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Personal Factors as Determinants of Utilization of Development Information in Rural Communities of South-South Geo-political Zone, Nigeria.

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Abstract
This study investigated the extent to which personal factors relate to the utilization of development information in the rural communities of South-South Geo-political Zone, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population comprised all adult male and female rural dwellers from the three out of the six states in the Zone (Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Rivers States). A sample size of two thousand, four hundred respondents was selected for the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument which was validated by three experts in relevant fields has two parts: part A elicited the respondents' bio-data while part B consisted of five items which elicited information to answer the research hypothesis. The items were structured on a modified four-point Likert scale. In the research area, the instrument was administered personally by the researchers and with the help of research assistants. Percentages were used to provide information on the respondents' bio-data while ANOVA and multiple regression were used to answer the research question. While ANOVA determined the joint contributions of the predictors (dependent variables), multiple regression analysis indicated the relative contributions of the predictors. The results showed that the respondents personal characteristics had significant joint contributions to their utilization of development information; age, educational attainment and sex had significant positive contributions while marital status and occupation had negative contributions. It was recommended that rural development planners must take into account the special circumstances of the rural people especially their age, sex, occupation, educational level and marital status if they are to participate meaningfully in development.

KEYWORDS: Personal Factors, Development Information Rural Communities, Local Media, South-South, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Personal factors which some researcher (Sule, et al; 2007; Emenyeonu, 1987 etc.) refer to as "Personal Characteristics" or Socio-economic factors" are of importance in the utilization of media/development information. Available data show that Nigerian rural dwellers acquire information from both mass media and personal sources. Studies carried out in the various parts of the world have indicated a close relationship between personal factors such as age, sex, occupation, education and marital status and utilization of information from these sources. It is against this background that such variables age, sex, marital status, level of education and occupation are examined in their relationship with the rural people's readiness to put into practice introduced innovations or new technologies.

Age: Awe (1995) posited that an individual's age influence utilization in one of the several ways. Older people, example farmers, may have more experience, resources and authority that would allow them more possibilities for trying new technology. On age and utilization, Akinbode and Clark (1968), and Arowojolu (1998) reported a positive relationship between the two variables. They assert that, in terms of farming, older farmers were found to be more receptive to new technologies as they already established ideas and practices. Practices, which are comparable to the existing ones, are more likely to be utilized quickly. Okafor (1986) on his part, stated that the age of an individual is very important to the utilization of an innovation.

To support these assertions, Tologbonse (2004) in a study to determine the utilization of improved rice technology by farmers in the inland valley swamp of the Middle belt zone of Nigeria, found out that those who utilized the technology most fell within the age bracket of 40-59 years, accounting for over 71% of the respondents. As the finding indicated, none of the respondents in Kogi and Nasarawa states (two of the states under study) was below 30 years of age. The mean age for the study was 45.27 years with Kogi state having the highest mean of 48.6 years and Nasarawa coming second with 46.19 years. Also Adeogun (2008) found out in a study to determine the utilization of cocoa techniques among cocoa farmers that, many of the rural areas under study have been left to older men. Thus, these areas lack a manpower since the active population had left in search greener pastures. This in however not to say that experience in a particular farming area or with a given

crop is strictly correlated with age. It may be that younger farmers are more likely to utilize new technology, because they have had more schooling than the older generation or perhaps have been exposed to new ideas as migrant labourers (Awe, 1995).

Also, Gilluly and Moore (1986) reported a 1984 survey following asset of family planning radio broadcasts produced by Babatunde Roland May, a journalist is Sierra Leone. The outcome showed that age had influence on the acceptance of information offered in the programme. Younger people welcomed information on contraceptive presented in the radio broadcasts more than older people.

Similarly, the choice of use of old people in utilization experiment has been known to lead to the failure of trial and eventual use of some innovations. In a study to determine the effect of socio-economic variables on the utilization of solar tent technology in Kainji Lake Basin, Sule et al, (2007) found that, the elderly fishers folks' participation in the initial trial to capture fishermen's interest on the technology as to effect the diffusion to the entire communities of fish processors led to the failure of the programme. Two reasons were advanced for this failure. Firstly, the contact persons (elderly ones) kept the knowledge from the technology to themselves for reasons arising from the financial benefits associated with this innovation. Secondly, these contact persons by virtue of their advanced age lacked the needed energy and enthusiasm to propel the required change across the respective fishing communities compared to those of lesser age categories as reported by Voh, (1984) and Theodore et al (1982)

It therefore follows that age can either encourage or discourage those intending to utilize an innovation or a new technology.

Sex: Innovations that border on rural life or peasant farming activities should see women play more vital roles in their utilization. This is because women constitute a larger proportion of the rural labour force in Nigeria and many developing countries Oyedeji (1982). However, available data in most studies indicate that women are often excluded from innovation transfer and utilization. In some cases this scenario has led to lack of success in the progress of innovations. Sule et al (2007) in the already cited study found out that, the total exclusion of women in the utilization of solar tent technology in Kainji Lake Basin contributed significantly to the lack of success in the scheme. They therefore recommended that any future fish processing technology that is to be transferred to the end users must include women from the onset.

Again, Adeogun (2008) indicated in his study that the majority of the respondents (81.3%) who participated in the utilization of cocoa rehabilitation techniques in Nigeria were males. He attributed the low participation of women in the programme to the fact that ownership of land by females in this area is limited. On his part Tologbonse (2004), indicated that the low level participation of female in the utilization of improved rice technology by farmers in the Inland Valley Swamp (IVS) of the Middle Belt Zone, Nigeria is their inability to own land for farming especially in the IVS. That, it could also be due to the fact that IVS are difficult to work or cultivate and, that, women are mainly involved in rice processing and not in production. Thus, the existing predominance of male farmers in the studies reviewed does not seem to reflect gender sensitivity and has led (as we have seen) to the failure of most programmes.

In Jamaica, a radio opera, *Nasebery Street* was launched in early 1985 by the Jamaican Family Planning Association. The soap dealt with family planning issues. A survey later that year showed that over 75% of 2,000 respondents listened to the soap; listeners showed more tendency to use contraceptives than non-listeners. Most importantly, the study showed that both men and women alike changed their view of family planning due to the programme. The reflection of gender sensitivity led to be massive utilization of the family planning information.

In a content analysis of one hundred and fifty family planning radio messages in recorded in 16 developing countries, Ojebode (1997) concluded that messages clearly vary as the sex and number of the audience do. Messages directed at women differ clearly from those directed at men or at the whole family. He therefore concluded that successful radio messages planning requires paying due attention to their audience's demography (Ojebode, 2002).

Some of the studies have shown that, women are made to suffer deprivation especially in the rural areas on account of sex, class and status. Inspite of the enviable role women play especially in Nigeria. And though they constitute a larger proportion of the rural labour force, rural women have continued to suffer deprivations on account of their being regarded as second class citizens. Even the existence of many national and international sanctions and legal provisions in favour or equal rights and treatment of men and women has yet to change the situation. This development has greatly affected women's access to information and productive resources as shown by some of these studies. Thus, women are not in the mainstream of technological transfer and utilization of innovations. They have to wait for men to let them know what is happening.

Level of education: Level of education in this case is measured by formal and non-formal educational institutions attended and its association with utilization of innovation. Age and education have been found to

have a correlation with utilization. LeRose and Mettler (1989) observed that, rural dwellers tend to be both older and less educated than urban dwellers. These two to them, are the characteristics of those less likely to utilize innovation or use communication media. Adeogun (2008), in the study on utilization of cocoa rehabilitation technology among cocoa farmers indicated that, of the 381 respondents, only about 29.1% were educated. Thus, suggesting the relatively low level of education among the respondents. This, he said negatively impacted on the utilization level of the respondents since literacy level is known to influence utilization capacity. However, the research also points out that, the low level of education may not have a negative impact on utilization if the technology in question is similar to what the farmers have been doing. This situation suggests that, the proper handling of an innovation by low literate target population requires choice of appropriate communication media, particularly, non-literate communication media channels (Adeogun, 2008).

Where the respondents' level of education is low as in the above study and studies by Sule, et al (2007), Tologbonse (2004) and Emenyeonu (1987), one thing is obvious – that is, utilization level will also be low if the measures enunciated by Adeogun (2008) are not utilized. These studies have also shown that, low level education is a common phenomenon among peasants in the rural sector. This often creates major setbacks in technological innovation transfer and other development activities requiring positive change. Thus, the low index of respondents in terms of formal and non-formal education often contributes to a large extent in the failure of the utilization of proven innovations. This corroborates the report of Voh (1982) who found that education had a significant association with utilization if innovation among some farmers Northern Nigeria. In another study done in Anambra and Imo States of Nigeria, Uwakah (1981) found a positive correlation between levels of education and response to innovation campaigns. In the same vein, Nweke's (1981) survey of farmers' utilization pattern in some farm communities in Anambra state established that literacy was a very strong and significant determinant of progress in agriculture.

Similarly, Obibuaku and Hursh (1984) in a study to determine effective methods for influencing agricultural modernization among illiterate and preliterate communities, found education to be a strong factor that influence information use. Citing Wilson and Gallup (1955), the reported that farmers and home makers with some college education utilized more farm and home practices than those with only secondary education, while the latter were superior to those with no more than eight grade education.

Marital Status: Marriage is the union of one man and women to the exclusion of all others. This seems to be the definition of marriage in Western Cultures. Though this definition may also apply to African societies, marriage in Africa assumes a different meaning depending of course on the type of society and religious affiliation of the individual in question, apart from monogamy which the definition above represents, other types of marriages found in Africa include, polygamy, polyandry, ghost marriage, sororate, inheritance marriage to mention but a few.

In whatever form one views marriage, the utilization of recommended practices by they in agriculture or other areas, are reported to be positively related to marital status. Nwike and Chidebelu (1991) reported that marital status is positively related to the utilization of recommended of yam, cassava and maize in Nigeria. In the case of palm oil production technology, Njoku (1991) reported that material status, cooperative membership, amount of loan received and intensity of extension contact were positively related to utilization.

Similarly, in a study of socio-economic variables affecting the utilization of solar tent technology in the Kainji Lake Basin, Sule et al (2007) established that a positive relationship exist between marital status and the utilization of solar tent technology. The study indicated that, most of the contact persons (92.8%) through whom the technology was to be diffused, were married. The expectation here was that, as persons who are married, they were to effect the diffusion of the solar tent technology to their next of kin and spouses. However the contact persons kept the technology to themselves for reasons arising from the financial benefits associated with the technology. Secondly, by virtue of their advanced age, they lacked the needed energy and enthusiasm to propel the required changes across the respective fishing communities. In the same vein, Benjamin (2008) found a strong relationship between marital status and the utilization of communication information for conflicts resolution among agro-pastoralists and arable crop farmers in Atiso Local Government Area of Oyo State. In another study, Adeogun (2008) tested the correlation between selected variables and utilization of cocoa rehabilitation techniques in selected states of Nigeria. He found that marital status, age and education, among others were significantly associated with utilization.

On the other hand, utilization of yam mini-set technology was said to be positively related age, education, farmers' membership of social organization etc. but negatively related to marital status. Also, Auta et al (1992) found that age and degree of accessibility were positively related to utilization while literacy level and marital status were negatively related. From available data, the relationship between utilization and marital status, as a socio-economic variable, is found not to be consistent.

Problem

Reports of earlier researches have dwelt on channels, amount, type and quality of communication necessary to support development initiatives and objectives in the rural areas. Some of these studies have also emphasized the impact of media use as provided in rural development packages and programmes. One wonders if there is sufficient information and research on personal factors that may determine utilization of development information in the rural areas of South-South geo-political zone, Nigeria? This explains why this research was embarked upon.

Purpose

The purpose of this study therefore was to find out the extent to which personal factors determine the respondents' utilization of development information in the rural communities of South-South, Nigeria.

Significance

The primary beneficiaries of a work like this are the local people. This is because the work is designed to be a consciousness raising and changing process. In addition, the finding of this study would influence the political process, contribute to the development process and add feedback into development information planning, research and practice.

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between selected personal factors and utilization of development information among rural dwellers in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Methods

The study which adopted a descriptive survey design, aimed at investigating the relationship between personal factors and utilization of development information in the three selected states of Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Rivers out of the six states that make up the South – South geo-political zone. A simple of 2400 respondents was selected from a population of about 171,309.

Instrumentation for Data Collection:

Data was collected using questionnaire which was validated by expert in Measurement and Evaluation in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The questionnaire which was administered personally by the researchers and with the help of trained assistants was structured on a modified four-points Likert scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3) strongly disagree (2) and disagree (1). Out of the two thousand four hundred copies of the questionnaire administered, two thousand and twenty six were retrieved coded and analyzed.

Method of Data Analysis

Simple percentages and frequency counts were used to evaluate and analysed the bio-data (demography) information while ANOVA and multiple regression were used to measure and determine the joint and relative contributions of the predictors (independent variables).

Results

The results of the study are presented on tables 1-8 below.

Table 1-Distribution of Respondents (Rural Dwellers) by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16-25	128	6.3
26-35	194	9.6
36-45	448	22.1
46-55	560	27.6
56-65	427	21.1
ABOVE 65	269	13.3
TOTAL	**2026**	**100**

Table 1 shows that for the rural dwellers, the highest number of respondents falls within the age bracket 46-55 (560 respondent's or 27.6%). This is closely followed by age bracket 36-45 (448 respondents or 22.1%), and 56.65 (427 respondents or 21.1%). It therefore follows that the majority of the rural dwellers who participated in the study were within age brackets 36-65 (1435 respondents or 70.8%). Those within the age brackets of 16 – 35 and above 65 constituted the lowest number of respondents (591 or 29.2%).

Table 2 - Distribution of Respondents (Rural Dwellers) by Marital Status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	191	9.4
Married	1084	53.5
Separated	339	16.7
Divorced	46	2.3
Widowed	366	18.1
TOTAL	**2026**	**100**

From table two above, it s evident that 1084 or 53.5% of the rural dwellers are married, 366 of 18.1% are widowed, 339 or 16.7% are either separated from their wives or husbands, 191 or 9.4% are single and 46 or 2.3% are divorced. On the whole, more respondents (1084 or 53.5% rural dwellers) are married, compared to the number of those who are single, separated, divorced or widowed. It therefore goes to show by implication that, the incidence of divorce is alien to the rural people. It was observed that, rather than divorce, men are encouraged to marry as many wives as they can possibly cater for. And, where the marriage broke down, separation rather than outright divorce was preferred by both parties.

Table 3 - Distribution of Respondents (Rural Dwellers) by Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
1. First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC)	490	24.2
2. West African School Certificate (WEAC) Senior Secondary School Certificate/ National Examination Council (NECO)	410	20.2
3. Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE)	914	45.1
4. Bachelor Degree (BSC, B.Ed B. Agric etc)	134	6.6
5. Masters Degree (MA, MSC, M.Ed etc)	62	3.1
6. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D)	16	0.8
	2026	**100**

As indicated in 3 above, 914 or 45.1% of the respondents hold the National Certificate in Education (NCE), 490 or 24.2% are holders of First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC), 410 or 20.2% have WASC, NECO or SSCE, 134 or 6.6% hold the Bachelor Degree, 62 or 31% have the masters degree and, 16 or 8.8% are holders of the Ph.D. The basic qualification needed for participation in this study was the FSLC for all the respondents.

Table 4 - Distribution of Respondents (Rural Dwellers) by States of Origin

State Of Origin	Frequency	Percentage
Akwa Ibom	643	31.8
Cross river	633	31.2
Rivers	750	37.0
TOTAL	**2026**	**100**

From table 4, it is obvious that Rivers State accounted for 750 or 37.0% respondents, Akwa Ibom is nest with 643 or 31.8% of the total respondents and Cross River taking the rear with 633 or 31.2% respondents.

What table 4 above suggests is that, rural development activities are viewed more seriously in Rivers State than in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States. It is also a pointer to the fact that there is more participation in rural development and subsequent utilization of innovation by the people of Rivers state than there is in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States.

Table 5 - Distribution of Respondents (Rural Dwellers) by Occupation Status

Occupational Status	Frequency	Percentage
Civil Servants (Teachers, nurses, policemen, forestry staff)	326	16.1
Private Employees (Farmers, fishermen/women, craftman).	601	29.7
Employers of labour (owners of farmlands, fish ponds bakeries etc).	661	32.6
Retirees	438	21.6
	2026	**100**

Table 5 shows that employers of labour accounted for 661 or 32.6% of the respondents, private employees 601 or 29.7% retiree 438 or 21.6% and the Civil Servants were 326 or 16.1%.

This goes to show that rural and community development effort are mainly undertaken by private employees (farmers, fishermen/women, craftmen etc), the employers of labour (Owners of farmlands, fish ponds, bakeries etc) and, the retirees, while the civil servants (Teachers, nurses, policemen, forestry staff etc) may not have enough time for participation. Occupation which guarantees time therefore, is of essence for those who are willing to participate in rural development efforts.

Table 6 - Distribution of Respondents (Rural Dweller) by Sex.

Category of respondents	Number	% of total respondents
Male	1015	50.1
Female	1011	49.9
TOTAL	**2026**	**100**

In terms of the total respondents (as indicated in table 6 above), the males were 1015 or 51.1% while the females accounted for 1011 or 49.9% of the respondents. This implies that more male rural dwellers did not only participate but also showed keen interest in community and rural development than their female counterparts. This shows that more men reside in the rural areas than women and that men participate in innovation transfer than female.

Table 7: ANOVA on the Joint Contributions of Personal Factors of Respondents to the Utilization of Development Information Among Rural Dwellers.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	762.604	5.	152.521	32.043	.000
Residual	9614.950	2020	4.760		
Total	10377.554	2025			
R	= .271				
R^2	= ,073				
Adj R^2	= .071				

The result in table 7 shows that the respondents personal factors of (sex, marital status, occupation type, educational attainment and age) had significant joint contribution to their utilization of development information ($F = 32.043$; $P<0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis as stated in this work is rejected as an alternative hypothesis is upheld. Apart from the joint contributions of the independent variables, a further test was carried out using multiple regression method to determine the relative contributions of these independent predictors to the utilization of development information among rural dwellers.

Table 8 below shows the relative contributions of the predictors to the dependent variable (utilization of development information).

Table 8: Summary of Regression analysis showing the relative contributions of respondents' personal factors to their utilization of development information.

Factors	β	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	15.047	.279		54.017	.000
Age	-.242	.042	-.159	-5.727	.000
Occupation	6.743E-02	.052	.029	1.299	.194
Education	.178	.068	.071	2.609	.009
Marital status	6.986E-03	.055	.003	.128	.898
Sex	-1.048	.103	.229	-10.187	.000

The result from 15 shows that, age (β= -.159; p<0.05), Educational attainment (β= .071; p<0.05) and sex (β = -.229; p<0.05) had significant positive contributions to the respondents utilization of development information. However, marital status (β = .003; p< 0.05) and occupation (β = .029; p<0.05) of respondents had negative contributions to their utilization of development information. Thus, the null hypothesis as stated in this work is rejected and an alternate hypothesis is upheld.

Discussion of findings

The finding in table 1which revealed that the majority of the rural dwellers who participated in the study where within age bracket (36 – 65) (1435 respondents or 70.8%) supports Okafor (1986) who stated that the age of an individual is very important to the utilization of an innovation and Arowojolu (1998), Omarauye (1987) and Akinbode and Clark (1968) who reported that older adults are more likely to participate and utilize innovations because they are more receptive to new technologies as they have already established ideas and practices.

The result in table 2 revealed that more respondents (1084 or 53% rural dwellers) are married, compared to the number of those who are single, separated, divorced or widowed. This finding corroborates Adeogun (2008) who tested the correlation between selected variables and utilization/participation in Cocoa rehabilitation techniques in selected states in Nigeria. He found out that marital status, among other variables was significantly associated with utilization and participation in the programme.

The finding in table 3 goes to prove that education has significant association with participation and utilization in proven innovations. Obibuaku and Hursh (1984), Voh, (1982) and Nweke (1981) all found positive correlation between levels of education and response to innovation campaigns in their studies.

While table 4 suggests that, rural development activities are viewed more seriously in Rivers State than in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, Table 5 shows that, the relationship between utilization of innovation and occupation as a socio-economic variable is inconsistent. This is supported by Sule et al and Auta et al (1992) who in their studies found occupation not to be a consistent variable in determining participation or utilization.

Also, the result in table 6 revealed that more men reside in the rural areas than women and that males participate more in innovation transfer than females. This findings is in line with Adegun (2008) who indicated in his study that, the majority of the respondents who participated in and utilized cocoa rehabilitation techniques in Nigeria were males and, Ojebode (2003) who concluded that one hundred and fifty family planning radio messages recorded in sixteen developing countries clearly varied as the number of sex and audience do.

Finally, the result in table 7 showed that the respondents' personal factors (sex, marital status, occupation type, educational attainment and age) had significant joint contributions to the respondents' utilization of development information (F=32.043; P<0.05). Apart from this, a further test was carried out in table 8 to determine the relative contributions of these independent predictors to the utilization of development information among rural dwellers using multiple regression. The result showed that age (β= -.159; p<0.05), Educational attainment (β= .071; p<0.05) and sex (β = -.229; p<0.05) had significant positive contributions to the respondents utilization of development information. However, marital status (β = .003; p< 0.05) and occupation (β = .029; p<0.05) of respondents had negative contributions to the utilization of development information. These results collaborates earlier studies by Adeogun (2008) Awe (1999), Ojebode (2007, 2002), Obibuaku and Hursh (1984), Voh (1982) and Uwakah (1982) who all found out that marital status, age, sex, occupation, education among other variables where significantly associated with utilization and participation in development programmes.

Conclusion

Community /Rural development is real. Therefore, there is need to view development planning in all its ramifications. Development planning should as a matter of urgency clearly define and make provision among

other things for communication packages which will take into account the needs and differences of the rural people.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study the following recommendations are made;

i. Proper planning and implementation of rural development programmes requires the use of quality information at all levels.
ii. Secondly, rural development should take into account the special circumstances of the rural people especially, age, sex, occupation, educational level and marital status if the rural people are to participate meaningfully in development.

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