



Women Apprenticeship: A Panacea to Unemployment among Women in Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author T. A. Adebisi designed the study, wrote the protocol and supervised the work. Authors T. A. Adebisi and T. A. Akinsooto carried out the field work and performed the statistical analysis. Author T. A. Akinsooto managed the analyses of the study. Author T. A. Adebisi wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author T. A. Adebisi managed the literature searches and edited the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/BJESBS/2016/20160

Editor(s):

(1) Russo Maria Teresa, Department of Education, Roma Tre University, Rome, Italy.

Reviewers:

(1) P. Moodley, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

(2) Barry Chametzky, Ozarks Technical Community College, USA.

Complete Peer review History: <http://sciencedomain.org/review-history/11425>

Original Research Article

Received 14th July 2015
Accepted 24th August 2015
Published 16th September 2015

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the concepts of apprenticeship and work amongst women in Nigeria. The study was a descriptive survey. The population for the study was all craft-women in Nigeria. A sample of 30 master craft-women was purposively selected in randomly selected three States in Nigeria. The instrument was a semi-structured interview guide termed Women Apprenticeship Interview Guide (WAIG), divided into two sub themes: the need for women apprenticeship and gender issues affecting women apprenticeship and job opportunities. Oral interview was tape-recorded, responses transcribed and coded. The discussions of the results were done using phenomenological narration. The results showed that women worked to enhance their family up-keep; social, more than gender issues affected women apprenticeship; and apprenticeship was a way-out of unemployment among women. The paper, posited that reform in apprenticeship strategies stimulate interests of women in vocational training and equip them with employable skills that would give them better employment opportunities.

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Keywords: Apprenticeship; women; unemployment; employment; employable skills; gender issues; family up-keep.

1. INTRODUCTION

The menace of unemployment cuts across sexes and ages. The necessity to ensure household upkeep has warranted women to seek gainful employment coupled with ever demanding domestic duties and responsibilities of child bearing, rearing and general welfare of the family. It is a known fact that unemployment has become a major problem for most countries across the world with women not left out in bearing the brunt of the menace. In most rural family settings the tasks of sponsoring children in school or vocational trades are left to women, thereby making the women left with no option than to engage in various activities from which they could get money to take care of the ever demanding responsibilities confronting them. Most women, consequently, end up taking up some menial jobs that do not fetch them enough funds to handle numerous financial challenges confronting them.

In United States (US) for example, National Women's Law Centre reported that unemployment among women remains high (National Women's Law Centre, 2012). The same report had it that in 2011, manufacturing employment increased for the first time in more than a decade, with annual average employment rising by 205,000 jobs. Unfortunately, according to the report, women did not share in these gains [1]. "In fact between 2010 and 2011, men's annual employment in manufacturing increased by 230,000 jobs while women's dropped by 25,000 jobs", (National Women's Law Centre, 2012).

In the same vein, the unemployment rate for women in January, 2012 in the US was 8.3 percent or 5,997,000 unemployed, an increase of 992,000 since 2009, (cnsnews.com, 2012) [2]. In the UK, of the 2.67 million people who are unemployed, 1, 12 million are women – the highest number for 25 years, (The Guardian, 20 February, 2012) [3]. Current levels of unemployment among young men and women in West Africa including Nigeria are likened to "ticking time bomb" in the region and beyond (Pacsnet.net, 2012) [4]. In 2011, according to Vanguard (13, February 2012) Nigeria's population stood at 164.38 million. Out of this, the labour force stood at 67.256 million out of

which 51.181 million are said to be employed and 16.074 million are unemployed. Going by official data, the unemployment figure which stood at 12.44 million in 2009, rose to 13.9 in 2010 and further to 16.74 million in 2011 [5]. The Guardian newspaper contends that the Nigerian situation is peculiar in that if the available resources are better managed and utilized, the country will not face this level of youth unemployment. An unemployment ratio of 23.9 per cent of total population will mean that over 38 million Nigerians are unemployed. Of the work force, it means that 16 million are unemployed.

In the households where men seemingly are up to the task of handling the financial demands confronting the homes, the global economic down-turn has made things tougher for them. Women in such households will make efforts to complement their husbands. They would probably engage in the acquisition of vocational skills that will make them self-reliant or employable. This then makes apprenticeship become imperative for women. It is through apprenticeship training that they can acquire relevant vocational skills. There are however certain gender issues and domestic responsibilities preventing women in Nigeria from engaging in apprenticeship training, which demand empirical investigation with a view to proffering solutions to the challenge.

1.1 Statement of Problem

The problem to be addressed by this study consequently lies in the sense that the absence of employment opportunities limits the options of young people in life, predisposing them to serious dangers. Many girls become sex workers in a desperate effort to earn a living. The contributing factor to the above scenario, apart from inadequate job opportunities, is lack of vocational skills, which enhances one's job opportunity and self-reliance. If this is the case, then an important way out is apprenticeship training for women. There is therefore the necessity to determine the extent to which the need for women apprenticeship has actually propelled them to acquire apprenticeship skills, and in what ways are gender issues such as marriage, child bearing and rearing, and house chores among others affecting women apprenticeship and job opportunities.

Unemployment is a situation in which persons capable and willing to work do not get jobs. Work is defined as physical or mental effort or activity directed toward the production or accomplishment of something. It is any legal activity that a person does to earn a living (for instance, a trade or profession).

The term 'apprentice' has, like a lot of training and learning vocabulary, come to mean different things over time. Originally the system of apprenticeship was developed in the middle ages. A master craftsman would employ young people as a cheap form of labor and teach them a trade. The apprentice would, after a period of some seven years, aspire to become a craftsman with their own workshop [6]. According to Fries, Gobel and Maier [7] apprenticeship training plays a major role for skill formation during the school-to-work transition. They exemplified that about 2/3 of German students who leave school, in particular those with lower graduation, enter the labour market via the apprenticeship system. Finishing apprenticeship training leads to acquisition of vocational qualification, which is in form of work experience and specific skills. In Nigeria, the situation is completely different to the German apprenticeship system. Most graduates of Technical Colleges and Polytechnics and those who obtained university degrees in technical oriented discipline such as engineering are as good as only having liberal education. In Germany, the formal degree serves as a kind of "admission ticket" for later jobs and unemployment rates are much higher for workers that did not finish apprenticeship training successfully. So, successful completion of apprenticeship training is what guarantees employment.

In 2008, the German Government introduced the Apprenticeship Bonus. The aim of this program is to support disadvantaged young people to find apprenticeship training. Apprenticeship training takes between two and three and a half years. After leaving compulsory school youth can apply at firms for apprenticeship training without further prerequisites. The German apprenticeship system provides dual training that combines in-firm training with schooling.

While most apprenticeships in the middle ages involved the vocational training of young men, there were some apprenticeship opportunities for young women as well. Most of these involved schooling in what were considered feminine arts,

such as embroidery, weaving and sewing. Just as with the young men, the young women who entered into an apprenticeship had to demonstrate some degree of natural talent, and would commit to a period of five to seven years away from family [6].

The aforementioned trades were chosen because they were considered to have special significance for women. The type of work that women do, and within such work, their ability to compete effectively with men, largely determine their life chances and power positions in society. There has been a substantial increase in women's participation in the productive area of economic activities all over the world. Women productive role comprises works done for payment in cash or kind. Egbue [8] said women by their choice give priority to marriage and give less commitment to their employment. Apart from economic gain approval from others, as well as realize the benefits of group fellowship women are therefore more or less constrained to operate within the confines of social structures which shape the world of work, and in which they are immersed as members of society.

Length of apprenticeship depends on several factors such as nature of trade, intensity of learning practices, age, and education, learning capacity, ability of the trainee and the need of the master for the trainee's services. Male apprentices are on the average between the ages of 15 and 22 years. In contrast, for the average female primary school pupil who leaves school, these are vital years for marriage, child bearing and domestic role commitments.

The key components in apprenticeship are:

- i. The apprenticeship secures wages for the apprentice for the duration of the training program;
- ii. The training program will allow him or her to acquire valuable skills; and,
- iii. The program will provide employment opportunities in the labor market following the successful completion of the training.

An apprenticeship should therefore be a planned program in place for a defined period of time that combines work and learning and supports an individual to develop skills and knowledge, usually within the framework of achieving a qualification for a particular trade or profession [9].

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to find out the need for and gender issues affecting women apprenticeship and job opportunities. Specifically, the study aims to

1. Find out what informed the need for women in apprenticeship;
2. Identify gender issues that are affecting women apprenticeship and job opportunities; and,
3. Investigate the job prospects of women in vocational trades.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What necessitated the need for women apprenticeship?
2. What are the gender issues affecting women apprenticeship and job opportunities?
3. What is the job prospect of women in vocational trades?

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was a descriptive survey that employed an ex-post-facto research design, which involved the determination and description of gender issues affecting women apprenticeship training and employment opportunities. The population for the study was all craft-women in Nigeria. A sample of 30 master craft-women was purposively selected from three randomly selected states in Nigeria – Ondo, Osun and Oyo States. The participants for the study were women who were actually present at their trades or workshops to ensure that the respondents were truly in vocational trades. The instrument was a semi-structured interview termed Women Apprenticeship Interview Guide (WAIG), which was divided into two sub themes: the need for women apprenticeship, and gender issues affecting women apprenticeship and job opportunities. To ensure that the items on the interview guide measured what it intended to measure, the instrument was subjected to both the face and content validity.

The researchers personally conducted face-to-face oral interviews with the respondents. The interviews were conducted using Yoruba language; the language of the respondents. Though the items of the interviews were written in English, they were translated. The oral interviews were tape-recorded and the

responses were transcribed and coded. The respondents were given number 1 to 30. 'Respondent' was coded as 'R' plus number given to each of them. Thus, 'R3' or 'R25' means respondent 3 or respondent 25, as the case may be. The responses of the respondents were therefore quoted against their respective code. The discussions of the results were done using phenomenological narration.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Need for Women Apprenticeship

The following are the transcribed responses from the respondents on the need for women apprenticeship.

Table 1, which showed the distribution of vocations and academic qualifications of the respondents revealed that 5 were into tailoring, 3 were into hairdressing, 5 were into photography, 4 were into typing/computer work, 4 were into trading, 1 was into beads making/wire craft, 2 were into cosmetology, 2 were into tie & dye and 4 were into catering. The Table also revealed that in all there were 14, 3, 5, 3, 2, 2 respondents with SSCE, OND, HND, NCE, B.A./ B. Sc., and primary six respectively, while there was just 1 with JSS 2.

3.1.1 Category 1

Responses to why the need for women in apprenticeship.

The common response given by this category of respondents to why they were in their respective trades was to "complement and support" their husbands due to unending domestic needs. For instance, Respondent 4 said: "With the situation in the country, a man alone cannot carry all the responsibilities". Though some responded that they were into the trade because they do not want to be idle Respondent 5 said "A woman must not just sit down doing nothing"; respondent 13 responded that: "I can't sit down. I don't want to be a slave to my mate. I want to complement my husband's efforts. I want to be able to do something". From foregoing, the major reason why women are into trade is to be able to complement their husbands in domestic responsibilities.

3.1.2 Category 2

Responses on gender issues that are affecting women apprenticeship and job opportunities.

Table 1. Respondents' vocations and academic qualifications

Respondent	Vocation/Trade	Academic qualification
1	Tailoring	NCE (Agricultural education)
2	Tailoring	SSCE
3	Tailoring	SSCE
4	Tailoring	SSCE
5	Tailoring	JSS 2
6	Hairdressing	SSCE
7	Hairdressing	SSCE
8	Hairdressing	SSCE
9	Photography	HND
10	Photography	Primary Six
11	Photography	SSCE
12	Photography	SSCE
13	Photography	Primary Six
14	Typing/Computer Work	NCE Computer Science
15	Typing/Computer Work	SSCE
16	Typing/Computer Work	SSCE
17	Typing/Computer Work	SSCE
18	Trading	SSCE
19	Trading	SSCE
20	Trading	OND
21	Trading	OND
22	Beads making/ Wire Craft	B. Sc. & MBA
23	Cosmetology	HND
24	Cosmetology	NCE
25	Tie & Dye	B.A. Fine Arts
26	Tie & Dye	SSCE
27	Catering	OND
28	Catering	HND
29	Catering	HND
30	Catering	HND

*PSC- Primary School Certificate; JSSC- Junior Secondary School Certificate; SSSC- Senior Secondary School Certificate; OND- Ordinary National Diploma; HND- Higher National Diploma; B.A- Bachelor of Arts; B.Sc.- Bachelor of Science and MBA- Master of Business Administration

Interestingly, all the respondents did not give any issues that are gender based as affecting their trades. This is in variance with the conclusion of Egbue [8] that women were constrained by demanding domestic roles that conflicted with business enterprises. Most reasons women gave

as affecting their trades were inadequate power supply, high cost of tools and other materials used in their trades, fuel scarcity culminating in difficulty to fuel to power their power generators as well as seasoned and off seasoned nature of their trades. This result, in a sense, showed that problems identified above by respondents overwhelmed whatever other gender issues they might be confronting in their trade. This calls for the urgent attention of the concerned stakeholders.

3.1.3 Category 3

The job prospect of women in vocational trades:

The responses from subjects indicated their respective trades had prospects. For instance, their responses range from: "It is lucrative, one can settle with this trade", "It is lucrative and has prospect", "It is lucrative, one can rely mainly on it", "It is lucrative for now; I make up to 20 – 30 thousand naira per month" to: "It is lucrative, but stressful". Thus, this result showed that apprenticeship skills possessed by the respondents was actually a panacea from unemployment and poverty as they have their own jobs and are satisfied with their trades as well as the proceeds from them.

4. CONCLUSIONS

From the discussion of the above results, it can be concluded that women are into employment (trades and vocations) to generate income to support their respective families in the family up-keep. Also, social issues such as poor power supply, fuel scarcity and high cost of tools and trade materials are more pronounced than gender issues such as marriage, child bearing and rearing as factors affecting women apprenticeship. In addition, apprenticeship trades and vocations are lucrative and worth establishing as they are actually ways out of unemployment among women.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the finding, the following recommendations are hereby suggested:

1. Women should be encouraged and supported by both governmental and non-governmental organizations to engage in apprenticeship training.

2. Government at all levels should ensure adequate provision of electricity as it remains the cheapest source of power for trade and vocations to thrive.
3. Practical steps need to be taken in the economy to check the high cost of tools and other materials used in various trades and vocations.
4. Continuous and steady supply of fuel must be ensured.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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APPENDIX I

Interview Guide on Women Apprenticeship: A Panacea to Unemployment among Women in Nigeria (IGWAAPUWN)

1. What is your trade/vocation?
2. How did you enter into this trade/vocation?
3. Why are you into this trade/vocation?
4. Since you are married and your husband is working, why do you think it is still necessary for you to work?
5. How would you describe your trade's prospect, lucrative, tasking, and satisfactory or mean?
6. What contributory role is your working as a trade's woman playing in the upkeep of your home/family?

In what way(s) has your family responsibility affected your trade either positively or negatively?

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*Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
<http://sciencedomain.org/review-history/11425>*