

ALLEVIATING POVERTY AMONG RURAL DWELLERS THROUGH COMMUNITY EDUCATION AS CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGY IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

Amachree, Telema¹ Ewuru, Agnes² Nwoye, Adaobi³ & Olori, Gloria⁴

- 1. Department of Adult Education & Community Development, Rivers State University**
- 2. Department of Vocational Education, University of Calabar, Calabar**
- 3. Department of Continuing Education & Development Studies, Enugu State University of Science and Technology.**
- 4. Department of Business Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka**

Correspondence: gloria.olori@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which community education as a capacity-building strategy is utilized to alleviate poverty among rural dwellers in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study was guided by one research question and a null hypothesis, statistically tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey research. Using the convenience sampling technique, a sample of 236 rural dwellers was drawn from the population of 2,860 from 36 registered farmers' associations. The instrument for data collection was the researchers' structured questionnaire that was face-validated by three experts. The reliability coefficient value of 0.77 was obtained using the Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question, while the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings show that, to a high extent, community education as a capacity-building strategy has been utilized in alleviating poverty among rural dwellers. Furthermore, there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of registered farmers from the three senatorial districts on the extent to which community education was utilized as a capacity-building strategy for alleviating poverty among rural dwellers. Some recommendations were made, among which was the intensification of the relevance of community education to the community by the national orientation agency and community leaders.

Keywords: community,, capacity, strategy, rural, dwellers,

Introduction

The alarming rate of people who could not afford a decent living, mainly in rural areas in developing countries such as Nigeria, has attracted the attention of the government through the establishment of various poverty alleviation programs. Some of these programs are National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructural Development Scheme (RIDS), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) 1 and II, The Nigeria Vision 20:2020 and Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and the N-power currently initiated by the Buhari's administration. While these programs, among other reasons, were designed to empower the populace, Agbionu (2014) observed that most of these programs failed to meet this objective due to the absence of political will. In addition, the failure of the programs is believed to have orchestrated the poverty rate of the people (Olagunju, 2020).

Poverty is a multidimensional social phenomenon that defies universally acceptable definitions. The World Bank in Sunderlin, Angelsen, and Wunder (n.d) viewed poverty as a pronounced deprivation of well-being. It was related to lack of material, income or consumption, low levels of education and health, vulnerability and risk exposure, no opportunity to be heard, and powerlessness. Oyekale and Balogun (2012) observed that poverty has graduated from deprivation in income, including quality of life, risk, vulnerability, lack of autonomy, powerlessness, and lack of self-respect. This is to say that poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means a lack of essential capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family. Furthermore, it means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households, and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in a marginal or fragile environment without access to clean water or sanitation. Egbe (2014) reported that over 70% of Nigerians live in rural areas that lack the basic social amenities needed to improve their quality of life. These deplorable conditions explain the need to empower rural dwellers with any capacity-building strategy.

Capacity building refers to any efforts to improve the level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes an individual possesses for proficiency in a given task or job. In this case, the individual acquires specific competencies to actively participate in the larger society and engage in economic activities to alleviate poverty. Miller, Bakare, and Ikatule (2010) described capacity building as developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes, and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in the fast-changing world. It is retraining given to individuals or groups to develop a specific skill or competence or general upgrading performance ability. According to Fazekas and Burns (2011), capacity building is helping local actors acquire and use relevant information to successfully implement policy. It is an ongoing process through which individuals, groups, organizations, and societies enhance their ability to identify and meet development challenges. Thus, it encapsulates the ability of individuals, institutions, and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and sustainably achieve the set objectives. In solving these problems, poverty is believed to be alleviated. Capacity building is primarily concerned with enhancing the competencies of individuals, groups, and societies based on perceived needs.

Competence is an integrated set of personal characteristics, knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective performance in various areas. An individual can do a job according to prescriptions (Akpan et al., 2016). Competence involves individuals and groups who continuously develop their knowledge and skills by putting in time, energy, and resources to improve their jobs and duties, usually setting things up effectively. One such way of advancing knowledge with the acquisition of skills is the application of capacity-building strategies.

Community education is a capacity-building strategy concerned with using community resources to empower community members. By exposing the individual to this knowledge, the individual becomes equipped to transact activities capable of transforming prevailing conditions. This education provides opinions and skills to make rational decisions and implement actions in the environment (Ibimilua, 2015). Community education is a type of education needed to ensure self-confidence, self-respect, and personal independence, as well as safeguard human rights for the achievement of social equality (Akande as cited in Anurugwo, Chukwuemerie & Elekwa, 2020). From this view, it could be deduced that there is a relationship between community education and poverty alleviation. Despite this relationship, research shows that the extent to which community

education was used in the eradication of poverty among communities was low in Rivers State (Olori et al. (2015), though a related study indicates that the acquisition of skills provided through community education has helped in the creation of jobs (Olori et al., 2017). Other scholars further affirm that community education has not significantly contributed to reducing poverty in the local government areas (Osuji & Mkpae, 2019). Divergent views on the efficacy of community education suggest the need for further investigation to ascertain its place as a capacity-building strategy for alleviating poverty in rural dwellers. Rural dwellers constitute inhabitants in a geographical location without social amenities and government.

While providing necessary skills and competencies through community resources to rural dwellers is believed to reduce the high poverty rate in Rivers State, the persistent spread of poverty has remained on the increase. This results in the proliferation of various social vices among its inhabitants. The study, therefore, sets out to determine the extent to which community education as a capacity-building strategy is utilized in the alleviation of poverty among rural dwellers in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which community education is used as a capacity-building strategy to alleviate poverty among rural dwellers in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

Examine the extent to which community education as a capacity-building strategy is utilized for poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Rivers State.

Research Question

The study was guided by the question;

1. To what extent is community education utilized as a capacity-building strategy for the alleviation of poverty among rural dwellers in Rivers State?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study was stated in a null form and tested at a 0.05 level of significance

Ho: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of registered farmers from the three senatorial districts on the extent to which community education as a capacity-building strategy is utilized for poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Rivers State.

Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design aims to collect data on and describe systematically the characteristics, features, or facts about a given population (Nworgu (2015). The design was appropriate for the study since it examined how community education is utilized as a capacity-building strategy for alleviating poverty among rural dwellers in Rivers State. The population of the study was 2,860 registered farmers from the three senatorial districts in Rivers State. The study's sample size was 257, which was drawn using the convenience sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was the researchers' structured questionnaire titled 'Community Education and Poverty Alleviation' (CEPA). The questionnaire was subjected to face validity by three experts, two from the Department of Adult Education and one from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit of Science Education, all from the Faculty of Education, the University of Nigeria Nsukka. The instrument's reliability was established on a test-retest method by administering the questionnaire to 30 registered farmers in Eleme Local Government Area twice within two weeks. The local government was chosen since it was not used for the study, though it shared the same characteristics as the target population regarding

occupation. Pearson's Product Correlation Coefficient was used to obtain the reliability coefficient value 0.77. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question. The real limit of numbers was used in decision-making for the items. This was classified as follows: very high extent (VHE) (3.50-4.00), high extent (HE) (2.50-3.49), low extent (LE) (1.50-2.49) and very low extent (VLE) (1.00-1.49). The null hypothesis was analysed using the one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at a 0.05 significance level. The decision-making was based on the following: where the probability value was greater than 0.05 significance level, a significant difference was not found, implying that the null hypothesis was not rejected. However, a significant difference was found where the probability value was equal to or less than 0.05 level of significance, implying that the null hypothesis was rejected.

Results

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the extent to which community education as a capacity-building strategy was utilized for poverty alleviation among rural dwellers (n=232)

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Rmk
1	I acquire knowledge in the use of modern agricultural facilities for greater yields	2.86	0.69	High
2	I acquire knowledge on the creation of business outfits for the diversification of business transaction	2.66	0.85	High
3	I acquire business skills for income generation	2.63	1.00	High
4	I acquire knowledge on the establishment of business ventures for the empowerment of the unemployed in the area	2.80	0.89	High
5	I acquire knowledge of political consciousness for active participation in politics	2.71	1.04	High
6	I acquire skills for the promotion of social activities	2.76	1.03	High
7	I acquired basic literacy skills to increase health-related issues	2.66	0.95	High
8	I acquire knowledge on the application of pesticides for increased agricultural productivity	2.68	0.96	High
Cluster mean		2.72	0.93	High

Table 1 shows respondents' mean scores on items 1-8 within the limit (2.50-2.99) classified as high extent and standard deviations of 0.69, 0.85, 1.00, 0.89, 1.04, 1.03, 0.95 and 0.96. The cluster mean of 2.72 with a standard deviation of 0.93 shows that, to a great extent, community education was utilized as a capacity-building strategy for poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Rivers State.

Table 2: A one-way ANOVA of difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the extent to which community education is utilized as a capacity-building strategy for poverty alleviation among rural dwellers

S/N	Item Statements		SS	MS	F	p-value	Decision
1	I acquire knowledge in the use of modern agricultural facilities for greater yields	Between Groups Within Groups	1.36 104.95	.68 .46	1.49	.23	Ns
2	I acquire knowledge on the creation of business outfits for the diversification of business transaction	Between Groups Within Groups	.15 165.63	.07 .72	.10	.19	Ns
3	I acquire business skills for income generation	Between Groups Within Groups	3.27 226.85	1.64 .99	1.65	.19	Ns
4	I acquire knowledge on the establishment of business ventures for the empowerment of the unemployed in the area.	Between Groups Within Groups	5.35 176.13	2.68 .77	3.48	.03	S
5	I acquire knowledge of political consciousness for active participation in politics	Between Groups Within Groups	4.85 247.22	2.43 1.08	2.25	.11	Ns
6	I acquire skills for the promotion of social activities	Between Groups Within Groups	3.10 243.39	1.55 1.06	1.46	.24	Ns
7	I acquired basic literacy skills for increased health-related issues	Between Groups Within Groups	2.46 205.64	1.23 .90	1.37	.26	Ns
8	I acquire knowledge on the application of pesticides for increased agricultural productivity	Between Groups Within Groups	1.66 209.09	.83 .91	.91	.40	Ns
Cluster p.value						0.30	Ns

Table 2 indicates that a significant difference was found on items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 with probability values less than 0.05 level of significance. However, a significant difference was not found for item 4, whose probability value was greater than 0.05 level of significance, hence the acceptance of the null hypothesis. With the cluster p-value (0.30) greater than 0.05 level of significance, the Table shows that a significant difference was not found in the mean ratings of registered farmers from the three senatorial districts. This is to the extent to which community education is utilized as a capacity-building strategy for the alleviation of poverty among rural dwellers in Rivers State.

Discussion of Results

Findings from the study show that community education, to a high extent, is utilized as a capacity-building strategy for alleviating poverty among rural dwellers in Rivers State. The relevance of this education is premised on the fact that every community tends to work to

improve his /her condition even with the limited available resources. Thus, as a capacity-building strategy, the acquisition of networking skills for expanding business activities, among others, was associated with community education. These observations were, however, contracted in some studies. For instance, the extent to which community education was used to eradicate poverty in Rivers State was low (Olori et al., 2015).

Similarly, Osuji and Mkpae (2019) indicated that community education has not significantly contributed to eradicating poverty in Khana and Gokana Local Government Areas of Rivers State. The poor contribution of community education is most likely associated with poor knowledge of people on its concept. However, with the knowledge of beneficiaries in various areas such as the use of agricultural facilities, knowledge of the creation of business outfits, and the acquisition of basic literacy skills. Community education was conceived as a veritable tool for alleviating poverty among rural dwellers in Rivers State. This may also be true considering that community education has aided in acquiring various skills and creating job opportunities, among others (Olori et al., 2017). The relevance of community education as a capacity-building strategy may have further led to the respondent's acceptance of the null hypothesis concerning poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Rivers State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that community education as a capacity-building strategy was found to alleviate poverty among rural dwellers in Rivers State greatly.

Recommendations

Given the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government should organize advocacy through the national orientation agency and community leaders to sanitize community members on the relevance of community education in their locality.
2. Efforts should be made by facilitators of adult education programs to expose learners to various areas of community education needed for the promotion of healthy living.

Contribution to Knowledge

While a large amount of literature on the relevance of community education is available, the study tends to add to existing literature on its place as a capacity-building strategy for alleviating poverty among rural dwellers.

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