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ACHIEVING SOCIO –ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION FOR WOMEN THROUGH ODL IN ZIMBABWE .A CASE OF GWANDA DISTRICT.

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ABSTRACT

Globally there is concern for women empowerment and access to education. In developing countries such as Zimbabwe, of the 17% who are illiterate, 2/3 of them are women who are marginalized, hence most have little or no access to education especially tertiary education. Open and Distance learning has been seen as the panacea to address this imbalance since social realities limit the opportunities for women to take up full time study programmes. In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU), with its spread to all regional compasses has been viewed as a realistic opportunity to enable the women to access university education. ZOU offers degree programmes in the fields of Science and Technology, Business Management and Law, Humanities and Social Sciences and Health Sciences. Based on the assumption that women have embraced the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode which suits students who fulfill other commitments such as work and family, this study sought to assess the socio- economic transformation that ODL, through ZOU has had on women in Zimbabwe in general and Gwanda district in particular. The study was carried out in Gwanda District of Matabeleland South region in 2016, and used the qualitative approach. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. Data were collected through interviews. The study found that women have benefited from ODL programmes since they now occupy influential positions at work and earn enhanced salaries. Their employment prospects have been enhanced by ODL qualifications. Women have gained confidence to participate in workshops, meetings & conferences. The study recommends that the government of Zimbabwe subsidises ODL programmes to increase the number of women in such programmes and more Campaigns be undertaken on the benefits of ODL to women.

Key words: Socio- economic transformation, Women, Open Distance Learning (ODL).

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The post world war 2 era saw a myriad of socio-political and economic upheavals in human life championed by the developed world and finally cascading to the rest of the world. New institutions such as the United Nations, the European the African Union and Southern African Development Community came into being. These institutions partnered their governments to usher democracy at individual, regional and international arena. It was however realised that women could not easily participate in socio-political and



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economic development of their countries due to lack of access to education. Kadada (2014) posit that: education is one of the key components used to improve and empower an individual's social, political and economic well-being. Globally, there is concern for women empowerment and access to education. In developing countries, such as, Zimbabwe, of the 17% who are illiterate, 2/3 of them are women who are marginalized, hence most have little or no access to education especially in tertiary education.

It was out of such concern that a lot of effort was expended to allow women to access education. As such various emancipation initiatives such as the Beijing conference 1975; 1985; 1995, the United Nations development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), International decade of women, Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls Education, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or through the collaborative efforts of the various Government and Non-governmental Organisations were adopted and implemented (OJO :2006). In spite of such noble and credible initiatives, gender inequality based on unequal educational accessibility remained a prejudice for women across the globe.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has been seen as the panacea to this human tragedy. Chiome, Chakanyuka & Chabaya (2011), postulate that scholars and politicians in many countries in the world have now recognised the potential for distance education. In the same vein OJO (2006) argues that the social realities in contemporary times has shown that the limitation in the access of many women to Education Opportunities which would have enhanced their empowerment is due chiefly to the inability of the learner and the instructor to be in face to- face contact. Clearly a realistic alternative is long overdue, and this is what has necessitated the introduction of the Open and Distance Learning Model otherwise referred to as Distance Education.

Patterson (2009) opines that the purpose of distance education is to make higher education more accessible and flexible for adult learners who would not otherwise be able to continue their education within the traditional classroom setting. It was on this strength that distance and open learning came into existence. It can be argued that the coming of Open and Distance Learning was a great relief to the education –thirsty population of the world but specifically to the women population as they have been prejudiced for a long time. Gudhlanga et.al (2012) and Dzakiria (2013) see the opportunities open to women through participation in ODL as:

- more freedom of access, and thereby a wider range of opportunities for learning and qualification
- overcoming geographical barriers and other confining circumstances such as personal constraints, cultural and social barriers and lack of educational infrastructure;
- a cheaper alternative to pursuing a course than through conventional methods,
- less disruptive as education is combined with work.

The concept of open and distance learning has seen a number of institutions coming into being across the globe with good examples found in the United Kingdom(Open University of UK), Malaysia, India, Canada(Thompson Rivers University) South Africa(UNISA), Ghana, Egypt, Nigeria and Zimbabwe (ZOU) to name but a few. This study is anchored on open and distance learning in Zimbabwe in general and on the Zimbabwe Open University in particular, specifically on how it has impacted positively on the socio-political and economic welfare of the women populace.

Open and Distance Learning in Zimbabwe

According to Nyawuwata(online) Open and distance Learning(ODL) in Zimbabwe has been in existence since 1928 where the oldest of the correspondence colleges ,Rapid Results College was founded .It was then followed by the Central African Correspondence College that was founded in 1954.Then in 1980 the Zimbabwe Distance Education College (ZDECO) was established. In essence ODL at university level in Zimbabwe came into being with the established of the Centre for Distance Education (CDE) at the University of Zimbabwe in 1993. In 1999 the Centre for Distance Education transformed itself to become the Zimbabwe Open University.

Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU)

The Zimbabwe Open University was established by an Act of Zimbabwe Parliament, The Zimbabwe Open University Act Chapter 25:20 Number 12/98(ZOU, University General Information and Regulations,2007) (Bishau and Samkange:2015:95) .According to Bishau and Samkange(2015) and Nyawuwata (online) ZOU had the mission to empower people from different walks of life by developing their skills and full potential, to preserve, advance and transmit knowledge without disrupting their family and working life through the distance education system. Chiome, Chakanyuka and Chabaya (2011), Bishau and Samkange (2015) and Nyawuwata



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(online) contend that the Zimbabwe Open University originated from the University of Zimbabwe in 1993 as a Centre for Distance Education under the faculty of education offering degrees in education to teachers who had acquired certificates and diplomas in education. The Zimbabwe Open University became a fully-fledged state University with its own charter in 1999 offering degree programmes in the fields of Science and Technology, Business Management and Law, Humanities and Social Sciences and Health Sciences (Bishau and Samkange 2015). From this humble beginning, with an enrolment of 400 students in 1993 the Zimbabwe Open University has grown in leaps and bounds to what it is today. For example at its peak in 2004 its enrolment had ballooned to over 20 000 students making it the second biggest university in southern Africa to UNISA in terms of students enrolment (Chiome et al 2011) and in 2007 the Zimbabwe Open University had become the biggest university in Zimbabwe with a total student enrolment of 19676 against the country's total student enrolment of 41000. With its national Centre in Harare (Head Office) ZOU is a multi-disciplinary inter- faculty institution offering diplomas and degrees to the citizenry of Zimbabwe through open and distance learning .

Today the Zimbabwe Open University operates through the country's ten geo- political campuses (comprising of Harare Metropolitan , Bulawayo Metropolitan, Midlands, Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, Masvingo, Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East and Mashonaland West, and has an eleventh region called the virtual region to cater for those in the Diaspora).

At its most basic level, open and distance learning takes place when a teacher and student(s) are separated by physical distance, and technology (i.e., voice, video, data, and print), often in concert with face-to-face communication, is used to bridge the instructional gap (Nyawuwata: online). With such a flexible learning programme adult learners in general and women in particular should be the most beneficiaries of the Zimbabwe Open University. Based on the assumption that women have embraced the Open and Distance Learning mode which usually suits students who fulfill other commitments such as work and family, this study intends to assess the socio-economic transformation that ODL through ZOU has had on women in Zimbabwe in general and to the women in Gwanda in particular.

Statement of the problem

The advent of Open and Distance Learning mode in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the world has been viewed as a panacea for women underdevelopment who had been constrained of time, accessibility and financial resources to pursue conventional education. To this end Dzakiria (2013) posit that the female population often outnumber the male population on DE programmes in Malaysia . This high female population on DE programmes may be understood from the unique mode of delivery, which fits females with their multiple roles as career and family women and at the same time have to upgrade themselves. As such, all things being equal, more women than men should embrace the Open and Distance Learning offered by the Zimbabwe Open University subsequently transforming their socio-economic well-being. This study therefore is an attempt to assess how ODL has transformed the socio-economic well-being of women in Zimbabwe's Gwanda District.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to assess how Open and Distance Education has transformed women socially and economically in Gwanda District with a view to recommend strategies to enhance the utility of ODL to women in Zimbabwe and globally.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions

- 1) To what extent has ODL enhanced the social status of women in terms of respect and confidence in the family and the community at large in Gwanda District?
- 2) To what extent has ODL improved the employment and promotion prospects of women?
- 3) Has ODL given women the capacity to be financially independent and earn higher salaries
- 4) Has ODL increased women's career prospects
- 5) To what extent has ODL enlightened women on legal literacy, women's rights and entitlements

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. In support of this assertion Mahsud et al (2014) argue that "Any investment in the



development of human capital, ignoring the female population cannot be fruitful for the progress of the country. Education is key for women to be economically empowered in this present challenging era. UNFPA (1994) is of the opinion that education promotes the fulfillment of women's potential in skills development, employment and giving paramount importance to the elimination of poverty, illiteracy and ill health among women.

Although education is a fundamental right from which all individuals should equally benefit, discrimination on sex, ethnicity, political affiliations or creed, various scholars have shown that there has been a significant difference between men and women. (Demiray and Dundar 2013). Women have tended to lag behind their male counterparts in accessing education. Conventional means of study have also tended to exclude women because of their productive and reproductive roles. (Njaya 2015) This opinion is also supported by (Evans,1995;Compura, 2003;Przymus, 2004) in Njaya (2015) who report that women find it difficult to embark on further studies especially at their adult stage when they have begun to build their families. The rising cost of conventional education further excludes marginalized groups including women from accessing university education.

The advent of Open and Distance learning has come as a panacea to enable the often marginalized woman to acquire education. This has enabled the woman to continue with education and her family commitments. Those that have dropped out of school have been assisted to continue with their education to give them skills to contribute fully in the social and economic aspects of their nations. ODL has opened doors to women empowerment. In a study in Parkistan in 2014, 91% of the participating women confirmed that education through ODL enhances women's access /control over family resources eg income, gold ornaments, domesticated animals and valuable goods. Through ODL the woman gains skills that enhance her employment and promotion prospects. This opportunity results in improved average earnings of the woman enabling her to take an active part in providing for the welfare of the family. ODL enables the woman to take informed financial decisions of purchasing different household accessories more confidently. Women become more economically active and contribute not only in their lives and the lives of their families but to the over all socio- economic development of their country. This is supported by Karsenti and Collin (2010) on ODL programmes in Africa 2007-2010 who found that ODL graduates had a stronger felling of professional competence.

Most of the ODL courses offered are job oriented and related to different professional fields. Management courses offered to women enable them to be better managers of their institutions. They readily utilize the acquired skills enhancing their effectiveness. ODL exposes the students to the outer world. This gives women confidence in inter acting at different forums like meetings and conferences.ODL has a significant contribution in status attainment of the women in the country. It enhances their opportunities of owning and controlling family resources and assets.

In a study to assess the impact of ODL in women empowerment in Zimbabwe Njaya T. 2015 found the following as the benefits that women in Zimbabwe had derived

- Earning a degree improved women's social esteem
- Enabled women to earn higher incomes
- Women became more educated and financially independent
- Women gained more respect in the family and community at large
- Women gained more confidence in dealing with family members and community at large
- Made women more employable and enhanced their promotional opportunities
- Increased women's career opportunities
- Enlightened women on legal literacy, women's literacy and entitlements

In the light of the benefits that women in general in Zimbabwe have benefited from ODL, what specific benefits have the often marginalized women in Gwanda derived by undertaking programmes through the ODL mode?

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Human Capita theory which advocates for investing in human beings through education so as achieve personal and national development (economic and social development) .It is in the light of this theory that this study was executed.



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to successfully carry a research, one has to think about the research design, the research method, population, the instruments data gathering and data analysis processes.

3.1 The research Design

A research design is “a plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done” (Maree 2007 in Tshuma, 2010:125). In the same vein Heppner, Kivlighan & Wampold (1992:43) highlight that:

A research design assists to examine specific questions in a valid, systematic and objective manner by reducing as many rival explanations as possible and yet isolating the variables of interest to the research question.

A research design can therefore be seen as a plan, framework or structure which links the philosophical foundations and approach to its methods in order to provide credible, accountable and legitimate answers to the research questions. This study used the case study design

“A case study is a research method which allows for an in-depth examination of events, phenomena or other observations within a real-life context for purposes of investigation, theory development and testing, or simply as a tool for learning” (Yin, 2003 in Tshuma, 2010:135). In summary, a case study is an in-depth study of a particular situation in its real-life context for the purposes of solving a problem of interest to the researcher. It provides rich descriptions (in-depth study) of a particular (single case) producing authentic findings through the use of multiple sources of evidence. The choice of the case study in the current study was due to the researchers’ intention to study in depth a single case (Matabeleland South Province out of ten (10) educational provinces in the country) in its natural setting so as to produce credible and acceptable findings.

3.2 The research method

Research can take a quantitative, qualitative or a mixed method paradigm. In this study a qualitative research paradigm was chosen based on the nature of the study at hand which sought to explore participants’ views on the effectiveness of the affirmative action policy in creating opportunities for women advancement to educational management positions in Matabeleland South region.

3.3 Qualitative Research

Golafshani (2003:600) posit that:

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand in context-specific settings, such as ‘real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest. Broadly defined means any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification.

Similarly Patton (2001 in Golafshani, 2003:600) posits that:

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as “real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” This means that respondents are not manipulated in any way, rather the researcher is immersed among the respondents in their natural settings in order to observe and record what they do and say in their daily life undertakings.

To learn about this phenomenon, *“the inquirer asks participants broad, general questions, collects the detailed views of participants in the form of words or images, and analyzes the information for description and themes”* (Creswell, 2003 cited in Tichapondwa, 2013:108). Qualitative research is therefore a process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say. The researcher has to be immersed within participants so as to record data as it happens. It is chiefly non-numeric and focuses on exploring in as much detail as possible to achieve ‘depth’ rather than ‘breadth’.

In this study qualitative research was found suitable because it allows researchers’ to observe and interact with the participants in their real- life settings, hence opinions of teachers, heads of schools, education officers and the provincial educational directorate from Matabeleland South were sought.



3.4 The target population

Tuckman (1994) in Tshuma, (2010:86) posit that:

The population in a research context is any target group of individuals that has one or more characteristics in common that is of interest to the researcher for purposes of gaining information and drawing conclusions.

The target population of this study comprised of all primary and secondary school teachers, heads of schools, deputy heads of schools, education officers, district education officers and the provincial education directorate in Matabeleland South region of education. It was from this population that a sample was chosen for an intense study through relevant sampling strategies.

3.5 Sampling Strategies

This study used the purposive sampling technique. Tichapondwa (2013:124) posit that,

The primary consideration in purposive sampling is your judgment as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study... You as a researcher only go to those people who in your opinion are likely to have the required information and will be willing to share it with you.

In the same vein, Shava (2012:160) advises that, "the aim in purposive sampling is to identify "information –rich" participants who have ... detailed knowledge or direct experience relevant to the phenomenon of interest to the study/researcher". This study used purposive sampling to get a sample which provided he much needed data to see the study through.

3.6 Data collection methods

Data was collected through individual interviews.

The interview technique of data collection

Frey and Oishi (1995:01) define the interview technique as "a purposeful conversation in which one person asks prepared questions (interviewer) and another answers them (respondent)". Alternatively, the interview technique is known as a face-to-face interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee in order to gain information on a particular topic or a particular area of interest to the researcher.

This study used semi-structured individual interviews that facilitated direct interaction between the researchers on one side and the women who have studied through ODL. The interviews enabled the researchers to collect rich descriptive data from the information rich informants that provided a deeper understanding of the role of in achieving socio economic transformation. The interviews allowed the participants to tell their own story in their own words in greater detail based on their personal feelings, knowledge, experiences and perceptions in their own language or words.

3.7 Analyzing qualitative data

Borgden and Biklen (1982) in Shava,(2012:150) defines qualitative data analysis as, "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and deciding what is important and is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others". In this study the physical sorting and analysis of the qualitative data was done, breaking the raw data into themes and categories that relate to the research questions. From there, the researcher described, analysed and interpreted what was seen and heard in terms of common words, phrases, themes or patterns that aided the understanding and interpretation of that which was emerging. Finally data from the individual interviews was linked to form a global picture that answers the question at hand.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study findings are based on the experiences of the women who undertook ODL studies through the Zimbabwe Open University. The majority of these interviewees talked glowingly about how ODL has transformed their social and economic lives from low positions at work and in the home (domestic arena) to earn an achieved social and economic status in the community and in their work positions. The findings are detailed below.



4.1 Why did you choose to study with an ODL institution?

The study participants explained that they preferred ODL to conventional institutions because it was/is convenient, flexible, and accessible and cost affordable as they had both work and family responsibilities. Studying through ODL allowed them to study in the comfort of their homes as ZOU had fulfilled its motto of bringing education to their door steps. One of the interviewees had this to say; *'ODL allowed me to work and learn at the same time. I had three children who needed my attention hence I could not leave them alone to go to a conventional institution, hence I opted for ODL to learn, work and manage my family at the same time'*. This is in line with Njaya's findings (2015) who says "Open learning model fits studying around other commitments family, relatives, community, household chores and work." From the above testimony ZOU has become an institution of choice for women who are normally constrained of time and household chores to undertake higher education on a full time basis.

4.2 To what extent has ODL qualification improved you in the following areas?

The study revealed that ODL has added social and economic value to the well being of women in the areas identified below.

4.2.1 Employment prospects

In terms of employment prospects the study participants indicated that they are now more marketable than before obtaining an ODL qualification even outside their profession which is predominantly education in nature. One interviewee had this say about her employment prospects; *'I have become marketable in universities ,the courses I covered in my ODL programme include all aspects a librarian should know ,some of the courses include marketing which has become handy in widening my employment horizon'* In the same vein one ODL graduate had this to say about her employment prospects; *'I can now be employed as a university lecturer ,social welfare officer, or self employed by opening an Early Childhood Development Care centre since I am a holder of a BEDM, MEDM and a BECD qualification all through ODL from a holder of an O level certificate and certificate in education before undertaking ODL studies'*. From the above words there is evidence that ODL has improved the employment prospects of women as they can be employed in many sectors of the economy consequently economically transforming the women too. This is supported by Njaya (2015) who found out that ODL programmes made women more employable and enhanced their promotional opportunities. This is in line with Demiray and Lurabay (2000) in Twaah (2010) who are of the opinion that ODL provides opportunities that enhance the educational qualifications of women and raise their occupational bargaining skills.

4.2.2 Promotion prospects

The study participants indicated that the ODL qualifications have allowed them to be promoted at work to higher positions. The majority of them indicated that before acquiring ODL qualifications, they were mere classroom practitioners armed with either a certificate or a diploma in education. On attaining an ODL qualification they have now moved into the higher echelons of educational management as heads of schools, college lecturers, and education officers among other educational management positions. One interviewee explained her steps up the promotion ladder thus, *'after acquiring my ODL qualification of a BCOM HR and MBA, I was regraded to a Human Resources Officer, after two years I was promoted to Senior Human Resources Officer, then a Principal Human Resources Officer which is equivalent to the post of Deputy Provincial Education Director'*. In the same vein another interviewee described how she has been promoted since attaining an ODL qualification of MEDM, thus *'I moved from class room teacher, to a senior teacher, then to a deputy head of school, head of school and now a District Education Inspector, thanks to the Zimbabwe Open University which opened up my promotion avenues for me and my fellow ODL graduates'*. These words are a testimony that ODL has done wonders to women socially and economically. This is supported by Karsenti and Colin (2010) who found that on completing an ODL programme women increased their promotion prospects and an assignment of more responsibilities.

4.2.3 Increased Earnings (salary and allowances)

The promotion women have experienced due to their ODL qualifications have been accompanied with enhanced earnings from salaries and allowances with some of them even doing part time employment based on their qualifications. One of the study participant had this to say; *'my ODL qualification has enhanced my salary in that in my employment as a college lecturer my salary has been increased, at the same time I do part time tutorship for a number of higher education institutions resulting in enhanced earnings from*



my salary and allowances from my part time work' These enhanced salaries and allowances have definitely economically transformed the welfare of women through ODL. This is supported by Karsenti and Colin (2010), and Njaya (2015) who reported the ODL programme resulted in women being promoted and getting a higher salary

4.2.4 Social Status (respect at home, work and in the greater community)

The study revealed that women in possession of ODL qualifications have earned respect at home, work and in the greater community. The study participants indicated that they have become role models in the home, advisors/counselors at work/church and opinion people in the community. This has enhanced their social standing in the home, work place and the community at large. The following account proves the point under discussion, *'people come to me for advice at work and at church, I have represented the college principal at their meetings and I was also seconded to be the Provincial Elections officer a few years ago'* said one interviewee. This is evidence that ODL has positively transformed the lives of women who now enjoy a lot of respect at home, work and in the greater community due to the education they have, the money they earn, and the office they occupy. The often down trodden species (women) has now a new enhanced and earned social status even among the male group which has for many years refused to see themselves as equal to women.

4.3 In which way has ODL qualification empowered women to efficiently carry out their duties at work? (E.g. on supervision, financial management, planning and etc)

The study showed that the ODL studies undertaken by women have increased their efficiency in conducting their duties at work. In fact the studies have empowered and equipped women with tutorial, research, management, conflict resolution, counseling and motivation skills among the many skills women now display. This point is enhanced/supported by one interviewee thus, *'it has equipped me with conflict management skills, personnel management and leadership skills including counseling skills as a public officer in charge of a district'*. Similarly another interviewee had this to say, *'I have acquired report writing skills using ICT (moving with times), leadership skills to motivate, guide, counsel and grievance handling skills, financial and personnel management skills, project planning and planning skills in general'*. There is no doubt that women have become more efficient in service delivery in as far as their work is concerned. This is supported by Karsenti and Colin (2010) who found that completing the ODL programme gave women a sense of professional competence.

4.4 Has ODL given women financial management skills to efficiently manage family finances?

The study participants indicated that through ODL they have acquired financial management skills which have come handy in managing family financial resources. They indicated that the first skill they mastered during their studies is budgeting, which meant balancing family finances, covering fees for themselves (ODL learners), the children and in some cases the husband as well including other household needs such food and so forth. The skill of financial budgeting was then extended to time management to effectively balance house hold chores with educational obligations for the children and women. One of the study participants had this to say about the financial management skills she acquired through ODL; *'ODL has helped me a lot because I did a course in economics in education, project management and financial management in education hence these courses have empowered me to efficiently manage family financial resources by ensuring that we live within our means'*. One can therefore conclude that ODL has made women wiser in terms of managing and sharing the family cake, some women have even become successful entrepreneurs running small family projects which confirm that ODL has successfully transformed women economically.

4.5 To what extent has ODL enlightened women on equal rights, women rights and entitlements?

The study findings show that ODL has brought enlightenment to women in knowing and understanding of issues of equal rights, human rights and entitlement. This is confirmed by one interviewee thus; *'I have been enlightened on equal rights, I now know my rights as a married woman including my workplace responsibilities. I now understand these issues better than before undertaking my ODL studies. It has created awareness on equal opportunities between men and women, if you are not read you tend to confuse these issues'*. Women who have undertaken ODL studies are now aware of their rights in the home, work place and in the greater communities, this brings about independence, hence they have been transformed socially.



4.6 To what extent has ODL built your confidence to participate in meetings, workshops and conferences to share information?

The study revealed that ODL has built women's confidence in participating in public spheres such as handling administrative positions, participating in meetings, workshops and conferences. Some of the courses they did in ODL needed them to do oral presentations to their colleagues especially the post graduate programmes. In this sense one study participant had this to say; *'I acquired confidence through Masters in Educational Management programme where oral presentation is one of the mode of learning .Even the research project I did, took me to different places during data collection, meeting different people hence I have now become confident of my myself and can handle any situation without fear'*. Similarly another interviewee intimated that *'I am now confident to mix and mingle with all people of different classes especially at church, workshops, meetings and conferences. You talk with confidence due to increased positive self esteem accrued due to the ODL qualification; hence women have been transformed socially through ODL'*. It can therefore be seen that ODL has had a positive effect in building women's confidence hence they can now handle any situation without fear in the home, workplace and even in the public arena among their juniors and seniors.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that ODL has transformed women socially & economically in that:

- They are now employable
- They now earn enhanced salaries and allowances
- They now occupy influential positions
- They have gained confidence to participate in workshops, meetings & conferences.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that:

- The govt subsidises ODL to increase women in such programmes
- Campaigns be undertaken on the benefits of ODL to women
- More research be done on the benefits of ODL

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