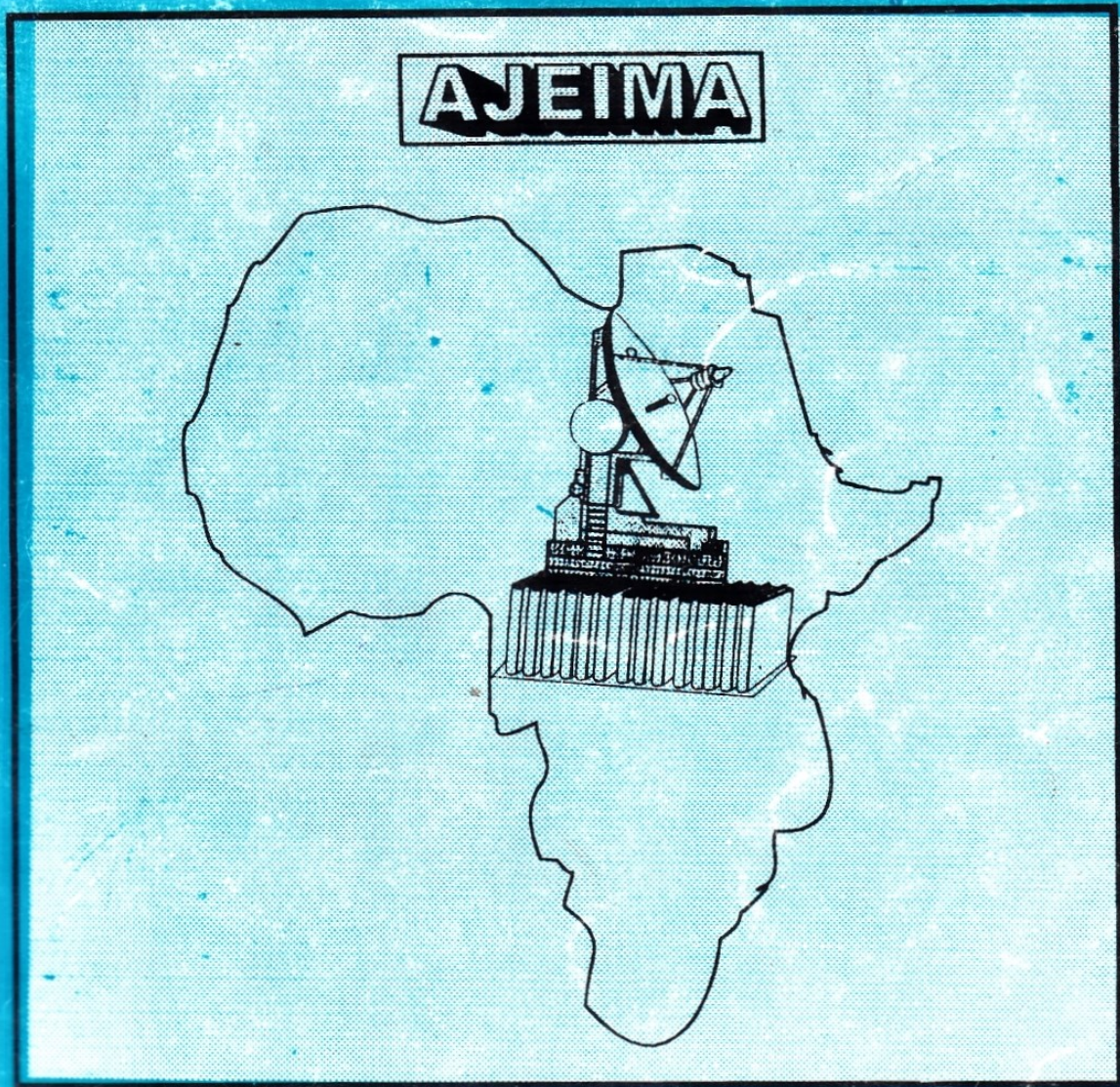


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## **WOMEN'S DECISION-MAKING: An Exploration of Akwa Ibom State Women's Information Input**

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### **Abstract**

The study explored Akwa Ibom State Women's Information Input for decision making in homes, in the context of the current women development programmes in Nigeria. Findings indicate that women make strong inputs into decisions taken in homes particularly concerning those personal to them. Women sources of information to decision making were largely elitist while there were no significant differences in women's information input among educated, non-educated, young or elderly women.

### **Introduction**

Increasing attention has focused over the past decade on the use of information among different groups of people. Traditional Observers of women development have in the past failed to elaborate the concept of female power, leadership and decision making because women were conceived to have little if any "power" and certainly were not seen to occupy "leadership" roles or positions. Women were thought to have less access to concrete resources and competence, leaving them with indirect, personal and helpless modes of influence (Johnson, 1976). In this view, women use "indirect power", "personal power" and helplessness as power plays.

In the more contemporary view, a small but growing literature has emerged which indicate that women in adulthood are as instrumental, active and interested in autonomy, individualism and competent performance as adult males. Research findings also suggest that some characteristics or traits which were traditionally ascribed primarily to women are becoming generally valued in modern management. Skills and behaviour such as listening, interpersonal relations are seen as necessary and vital for effective management (McCarthy, 1979). Sensitivity to the needs of others (Gilliaan, 1979), lack of criticism of and hostility towards others (Smith, Rosenberg, 1975) and acceptance of the responsibility for choices (Archer and Waterman, 1988) have been positive descriptions of female style in the exercise of power and persuasion

Women who are engaged in decision making combine instrumental and expressive concerns in their efforts and there is growing evidence that they also possess the additional "male" instrumental individualism capabilities of

“personal identity, self-actualization, internal locus of control and principled moral reasoning (Archer and Waterman, 1988).

When new theoretical frameworks are applied to the study of women and decision making power, the evidence suggests that women have considerable power which is, by definition exercised in spheres largely different from those wherein men exercise power and authority. Although women’s power is shown in the family, women groups and communities this does not diminish potency, rather there is growing evidence that the kind of power and decision making favoured by females in largely private settings is considered optimal for functioning in the public spheres predominantly occupied by men in society.

The studies on women and decision making therefore reveal a new picture of women’s qualities, capabilities and styles. The picture clearly shows positive and desirable inputs to decisions within what ever setting the women operate.

It is against this background that this study on the analysis of women’s information input in decision making is done. This paper therefore sets out to determine women’s extent of contribution to important decisions in families, identify women’s sources of information input to decision making, determine if there is a significant difference between the information input by non-educated and educated women and to determine if there is a significant difference among the information input from women of varying age groups.

### **Methodology**

The survey technique was used in carrying out the study. The population consisted of all the women in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria between the age of 20 and 80. By random Sampling, 300 women were selected and administered a questionnaire titled “Women Information Input to Decision Making” “WIIDM”. The questionnaire explored areas like marital status, educational qualification, extent of contribution to major decision in the family, sources of information input for contributions etc.

Fourteen items were developed in the questionnaire and given to three colleagues at the University of Uyo for independent validation as to the suitability of the items in eliciting the needed information. Based on their input, four items were eliminated. The remaining ten items formed the “WIIDM” questionnaire. The questionnaires were personally administered by the investigator after due consultation with those sampled.

### **Findings**

#### **Demography of the study sample**

An analysis of the data from the study sample has revealed that majority of the women were married (73%) and within the age bracket of 20 - 40 years. 90% of the sample had between one and six children. 45% were illiterate while the remaining 55% were distributed between First School Leaving Certificate, West African School

decision making. Sources like women associations, experience and schools contributed averagely, library and information centres contributed insignificantly.

**Table 2: Women's Sources of Information Input to Decision Making**

S/N	INFORMATION RESOURCES	GREAT EXTENT %	AVERAGE EXTENT %	NO EXTENT %
1.	Newspaper	3.7	18.7	77.6
2.	Radio / T.V.	5.0	85.3	9.7
3.	Books	32.0	40.0	28.0
4.	Colleagues and Peers	16.7	33.3	50.0
5.	Workshops	-	18.7	81.3
6.	School	-	35.0	65.0
7.	Women Associations	-	34.4	65.6
8.	Library/Information Centres	-	3.7	96.3
9.	Experience	-	53.3	46.7
10	Posters			

These findings have brought to the fore, the need for information literacy among women of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, and the provision of information materials relevant to their needs. The concept of information literacy has been considered by a number of writers (Bunch 1982, Coleman 1986, September 1993), Information literacy, according to Curran, 1990 is more than simple location skills. It involves higher-level skills such as understanding or comprehending, interpreting evaluating, organising, synthesizing, applying, using and communicating information.

The primary information needs of women in developing countries relate to basic survival issues such as the labour market, housing delivery process, transport, education services, community services, health and welfare services. The provision of information the women should therefore be tailored to meet such needs. Libraries and information centres should make an effort to reach out to the women.

### **Variability of Information Input to decision making Between educated and non-educated women**

The research question sought to determine if there is a significant difference between the information input by non-educated and educated women, t-test, for independent samples, were employed in testing this research question. The calculated t-test was 1.965 while the critical value at df of 298 and significant level of 0.05 was 1.965. Since the computed and critical values of t are about the same, the results therefore indicate that educated and non-educated women do not differ significantly in their information input to decision-making.

**Table 3: Summary of T-test Analysis of Educated and Non-educated Women on Information Input**

	Mean	S <sup>2</sup>	N	t
X <sub>1</sub>	40.11	168.22	165	1965*
X <sub>2</sub>	37.18	177.16	135	

\*Not significant at P 0.05

Women in this study, whether educated or non-educated are clear about their input into decision making in their homes. Veeders study showed that women in making inputs for decision making are more logical and consider consequences of decision making; are practical, realistic, sensible and have a greater value for relationships irrespective of the age or educational qualifications. It is therefore necessary to provide information to women at all levels of educational status.

#### **Variability of Information Input among Varying Age Groups**

The study also sought to determine if there is a significant difference among the information input from women of varying age groups. Analysis of variance was used to test for significant difference among the three age groups i.e. (20 - 40; 41 - 60; 61 - 80).

**Table 4: Summary of Analysis of Variance on Information Input among the three age groups**

	Df	SUMO OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARES	F
Regression	2	310.04	155.02	2.64*
Residual	297	17439.95	58.72	

\*Not significant at P 0.05

The critical value of F at the specified df is 3.00. Since the computed value is less than the critical value it means that there is no significant differences in the information input among age groups.

All the three generations of women in this study have given a good picture of their strong input into decision taken in their homes. Women perceive that irrespective of age, they have a unique way of "winning" in argument not based on organisational power, status or role descriptions and restrictions.

**Conclusion**

Thus exploratory study examined women's information input in decision making in homes, and took the current positive view of women in development as the conceptual framework.

Women in this study, irrespective of educational status or age bracket contribute a great extent to decision making in homes. Particularly in decisions that were personal to them. Sources of information for the inputs made came largely from Newspapers, Radio/ Television programmes, books and discussions while there were no significant differences in input to decision making between educated and non educated women and women in varying age brackets.

There is therefore need for the provision of information that can be assimilated by literate, non-literate, young and elderly women in Akwa Ibom State.

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