



## Influence of lifelong learning on socio-economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North local government area, Anambra state, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study explored the influence of lifelong learning on socio-economic well-being of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria of. Four research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all the registered literate business women in the nine (9) clans that make up Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State. The sample of the study comprised of 190 literate business women selected through simple sampling technique. Questionnaire developed by the researchers and validated by two experts, one in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education and the other in the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation Option) all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed with mean. The findings of the study include that lifelong learning positively influence women's socio-economic wellbeing and that gender disparity, early marriage, cultural factor, lack of some rights, poor education, among others are the problems affecting the socio-economic wellbeing of women. It was also found that the following strategies would enhance socio-economic wellbeing of the women: sensitization of women on the need to be educated, abolishing of cultural harmful practices, creation of jobs, minimizing discriminatory religious practices, among others. Conclusion was made and the study recommended among others that the government should mount campaign on the effects of early marriages and advise parents to send their female children to school at the right time.

**Keywords:** lifelong learning, socio-economic wellbeing, business women

### Introduction

The idea of lifelong learning is not new. Its roots can be sought in ancient times. Its precursors were ancient philosophers such as Solon, Confucius, Pythagoras, Plato and Seneca, who wrote about continuous learning and development. In modern times, this idea is present in the pedagogical work. Its importance today is highlighted not only by educators but also psychologists (Pilch, 2003) <sup>[19]</sup>. Lifelong education/learning is defined by Obiozor and Obidiegwu (2013) <sup>[16]</sup> as education over one's entire life-span which can be acquired through different forms and modes of education. Lifelong education is not confined to adult education but it encompasses and unifies all stages of education in school and out-of-school. European Commission (2000) <sup>[5]</sup> defined lifelong learning as all purposeful learning activity undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences with a personal, social, civic and/or employment related perspective.

Generally, learning is classified into three types: formal, non-formal and informal learning. The notions of the three types of learning demonstrate not only the vertical dimension of learning (learning throughout life) but also its horizontal dimension (life-wide learning). Life-wide learning helps to facilitate learners to acquire and integrate various sets of knowledge and skills in order to apprehend, advance or even invent new knowledge and skills (Quane, 2009) <sup>[21]</sup>. Lifelong learning is important because it helps to develop the autonomy and sense of responsibility of people and communities; to reinforce the capacity to deal with the transformations taking place in the economy, in culture and in society; and to promote co-existence, to tolerate the

informed and creative participation of citizens in their communities, in short to enable people and communities to take control of their destiny and society to take the challenges ahead (UNESCO, 1997) <sup>[23]</sup>. The contemporary understanding of this concept concerns the education of man from childhood to old age, therefore it applies to the education of children, adolescents, adults and seniors. Education is lifelong, continuous and integrated process and it cannot be confused only in one period of human life (Pilch, 2003) <sup>[19]</sup>.

However, there is assertion that lifelong learning leads to improvement in the economic well-being of women. This is justified in respect of roles individuals have to play in all perspectives of human endeavours. It is on this role that UNESCO (2015) <sup>[24]</sup> made some recommendations that bothered on transformation and expansion of equitable learning opportunities for all individuals. Also, the World Development Reports (2016) revealed that the profitability of education according to estimates of private rate of returns is indisputable, universal and global. For Oyebamiji and Adekola (2015) <sup>[18]</sup>, economic development of women which invariably gives women financial capability has been in state of dilemma and calls for urgent rescue. Women sometimes are denied of their rights to income that is mostly accruable to their male counterparts in the community. The concern is for all women to be able to possess enough financial muscle to fund and maintain daily basic needs without hardship because it is their fundamental rights.

In the same vein, Nkemena (2010) <sup>[15]</sup> noted that adult women education programmes have suffered so much neglect, especially in the aspect of human capability development in the following ways: skill acquisition,

knowledge acquisition and upgrading in various fields of endeavours, development of competence needed for work, innovations and creativity to improve their job performance. This therefore, is one of the yardsticks of this study, including social well-being of the women.

Lifelong education of women leads to social development. Some of the most notable benefits include decreased fertility rates and lower infant mortality rates, and lower maternal mortality rates (King, 1998) <sup>[10]</sup>. Closing the gender gap in education also increases gender equality, which is considered important both in itself and because it ensures equal rights and opportunities for people regardless of gender. Through lifelong education, women are likely to engage in civic and political participation in their individual communities and the society in general. Evidence also points to an increased likelihood of democratic governance in countries with well educated women (Levine, Cynthia, Margaret & Careen, 2008) <sup>[12]</sup>. According to Sen (1999) <sup>[22]</sup>, there are also benefits relating to the women’s role in the house. Educated women have been found to experience less domestic violence regardless of other social status indicators like employment status.

However, implication is that women who engage in lifelong learning acquire more knowledge and skills that would enable them take rational decision in all works of life otherwise, the person will not be literate enough to impact positively in herself and the society at large. In Onitsha North, the socio-economic well-being of business women is not sound because of perceived number of factors that hinder women from accessing socio-economic fortunes and becoming economically empowered. Most business women in the area find it difficult to make the two ends of life meet neither are they educationally empowered. Could it be attributed to cultural factors or socio-cultural factors such as poverty, social inequality and inadequate social support that hamper women socio-economic development, some societal inherited traditions that prevent women from inheriting land both from their fathers’ or husbands’ thereby limiting their access to land or could it be attributed to illiteracy or poor education?. It is possible that this deterioration in development of business women could reverse if adequate strategies are employed. It is against this background that the researchers sought to determine the influence of lifelong learning on socio-economic wellbeing of women in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to determine the influence of lifelong learning on socio-economic well-being of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the influence of lifelong learning on social wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State.
2. Determine the influence of lifelong learning on economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State.

3. Identify the factors affecting the socio-economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area.
4. Suggest strategies for enhancing the socio-economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study

1. How does lifelong learning influence the social wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State?
2. How does lifelong learning influence the economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State?
3. What are the factors affecting the socio-economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area?
4. What are the strategies for enhancing the socio-economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area?

**Materials and Methods**

The design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of all the registered business women in Onitsha North Local government Area of Anambra State. The sample consisted of 190 literate business women selected through simple sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire titled ‘Influence of Lifelong learning on Socio-economic Wellbeing of Business Women in Onitsha North, Anambra State, Nigeria (ILLSWBW) was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to validity by two experts, one in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education and the other in the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation Option) all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Comments and recommendations of the experts were effected in the final construction of the instrument by the researchers which was used for the study. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpa and 0.82 was obtained and considered adequate for the study. The collected data were analyzed with mean. Decision rule was based on 4-point numerical values on the response categories of: Strongly Agree (SA)-4 points, Agree (A) - 3 points, Disagree (D)- 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD)-1 point. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted. This means that any item with a weighted mean value of 2.50 and above was considered agree while any mean below 2.50 was considered disagree.

**Results**

**Research Question One**

How does lifelong learning influence the social well-being of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State?

**Table 1:** Mean score of the respondents on influence of social wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North L.G.A

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	Remark
1	Lifelong learning (LLL) increases social interaction of women	3.52	Agree
2	It increases cognitive ability for quality of life.	3.47	Agree
3	LLL closes the gender gap in education	3.38	Agree

4	LLL increases decision making ability of women	3.70	Agree
5	It Empowers women and reduces domestic violence.	3.31	Agree
6	Increases political participation of women	3.42	Agree
7	It increases the survival art of women.	3.63	Agree
8	LLL sensitizes women on their roles	3.24	Agree
9	Women’s self-esteem is increased.	3.42	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.45	Agree

Table 1 shows that all the items 1-9 were agreed by the respondents, including the grand mean because their mean scores were greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that lifelong learning positively influences social wellbeing of women in Onitsha North Local Government

Area.

**Research Question Two**

How does lifelong learning influence the economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State?

**Table 2:** Mean scores of the respondents on the influence of economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North L.G.A.

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	Remark
10	Acquisition of LLL increases the wages of women	3.52	Agree
11	Women education increases the equitable distribution of wealth in society.	3.36	Agree
12	LLL gives women information that will empower them towards alleviation of poverty.	3.73	Agree
13	Knowledge of LLL increases the productive potentials of the economy.	3.53	Agree
14	It improves women’s role as home builders.	3.52	Agree
15	LLL is a tool for attainment of economic capacity of women.	3.69	Agree
16	It enables women grow and manage their incomes.	3.37	Agree
17	It increases knowledge and fosters behaviours of women critical to economic security and investment.	3.25	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.50	Agree

Table 2 above shows that all the items 10-17 were agreed by the respondents for the fact that their mean scores, including the grand mean were greater than the criterion mean. This implies that lifelong learning positively influences economic wellbeing of women in Onitsha North Local Government

Area.

**Research Question Three**

What are the factors affecting the socio-economic wellbeing of women in Onitsha North LGA?

**Table 3:** Mean scores of the respondents on the factors affecting the socio-economic wellbeing of women in Onitsha North L.G.A

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	Remark
18	Gender disparity	3.68	Agree
19	Early marriage of girls	3.42	Agree
20	Cultural factors	3.64	Agree
21	Lack of right on certain properties eg land etc.	3.54	Agree
22	Poor education of women	3.92	Agree
23	Religious factor	3.68	Agree
24	Lack of capital	3.68	Agree
25	Poverty	3.72	Agree
26	Illiteracy	3.63	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.66	Agree

Table 3 above shows that all the items 18 – 26, including the grand mean were agreed by the respondents. This implies that gender disparity, early marriage, cultural factors, lack of some sights, poor education, religious factors, lack of capital and poverty are the factors militating against the socio-

economic development of women.

**Research Question Four**

What are the strategies for enhancing the socio-economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North L.G.A?

**Table 4:** Mean scores of the respondents on the strategies for enhancing the socio-economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North L.G.A.

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	Remark
27	Sensitization of women through women education the need for them to be educated.	3.40	Agree
28	Abolishing the cultural practices against women	3.54	Agree
29	Minimizing discriminatory religious doctrine that forbid women from participating in some activities	3.12	Agree
30	Creation of more jobs	3.64	Agree
31	Governments enforcement of laws to protect women’s right	3.10	Agree
32	Increasing the women’s access to loans	3.12	Agree
33	Mounting of campaign on the effects of early marriage	3.12	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.29	Agree

Table 4 above shows that all the items 27 – 32 were agreed by the respondents because their mean scores, including the grand mean were greater than the criterion mean. This implies that sensitization of women on the need to be educated, abolishing harmful cultural practices, minimizing discriminatory religious doctrines, creation of more jobs, enforcement of laws to protect women, among others are the strategies for enhancing the socio-economic development of women.

### Discussion

The findings of the research question one showed that lifelong learning increases incomes of women, cognitive ability for quality of their life, closes the gender gap in education, increases decision making ability of women, empowers and reduces domestic violence, increases political participation of women, among others. This implies that lifelong learning positively influences social wellbeing of women. This is in agreement with Purna (2014) [20] who said that educated women have been found to experience less domestic violence, regardless of other social status indicators like employment status. It also corroborates with Hughes (2014) [8] who noted that women education increases income and leads to growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The author noted that educating girls leads to a number of social benefits and empowerment. The findings are also in agreement with Kingdom (2012) [11] who maintained that women's education has cognitive benefits as well as improved cognitive abilities for quality of life. Instance of this is the fact that educated women are better or able to make decisions related to health factors. Cognitive abilities also translate to increased political participation among women. Educated women are more likely to engage in civic participation and attend political meetings. There are several instances in which educated women in the developing world were able to benefit for themselves through political movement. Evidence also points to an increased likelihood of democratic governance in countries with well educated women (Naila, 2012) [14].

The findings of research question two showed that lifelong learning increases the wages and equitable distribution of wealth of women in society, give women information that will financially empower them towards poverty alleviation, increases their productive potentials, economic capacity, improves women's role as home builders, among others. This implies that lifelong learning influences economic wellbeing of women. This corroborates with George and Patrinos (2014) [6] who affirmed that women who invest in education receive a net monetary gain over the course of their lifetime than their counterparts. The findings also agree with Hanusheck (2013) who maintained that women education increases the equitable distribution of wealth in the society. This increase in women education is important as it targets the impoverished, particularly disadvantaged group. The author noted that there is also evidence that lower gender disparity in educational attainment for a developing country correlates with lower overall income disparity within society.

The findings of research question three showed a number of factors militating against the socio-economic development of women. They include: gender disparity, early marriage, cultural factor, lack of right to certain properties like land, poor education, religious factor and poverty. A combination

of the factors weighs women down that their voice cannot be heard. This agrees with Adegoye and Adegoye (2008) [1] who averred that harmful cultural practices militate against women socio-economic empowerment. There are cultural practices that promote gender-based violence and these acts of violence are usually directed at women (Bisika, 2008) [2]. The findings also agree with Jhingan (1997) [9] assertion that one of the most pertinent obstacles to economic development is the shortage of capital. Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of a country's low rate of capital formation. In an underdeveloped country, the masses are under poverty line. They are mostly illiterate and unskilled, use outdated capital equipment and methods of production. Equally, the findings agree with the study conducted by Briere and Jordan (2004) [3] which identified socio-cultural factors such as poverty, social inequality and inadequate social support as some of the variables that hamper women's socio-economic development. Also, in some societies, inherited tradition prevents women from inheriting land both from their father of husband thereby limiting their access to collateral and productive opportunities (Danjuma, *et al*, 2013) [4].

Also, the findings of the research question four showed that for women to develop and be heard, the following strategies are suggested: sensitization of women on the need to be educated by government, abolishing of harmful cultural practices by community leaders, minimizing discriminatory religious doctrine that forbid women from participating in some activities, creation of more jobs by government, enforcement of laws to protect women in discriminatory practices by government, among others. This corroborates with Munah (2008) [13] who noted that national action plan must be designed in broad consultation with women organizations to complement women initiatives which must be adequately funded and staffed. Often times similar institutions have been marginalized, under-resourced and used as a dumping group for gender issues. The findings also corroborate with Onokerhoraye (1995) [17] who said that government should necessarily be in partnership with various women organizations such as the great women multi-cooperative centre for women/child development and Edo State Women Association (ESWA) with a view to creating an enabling environment for credit to be made available to the rural women at affordable rate. Women should also be able to access credit/loan based on their own recognition. Furthermore, benevolent organizations such as the International and Christian Centre for Missions (Home for Needy, the Noble Family Foundation, etc.) should complement government efforts by assisting women with grants in aids.

### Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that lifelong learning provides for involvement of women in socio-economic activities which enables them to acquire knowledge and skills they will use in improving their quality of life. They will also utilize the skills in confronting the challenge that may arise in the socio-economic wellbeing which is one of the indices of development.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Government should mount campaign on the effects of



- early marriage and advice parents to send the girls to school.
2. Harmful cultural practices against women should be abolished by community leaders to ensure gender equality.
  3. There should be equal opportunities in political terrain with men and women.
  4. Equal access to loan should be given to women by bank industry.

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