

# Empowering Women For Socio-Economic Transformation: The Role Of Entrepreneurial Skills Training

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*Abstract: The main purpose of this study was to examine the role of entrepreneurial skills training in the empowerment of women for socio-economic transformation. The specific objectives of the study were to ascertain the relationship between: (i) Hairdressing skills training and economic empowerment of women (ii) Fashion design skills training and economic empowerment of women (iii) Catering skills training and economic empowerment of women. The study was carried out in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all women entrepreneurs and trainees. The sample consisted of 200 randomly selected respondents. Data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire and achievement inventory and data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result of analysis revealed that all the independent variables – hairdressing skills, fashion design skills and catering skills have significant relationship with the economic empowerment of women. It was recommended, among others, that government should provide credit facilities to encourage women to establish vocational training centres.*

**Keywords: Empowerment; Women; Socio-economic, Transformation.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Women's economic empowerment is widely considered a veritable tool for social and economic transformation. Women generally face substantial social and economic challenges, and empowering them can increase their autonomy and enhance their economic and social status. Enhancing women income generating option can also alter power dynamics between women and men, both at the household level and in labour relations.

Improving women's economic opportunities is also fundamental to poverty reduction and economic growth. The World Bank's Gender Equality Action Plan for 2007/2010 explicitly recognizes the broad development benefits of women's economic empowerment. These efforts by the World Bank and its partners to make a broad economic case for gender equality has created exciting possibilities for

improving women's economic status and making progress towards female gender liberation.

Women's economic empowerment is considered relevant to their ability to earn an income from outside the home. It also involves giving women more access to credit facilities and broadening their income bases for improved participation in the development programmes Esu, (1992) observes that in many rural areas of Nigeria, women contribute a substantial portion of the labour required for infrastructural development. Women also constitute 80% of the farmer population in rural areas. This means about 80% of the total food consumed in Nigeria and the raw materials supplied to industries is generated by women. Despite having limited access to production resources and social capital, women have always remained the bedrock of development. This underscores the imperative of women empowerment to enhance their land ownership, increase their productivity, skill acquisition and

high income generation to improve their participation in socioeconomic development.

In recent years, the international community, feminists and the donor agencies have become obsessed with the issues of gender equality and women empowerment to promote their contribution to national development. These cravings have been predicted on the fact that women constitute more than half of many countries total population and are especially the primary producers of the food and raw materials utilized for national development. Therefore, women empowerment is increasingly and justifiably being muted as a sine qua non for social and economic transformation. Women are central to development and the menace of poverty cannot be combated without strengthening the skills and economic capacities of women. Women possess unique talents that needs harnessing, to benefit from their contribution and preservation of cultural values and peaceful co-existence. This is even very crucial because when wrong decisions in any of these developmental areas are made, albeit men domination, it is women and their children who suffer most of the consequences of such decisions.

For this reason, women need to be empowered to be able to influence the quality of their lives and contribute productively to societal development. Economic enlightenment and training, skill acquisition, functional literacy and importantly, vocational skill training (Osisanya-Olumuyiwa, 1998). The main emphasis is entrepreneurial education which is education that equip a person with skills that enhances economic and career needs of the person. Skill acquisition drive that aims to promote self-reliance and creativity as well as building a new generation of job creators rather than job-seekers.

Empowering women through entrepreneurial training skills is fundamental to unemployment, poverty reduction and development strategy. Essentially, entrepreneurial training skills seeks to provide participants with knowledge, skills and motivation to attain entrepreneurial successes in a variety of settings. It provides a wide range of competences, which include management and organizational skills. This can be promoted through vocational training, and other measures to encourage self-empowerment, such as training and facilitating access to credit/grants and self-development.

Women's creativity, resourcefulness and enterprise can be developed through entrepreneurial training skills. It is in consideration of the importance of entrepreneurial education in human capacity building, reduction of chronic unemployment and poverty alleviation, that the National Universities Commission (2004) recommended Nigeria universities to integrate entrepreneurial education as an integral part of the curriculum.

However, in furtherance of encouraging self-empowerment, government has also established the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) as an employment agency to develop four major programmes for skills acquisition namely; entrepreneurial development, small-scale enterprises, rural employment promoters and special public works. Women exposed to these entrepreneurial programmes are therefore expected to acquire relevant skills for setting up their own businesses and effectively managing them.

It is in view of the importance of entrepreneurial skills in enhancing women's self-reliance, self-development, poverty reduction and effective contribution to socio-economic development that this study was carried out to examine some of the specific areas of skills required by women and how these relate to their economic empowerment.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- The specific objectives of this study were to;
- ✓ determine the relationship between hair dressing skills training/acquisition and women economic empowerment;
  - ✓ ascertain the relationship between fashion designing skills training/acquisition and women economic empowerment; and,
  - ✓ examine the relationship between catering skills training/acquisition and women economic empowerment.

#### HYPOTHESES

- ✓ There is no significant relationship between hairdressing skills training/acquisition and women economic empowerment.
- ✓ There is no significant relationship between fashion designing skills training/acquisition and women economic empowerment.
- ✓ There is no significant relationship between catering skills training/acquisition and women economic empowerment.

### II. METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State. The study adopted a survey design. The population of the study consisted of women entrepreneurs and trainees in the study area. The sample comprised 200 randomly selected respondents from the population. Data were collected with the aid of a validated structured questionnaire and achievement inventory, administered directly by the researchers. Data obtained were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hairdressing skills training/acquisition and economic empowerment of women.

Variables	x y	x <sup>2</sup> y <sup>2</sup>	xy	r-value
Hairdressing skills	2779	4689		
			65907	0.53
Economic empowerment	2534	4685		

significant at .05 level, critical  $r = .138$ ,  $df = 198$ .

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between hairdressing skills and economic empowerment of women (N=200)

The result of the statistical analysis presented in Table 1 indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.53 is greater than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 198

degree of freedom, since the result was significant, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between hairdressing skills and economic empowerment of women.

Fashion design skills training/acquisition and economic empowerment of women.

Variables	x y	x <sup>2</sup> y <sup>2</sup>	xy	r-value
Fashion design skills	2811	4765		
			68172	0.60
Economic empowerment	2534	4685		

significant at .05 level, critical  $r = .138$ ,  $df = 198$ .

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between fashion design skills and economic empowerment of women (N=200)

The result of the statistical analysis presented in Table 2 indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.60 is greater than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. Since the result was significant, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between fashion design skills and economic empowerment of women.

Catering skills training/acquisition and economic empowerment of women.

Variables	x y	x <sup>2</sup> y <sup>2</sup>	xy	r-value
Catering skills	2779	4679		
			69071	0.75
Economic empowerment	2534	4685		

significant at .05 level, critical  $r = .138$ ,  $df = 198$ .

Table 3: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between catering skills and economic empowerment of women (N=200)

The result of the statistical analysis presented in Table 3 indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.75 is greater than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. Based on this, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between catering skills and economic empowerment of women.

#### IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

##### HAIRDRESSING SKILLS AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The result of the first hypothesis (Table 1) revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between hairdressing skills and economic empowerment. This means training women to acquire hairdressing skills will empower them economically. The findings of this hypothesis is in agreement with Nussbaum (2000) who noted that hairdressing skills for the unemployed created economic empowerment because hairdressers can set up businesses to generate their own income. Similarly, Hannan (2004) opined that the central aim of hairdressing skills is to help the unemployed (and employed) particularly to contribute to job creation and

poverty alleviation. Hairdressing offers unisex services such as braiding, cornrows, cut blow and oil, eye brow shaping and fixing, haircuts, hair treatment and dyeing, manicure, pedicure, perm/colour, relaxer, stretch hair tinting, weaving, retrench among others.

Hairdressing is useful in improving the abilities of the people to improve their wellbeing to be independent, generate and improve their savings and achieve further investment. Women who have acquired hairdressing skills can open their own saloons and also employ other women for entrepreneurship training since these women will have other women apprentice/trainees. These skills will empower women economically and enable them to contribute to social and economic development, provide financial support for their families as well as allow women to engage in community development services.

##### FASHION DESIGN SKILLS AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The result of this hypothesis (Table 2) revealed that fashion design skills has a significant positive relationship with economic empowerment of women. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the view of Nsifon (2004) who asserted that sewing is one of the programmes for improving women and men economic independence. This means if women are trained to acquire skills and proficiency in fashion design, they would strengthen their economic and social status. Fashion design is not capital intensive in terms of facilities needed for the training and for the individual trained, very little is required to set up a shop to start business. The women only needs to get a sewing machine, iron, tread, a tape and scissors to get started. A shop may or may not be a fundamental requirement as one can start sewing in a living room. Skapa (2005) opined that the aim of sewing skills is to reduce unemployment and to combat poverty. Any student that successfully completes sewing or pattern making course will be able to work in a clothing factory or start his/her own sewing business. It is not only housewives and retrenched workers that are candidates for sewing training, but school leavers are also expected to acquire some basic skills in fashion design. In the basic sewing class the students learn the technology of a sewing machine, how to use sewing machine, how to cut and how to complete a garment. In the pattern making class, they learn how to manually draft a pattern.

Hamabeh (1987) also stated that fashion design training is very central and expedient for acquisition of skills, abilities, values, attitudes and competences essential for the purposes of employment, women self-improvement as well as economic empowerment. Fashion design is so economically important for job creation and self-reliance that it is a course or discipline of its own in the educational curriculum. Many universities now have fashion design as a course of study. Fortunately, this skills can be acquired in non-formal settings like vocational training centres and through apprenticeship training. The purpose of this training is to improve the ability of people to perform useful services in various occupations. By developing and improving women skills they enter the pool of human resources required for socioeconomic transformation of the society.

In the same vein, Osaji (2004) observed that fashion design skills would help women to generate income to support themselves, their families and make meaningful contributions to national development. Reducing poverty among women is a veritable strategy for addressing national poverty because women economic independence has a multiplicity of social benefits. When women are empowered, they would empower their children, youths, their husbands and the community. It is the aggregate of these contributions that enhances socio-economic development of the country.

#### CATERING SKILLS AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The result of this hypothesis indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between catering skills and women's economic empowerment. This implies that catering skills can help women economically. The finding of this hypothesis is in agreement with the view of Daniel (2004) who maintained that caterers are responsible for baking (cakes, bread, etc.). They make good money from baking wedding, birthday, anniversary cakes and bread and so on. Nsifon (2004) further observed that most caterers make far more income than senior officers in the public services in terms of monthly income. Some caterers do employ many other caterers in situations where they have contracts to deliver. Again, in eatery houses, their role cannot be undermined; they are significant in the existence of such eateries.

Sokari (2004) also opines that the main aim of catering institution is to provide diplomats with sound theoretical and practical knowledge to carry out a number of activities in the field of catering and hotel management. In recent times, local food vendors, eatery business, hotel and restaurants services have provided jobs for tourism drive initiatives and apart from job creation, foreign exchange earning, income tax and infrastructural development are the contributions of this sector to national development. Restaurant donors provide employment for the teeming population of the unemployed thus reducing poverty and crime and taking the pressure off government-owned establishments. Caterers are economically independent and are better placed to contribute to community and national development. In the first place, they pay tax which is a major contribution to government revenue.

#### V. CONCLUSION

National development in any society cannot be accomplished without the proper harnessing of human resources. Human capital development has been perceived as an essential requirement for enhancing the contributions of all citizens to national development. Women empowerment is equally a fundamental ingredient in the development and transformation drive. This is why women empowerment through various skills acquisition is emerging as a major participatory development strategy. Women skills acquisition can be achieved in a variety of settings, including both formal and informal settings. Hairdressing, catering, fashion and fabric making are some of the skills that women have

dominated over the years, and from these sectors, women have made enormous contributions to the socio-economic development of their communities and countries. It is particularly important, therefore, that the private sector and government should collaborate to promote vocational training for women in these areas. This will equally open the revenue outlets for the state to draw in taxes for national development.

#### VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the study.

- ✓ Government should establish vocational training centres to train women on various skills.
- ✓ Zero interest loan and grant should be provided to women to enable them setup hairdressing, catering and fashion design centres.
- ✓ Government-owned vocational centres for fashion, fabrics and catering should be established to provide employment and training for women.

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