They were adults of mostly 20-60 years old, literates and adherents of the two religion in Nigeria (Table 1). Field observation revealed that the existing economic situation in the country is having its toll on women who were saddled with the nutrition and health management in the family. The young females were not faring better, many of them lacked access to quality education and reasonable means of livelihood hence were prone to social vices like prostitution, sex and drug abuse, unwanted pregnancies, physical abuse as well as dropping outs of schools. Thus many, especially in the rural areas of the state, were living in abject poverty thus stressing the need for urgent empowerment.

**Table 1.** Socio-economic classification of respondents in Ekiti State, Nigeria

S/n	Feature	Proportion (%) of Respondents*			
		EG	FTH	HFHW	
1	Age	< 20 Yrs	0	17	13
		20-60 Yrs	100	83	77
		> 60 Yrs	0	0	9
2	Education	Illiterate	0	7	3
		Literate	100	93	96
3	Religion	Christianity	59	57	60
		Islam	41	40	40
		Indigenous & others	-	3	-

\* EG: ESWDC Graduates FTH: Full-Time Housewives HFHW: Husbands of Full-Time Housewives

Similarly, information from the ESWDC graduates and field observation revealed that the Centre possessed facilities and departments that offer skill acquisition in catering and hotel management, computer studies, secretarial studies, fashion design, hair dressing and cosmetology, textile technology, electrical installation, bricklaying and mastery.

### b. Tests of the Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between the activities of ESWDC and economic resilient of Ekiti women

The results obtained from graduates of ESWDC revealed that the centre provided them with opportunity to acquire entrepreneurial skills, enhanced their employability, psychologically maturity, social interactions and generally helped them further their education (Table 2). The high mean values obtained on these attributes suggest that significant relationship exist between the activities of ESWDC and economic resilient of Ekiti women.

**Table 2.** Potentials inherent in ESWDC for the evolvement of economic resilience in Ekiti women as perceived by current students of ESWDC

S/n	Potentials	SA	A	D	SD	N	Total	Mean	Interpretation
1.	Opportunity to acquire skills	116	3	0	0	30	119	3.97	SA
2.	Enhancement of employment	120	0	0	0	30	120	4.00	SA
3.	Acquisition of entrepreneurial skills	100	15	0	0	30	115	3.83	SA
4.	Enhancement of psychologically maturity	92	15	0	0	30	107	3.57	SA
5.	Improvement in women social interactions	96	18	2	0	30	116	3.87	SA
6	Acquisition of further education	120	0	0	0	30	120	4.00	SA

**Hypothesis II:** There is no significant relationship between Ekiti women's participation in the activities of ESWDC and their economic resilience.

The study examined the willingness of Ekiti women to take advantage of the opportunities inherent in ESWDC program. Results obtained revealed that gross ignorance of the Centre and its activities prevailed among the women respondents (Table 3). Field observation revealed that respondents' awareness of the Centre was directly proportional to the distance of their communities of residence to the location of the Centre. Hence, respondents who reside in communities located closer to the location of the centre demonstrated more awareness about it and its activities than those residing several kilometers away from the Centre. Briefings on the activities of the Centre given to the respondents convinced them of its potentials to build economic resilience in them and elicited their interests in being trained at the Centre. However, the women who were full-time housewives indicated that their participations will be hindered by financial and time constraints as well as the demands of their marriage (Table 3). Thus significant relationship exists between Ekiti women's participation in the activities of ESWDC and their economic resilience.

**Table 3.** Factors inhibiting Ekiti women’s willingness to participate in the activities of ESWDC

S/n	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Total	Mean	Interpretation
1.	Aware of ESWDC activities	16	12	8	18	30	54	1.80	D
2.	Financial constraint hinders participation in ESWDC activities	64	18	4	6	30	92	3.07	A
3.	Marital commitment hinders participation in ESWDC activities	80	21	4	1	30	106	3.53	SA
4.	Time constraint hinders participation in ESWDC activities	60	15	12	4	30	91	3.03	A
5.	ESWDC location hinders participation in her activities	72	21	6	2	30	101	3.37	A

**Hypothesis III:** There is no significant relationship between the supports of husbands of full-time housewives and the women’s participation in the activities of ESWDC.

Results obtained from this study revealed that most of the husbands of the full-time housewives were ignorant of the existence and activities of ESWDC (Table 4). Also briefings on the Centre and its activities excited their interests. Field observation also revealed that the degree of awareness among these male respondents declines with the increase in the distance between where they live and the ESWDC. Most of the husbands were not prepared to foot the financial bill that would be required to get their wives to train and considered the time that would be required by their wives for training at ESWDC an absurd waste. Similarly, they were not prepared to bear the domestic burden, such as taking care of the children and haulage of farm products from the farms to the markets that would arise as a result of their wives leaving home for training (Table 4). They equally revealed that the location of the Centre was far from the communities where they reside hence it served as a disincentive to allow their wives to participate in the Centre’s activities. These results above tend to suggest that most of these respondents (husbands of full-time housewives) were not willing to support their wives to participate in the activities of the Centre. Thus, significant relationship abounds between the supports of husbands of full-time housewives and the women’s ability to participation in the activities of ESWDC.

**Table 4.** Willingness of husbands of full time housewives to support their wives to participate in ESWDC activities

S/n	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Total	Mean	Interpretation
1.	Aware of ESWDC activities	20	12	12	15	30	59	1.97	D
2.	Prepare to meet the financial demands of wife participation in ESWDC activities	12	12	10	18	30	52	1.73	D
3.	Prepare to face marital challenges that wife’s participation in	4	3	14	21	30	42	1.40	SD

	ESWDC activities might require								
4.	Prepare to spare the time that wife will use in participating ESWDC activities	4	3	12	22	30	41	1.37	SD
5.	ESWDC location will hinder wife's participation in her activities	4	6	14	20	30	44	1.47	SD

#### 4.2 Discussion of Findings

The respondents in this study belonged to different socio-economic classes yet all of them were conscious of issues affecting women. Socio-economic status has been described as a powerful predictor of many facets of personality (Deckers et. al., 2015). The economic difficulties faced by Ekiti women could be leveraged upon to establish the need for their empowerment and thus enhance their economic resilience. The trainings provided by ESWDC can enable women acquire or improve on income earning skills. Kayode (2002) asserted that the ESWDC, Igede-Ekiti, offers diverse skills acquisition opportunities that are capable of empowering and liberating women from poverty. Ademokun and Ajayi (2012) as well as Bayeh (2016) opined that empowerment of women is a necessity for the development of a society, since it enhances both the quality and the quantity of human resources available for development, especially in Nigeria, a male dominated society where women are largely positioned in subordinates roles, whether t rich or poor, urban or rural based, and educated or un-educated (Abubakar 2017).

The ESWDC possessed facilities capable of training women in eight different skills and it has flexible admission requirements such that both primary and secondary school leavers can gain admission into it and be trained in any of the listed skills. World Bank (2020) observed that skill acquisition positions the population for self employment, diverse job opportunities, employment generation; reduce crime conditions, improvement in income and in standards of living. The gainful employment of women is an escape route from poverty (Kemp et. al., 2004). Nichols and McDade (2013) asserted that chronic unemployment is one of the five major factors that drive poverty.

The acquisitions of skills offered by ESWDC make the Centre a facilitator of self-employment. Efe-Imafidon et. al. (2017) observed that unemployment remains one of the toughest nuts to crack in Nigeria hence women acquisition of skill grant them knowledge and the drive towards enterprise. It also enhances their personal livelihood through enduring business start-ups; generate employment opportunities; and promotes economic development and growth.

The training received in ESWDC built in trainees the ability to respond to the environment at right time and location. This psychologically maturity enables them to know when to act, according to the circumstances and the culture of the society. Thus the women trainees were trained to attain self-esteem and to develop confidence as prerequisite for effective business management. ESWDC also trained women to be socially matured. Social maturity affects people's personality (Besner, 2013) and impact on physical health, ability to receive adequate medical care and nutrition, and life expectancy (Adler and Newman 2002). Thus the ESWDC is capable of being utilized to build economic resilience in Ekiti Women of Nigeria.



The results obtained in this study revealed that the existence and activities of ESWDC were not adequately disseminated in the state despite the wide array of mass media, both prints and electronic, that abounds in the state. The electronic media, located in the state, ought to have been utilized effectively to do this. Four radio and two television stations are located in the state. Mass media serve as the appropriate means of quickly getting the masses informed about innovations, developments and opportunities (Bitner 1989, Biagi 2003, Utulu 2011). According to Singh (2009), broadcast media have tremendous reach and influence. Time, financial and marital constraints were identified as disincentives to participation in ESWDC trainings. Kayode and Ayodele (2015), Meyer (2017), Mrcic (2017), Kayode and Adedokun (2019), equally identified these disincentives in studies conducted on other groups of people. The culture of the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria that inhabit the study area requires women to seek the support of their husbands on issues affecting them. The group is patriarchal, with family structures in which husbands exert authority over their wives on most issues (Kritz and Gurak 1991, Isiugo-Abanihe 1994, Oyediran et. al., 2002). Men are the decision-makers on issues relating to the family. Hence, the support of the husbands is a pre-requisite to successful empowerment programs for women.

## V. Conclusion

It is now generally acknowledged that the goal of sustainable development will stand in jeopardy if women are not carried along. Results from this study revealed that ESWDC possessed the potentials that could be leverage upon to develop economic resilience in women in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The testimonies of graduates of the Centre lend credence to this assertion. The ESWDC trainings are avenues to guarantee development of economic resilience in Ekiti women. Hence the women, according to Kongolo (2009), are awakened to opportunities within their reach. It starts with people and progresses through them (Seer 1981, Gwanya 1989).

Field observation revealed that many of the full-time housewife respondents in this study were young mostly unemployed women (see Table 1). Report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2004 revealed that youth (between the ages of 18 and 30) make up nearly half (47 per cent) of the world unemployed population. Odia and Odia, (2013) revealed that the Nigerian unemployment rate was about 19.7% above world average of 14.2% by the World Bank, with 41.6% unemployment rate reported for youth in the 18 to 24 years age bracket. Plecher (2020) asserted that in 2019, the unemployment rate in Nigeria was at approximately 6.11%. This further highlights the need to develop economic resilience in them through empowerment via skills development and acquisition that ESWDC offers. The readiness of the women to participate in ESWDC trainings is favourable incentive for achieving this objective. The men used in this study were mostly farmers who regarded their wives as labour hands in their subsistence farming enterprises. The development of economic resilience in these women was of no consequence to them. Therefore, any intervention aimed at achieving economic resilience in women in the State must consider and address the interests of their husbands.

Consequent on the above, the following recommendations are being proposed:

1. The existence of ESWDC and its activities should be popularised in the state especially through the electronic media, especially the radio.
2. Trainings offered by ESWDC should be free to the women participants.
3. Stipends should be paid to women trainees in ESWDC trainings during their training period.

4. Government should offer interest-free loans for graduates of ESWDC to set up their own business at graduation
5. The ESWDC should be made multi-campus with campuses in each senatorial districts of the State so that the Centre could be made nearer to the communities of the intending women participants.
6. Government should embark on the rehabilitation of rural roads to enhance easy haulage of agricultural products by vehicles. At present haulage of goods and products are done by women (wives).

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