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## Participation in Social Group and Wellbeing Status of Rural Women in Oyo State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*This study examined participation in social group and wellbeing status of rural women in Oyo State. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to obtain data from 170 rural women who are members of selected social groups. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. More than half (54.1%) of the respondents had low level of social group participation. Benefits derived from social group participation were social control ( $\bar{x} = 1.65$ ), access to credits and loans ( $\bar{x} = 1.35$ ), security of goods ( $\bar{x} = 1.62$ ) and invitation to social functions ( $\bar{x} = 1.72$ ). Time ( $\bar{x} = 0.64$ ), distance of the meeting venue ( $\bar{x} = 0.45$ ) and financial constraint ( $\bar{x} = 0.39$ ) were some of the factors that affect social group participation among the women. There was no significant relationship between participation ( $r = 0.126$ ) in social group and wellbeing status of rural women. Based on these findings, this study has implications for the assessment of social groups in rural communities as they serve as strong platform for dissemination of social and agricultural information. This study therefore recommends that social groups should be well organised by engaging in activities that will improve the quality of life of rural women in all spheres, this will increase their involvement in group activities, improve their wellbeing and ensure rural development.*

**Keywords:** Participation, social groups, social security, time, wellbeing

### Introduction

One of the principles of agricultural extension is for extension worker to take advantage of existing local groups to reach as many farmers as possible. For centuries, rural dwellers have been conducting their affairs in group settings. They have utilised groups to undertake social, cultural and religious activities as well as for managing and utilising communal resources (Emeh, Eluwa and Ukah, 2012). Rural communities are known to have greater community connectedness, manifested in more social capital and volunteering. Social groups bring residents together and

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provide group members with opportunities to give and receive social support such as a sense of belonging, practical help or emotional support (Lyons, *et al*, 2016).

Social group refers to aggregate or categories of people who have a consciousness of belonging or membership and interaction and share a common identity. They regularly interact through collective action on the basis of mutual expectations. It specifically seeks to help diverse groups of poor and socially excluded citizens, including women to organise themselves, make their voices heard and demand broader institutional change to improve their lives and livelihoods. It is a route to local problem-solving and increased social accountability, able to overcome cultural, political and institutional barriers to improve people's lives (Badejo, *et al*, 2017). Such groups could be formal or informal, such as cooperatives societies, women organisations, youth forum, trader's groups, farmers' associations. etc.

Social groups' values and principles especially in the rural context are self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, solidarity, the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for their members (Yusuf, 2018). Social groups exist for many reasons like, access to credit and loans, relationship, social control, affiliation etc., but the extent to which an individual will benefit from a particular group depends on the extent of his participation. Group participation is the engagement in activities with others in a group which has being measured in terms of: holding of membership, regular attendance of meetings, payment of levies/dues, serving in communities and going out to work for the good of the group. Moreover, as people would have loved to participate in social groups, especially rural women, they are faced with challenges like time, husbands' disapproval, lack of motivation, lack of proper information and leadership.

Worldwide, women are faced with several challenges which are all encompassing in poverty and developing countries are well concentrated with poverty. In Nigeria, there has been so many poverty alleviation programmes for women which has not yielded the desired result. The development of skills and trainings for rural women through small groups can be used to enable them function well especially in the informal sector (Jivetti and Edwards, 2015)

It has been estimated that close to 200 million women across the developing world have found their way into several social groups because it is believed to be particularly appropriate for working towards women empowerment as collective action is most effective in making women independence (Alemu, kempen and Ruben, 2018). Rural women involvement in social groups has contributed greatly to achieving sustainable development, improving their wellbeing and reducing poverty (Amoah, 2018). Furthermore, women participation in social and economic groups has been considered crucial not only for fueling economic growth but also for

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enhancing gender equality in many low and middle income countries. It is generally believed that women's participation in social groups is likely to promote female health, personal income and wellbeing (Karim, Lindberg, Wamala and Emmelin, 2017).

Wellbeing is a state in which every individual realizes his own potential and can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and able to make a contribution to his community. It is also the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy. It is used in relative term with concepts like happiness, life satisfaction, pleasure, and prosperity. The strategies for achieving well-being help people reach new ways of understanding and controlling their lives both in an individual and a collective scope (Pinto, Fumincellie, Mazzo, Caldeira and Martins, 2017). Amoah (2018) reported that social group participation influences well-being of an individual. Yusuf (2018) also established a relationship between membership in social group (cooperative societies) and improvement in the socio-economic status of the participants.

### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of the study was to determine participation in social group and wellbeing status of rural women in Oyo state, Nigeria. Specific objectives are to:

- assess the extent of participation in social groups;
- examine the benefits they derive from being members of social groups;
- identify factors that affects participation of members in social groups and
- determine the wellbeing status of women.

### **Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between participation in social groups and wellbeing of women in the study area.

### **Methodology**

This study was carried out in selected rural communities in Oyo State. Oyo State is bounded by Republic of Benin, Osun, Kwara and Ogun States and there are 33 local government areas in the State. It is located between latitudes 8.1<sup>0</sup> N and longitudes 3.4<sup>0</sup> E. It covers a total landmass of 28, 454km<sup>2</sup>. The weather conditions vary between the two distinct seasons in Nigeria; the rainy season (April - October) and the dry season (November - March). Agriculture is well practiced in the State providing food and shelter, employment, raw materials and remains an important source of internally generated revenue in the State.

The population of the study was all rural women in social groups in the State.

A multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents for this study. In the first stage, 3 LGAs were randomly selected out of the 28 rural Local Government

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Areas (LGAs) in the State which are Akinyele, Iwajowa and Ogo-Oluwa LGAs. In the second stage, 2 communities were purposively selected from each LGA because of the existence of several social groups in the communities making 6 communities which are Ijaye and Ikereku in Akinyele, Iwere-ile and Itasa in Iwajowa, Jagun and Alaro in Ogo-Oluwa. In the third stage, three social groups were purposively selected from each community because they are the prominent groups in the area; farmers, cooperative and traders groups. In the fourth stage, 50% of rural women were sampled proportionate to size from the list of women who are members of the three social groups making 182 respondents out of which 170 were eventually used for the study.

The extent of participation in social groups was operationalised by asking respondents to state how often they participated in group activities like paying dues, attending meetings, taking up group tasks. This was measured on a three point Likert type- scale of always (2), occasionally (1) and never (0). Mean score of 10.86 was obtained which was used to categorise the respondents into those having low and high participation in social groups.

Respondents were asked to indicate the benefits they derive in social group participation like access to credits and loans, involvement in decision making, invitation to social functions, social control and so on which was operationalised on a three point Likert-type scale of major benefit (2), minor benefit (1) and not a benefit (0). Mean score of 15.76 was obtained which was used to categorise the respondents into those having low and high benefits in social group participation. Also, factors that affect social group participation like time, distance to meeting venue, financial constraint and so on were operationalised on a three point Likert-type scale of major factor (2), minor factor (1) and not a factor (0).

The well-being status was measured by using the subjective wellbeing of dimensions which are quality of life, health status, civic engagement, personal security, education and skills, social connections, income, job and earnings, housing. Statements were developed under each dimension and operationalised using five point Likert-type scale of strongly agreed (5), agreed (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (0) for positive statements and vice-versa for negative statements. For each dimension, the mean value for all the statements were added together and divided by the number of statements, giving the mean value for each dimension. A mean value of 189.6 was obtained which was used to categorise respondents into those having low and high well-being status.

Data were collected through the use of structured interview guide and data were analysed using descriptive (frequencies, percentages, mean) and inferential statistics (PPMC).

## Results and Discussion

### Participation in Social Groups of respondents

Table 1 reveals the extent of participation of women in social groups. Respondents always attend group meetings and take up group tasks ( $\bar{x} = 0.29$ ), pay their dues promptly ( $\bar{x} = 0.19$ ). Also, respondents are always attentive during group meetings ( $\bar{x} = 0.31$ ) and some get tired during group meetings ( $\bar{x} = 0.50$ ). Respondents do not like long hours' of meetings ( $\bar{x} = 0.35$ ) as rural women are always busy with their economic activities and household chores. The result implies that respondents are very confident in the activities of the social group they belong to thereby suggesting a level of commitment to all group activities. This corroborates the report of Badejo *et al* (2017) that rural women show a level of dedication and commitment in their social group activities.

**Table 1: Participation in social groups**

Social group participation	Mean	SD
<b>Extent of participation</b>		
Attend group meetings	0.29	0.21
Pay my dues promptly	0.19	0.15
Take up group tasks	0.29	0.23
Attend group meetings promptly	0.21	0.19
Easily get tired during group meetings	0.50	0.34
Always attentive during group meetings	0.31	0.24
Do not like long hours meeting	0.35	0.38
<b>Level of social group participation</b>		
	<b>%</b>	<b>Scores</b>
Low participation	54.1	4.0-10.68
High participation	45.9	10.69-14.0

Source: Field survey, 2018

Level of social group participation (Table 1) shows that 54.1% have low participation and 45.9% of the respondents had high participation. This result indicates that respondents' low participation in social groups activities may be due to their busy schedules and the fact that many of them are not executives in such groups which may afford them the opportunity to be fully involved in group task and activities. This is in tandem with the result of Olawuyi and Olawuyi (2015) that some members of groups are not really interested in taking group activities but mainly for benefits they will derive from it.

### Benefits Derived from Participation in Social Groups

The result from Table 2 shows the benefits women derive from participation in social groups. It reveals that invitation to social functions by group members ( $\bar{x}=1.72$ ), social control ( $\bar{x}= 1.65$ ) and security of goods ( $\bar{x}=1.62$ ) were the most beneficial to the respondents. This implies that women derive pleasure in attending social gatherings like wedding ceremonies and burial and are ready to get their scores settled each time one occurred in order for peace to reign and to foster unity among members. The table also reveals that respondents had access to credit and loans ( $\bar{x}=1.35$ ) and gained satisfaction from involving in developmental activities ( $\bar{x}= 1.27$ ). Few of the respondents had access to cheaper source of goods ( $\bar{x}= 0.99$ ) and some of them were involved in collective marketing of their goods ( $\bar{x}=0.96$ ). This implies that the kind of occupation majority of the respondents are involved in do not really require collective marketing and joining hands to get their goods in bulk. Majority of the respondents are traders so they prefer to get their goods sold individually. Also, respondents are involved in decision making ( $\bar{x}=0.96$ ) and had easy access to policy makers ( $\bar{x}=1.26$ ). This is because few of the respondents who had easy access to policy makers are executives in the social groups. This is in consonance with Oino *et al* (2014) who found that as women formed groups, these groups have resulted to unity of purpose which has brought about benefits of collective perception, decision-making and implementation of interventions projects. Benefits members derive from participating in social groups is a major reason most members are committed. This is in agreement with Winnie (2013) who stated that women based social group institutions are desirable not only from the perspective of social justice but also because of the substantial social and economic benefits which result to enhancing women's social and economic status both within the household and in the society at large. Hence, proper package of programmes and incentives that will be more beneficial to rural women should be encouraged in social groups.

**Table 2: Benefits derived from participation in social groups**

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
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<http://eoi.citefactor.org/10.11226/v23i4>

Access to credit and loans	1.35	0.73
Involvement in decision making	0.96	0.79
Satisfaction from involving in developmental activities	1.27	0.85
Access to cheaper source of goods	0.99	0.82
Access to collective marketing of produce	0.96	0.84
Invitation to social functions by group members	1.72	0.59
Fulfilment of basic needs	1.38	0.62
Personal development	1.31	0.67
Transmission of culture	1.29	0.57
Social control	1.65	0.61
Security of goods	1.62	0.64
Easy access to policy makers	1.26	0.73

Source: Field survey, 2018

### Factors Affecting Participation in Social Group

Table 3 shows that respondents indicated that time ( $\bar{x} = 0.64$ ), distance of the meeting venue ( $\bar{x} = 0.45$ ) and financial constraint ( $\bar{x} = 0.39$ ) were major factors to their participation in social groups. The result also indicated that respondents did not allow bad manners of other group members to affect their participation in social groups. This suggests that respondents are committed and dedicated to the group. This is in consonance with Adejoh (2015) that busy schedule of women (time) and distance to venue of meetings were factors that affect social group participation. This implies that despite the challenges of being members in social groups, rural women are still very concerned about gains from social groups than problems being faced. Also, respondents reveals that husbands' disapproval ( $\bar{x} = 0.29$ ) was a minor factor that determines social group participation; this suggests that men are aware of the importance of participating in social group activities.

**Table 3: Factors affecting participation in social groups**

Factors	Mean	SD
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Time	0.64	0.24
Insufficient information about the meeting	0.36	0.19
Personal traits	0.36	0.25
Distance of the meeting venue	0.45	0.14
Financial constraint	0.39	0.11
Husband's disapproval	0.29	0.10
Bad manners of other group members	0.34	0.12
Past experience	0.35	0.17
Size of the group	0.25	0.09
Length of residence in the community	0.27	0.08

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Source: Field survey, 2018

### Wellbeing Status

Table 4 shows the result of the subjective wellbeing status of rural women in social groups. Personal security ( $\bar{x} = 4.18$ ) was the most enjoyed wellbeing dimension by the respondents, hence a safe and secured environment. This corroborates the work of Carcach and Huntley (2012) that crime rates are lower in rural areas with high levels of participation in community and social oriented activities. The result also showed that quality of life and civic engagement ( $\bar{x} = 4.09$ ) were also enjoyed by the respondents. This implies that participation in social groups has enabled respondents' quality of life to be improved and also enable them to be involved in civic activities and responsibilities. Income wellbeing ( $\bar{x} = 4.00$ ) is also germane among the dimensions of wellbeing. This suggests that income of respondents has also improved due to their participation in social group which corroborates the findings of Karim, Lindberg, Wamala and Emmelin (2017) that participation in social groups will increase the income of rural women as women have access to credit and loans which could boost their income. Respondents are also better off in education and skills ( $\bar{x} = 3.91$ ), job and earnings ( $\bar{x} = 3.89$ ) and social connection ( $\bar{x} = 3.49$ ) as part of the dimensions of wellbeing. This proves that rural women involvement in social group has enabled them to have improved skills, better jobs and good relationships with members of the group. Housing ( $\bar{x} = 3.47$ ) and health ( $\bar{x} = 3.80$ ) wellbeing had the lowest mean values suggesting that respondents have not really improved in their health and housing system due to their commitment in their groups. Social groups should be an avenue for dissemination of information on the health of rural women so as for them to have a better and healthy family. Rural women are

supposed to leverage effectively on group participation to make their wellbeing status better.

**Table 4: Wellbeing status**

Dimensions	Mean	SD
Quality of life wellbeing	4.09	2.10
Health wellbeing	3.08	2.27
Civic engagement wellbeing	4.09	2.89
Personal security wellbeing	4.18	2.34
Education and skills wellbeing	3.91	3.47
Social connection wellbeing	3.49	2.27
Income wellbeing	4.00	2.69
Job and earnings wellbeing	3.89	2.16
Housing wellbeing	3.47	2.06

Source: Field survey, 2018

### **Relationship between Participation in Social Groups and Wellbeing**

Table 5 indicates that there is no significant relationship between participation ( $r$ -value= 0.126,  $p=0.252$ ) in social group and wellbeing of women in the study area. This means that participation in social group does not affect their wellbeing status. This contradicts the findings of Amoah (2018) that social group participation influences the wellbeing of rural women. This suggests that rural women are not better off in some of the dimensions of wellbeing used in the study.

**Table 5: Participation and wellbeing of respondents**

Variable	r- value
Participation level	0.126

\* $P \leq 0.05$ . Source: Field survey, 2018

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Participation in social group did not influence respondents' level of wellbeing which may be due to the fact that respondents pay more attention to invitation to social functions as one of the benefits, not focussing on other benefits that could enhance their wellbeing. Full participation of rural women in social group activities requires considering their busy schedule and workload in planning meeting times as time is a key factor to participation in social groups. Extension agents and executives of social groups should ensure organising activities, like health programmes that will spur the interest of rural women so that they can participate better in social group activities, this will in turn improve their quality of life in all spheres and ensure rural development.

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