

**INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION INTERVENTIONS ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE 2017 WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WORKSHOP BY THEOONI OF IFE IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This research investigated the impact of the Women Empowerment Workshop organised by the Ooni of Ife in Osun State, Nigeria, in 2017. The workshop aimed to enhance women's empowerment through development communication strategies. A total of 7 women participated in the study, and data were collected through focus group discussion and analysed thematically. Findings revealed that the workshop effectively raised awareness of systemic challenges faced by women, fostered empowerment, and strengthened social networks. Participants reported increased confidence, particularly in their ability to advocate for themselves, engage in community activities, and collaborate with others. The workshop also provided mentorship and expanded social connections that facilitated advocacy and cooperation. However, challenges such as limited resources, personal responsibilities, and lack of ongoing support hindered the full application of the new skills. This study shows the importance of sustained financial and social support in empowerment programs and recommends follow-up initiatives, the creation of a resource hub, and the inclusion of practical activities in the curriculum to enhance long-term impact.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Feminism, Women workshop

**Introduction**

World Bank data shows that 53% of Nigerian women live below the poverty line, which is \$1.90 per day (World Bank, 2018). This worrisome figure underlines the necessity to enhance quality of the life of women in the country through various interventions. As a result, there are policy measures adopted by the Nigerian government, as well as the international organisations aimed at empowering women. However, most of these programs in Nigeria and across Africa are mainly supported by international organisations and development partners. There have been hinderances such as cultural constraints since most of these interventions are informed by Western feminism hence, they may not align with the local culture (Akpan, 2015). Also, the meaning of empowerment varies significantly for African women according to their age, status, ethnicity, geographic location, cultural, or religious beliefs, which hamper the achievement of empowerment aims and objectives based on Western paradigms. Most of these programs were designed and implemented without even considering the Nigerian women themselves (Akpan, 2015). Referring to Rowlands (1997) it is possible to identify that, there is a tendency to define the concept of empowerment in the framework of feminism where motivation in oppression dynamics is highlighted.

There is need to empower women for sustainable development, and there exist international and national organisations for this cause. In Nigeria, there are cultural, economic and social barriers that limit women and prevent them from realising their full potential. One intervention that seeks to empower women is the Women Empowerment Workshop that was organised by the Ooni of Ife in Osun State in 2017 (Jaiyeola, 2020). This workshop aims at empowering women for increased economic opportunities, leadership potential, and contribution to the society. The Women Empowerment Workshop organised by the Ooni of Ife began in 2017 and has had significant impact as a development communication initiative. For instance, in its 2018 edition, 500 women from various parts of Osun State participated, receiving training and support to enhance their skills for financial independence. The workshops typically took place at the Oba OkunadeSijuade Hall in Ile-Ife. These events aim to address poverty by equipping women with practical skills and encouraging the development of small and medium-scale enterprises, which are seen as catalysts for economic growth and empowerment.

Development communication interventions are instrumental in influencing behavioural and social change processes (Nieuwoudt, 2017). Employing different types of inventions in form of media, group discussions, organised workshops, and seminarshelp to prevent and address various issues while fostering sustainable behavioural change. This paper was aimed at assessing the

effectiveness of development communication interventions with emphasis on the Ooni of Ife's 2017 Women Empowerment Workshop in Osun State. The impact of the workshop on the status of women was examined in the study through the gender perspective covering such aspects as financial responsibility and economic independence, leadership positions, and active participation in community life.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the 2017 Women Empowerment Workshop by the Ooni of Ife as a development communication intervention, focusing on its impact on women's empowerment in Osun State.

The objectives of this study are:

1. Assess the communication strategies used in the Women Empowerment Workshop and their effectiveness in engaging participants.
2. Determine the extent to which participants of the workshop feel empowered in financial, social, and leadership aspects after attending the workshop.
3. Explore the opportunities presented by the workshop in fostering women's empowerment goals.
4. Explore the challenges presented by the workshop in fostering women's empowerment.
5. Suggest ways of improving future women's empowerment programs in Osun State and beyond based on participants' experiences and identified challenges.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Development Communication Strategies in Women Empowerment Programs**

Development communication strategies have emerged as essential tools for fostering women's empowerment by addressing the structural barriers they face. These strategies involve the deliberate use of communication to encourage social change and equitable development (Uwaoma et al., 2024). The integration of participatory models ensures that women are not mere recipients but active contributors to their empowerment journey. For example, programs that incorporate technology and financial literacy effectively enhance women's economic independence, broaden their decision-making capabilities, and amplify their voices in the community (Ayinla et al., 2024). Such initiatives are particularly impactful when designed to align with the unique cultural and socio-economic contexts of the target population, promoting inclusivity and sustainable outcomes.

The relationship between development communication and women's empowerment is reinforced through its alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (achieving gender equality). Empowerment programs leveraging participatory communication models prioritise women's involvement in policy-making and implementation processes (Mefalopulos, 2019). This participatory approach fosters inclusivity, ensuring that interventions resonate with the lived experiences of women. In contexts such as rural development and entrepreneurship, these strategies enable women to overcome systemic challenges and contribute significantly to their communities. Moreover, integrating multimedia tools, such as live broadcasts and online platforms, enhances the dissemination of information and creates opportunities for collaboration and advocacy among women across various sectors (Adeleye et al., 2024).

### **Cultural and Structural Barriers to Women Empowerment in Nigeria**

Cultural norms and traditional beliefs in Nigeria significantly impede women's empowerment. Patriarchal systems often limit women's roles to domestic spheres, discouraging their active participation in education, leadership, and economic activities. Gender stereotypes reinforce these barriers, portraying women as less capable of holding influential positions or contributing equally to economic development. For instance, traditional practices in some Nigerian communities, such as early marriage, restrict women's access to education and career opportunities, perpetuating a cycle of dependency and reduced agency (Kakabadse et al., 2019). Social stigma against assertive women further discourages their participation in public decision-making, creating a cultural environment that undermines their potential.

Structural challenges compound the effects of cultural barriers, as systemic inequalities often prevent women from accessing critical resources. Limited access to quality education, healthcare, and financial services disproportionately affects women, particularly in rural areas. Gender biases in employment and wage disparities further marginalise women in the labourmarket, curtailing their economic independence. Policies and legal frameworks, while sometimes progressive, often lack effective implementation mechanisms, leaving women vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation (Akinola, 2020). Additionally, infrastructural deficits, such as inadequate childcare facilities and transportation, hinder women's ability to balance familial responsibilities with economic and professional aspirations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Participatory Communication Theory serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. The participatory communication theory is relevant for development communication, it emphasises the active involvement of individuals or communities in the communication process, shifting away from traditional top-down models. This approach encourages two-way dialogue, where participants contribute to shaping messages and solutions that impact their lives, fostering empowerment and collective action. It highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity, ensuring that communication strategies resonate with the community's social and cultural context. By involving communities in planning, implementation, and evaluation, participatory communication enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of development programs. The theory is widely used in projects related to education, public health, and social justice, ensuring that interventions are locally relevant and supported by the community. However, critiques note that power dynamics and unequal representation within communities can hinder its effectiveness (Chambers, 2008; Freire, 1970; Servaes, 2012).

### **Empirical Review**

The article "Digital Literacy and Women's Empowerment: Bridging the Gender Gap in Technology for Achieving SDGs" explores how enhancing digital literacy can empower women, especially in developing regions, to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The authors emphasise the critical role of technology in overcoming gender disparities in education, employment, and social participation. The study suggests that digital literacy programs can enable women to access new economic opportunities, gain greater autonomy, and influence decision-making processes, thus bridging the gender gap. The article concludes by recommending policies for increasing women's digital skills, particularly in rural areas, and calls for integrating ICT into educational curricula to empower women globally

The article by Obadeyi et al (2017) examines the correlation between women entrepreneurship development and women empowerment in Abeokuta South Local Government in Ogun State. The study reveals how entrepreneurship activities can function as women's economic and sociopolitical emancipation in the region. According to the research, women are significant contributors to economic growth and community development when they venture into business. From the above points, it is understood that through entrepreneurial practices, women are also able to earn an income, change their status, and thereby improving the well-being of their households. The study showed that entrepreneurship brings economic gains but mostly empowers women by instilling personal development, self-esteem, and leadership skills. The article presents different

issues of concern to women entrepreneurs, including financial restrictions, gender bias and stereotyping, and lack of coaching. These barriers can negatively affect their performance, thereby compromising their prospects in business settings.

Zadey (2024) study on harnessing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for women's empowerment in rural development and micro-finance explored how digital technologies can bridge gender gaps and improve women's access to resources in these areas. The study utilised a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to assess the impact of ICT tools. The findings showed that ICT facilitates women's access to financial services, educational resources, and social networks, empowering them economically and socially. He found some challenges such as cultural barriers and limited digital literacy remain. The study recommends strengthening ICT infrastructure, enhancing digital literacy programs for women, and integrating gender-sensitive policies in ICT initiatives for rural development.

### **Research Methodology**

The study employed the qualitative research design to critically analyse the effects of the development communication interventions for women's empowerment, using the 2017 Women Empowerment Workshop spearheaded by the Ooni of Ife in Osun State as a case study. This type of research necessitates the use of a case study, as it is a focused approach that enables investigation of a single actual event in its natural setting (Harrison et al., 2017). Applying the case study approach allows not only for the examination of the organisational structure of the workshop but also the participants' experiences.

The research design mainly used the focus group discussion as the main data collection technique. The focus group enables the researcher to engage a group of women who partook in the workshop to openly discuss how the intervention affected their lives. The format of the focus group discussions was designed to be more open and since people can hear what others have to say, they start to ponder their understanding of the information shared in the workshop, its application in their communities as well as the opinions of others (Nyumba et al., 2018).

This research employed purposive sampling technique as a way of choosing the participants for the research. The participants were women who attended the Women Empowerment Workshop organised by Ooni of Ife in Osun State. This helped in the elimination of biases that may be put forward by outsiders who have no experience interacting with the workshop. The participants who

completed the FGD 7 women in order to ensure a diversity in terms of age, occupation, and socio-economic status; thus, there was a variety of responses regarding the significance of the workshop.

To analyse the data gathered from the focus group discussions, thematic analysis was used. Findings of the thematic analysis included key themes, patterns, and insights associated with women's empowerment and the perceived outcome of the workshop (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This also included issues of organisational constraints to women's empowerment, recommendations on how to overcome these constraints, and development communication as a tool that can foster permanent change.

### Data analysis and presentation

The data collected are from the beneficiaries of the workshop in order to obtain information to respond to the research questions that have been developed in this research. In this focus group discussion, there were 7 women, and therefore 7 responses were completed and have been discussed in this section.

Participants	Age	Occupation	Marital Status	Educational Background
1	32	Farmer	Married	Secondary school
2	45	Trader	Widowed	Primary school
3	28	Teacher	Single	University degree
4	38	Nurse	Married	Nursing certificate
5	50	Trader	Divorced	Secondary school
6	45	Tailor	Married	University degree
7	31	Civil servant	Single	University degree

### Research Question 1: What specific communication strategies were utilised in the Women Empowerment Workshop in 2017?



### **Use of Multiple Communication Methods**

Multimedia helps in increasing the extent of learning through the use of multiple means of communicating knowledge. Regarding the strategies employed in the application of integrated marketing communications during the workshop, participants mentioned that the use of multiple forms of communication such as mouth to mouth made the learning process more interesting. Some described the benefits of discussions and cooperation in groups to achieve set goals and tasks. One participant said, "I found that we were able to relate to the activities in the group in terms of going through similar situations and that made the learning easier."

### **Using Visual Aids and Presentations Enhances Comprehension**

Visual aids and structured presentation were pointed out as one of the communication strategies that helped in the comprehension of the message where the topics were complex. These methods were cited by participants as helpful aids in terms of clarity of instructions. The comment made by one of the participants was: 'The slides and visuals were helpful when understanding the concepts explained.' I was able to clearly distinguish the information that was presented." A similar comment was made by another participant as they said, "The involvement of presentations was also an advantage because it took abstract concepts and explained them in simpler parts."

### **Facilitator Interaction and Engagement**

The topics that frequently emerged were the satisfaction of the participants, the role of facilitators in communication, and the process. Others pointed out that active facilitation helped people to make contributions and keep them engaged during the session. Participant 1 noted, "It was easy to ask questions as the facilitators were friendly and made me feel more inclined to be engaged." Participant 2 added that, "Their energy and willingness to teach the content was refreshing; it was much like a classroom setting." With regards to the learning environment that was created in the said workshop, participants pointed out that the climate was one that promoted learning. This was due to the facilitators' availability and assurance that it was okay to ask questions. One of the participants remarked how they felt more inclined to ask questions for more clarifications because of the warm reception from the people in charge; this made them more attentive. Participant 5 said "There was a favourable environment for free expression, and this boosted our confidence in sharing knowledge."

### **Intense Participation of Individuals During Activities**



It was ascertained from the participants that the communication strategies employed during the workshop greatly improved their level of interaction and participation. Some pointed out that although interactive in their nature, the activities sustained their attention and invited engagement. This was supported by one of the participants as she said, “The group work made the workshop interesting and I was looking forward to participating and gaining more knowledge.” Another supported this view, saying, “I also thought that when working in groups, we were a team, so I wanted to contribute.”

This element addresses the improved understanding and retention of information. Many participants also stressed on the importance of using visual aids and having a structured approach to presentation so that people can understand it. Most stated that such approaches were not only fun but also effective in helping them remember the facts. Another participant said, ‘Finally, I was impressed by effective and memorable visuals used in the workshop.’ It was encouraging to see that: “I still refer back to my notes.” Participant 5 said, “I preferred it because I could easily remember things that were presented in front of me during discussions.”

## **Research Question 2: In what ways do participants feel empowered in financial, social, and leadership aspects as a result of attending the women empowerment workshop in 2017?**

### **Increased Financial Literacy**

As evidenced in the results, participants felt that their overall financial literacy had been enhanced by the workshop. Some of the respondents said that the training offered them useful skills for addressing their financial issues. For instance, one participant stated, “I only mastered how to prepare a decent budget and avoided the vice of spending too much money on undeserving things.” Participant 2 said, “The workshop enlightened me about savings and investments; now I feel capable of making the right financial decisions.” The outcomes indicate that the participants’ self-efficacy improved following the workshop in terms of their financial independence. Some have said that they are now confident making their own decisions and handling their own money. One of the participants (6) noted, “I am now able to make my own financial decisions without having to consult with somebody else.” A similar sentiment was echoed by another participant, who said, “I used to be wary of spending/ investing, but now the option is clear to me.”

### **Application of Financial Knowledge**

The participants were keen on noting that the issues raised should be ‘brought to practice’ and incorporated in their decision-making on issues to do with finances. They also stressed the

importance of the practical approach of the workshop, which helped to encourage practical application of the knowledge gained. In that sense, one of the participants mentioned, “I began a small savings plan after your workshop; it was surprising how it assisted me to achieve my objectives.” Another one (7) said, “I have started to record my expenses, and it has shifted my attitude regarding how I spend money.”

### **Enhanced Social Ties**

In this regard, the participants were of the view that the workshop went a long way in enhancing the community networks much as they got a chance to interact with other women. Some stressed commonalities and the need to help one another. As one of the participants (4) clearly pointed, “I have met new friends who are also businesswomen, we help each other with ideas.” Another added, “The networking that I have done at the workshop has been very useful; we support each other on issues affecting our businesses.”

### **Availability of Mentorship and Resources**

The sector also helped participants to get access to mentors, which they considered vital for their further development. Some said that they benefited from sharing experiences and interacting with other women who have had similar experiences. Another participant (3) said, “Having someone who can listen and know what I go through has greatly helped me.” A third said, “I was aware of resources and people that I never even knew existed and they have been quite helpful.”

### **Feelings of Social Inclusion**

Interviewees noted that feelings of being accepted and increased self-efficacy in social contexts were achieved after attending the workshop. Some opined that the calls facilitated their participation due to the support of the group. One participant (5) said, “I can comfortably contribute to group discussions now; it is like being in a sorority.” Another said, “The workshop was very helpful as it offered some freedom of speech and self-acceptance.”

### **Research Question 3: What challenges did participants identify in relation to the women empowerment workshop’s role in fostering their empowerment?**

#### **Limited Access to Resources**

We have seen that one of the main barriers that participants experienced when applying the knowledge and skills acquired from the workshop was the issue of resource availability and more specifically, funding. Some complained that they could not apply the knowledge learned even

when they wanted to do so. One of the participants (2) remarked, “I think creatively, but due to lack of capital, I can hardly implement them.” Participant 3 said she agreed with the previous statement and followed up by saying, “The process of identifying tools and materials to use in my business has been challenging.”

### **Balancing Responsibilities**

Some of the challenges mentioned by the participants included the juggling of different roles like family, work, and business. This challenge sometimes made it difficult for them to spend time in practicing those new skills they had learned. Participant 4 noted that, “Managing my business alongside the household chores can be a hustle; I barely get a chance to concentrate on what has been taught.” Another (1) wrote, “No time, as there are so many things that seem to require my attention and I sometimes find it difficult to carve out time to put the changes I would like into practice.”

### **Lack of Continued Support**

One concern raised repeatedly was the absence of follow-up after the completion of the workshop. Sources cited the lack of continuing resources or support on how to proceed as an issue that surfaced from the study. Some of the participants’ comments included: “I felt a bit confused at the end of the workshop; there was no direction given on how we could further follow up and implement what we learned.” The other one (6) said, “They should have provided more frequent touchpoint or follow-ups to ensure that I stuck to the plan.”

### **Research Question 4: What opportunities did participants identify in relation to the women empowerment workshop’s role in fostering their empowerment?**

#### **Increased professional contacts**

The participants expressed that the networking aspect of the workshop was particularly beneficial as it provided the participants with an opportunity to meet other professionals, find common ground with them, and possibly form a partnership. Some highlighted the importance of the new relations from the perspective of future possibilities. This participant (3) said, “I have been able to engage with several women who are also venturing into business; we have even exchanged contacts and intend to work together on some projects sometime in the near future.” Participant 1 said, “The networking sessions were beneficial for me because they provided a pool of individuals that I can consult with whenever needed.”

### **Joint and coordinated endeavours**

Several participants revealed their interest in future shared endeavours that are likely to proceed from the interactions in the workshops. They explained how such partnerships could result in joint resource and information sharing. Participant 4 said, “We have started discussing working collectively to launch a community project that will target women’s health and their ability to engage in business.” As we can see, people appreciate the idea of working as a team: “It feels empowering to work as a team.” Participant 7 added, “In the past, I never considered forming a partnership, but now the idea has come up, I have realised how synergy has advantages since we are stronger together.”

### **New opportunities and sources of revenue**

Another advantage of the workshop was the awareness of new sources and findings that participants were not aware of before. Some of the joys mentioned included the anticipation of using these new contacts for self- and career-enhancement. The following comment was made by one of the participants (4) of the study: “During the workshop, I was informed on grant sources that I could apply for with the assistance of my new contacts.” Another (2) said, “Networking provided me with awareness of different sources that can help me in my business; I was not aware of them before now.”

### **Promoting consciousness about system-level problems**

Participants observed that the workshop provided information on the structural injustices that women endure in their societies. Some of the issues that were discussed by many during the workshop included; Many indicated and showed/criticised gender inequality and limited resource access. In their words, one participant said, ‘To be honest, I never fully appreciated how pervasive such issues really are until I attended the workshop.’ Participant 5, “Discussions made us realise that these are not just individuals’ cases but the community’s challenges.”

### **Creating Voices for Change**

A lot of participants felt the workshop gave them the confidence to start advocating for change in their local areas. They said that they felt more empowered to address issues and push for organisational change. Claiming that the workshop helped provide the necessary advocacy tools to empower its people and raise voices to discuss existing problems, one participant mentioned,

“through this program, I gained ways on how to stand up for ourselves.” Participant 3 stated, “I am encouraged to come up with projects that address such needs since I now appreciate the benefits of working in groups.”

The whole group embodied this shift and several individuals mentioned how the skills of the workshop assisted them to identify specific issues in their communities and articulate their needs. However, one participant (6) shared this sentiment: ‘Honestly, before this workshop, I did not think my opinion was important.’ It came to me that we can only fight for the changes we want when we join forces.’ Also, from the interviews, it was evident that many participants felt it necessary to support and help individuals from their communities. Discussing how to spread the information and materials they got for themselves, they mentioned their intention to organise their own workshops, meetings, and information-demonstration events. ‘I have gained knowledge and skills that I would wish to share with others; it is not all about me,’ This is according to one participant. We must empower one another.

Making sure that everybody becomes an active participant and works towards the solution. It further aimed at forming group ideas and solutions towards fixing systematic problems, which is a model created during the workshop. Some of them stressed the importance of collaboration in order to bring about positive change. There was an instance where a participant said, “We thought about the idea of agenda setting for women rights issues in the community; it makes me have a feeling of power when we come together for the same cause.” Another stated, “All these are system-related problems, which require a collective effort in solving them, and the workshop demonstrated how we can work together.”

#### **Research Question 5: What recommendations can be made to enhance future women’s empowerment programs in Osun State and beyond?**

The participants showed a sense of comfort and more willingness to have follow-up sessions after the initial workshop. Such sessions could be continuous, repeated to enhance the understanding, and entail the explanation of difficulties that may be encountered while practicing. The following ideas were voiced: “More frequent meetings would assist in keeping us on track and enthusiastic as we put into practice what has been taught.”

Organisations should provide more realistic experiences or projects.

Although most participants acknowledged the advantages of gaining theoretical knowledge, many of them expressed the need for more practical exercises that enable the development of practical

skills in realistic situations. One of the participants (2) said, “I think there should be more practical sessions in order to enhance the learning process; it allows for implementation of the lessons.”

### **Expand Resource Access**

They pointed to the scarcity of resources, opportunities for financing, materials, and guidance when implementing the strategy. Some proposed the concept of a locator centre where participants can obtain information and assistance. One participant (4) stated, “It would further improve the likelihood of our practice and application of what we learned from this course if we are provided with contacts or linked to local businesses/organisations that can provide the resources.”

### **Encourage Diverse Networking Channels**

For the effective use of the networking, the participants suggested inviting more guest speakers and business individuals to come and share their experiences. One of the participants stated, “More opinions would broaden the knowledge and create new opportunities for cooperation.”

### **Encourage Group Collaboration**

Regarding the format of the work, participants proposed that people should work in pairs and groups on community-based projects during the workshop. This could lead to collaboration and the enhancement of interpersonal bonds. As one of the participants noted, “We believe that completion of a particular project would not only benefit the skills of everyone involved, but also contribute positively towards the development of a strong network of community members.”

### **Discussion of Findings**

Based on the evidence yielded out of this study, it is established that the Women Empowerment Workshop facilitated by the Ooni of Ife plays a crucial role in enabling participants’ enlightenment of what they perceived as empowerments, opportunities for social relationship, and barriers to transforming skills acquired in their respective endeavour. Techniques such as group discussions, role-playing, and shared storytelling allowed participants to shape the learning process and apply it to their local contexts. This aligns with the Participatory Communication Theory, which highlights the significance of two-way dialogue and cultural sensitivity in fostering empowerment (Servaes&Servaes, 2021). Digital tools and visual aids were also incorporated to enhance understanding and accessibility, echoing the findings of Zadey (2024) on the role of ICT in promoting engagement in rural contexts. These strategies created an inclusive platform for learning, reflecting the theory's emphasis on participatory and context-specific communication.

Participants reported feeling empowered across multiple dimensions. Financially, they gained skills in budgeting, savings, and entrepreneurship, aligning with Jaiyeola's (2022) assertion that digital literacy programs open economic opportunities for women. Socially, the workshop fostered confidence in public speaking and negotiation, echoing the findings of Obadeyi et al. (2017) that entrepreneurial activities enhance personal development and self-esteem. Leadership-wise, participants felt more capable of influencing decisions and taking on community roles, consistent with Zadey's (2024) conclusion that ICT integration strengthens women's leadership capabilities by connecting them to resources and networks.

Participants faced challenges such as limited post-workshop support, financial constraints, and deeply rooted cultural norms. These issues resonate with Obadeyi et al. (2017), who found that financial restrictions and gender stereotyping negatively affect women entrepreneurs' performance. Similarly, Zadey (2024) identified cultural barriers and inadequate digital literacy as obstacles in utilising ICT tools effectively. These findings align with critiques of the Participatory Communication Theory, which notes that power imbalances and societal norms can limit the success of community-focused initiatives (Servaes, 2022).

Participants highlighted opportunities for leveraging digital tools, creating mentorship programs, and establishing cooperative societies to address resource constraints. This reflects Jaiyeola's (2020) recommendation to integrate ICT into empowerment programs to provide women with tools for economic and social advancement. Zadey's (2024) findings on ICT's role in enhancing access to financial services and education further substantiate these opportunities, suggesting that digital integration can bridge gaps in resource accessibility and foster sustainable empowerment.

To enhance future programs, it is recommended to integrate digital literacy training, establish mentorship networks, and address cultural barriers through community sensitisation. These strategies are supported by Jaiyeola (2020), who advocates for policies promoting women's digital skills, and Zadey (2024), who emphasises strengthening ICT infrastructure and implementing gender-sensitive policies. Additionally, involving participants in planning and feedback processes, as emphasised by the Participatory Communication Theory, can ensure that programs remain culturally relevant and effectively address the community's needs (Servaes&Servaes, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

As noted in this research, the Women Empowerment Workshop spearheaded by the Ooni of Ife in Osun State has played a tremendous role in escalating participants' knowledge of systematic issues



and stemming dependency. The Women Empowerment Workshop in 2017 proved instrumental in empowering participants across financial, social, and leadership domains. The communication strategies employed, including participatory methods and the integration of digital tools, effectively engaged participants and fostered their confidence and capacity for self-development. Participants reported significant improvements in their economic independence, leadership skills, and social influence as a direct result of the workshop. Despite its success, the workshop faced challenges such as limited financial support, cultural resistance, and insufficient post-program engagement, which hindered its broader impact. Addressing these challenges requires enhanced resource allocation, stronger mentorship frameworks, and continuous support systems to sustain empowerment outcomes. The workshop also revealed untapped opportunities, including leveraging ICT for greater reach, fostering collaborative networks, and expanding access to skills training. These opportunities underscore the potential for scaling and replicating the program to achieve broader and more sustainable results.

### **Recommendations**

The following are the recommendations based on the research findings.

- i. It is recommended that future programs incorporate tailored communication approaches that emphasise participatory methods and digital literacy to enhance engagement and inclusivity.
- ii. Another recommendation is that structured follow-up programs, including mentorship and continuous skills training are provided to sustain and expand empowerment outcomes in these areas.
- iii. Also, it is recommended that resource mobilisation plan is set up to address financial constraints and create cultural sensitisation campaigns to mitigate resistance.
- iv. It is also recommended that ICT tools are leveraged to expand access to the program and facilitate the creation of collaborative networks among participants.
- v. Lastly, it is recommended that for future empowerment programs, participant feedback mechanisms are designed as this will ensure that the needs of the community are addressed effectively.

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