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**EVALUATION OF AGRIBUSINESS TRAINING SKILLS ACQUISITION  
PROGRAMME ON POVERTY REDUCTION AMONG WOMEN IN CROSS  
RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The main thrust of this study was to evaluate Agribusiness training skills acquisition programme on poverty reduction among women in Cross River State, Nigeria. Literature review was carried out accordingly. Survey research design was adopted for the study. This design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to make inference and generalization of the population by selecting and studying the sample for the study. A sample of seven hundred and thirty-six (736) respondents was used for the study. The sample was selected through stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The reliability estimate of the instruments was established through test-retest reliability method. One Way analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was the statistical technique employed to test the hypothesis under study. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that, agribusiness training skill acquisition programme significantly influenced poverty reduction among women in Cross River State – Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that training and development policies, goal and objectives should be carefully planned, drafted to capture the core values, culture of the organization and training needs of the individual staff and the industry in general.*

**KEYWORDS:** Agribusiness training, skill acquisition, and poverty reduction

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Women's economic status offers huge scope for bringing about real changes in women's lives. Earning an income can increase women's autonomy and enhance their economic and social status. It can result to shift in power relations between women and their men, including their household level, in terms of women's control over how household budgets are spent. Improving women's economic opportunities is also a key to poverty reduction and economic growth. The World Bank's General Equality Action Plan for 2000/2010 explicitly recognizes the broad development benefits of women's economic status. These efforts by the World Bank and partners to make the broad economic case for gender equality have created exciting possibilities for improving women's economic status and making progress towards gender equality, (Jalbert, S. E. 2000).

Women economic status is considered relevant to their ability to earn an income from outside the home. It also implies giving women more access to credit facilities and broadening their income bases for improved participation in the development programmes. In Nigeria today, the increasing rate of poverty, unemployment, corruption and so many other social problems had become worrisome to the government and to every well-meaning citizen. The incidence of Poverty in Nigeria is on the high side (about 70% of the total population has been classified as poor. (Dabalén, A., B. Oni, and D. Adekola, 2007). The problem of unemployment is particularly pathetic as the number of those coming out from various institutions looking for employment opportunity is increasing day by day. The situation in Nigeria is of such concern that hundreds of unemployed university graduates ruins the streets in search of jobs.

Consequently, it was therefore perceived that this problem could adequately be addressed by setting up vocational and technical education as the aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic knowledge by Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004).

However, the success of this programme just like any other social action programme depends essentially on effective implementation. Therefore, there is need for its evaluation. This is particularly so, because evaluation plays a very important role in programme improvement (Yoloye, 1979). Evaluation provides continuous feedback concerning programme strengths and weaknesses; and corrective measures applied to realize programme goals and objectives. Decisions about how to use resources to attain programme goals are all based on the result of evaluation. In fact, evaluation provides basis for continuous monitoring, formulating and reformation of programmes. Evaluation of any educational endeavour is for determining the extent to which it is serving the purpose for which it was established.

The absence of constant evaluation will leave the programme with risk of failure. Periodic evaluation will bring about improvement, efficiency and accountability. Data is therefore required on the programme quality and suitability. Aina (2010) sees vocational and technical education as training for an individual to help him or her acquire skills, knowledge and attitude in a particular occupational area for employment with respect to societal needs Uko-Aviomoh & Ajuluchi (2009) sees vocational and technical education as that education which provides technological literacy to sustain life daily. It's aimed at making individuals that are armed with skills knowledge to secure employment either by gaining it or establishing a personal output. This is actualized when these organized competencies are active in meeting daily needs of socio – economic life. Although education is an important equal right for all people, if the current educational gap between the rates of men and women are considered, it will be quite interesting and welcomed. This is because education is hypocritical when gender roles are taken into view. The perception of women gender roles in productivity, fertility, religion negatively affects their participation in education and economic matters. Therefore, defining clearly the roles which exist in a practical education with a broad spectrum of career choices will create options that can afford women the opportunity to contribute immensely to the economy of their homes and the state in this challenging times.

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Poverty is general scarcity or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money. It is a multifaceted concept, which includes social, economic, and political elements. Absolute poverty or destitution refers to the lack of means necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Absolute poverty is meant to be about the same independent of location. Relative poverty occurs when people do not enjoy a certain minimum level of living standards as compared to the rest of society and so would vary from country to country, sometimes within the same country (Aboyele, 2010).

Most Nigerian women especially at the rural Areas are poor and this has been attributed to a number of factors to be responsible for their poverty thus: high level of illiteracy, lack of basic needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, healthcare), lack of resources, lack of credit facilities, in adequate knowledge on investment, inaccessible banking facilities, high-interest rates from money lenders, Societal stereotype and stigmatization, these and many other factors work together to make women poor. Oladunni (2017) said, because of societal stereotype and stigmatization, certain professions and occupations are exclusively preserved for men, while women are deprived. It was thus submitted that some of the effects of this is that majority of these women mostly at the rural areas in Cross River State are poor and impoverished with very low income level. Poverty reduction among women is their capacity to bring about economic change for themselves. It implies the ability of women to generate income in order to provide adequately for themselves and their families without necessarily depending on their husbands or on social welfare.

Poverty has tremendously been a major factor in the underlying causes of problem among women in Cross River state. It has grossly affected human habitation and peaceful co-existence of women in the study area. The aftermath of this menace is manifested in the illicit practices which includes unemployment, discrimination, exploitation, prostitution, in-human treatment, single parenthood, child abandonment, child trafficking and so on. Skills acquisition has been identified as a very significant factor in unemployment reduction and poverty alleviation (World Bank, 2001; Babalola, 2007). Skills acquisition seeks to provide participants with knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. In fact, it provides a wide range of competencies, which include management and organizational skills. The Nigeria government also acknowledges the utility value of this type of education by putting in place some active labour policies to promote wage employment through subsidized placement, employment assistance and vocational trainings, and even other measure to encourage self-employment, such as training and facilitating access to credit/grants and other business requirement.

According to Jalbert (2000) the term entrepreneur applies to someone who creates value by offering a product or service. Entrepreneurs often have a strong belief about a market opportunity and organics their resources effectively to accomplish an outcome that change existing interactions. Some observers see them as being willing to accept a high level of personal professional or financial risk to pursue that opportunity, but the emerging evidence indicates that they are more passionate experts than gamblers.

It is in consideration of the importance of skills acquisition in human capacity building, reduction of chronic employment and poverty alleviation, that the National Universities

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Commission (2004) recommended Nigeria Universities to integrate skills acquisition as an integral part of the curriculum. However, in furtherance of encouraging self-employment, government has also established the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) as an employment agency to develop four major programmes for skills acquisition namely; vocational skills 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.

Skills acquisition are associated with programmes which may need to combat illiteracy such as community development, agricultural extension, family planning, vocational training, small scale industries, industrial training and human resource management. Non-formal education has been recognized largely as a primary tool for salvaging people from poverty. Through vocational skill development, beneficiaries get empowered and self-employed thereby improving their wellbeing and reduction of unemployment. To a large extent therefore, it is a catalyst for reduction of unemployment in developing nations and in Nigeria.

One of the challenges facing the nation today is how to get the women gainfully employed. Unemployment generates poverty, youth family violence etc. To reduce poverty among youth in the rural areas, the need for non-formal education becomes paramount to equip them with skills that would make the women employable or self-reliant. It is in the light of these that this study is embarked upon to ascertain the extent to which agribusiness training skills acquisition on poverty reduction among women in Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the problem**

It is generally estimated that 75% of women in Cross River State are not engaged in any meaningful job or business that can make them functional in anyway Adegoke, A. T. (2014). The state government and chairmen in different regimes have tried by facilitating access to credit/ grant and loans to encourage self-employment of these women, individuals and cooperate bodies and even the ministry of women affairs have also in one time or the other invested in the liberation of these women from this ugly plight but these efforts had not made any headway. This situation is assuming a more permanent posture in Cross River State such that unemployment, child trafficking, poverty, single parenthood and child abandonment have tremendously increased. These ugly situations had led to use of many of the women for rituals, yet many infected with some deadly diseases, while many others loses their lives in the process of terminating an unwanted pregnancy. A silent resignation to fate borne out of hopelessness have indeed overtaken most of the women and a serious social problem is gradually unfolding if nothing is done.

It has been known that every government in the State has embarked on one form of poverty reduction programme or the other. However, what has remained unanswered is the extent to which these policies and programmes have actually impacted on the women in Cross River State. A close look at the subject of poverty and its reduction agencies, as well as programmes indicates that considerable gap still exists between the target object (reducing poverty among women) and the achievement of this target objective.

In spite of all the obvious efforts by successive administration in combating poverty, a careful observation reveals that within the study area, more women appear not to be self-reliant as a result of lack of skills acquisition. In the face of all these, it seems that the efforts of various governments are not yielding the desired result. This study is therefore borne out of the desire to evaluate the influence of agribusiness training skills acquisition programmes on poverty reduction among women in Cross River State.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Agribusiness training skill acquisition and poverty reduction among women**

Agribusiness simply refers to the business of agricultural production. The women hold a vast amount of responsibility and good knowledge of sustainable agricultural system skills. They are important natural resource users and managers in providing food and securing overall family welfare. This is sometimes the backbone of small holder agricultural production (Olaitan, 2008). Women work as unpaid family workers on the farm, in the informal sector, adults, especially young adult, often work in the informal sector and in the homework (Antai, 2008). Observing the situation of women in agriculture, Basu (1999) adopted the survey research design. A sample of 100 respondents was randomly selected through the simple random sampling technique for the study. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using Independent t-test analysis. From the result it was revealed that, collecting and transporting firewood and other forest products can typically take up several hours per day, and with the contraction of forest areas, time requirements are increasing drastically.

Coombs (2012) in his study on agribusiness training skill acquisition programme and women's economic empowerment, adopted the survey research design. A sample of 150 respondents was randomly selected through the simple random sampling technique for the study. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation analysis. From the result he stated that agriculture is one of the three most hazardous work sectors along with mining and construction in terms of work related deaths and injuries and this is especially true for women whose lack of experience, or training and still developing bodies make them particularly vulnerable.

Belanger (1993) adopted the ex-post facto research design in his study. A sample of 250 respondents was randomly selected through the stratified and simple random sampling techniques for the study. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. One-way Analysis of Variance was used for data analysis. The result revealed that the competitiveness and the quest for greater productivity in an economic area that now covers entire continents, is undoubtedly speeding the pace of change in production methods and tending to boost demands for vocational training. Harverkort, Veldhuizen and Ailders (1993), posited that in the field of agricultural technologies, people need to be aware of newly emerging technical and methodological possibilities to fit various local situations. Chijioke (2001) advocated that, since agriculture is the mainstay of the Nigerian economy, serious attention should be paid on skill training and teaching people on how to produce



good crops. He also observed that within this vocation we also find training on fishing, hunting, veterinary and science (animal care and rearing).

Irrespective of age, agriculture is one of the three hazardous sectors along with mining and construction in terms of fatalities, accidents and ill health. Half of all fatal accidents occur in agriculture (Coombs 2012). Gender and Coombs (2000) conducted a study of women in commercial agriculture in 13 African countries. He adopted the survey research design for the study. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using simple statistical analysis technique. He estimated that among 17 million economically active women between the ages of 15-30, 77% work in the agricultural sector. He also stated that 38% of this labour is paid employment. In many situations, women are forced to work long hours, use sharp tools to carry loads too heavy for their bodies and operate dangerous machinery. They are exposed to toxic pesticides, diseases and harsh weather; they may also work in unsanitary conditions and suffer harassment and psychological abuse, (Biao, 2012).

Chukwurah (2002) concluded that the lack of knowledge of modern agriculture practices prevent rural African youth from being fully productive. In the quest, therefore, to make youth more productive, Okpoko (2002) in her study of Anaocha youth, reported that appropriate technology encourages and enables women to have relevant local equipment's which help them in processing grains, preserving fruits and vegetables and storing harvested products. In the same study on empowering youth for community development through women education, he reported that women organized and mobilized themselves and formed a co-operative society named "Nmetu-out" meaning "togetherness group" where they learned to construct various locally made implements such as solar dryers, groundnut decorations made from wood and chicken mesh and storage scribe with animal dung or rat baffles. Such technology simplified and shortened their process and storage tasks, giving them more time to attend their classes and be more involved in community development activities.

Robert (2011) concluded that the adoption of new technologies in agriculture reaps the following benefits: productivity, income generation, meeting nutritional needs and children's (especially girls) education. He further stated that it strengthens traditional skills, build upon indigenous technical knowledge and empower rural households. The study conducted by Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC) in (2006) Gabon and in Gantsi on women showed that vocational training courses on trades and agriculture contributed to the reduction of youth joblessness of 108 in 2006 in such areas as rearing guinea fowls, rabbits and small livestock.

Promoting women employment in agriculture within a decent frame work is a means of reducing poverty. The creation of women employment in this sector could help reduce poverty, promote rural employment and development, and reduce poverty by raising incomes. This is due to the fact that many women do not want to work in agriculture because the pay is often low, the hours are long, the work is hazardous and dangerous and career prospects are perceived as minimal. To attract women into this sector, the work must be based on appropriate training, good employment conditions with decent level of

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remuneration and good health and safety standards. Visions of young adult herding livestock, helping their parents harvest fruits or haul in the daily catch may not seem as tragic as the vision of a factory job (Skapa, 2011).

Agriculture is sustainable when they are ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, culturally appropriate, humane and based on scientific approach, which can be obtainable through training. Placing children in work situations that interfere with their health. Mental and physical growth affect their opportunities to train for more skilled agricultural or non-farm work and their future earnings potential (Ifedi, 1984).

Katha (2014) found that the added income that parents (women) reap from farm work is often invested in the schooling of their children. Once women have gained additional income obtained from community development fund raising activities such as vegetable garden, their first goal is to pay for school uniforms, books and fees. A study of women poverty alleviation and empowerment through cooperative farming, vocational training and business development in Krishnagiri district, revealed that through animal husbandry, silk warm rearing, fisheries and agriculture, women got macro loans, which help to expand their farms and increase their income levels.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research design used for this study is survey research design. According to Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim and Ekuri (2012), survey research design involves the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe existing phenomena. Studies that make use of this approach are employed to obtain a picture of the present conditions of particular phenomena. Kerlinger (1986) for instance describes the survey research as that which is directed towards determining the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of investigation. He further describes it as a type of research that studies large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution, interrelations of sociological and psychological variable.

The population for this study will consist of 750 women that were involved in the agribusiness training skill acquisition programmes among women in Cross River. In order to have a representation of sample, both purposive and accidental sampling technique was adopted for this study. According to Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim and Ekuri (2012) purposive sampling technique is a means by which the researcher intentionally decides to use the sample for the study because of certain characteristics or elements. Here the researcher intentionally decided to use only all women in skill acquisition programmes in Cross River State since they are few. The accidental sampling will be adopted as the researcher will give the instruments only to the women in skill acquisition programmes she will meet at the time she will visit those skill acquisition centers. In this method there is no provision for the estimation of the representativeness of the sample. The sample for this study will involve all the women that the researcher will come intact in the skill acquisition centers in the three Senatorial District of Cross River State. The instrument to be used for the study was a structured questionnaire titled agribusiness training skill acquisition programs and poverty reduction among women questionnaire (SAPPRQ).

To ascertain the validity of the instrument, and to ensure that the selected items for inclusion in the questionnaire are capable of eliciting relevant responses needed to measure the set objectives for the study, the researcher will first present the designed questionnaire to her supervisor for face validity and three experts in Department of Test and Measurement Faculty of Education who will check for the appropriateness of items, content coverage, clarity of language and suitability of the items. After the exercise, the instrument was considered to be both construct and content valid to satisfactorily measure the variables of the study.

To determine the reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire) a trial test will be carry out using fifty (50) respondents drawn from the population area who were not part of the real study. Split-half method of reliability will be used to determine the reliability estimate of the instrument. Here the researcher will give the instrument once to the respondents to complete. But at the time of scoring, two set of scores will be derived (odd and even). The scores derived from the two sets were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlations and corrected with Spearman Brown prophecy formula. The reliability coefficient ranges from 0.88 to 0.95. This shows that the reliability coefficient were high enough and reliable.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the results and discussion of findings. Data were presented on the basis of the research hypothesis that guided the study.

Research hypothesis one

1. Agribusiness training skills acquisition programme has no significantly influence on poverty reduction among women of three senatorial district in cross River State.

To analysis this research hypothesis, responses to items 1-8 of section B of the questionnaire were analyzed. The result of the analysis is presented in the Table 1 below.

### Summary data and one-way ANOVA of the influence of Agribusiness training skill acquisition programmes on poverty reduction (N=736)

Agribusiness training skill acquisition programmes	N	$\bar{X}$	SD			
Low – 1	163	26.00	1.27			
Moderate – 2	260	24.50	1.86			
High– 3	65	27.51	.50			
Total	736	25.40	1.89			
Source of variance	SS	Df	Ms	F	Sig of F	
Between group	558.033	2	279.016	115.144*	.000	
Within group	1175.246	733	2.423			
Total	1733.279	733				

\* Significant at .05 level, critical F=3.00, df= 2, 733.



The result on Table 1 revealed that the calculated F-value of 115.144 is higher than the critical F-value of 3.00 at .05 level of significance with 2 and 733 degree of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore implied that, Agribusiness training skill acquisition programmes significantly influenced poverty reduction. Since Agribusiness training skill acquisition programmes had a significant influence on poverty reduction, a post hoc analysis was employed using Fishers' Least Significant Difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Fishers' Least Significant Difference (LSD) multiple comparison analysis of the influence of Agribusiness training skill acquisition programmes on poverty reduction

LSD

(I) AGRIBUSINESS TRAINING SKILL ACQUISITION PROGRAMMES	(J) AGRIBUSINESS TRAINING SKILL ACQUISITION PROGRAMMES	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
1.00	2.00	1.50000(*)	.15552	.000
	3.00	-1.50769(*)	.22835	.000
2.00	1.00	-1.50000(*)	.15552	.000
	3.00	-3.00769(*)	.21587	.000
3.00	1.00	1.50769(*)	.22835	.000
	2.00	3.00769(*)	.21587	.000

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The result of the analysis in Table 2 showed that respondents whose Agribusiness training skill acquisition programmes was low were significantly different in their poverty reduction from those whose Agribusiness training skill acquisition programmes was either moderate or high. Also respondents whose Agribusiness training skill acquisition programmes was moderate were significantly different from those who were high in poverty reduction.

The above result indicated that, agribusiness training skill acquisition programmes significantly influenced poverty reduction. The findings of this study is in line Olaitan, (2008), who sees a woman as a very important natural resource users and managers in providing food and securing overall family welfare

Coombs (2012) in his study on agribusiness training skill acquisition programme and women's economic empowerment, adopted the survey research design. A sample of 150 respondents was randomly selected through the simple random sampling technique for the study. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation analysis. From the result he stated that agriculture is one of the three most hazardous work sectors along with mining and construction in terms of work related deaths and injuries and this is especially true for

women whose lack of experience, or training and still developing bodies make them particularly vulnerable.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and findings of the study, it was concluded that Agribusiness training skills acquisition programmes significantly relates to poverty reduction among women in Cross River State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Training and development policies should be put in place, since agriculture is one of the mainstay of the Nigerian economy, serious attention must be paid on skills training and teaching people on how to produce good crops.
2. Goal and objectives should be carefully planned, drafted to capture the core values, culture of the agribusinesses and training needs of the individual staff for efficiency.
3. Adequate training should be focus on fishing, hunting, animal care and rearing.
4. Government should introduce appropriate technology which will encourage and enable women to have relevant local equipment's which will help them in processing grains, preserving fruits and vegetables and storing harvested products.
5. Government and non-governmental organizations should be involved in skills training to reduce poverty among women.
6. There should be the need to evolve training programmes on entrepreneurial education outside the formal school, which are based on the need of both urban and rural areas where adults and women will acquire knowledge and realize their potentials for development.
7. Similar study should be carried out on agribusiness training skills acquisition programme on poverty reduction among women in Cross River State, Nigeria, urban and rural areas where adults and women will acquire knowledge and realize their potentials for development.

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