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Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) on women empowerment

ABSTRACT. The need to empower women seems to center on the fact that women have potentials to contribute to the development process but are constrained by some factors that render them powerless. For this reason, this study examined the impact of justice development and peace commission on women empowerment by assessing the empowerment initiatives, women participation and identifying factors that militate against full empowerment and participation of women. The theoretical background for this study is structural functionalism and the study is descriptive in nature. The study was conducted in JDPC, Ijebu-Ode and data was collected from primary and secondary sources. For primary data, IDI was conducted for 12 beneficiaries of the empowerment programmes and 6 employees of JDPC while secondary data were collected through extensive review of literature. The data collected were content analyzed. The findings revealed that not until recent empowerment programmes organized for women, women do not have the zeal for the programmes which has limited their consciousness and strength in the society. Also, awkward spending of women contributed to their failure from receiving further loans from JDPC. Equally, low level of education, tradition and belief that men are better than women affected the slow rate of empowerment of women.

KEYWORDS: empowerment, JDPC, religious organization, women empowerment

Introduction

Empowering women has become a frequently cited goal of development intervention (Mosedale, 2005). In 1970s when women empowerment was first invoked by the Third World feminist and women organizations, it was explicity used to frame and facilitate the struggle for

social justice and gender equality through a transformation of economic, social and political structures at national and international levels (Bisnath, 2003). The need to empower women seems to centre on the fact that women have potentials to contribute to the development process but are constrained by some factors that render them powerless. While the reasons for any particular woman's powerlessness (or powerfulness) are many and varied, it may be necessary to consider what women have in common in this respect. The common factor is that, they are all constrained by their reproductive responsibilities, societal norms, beliefs, customs and values by which societies differentiate between them and men (Kabeer, 2000).

Women's level of education, poverty and men's attitude towards women have over the years posed a serious threat to women's participation in development. It is obvious that level of education and economic conditions of women most often determine their level of participation in decision making both at family, community, state and national levels. There is generally unequal burden of domestic maintenance and childcare responsibilities allocated to women as compared to men. Male dominance in sexual relations, with its consequence on women's lack of control over their sexuality in many societies has denied women right to determine the number of children they want. They have a low decision-making power as compared with men. The prevailing patriarchal ideology, which promotes values of submission, sacrifice, obedience and silent suffering often undermines the attempts by women to assert themselves or demand for share of resources and right (Hawkesworth, 1990).

The problem

The empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gender equality and empowered women are catalysts for multiplying development efforts. Investments in gender equality yield the highest returns of all development investments (OECD, 2010). Whether the issue is improving education in the developing world, or fighting global climate change, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women is a critical part of the equation.

Statistic shows that the dramatic accumulations of social imbalances begin to worsen within marriage, religious and government institution

and access to good health program. Statistics has further shown that high rates of maternal mortality and violence against women make Nigeria one of the toughest places in the world to be born a girl. Education statistics have been used as an indicator of gender inequalities military women's empowerment in Nigeria. The population census conducted in 1991 by the federal government of Nigeria found that 61% (41 million) of Nigeria women suffer from intellectual poverty. In Africa, there are different form of education, such as agricultural extension programme, in service training, out of school education, in service personnel training, community development, cooperate education, evening classes, literary services, extra-moral education.

Implicit from the assertions above shows that evidently there are factors militating against women empowerment and also women's believe about social construct and not much have been done from government and even the religious organization. It is, thus, high time researchers are able to check more on impact of Religious Organization on the women's empowerment.

Research objective

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of justice development and peace commission on women by assessing the empowerment initiatives, women participation and identifying factors that militate against full empowerment and participation of women in the developmental process.

Literature review

Empowerment

According to Sahay (1998), "empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life". It implies decentralization of power and authority in the deprived, oppressed and powerless people who have not been able to participate in decision making and implementation of policies and programs of both government organizations as well as in societal matters.

Women Empowerment

Women empowerment has attracted the attention of many scholars. Okpoko (2002) stated, "Women empowerment came into popularity with the feminist movement whose demand was that women become empowered to take control of their own lives; to set their own agenda of what to do and how to do things that affect them". The effect of women empowerment creates a powerful influence on family, community norms and values and finally the law that governs the community (Page, 1999). Empowerment of women now can be categorized into five main parts—social, educational, economic, political and psychological.

Women in Socio Economic Development

The fact that women are the subject of a growing national and international interest is unquestionable (Ekejuiba, 1991). This interest stems from the acute recognition that women are crucial to social and economic development. Anikpo (2000) contended that women are denied various rights and their contribution to national development were either stifled or ignored. According to Eudora (1997) in the wake of the global conference on women in Beijing, China, the world community has witnessed several conferences where efforts have continued to encourage women participation in their societal development. Similar conference was held in Africa in November, 1994 in Dakar Senegal where the African Platform for action was prepared for ratification in Beijing. The platform states the need to accelerate the societal, economic and political empowerment of all women at all levels and stages of their lives using the universal principles of equal partnership between men and women; a fuller and more active participation of women in policy formulation and decision making processes of government; the participation of women in economic, social and political empowerment at all levels on an equal footing with men, women becoming active contributors in and benefiting from all aspects of national development; and priority action being taken for protecting the human rights of girls and ensuring that they receive adequate nurturing, care and education and opportunity for achieving their full potential equally with their brother.

Theoretical framework

For the purpose of this study, structural functionalist theory and modernization theory are adopted as the theoretical framework upon which

this work is anchored. The silence of structural functionalist theory to capture religious organization of women empowerment paves way for modernization theory to capture structural function.

Structural-functionalist Theory

This theory contends that society is like a system, that is a set of interconnected part which together form a whole for example religion, politics, education, economic and family are functioning part of the society that brought about progression. Functionalist sees social structure or the organization of the society as more important than the individual. Structural functionalist perspective on women empowerment programmes opens the view that women also have their own role to play in the societal progress. As men are being valued so also women are to be valued too and they all function together to safeguard its people to live better live and this group helps to promote social solidarity. From Parsons Perspective which views society as a system to achieve an objective, the role of women should not be side lined because they are also an agent of social progress. And to Merton's application on social dysfunction, he said when society system fails to work together it dysfunction, so as if women's empowerment programmes are looked upon as one of the agent of development it means it has not translated to the progress of that society because women are still regarded as the poorest in Africa. The theory likened the society to a system without consideration for factors that could instigate change and development. The theory also emphasized that inequality is functional in the society as such less emphasis was placed on the extent to which such inequality can alter development and distort effectiveness of the social structures. As such, the theory did not sufficiently provide a universally acceptable template for Women's Empowerment Programme.

Methodology

The research design adopted was descriptive survey and the study area was Ijebu-ode, a town in Ogun-state, Southwest Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of the employees of Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and female beneficiaries that are registered under them in Ijebu Ode. The officials of Justice Development and Peace

Commission (JDPC) are six (6) in number while the female beneficiaries are twelve (12) in number giving a total of eighteen (18) as sample size. In-depth interview was conducted and the data gathered was analysed using content analysis.

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the employees

The table 1 shows the six workers that were selected from the JDPC for in-depth interview. The first interviewee was 75 years old male with 29 years of experience, Christian, has MSc as highest degree and currently serving as the Head of Education Department. The second interviewee was 37 years old female, Christian, Agriculture officer with 3 years of experience, and has BSc as the highest educational qualification. The third interviewee was 44 years old Muslim female serving as the assistant commissioner in Human Right department with 16 years of experience and BSc as the highest qualification. The fourth interviewee was a female, Christian, who is serving as the Human Resource Manager, 58 years of age, has MSc as the highest qualification with 20 years' experience. The fifth interviewee was the head of gender equity and women empowerment programme, Christian, 53 years old female with MSc as the highest educational level and 21 years of experience. Lastly, the sixth interviewee is a Christian, male, 45 years both assisting gender department and head of alternative dispute resolution with 17 years of work experience and BSc as the highest level of education.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the employees

S/N	Age	Gender	Religion	Position	Highest educational level	Years of working experience
1	75	Male	Christian	Head of Education Department	M.sc	29 years
2	37	Female	Christian	Agriculture Officer	B.sc	3 years
3	44	Female	Muslim	Assistant Commissioner for Justice Development and Peace Women in the Human Right Department	B.sc	16 years

4	58	Female	Christian	Human Resource Manager	M.sc	20 years
5	53	Female	Christian	Head of Gender Equity and Women Empowerment Programme	M.sc	21 years
6	45	Male	Christian	Assisting Gender Department and Head of Alternative Dispute Resolution	B.sc	17 years

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the beneficiaries

Table 2 shows the socio demographic background of the selected interviewees. Twelve women were randomly selected from JDPC organization purposively. The ages of these women ranged from 38 to 73, majority (8) of them were Christians, majority (10) were traders and only two of the beneficiaries had less than 10 years of experience. One person had Higher National Diploma (HND) as the highest educational level, three had no education, three had Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE), two had Ordinary National Diploma (OND), one had Primary School Leaving Certificate while two dropped of secondary schools.

Table 2. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the beneficiaries

S/N	Age	Religion	Occupation	Highest educational level	Years of experience
1	65	Muslim	Trader	SSCE	10 years
2	45	Muslim	Trader	SSCE	13 years
3	38	Christian	Trader	OND	16 years
4	73	Christian	Trader	Primary School Certificate	18 years
5	70	Christian	Teacher	HND	20 years
6	39	Christian	Farmer	No education	8 years
7	48	Muslim	Trader	OND	14 years
8	42	Christian	Trader	SSCE	9 years
9	38	Christian	Trader	No education	7 years
10	45	Muslim	Trader	No education	15 years
11	40	Christian	Trader	Secondary school dropout	6 years
12	37	Christian	Trader	Secondary school Drop out	3 years

JDPC empowerment initiatives programme

Respondent 1: Employees

All the interviewees revealed that JDPC renders various empowerment programmes. They include: Economic empowerment program where loans were given, Educational Empowerment Programme which creates adult literacy class that enlightens the women on issues of domestic violence, how to read and write and to know their rights and privileges, Political Empowerment Programme encourages women to go into politics, Cultural empowerment, Gender equality empowerment and agricultural empowerment. A respondent shed some light on the importance of these empowerment programmes:

The objectives of the empowerment initiatives programmes are to reduce poverty rate, promote good home and marital stability because we believed that if a woman is empowered there will be no frequent fighting in the home between the husband and the wife and that will curb the issue of domestic violence and the women self-esteem will also be enhanced (IDI/75 years/Employee of JDPC).

In the same vein, an interviewee explained a special empowerment programmes that JDPC made to the beneficiaries like the Human Right programme that covered both males and females to eradicate discrimination. This was stated below:

We have the Human Rights programmes that attend to both male and female in erasing all sort of discrimination and one thing we don't allow here in JDPC is discrimination. Everyone is created in the image and likeness of God; everybody deserves to be respected whether you are a male or female. But generally we encourage women to work not to be idle at home so when people say women office is in the kitchen we say no at JDPC because we are there to encourage them to work to support their husbands. JDPC is not saying women should take over the home but they want women to be more responsible so in every decision man takes in life women should also be involved (IDI/44 years/Employee of JDPC).

A respondent affirmed that JDPC empowerment programmes packages available to the physically challenged women and men. It was stated that:

[...] JDPC believed that we can deal with women and the physically challenged using the societal approach that is to take good care of the haves not. We use

the caritas approach to take good care of the physically challenged and here we encourage them to go to school where they learn craft, make shoe, and bag for children and also learn mat making. Also, we provide grinding machine for the physically challenged ones for them to work not to remain jobless and we provide the blind with grinding machine too so their children can help them operate them. Also, here in Ijebu-Ode we provide tricycle for the physically challenged ones. The first man we started with was Baba Ibeji, they now have their association here in JDPC known as the 'Physically Challenged and the Maruwa Riders' which made them a formidable group. Others with disability have fish pond, piggery etc. So, these are some of the empowerment initiatives in which we give to our beneficiaries (IDI/53 years/Employee of JDPC).

Respondents 2

The beneficiaries revealed the various women empowerment initiatives provided by JDPC. They are Economic empowerment, Political empowerment, Educational empowerment, Cultural empowerment, Gender equality empowerment and Agricultural empowerment. 41.6% of the beneficiaries take part in economic empowerment programmes, 16.6% engage in both political and educational empowerment while cultural, gender equality and agricultural empowerment programmes had 8.3% of the women each. The pie chart below represents the responses.

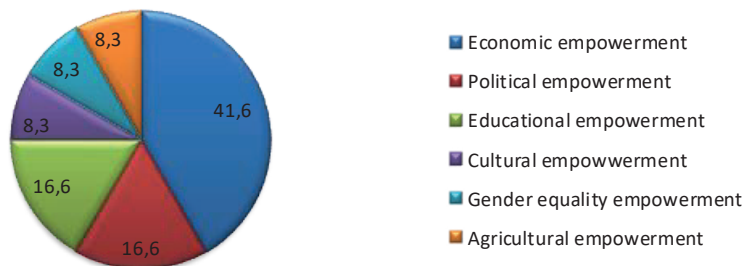


Figure 1. Percentage of women in JDPC Empowerment Programmes

Also, the beneficiaries revealed that these empowerment programmes are classified into human rights advocacy, skills acquisition, scholarship, leadership training, financial loan and adult education. 18% of the women in economic empowerment programme applied for adult education, majority (50%) of the respondents got financial loans, while 8% each participated in human rights advocacy, skills acquisition, scholarship and leadership training. In political empowerment programme, 8% of its ben-

eficiaries went for adult education, 26% opted for financial loan, 34% applied for leadership training while 8% and 26% chose skills acquisition and human rights advocacy respectively. For the educational empowerment programme, 34% of its beneficiaries got adult education, 8% each went for the leadership and scholarship programme while 26% each participated in skills acquisition and human rights advocacy. The remaining empowerment programmes had only adult education, financial loan, skill acquisition and human rights advocacy programmes with participation from 8%, 26%, 33% and 33% of the beneficiaries respectively from cultural empowerment programme, 26%, 33%, 18% and 18% respectively from gender equality empowerment programme and 18%, 42%, 33% and 8% respectively from agricultural empowerment programme. The responses are represented in the figure 2:

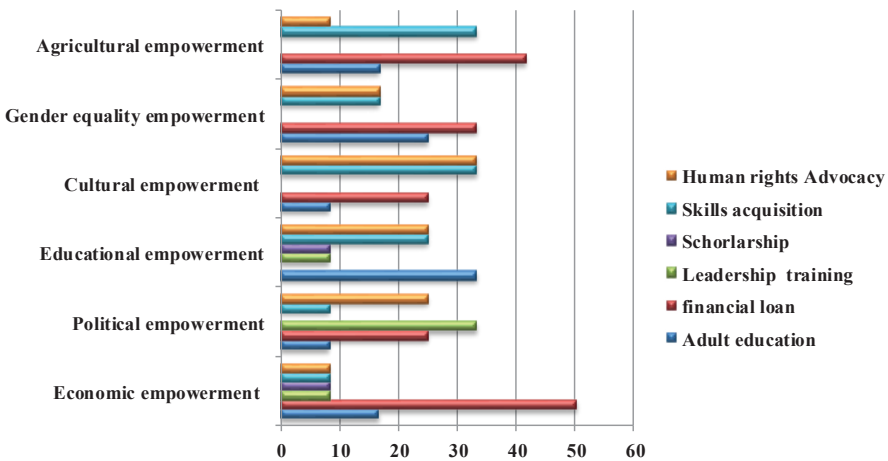


Figure 2. Distribution of women in empowerment programmes

Factors that militate against full empowerment and participation of women

Employees of JDPC were interviewed on the factors that militate against full empowerment and participation of women and a lot of factors were revealed. Majority of them explained that unwise spending of some of the beneficiaries contributed more to decrease in empowerment programmes. Some beneficiaries also find it hard or take too long to refund

money as they have complained of the payment duration which causes a difficulty for others trying to apply. Mismanagement by the women also contributed to their inability to get full and effective empowerment programmes especially in the sense of patriarchy and culture and the fact that many beneficiaries run away with loans. Below are responses by some participants:

Women themselves cause setback against the full empowerment programme. They collect money and spend it unwisely on worldly things like clothes they don't need and so on. The purpose of the money given to them is to set up a business and probably send their children to school. Though I won't lie the money JDPC gives to them maybe insufficient but we are trying our best (IDI/58years/Employee of JDPC).

Overspending unwisely could result to JDPC not issuing loans to women because the money meant to save a business are used for parties which ijebus are known for forgetting the money was borrowed and should be used to do something tangible so that the loan can be repaid (IDI/44years/Employee of JDPC).

More so, patriarchy is also a major problem these women encounter. Some of their husbands are alcohol addicts so if they see that the wife is making money or have business and instead of the man to go to his place of work, he sits with the wife in shop to spend and lavish all the money made which serves as hindrance against their empowerment programmes from JDPC (IDI/75years/Employee of JDPC).

Another limitation is the fact that majority of the beneficiaries are poor. Imagine someone getting loan and running away with the money. This is a great factor that could stop us from giving further loans. In fact, it is the current issue we are discussing as it happened recently (IDI/45years/Employee of JDPC).

Discussion of Findings

Finding revealed that JDPC are involved in six empowerment programmes: Economic empowerment, Political empowerment, Educational empowerment, Cultural empowerment, Gender equality empowerment and Agricultural empowerment which are further classified into human rights advocacy, skills acquisition, scholarship, leadership training, financial loan and adult education. It was further revealed that majority of the

women under these programmes accessed the financial loan. The work of Kurukshetra (2015) is in tandem with this finding that “Micro finance for ‘women’s empowerment’ is emerging as a powerful instruments for poverty alleviation in the new economy”. The findings revealed that the economic empowerment has the largest involvement of women (41.6%) as it also provides some skills acquisition; provide some advice on how to spend their money right in form of informal adult education. The political empowerment and educational empowerment programmes has the second largest involvement of the beneficiaries with 16.6% each which covers the objective of creating consciousness for women, developing capacity building, making their voices heard, helping women create awareness of their own rights and know what is wrong from the status quo, and more so helping women in developing the ability to read and write. This finding strongly affirmed with the work of Brill (2010) that explained that “without our own voice being heard inside the governmental areas, and halls of public policy and debate, we are without the right to accountability and a basic establishment of those who are governed. Kurukshetra (2016) equally holds that ‘traditional concept recognize higher education as an instrument of personal development as it helps in growing an individual’s intellectual horizons, wellbeing and potential for empowerment’. The last empowerment programmes had 8.3% participation each and they were identified as the cultural empowerment which helps women to strengthen the social relations and positions in the social structures; gender equality empowerment which works hand in hand with the cultural empowerment to ensure equal opportunity for women and men in a patriarchy society and the agriculture empowerment where loans, skills acquisition and education are well provided on the new and available existing technology for improved production. Gangrade (2012) posited that the cultural empowerment as women status to women opportunity and freedom to develop herself.

On the factors that militate against full empowerment and participation of women, findings revealed that the tradition and traditional belief that men are better than women contributed to slow rate of empowerment of women. This was affirmed by Umar (2018) who noted that the girl child is not valued for who she is, her potentials or achievements but for her services, submissiveness and at best good looks and it is believed that the place of the girl child and subsequently women is in the kitchen or at home. Also mismanagement of funds and negligence on the side of women were also crucial barrier to women’s development where loans are mis-

managed towards buying of different traditional clothes for party to flaunt their wealth instead of maximizing their profits from the loans. This mismanagement contributed to them not receiving further loans from JDPC as they were unable to pay back the loan on due time. Okoju (2011) stressed that women who lack power drive will find it difficult to assume leadership position and this impediment is attributed to low self-concept. The findings also reported that duration of loan payment is equally responsible for the loss of women empowerment programmes. Some loans which are to be disbursed to the beneficiaries every month as a custom by the organization have been shifted to weekly loan payment which seems unbearable to the beneficiaries who have invested in some businesses that requires paying loans every month due to customers.

Conclusion and recommendation

Generally, JDPC has largely impacted on women empowerment programmes which allowed women to become self-dependent, self-sustained, have the ability to influence their home even without the husband serving as the breadwinner of their home and were able to take part in development process of the society, partaking in rallying to protect their interest by largely giving support to their female colleagues, enjoying capacity building and ensuring full adult education. It was therefore recommended that the Government, the JDPC and the community (people, Oba's, Baale's) should work together towards creating some public awareness about cry of women living in absolute or relative poverty and help direct them on the available impact of JDPC on women's empowerment programmes across Economic empowerment, Educational empowerment, Political empowerment, Cultural empowerment, Gender equality, and Agricultural empowerment. Also, necessary materials like textbook, Classrooms block with all facilities in good condition should be provided in educating the women on how to manage loans and maximize their potentials.

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