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Women Education as a Panacea for Improving Community Development Projects in Oron Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.		
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Keywords		Abstract
Women, Education, Panacea, Community, Development and Projects		This study investigated women education as a panacea for community development projects in Oron Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. One research question and one null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study comprised 2,020 female adults. A sample of 202 respondents was drawn for the study. The sampling was done through simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled “Women Education as a Panacea for Improving Community Development Projects Questionnaire” (WEPICDPQ). The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Continuing Education and Development Studies and one from the Department of Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to analyse the data. The hypothesis was subjected to testing at 0.05 level of significance. The research findings revealed that political education relate to community development projects in the study area. It was recommended among others that educational curricula at both formal and adult education levels should integrate civic and political education components. This will ensure that women acquire knowledge of democratic principles, electoral processes, and local governance systems, thereby strengthening their capacity to influence development decisions at the community level.
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Introduction

Education is widely acknowledged as a fundamental driver of human capital development and a critical instrument for achieving sustainable socio-economic transformation. In contemporary development discourse, the education of women has gained prominence due to its multiplier effects on families, communities, and national development outcomes (Omoni, 2018). Women’s education enhances not only

individual capabilities but also promotes improved health, increased productivity, reduced poverty, and stronger participation in community development initiatives. As such, global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality), emphasize the need to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all, with a strong focus on empowering women and girls (Adamu, 2019; Bessong et al., 2025).

Agu (2019) stated that in developing countries like Nigeria, gender disparities in access to education remain a persistent challenge, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. Although there have been significant improvements in female enrolment rates over the years, many women still face structural and socio-cultural barriers such as poverty, early marriage, gender stereotypes, and limited access to educational resources. These challenges often restrict women's ability to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute effectively to community development processes. Consequently, communities may be deprived of the valuable contributions that educated women can offer in areas such as health promotion, environmental management, economic development, and social cohesion (Egbo, 2017; Oboqua et al., 2018, Akam et. al 2013).

Community development projects are essential mechanisms for improving the living standards of people at the grassroots level. These projects often include initiatives in infrastructure development, education, healthcare, sanitation, and economic empowerment (Erim et al., 2014; Francis, 2023). The success and sustainability of such projects largely depend on the active participation and commitment of community members. Notably, women constitute a significant proportion of the population and are often directly involved in managing household and community welfare (Oboqua et al., 2017). Therefore, their level of education plays a crucial role in determining their effectiveness in contributing to and sustaining development initiatives. In Oron Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, community development efforts have been evident in various forms, including self-help projects, government interventions, and non-governmental organization (NGO) activities. Despite these efforts, Onamah (2018); Bessong et al., (2025) submitted that the level of success and sustainability of some projects has been uneven, raising concerns about the extent of community involvement and capacity. Given the strategic role women play in community life, their educational status becomes a key variable in understanding the equitable sharing of community development projects in the area.

Equitability in power sharing particularly in the developed countries today is quite commendable. In the past, political office holding was considered as men's birth right which culminated in lopsided development due to sentiments. The inclusion of women in key positions in the political arena has brought about development and improvement of life and social well-being of the people. In Singapore for instance,

women play significant roles in the planning and implementation of government policies for general good of the populace (Bessong et al., 2026). Key areas like finance, budget, infrastructural development and tourism are all headed by women who are well educated and qualified. Apart from that, these women have gathered experiences working in several departments and units abroad. Conclusively, it is said that the feat Singapore has achieved in the recent past is associated with the inclusion of women in political positions (Niasse, 2023). It is therefore an open secret that the continued exclusion of women from political office holding is responsible for the slow pace of development in our local communities.

Francis (2023) further noted that the inclusion of women in grassroot politics in Ini/Ikono federal constituencies has brought a glimmer of light and hope to children of school age and widows in the area. Between 2002 and 2011 about 326 women mostly widows had been empowered in different areas of human endeavours to enhance sustainable development. About 64 orphans have been sponsored in secondary school and 2 to learn various trades that would make them employers of labour and business owner and managers soon. The idea behind this development is to encourage women take care of their families as widows and to empower the younger women who will become responsible citizens. Okueze (2020) however maintained that there is adequate support for women to gain political offices. Unlike before when women were not supported by their fellow women to participate in politics, today, the awareness is high, and many more women are vying for key political offices at the local, state and federal government levels. This because attention has been shifted away from the men who have exhibited high-handedness and lack of respect for the public offices they had been voted into. Notably however, the few women who have been voted into power have performed credible well and impacted positively on the lives of their community members. It is believed that the greater women participation in Nigerian politics, the better for the society and the people at large.

In the area of political empowerment for women in Akwa Ibom State, there are no clear-cut programmes for women political empowerment except for the mobilization of women by individual political parties only to be used to carry votes and to be dumped after being voted into power. However, they are certain radio programmes aired for public enlightenment on the need to cast your votes for the best candidate of your choice (Olofu et al., 2024). The radio programmes also educate the masses of the negative effect of selling their votes for money and facing the option of mortgaging their future and those of their future generations and communities. The non-chalant attitude presented towards the empowerment of women in the area of politics, governance and leadership is also attributed to the domination of males to further incapacitate women and continue to oppress them.

UNDP Report, (2017) records that despite the pronounced commitment of the international community to bridge the gender gap in the formal political arena, reinforced by the convention in Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of

Action, there are only twelve countries where women hold 33% or more seats in the parliaments. Onamah (2018) observes that across the globe especially in this 21st century that women have occupied prominent positions in government. Onamah said further that about fifty-five women from forty countries have been elected as prime ministers and presidents, among whom were Mrs Margaret Thatcher (former British prime minister), Mrs Golda Meir (former Israeli prime minister) Indira Gandhi of India, Germany chancellor-Angela Merkel, Michelle Bachelet- Chilean president, Tarja Halonen-Finnish president, Bangladesh prime minister-Begum Khaleda Zia to mention a few. In Africa, we have had two women prime ministers-Lisa Diogo of Mozambique and Elizabeth Dondo in Central African Republic and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.

The UN report of the Expert Group meeting held in Addis Ababa Ethiopia in 2005 holds the views that to understand and realize equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, certain conditions must be fulfilled for effective community development projects and sustainable development namely political participation, political representation, political leadership as well as political accountability (Oroka et al., 2024). Political participation implies allowing women agenda to be developed by women who are taking part in politics through such activities as partaking in discussions, debates, lobbying as well as activism in formal and informal ways; political representation consists of the articulation and presentation of political agendas of given groups by various actors in decision-making arenas and key social forums in democratic societies. Various actors can speak for various interests, audiences, political parties, members of parliament, social movement and groups, as well as specific state-based agencies promoting interests, such as national machineries for the advancement of women (Oboqua et al., 2017). Group representations could be based on a variety of dimensions for instance constituency interests, ascribed interest such as sex, ethnicity, religion and ideological interests which may be conservative, liberal or socialist.

Steffen (2018) reveals in her study of the Solomon Islands that in 1990, the United Nations Economic and Social Council set the target of having 30 percent or more women in national legislative seats in each country worldwide. While 30 percent stands as the minimum, the parity zone is considered between 40 and 60 percent. As of January 2014, women held only 20.4 percent of the legislative seats across the world. In the Solomon Islands, women held none (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014). In Nigeria at the federal level we had 27 percent female representative in federal appointive positions. In 2000, the federal government established its national policy on women, which provided for 30 percent affirmative action for women representation in the legislative and executive arms of government as well as in political hierarchies. To buttress further in the participation of women in politics, the Federal Ministry of Women

Affairs and Youth Development (FMWYD) established the National Action Committee on Women in Politics. The purpose was to develop strategies for effective mobilization and participation of women to register, vote and be voted for in the on-coming electoral process. This must have informed the emergence of the only female presidential candidate in Nigeria in 2003, Mrs Sarah Jibril and the first Nigerian female Governor in Anambra State, Mrs. Virginia Itiaba. Steffen (2018) observes that whether women are included in or excluded from the political process can depend on several factors. For example, in the case of community forestry projects in India and Nepal, Agarwal (2001) claimed that women were excluded because of their weak bargaining power. Duflo (2020) has argued that the strongest barrier to improving female participation in policy making is the widespread perception that women are not competent leaders.

To Debunck these efforts, Nigerian women could make remarkable and outstanding contributions to building their communities all things being equal. The likes of late Dora Akunyili who made tremendous impact in the lives of Nigerians through her position as National Agency for Food, Drugs, Administration and Control (NAFDAC) Director-General is still very fresh on the minds of Nigerians even though she is late. Women are looking for opportunities to showcase their abilities and prowess and Akwa Ibom State is not left out on this, as worthy daughters of this extraction have also performed cleverly in political offices. Ms Winifred E. Oyo-ita, recently appointed Head of Civil Service of Nigeria is one such women who have distinguished themselves as a public office holder (Akin-Fakorede et al., 2025). In Pakistan, as a result of the way women Councilors were ignored, treated with contempt, deprived of funds and expected to confine themselves to women issues, this created a strong oppositional consciousness among women Councilors and resulted in increase awareness of their gender identities. Women formed a different Political Party which provided them the forum to share their experiences, learn from each other and find ways to become more effective in their newly assigned political roles and resist patriarchy and assert themselves more to access political power. With the help of an NGO, Pattan development organization, the councillors formed a common platform Women Councillor's Network (WCN) and used it to negotiate better working environment for Women Councilors.

WCN formed an election alliance with the name Women Unity Group with the objective to enhance women bargaining power at the local level to negotiate with political parties and the local power elite to take women more seriously as political actors and give them more seats in the category of general and Nazism seats. Hannum and Buchman (2018) have it that the empowering potential of literacy can translate into political participation and thus contribute to the quality of public policies and to democracy. This establishes a strong relationship between education and political participation, educated people are to some extent more likely to vote and manifest more tolerant attitudes and democratic values.

Verba et al. (2021), in theories of participation and high intensity participation explained why people are not politically inclined in three ways thus: because they cannot participate, because they do not

want to; and because nobody asked. This means that people may be inactive because they lack resources, because they lack psychological engagement with politics, or because they are not within the network that brings people into politics. The lack of resources refers to time, money and civic skills while the psychological lack implies an individual's sense of political efficacy and finally, the network that brings people into politics defines the invitation to participate at work, church or organizations especially from friends, relatives and acquaintances. The authors submitted that the social status of an individual – his job, education, his earnings to a very large extent determine the individual participation. They also posit that civic attitudes are also important factors in explaining participation. Political participation involves those who do little or nothing about the political situation around them, those who are voting specialists, vote regularly and do nothing else, the parochial participants who contact officials in relation to specific problems but are otherwise inactive, the fourth group are the communalists, who intermittently engage in political action on broad social issues but are not highly involved, the fifth group are the campaigners who are heavily involved in campaigns of various kinds and finally, the complete activists, who participate in all kinds of activities.

Verba et al. (2021) applied their model to the task of providing a cross-national explanation of political participation by examining differences in participation engendered by different political institutions and cultural settings. They stress the distinction between individual and group resources in promoting participation and argue that “organization and ideology” is the weapon of the weak. It is their view that groups bound together by ideological ties can overcome the lack of individual resources of their members and that this promotes the participation of their members in politics. Thereby making a case for the establishment of institutions to facilitate participation in politics. Verba et al's (2021) model has been faced with problems, firstly, as it models the use of socio-economic status as a predictor of participation and civic values. Their recent work on participation using United States as a case study applied family income as a good proxy measure of socio-economic status however, family income proved a very weak influence on participation. Furthermore, the increase in white-collar occupations at the expense of blue-collar occupations and the tremendous growth in higher education have proved no evidence of increased political participation.

Muller (2022) in modelling aggressive political participation states that attitudes about behaviour are defined as the individual's beliefs about the consequences of his behaviour multiplied by their subjective value. Individual's own belief in the justifiability of his behaviour as well as his perception of significant others (parents, peer) expectations about it. Muller said further that motivation to comply with the norms reflects such factors as an individual's personality and his perception of the reasonableness of expectations of others. According to Burchfield (2020), in his book titled “Women: the disadvantaged

specie” observed among Nepalese women that those who had spent two years in the state runned literacy programmes demonstrated more political knowledge than those not in the programmes and were not likely to believe they could serve as political representative.

In addition, Egbo (2017) reported that literate women in Nigeria for example, reported confident enough to participate in community meeting unlike the illiterate women. In spite of seemingly remarkable achievement recorded by women, Nigerian women remain severely constrained in their effort to play a major and decisive role in the socio- political and economic development of the nation. Agu (2019) blames the colonial authorities for setting a dangerous stage and precedence for weakening of the influence and role of women through what has been described as the abrogation of the social stability which the Nigerian society had enjoyed before the coming and intrusion of the British Colonialists. The result of this dislocation was the relegation of the role and functions of women to the background in the Nigeria society, particularly in the areas of leadership and political responsibility. Agu believes that women see politics as a dirty game, a business which involves intimidation, rigging, assassination, kidnapping of opponents and all sorts of electoral violence which are brought into play in order to gain an undue advantage over opponents. He maintained that, in 2010 alone women participation in politics was 36.8%, 2011 to 2015 put together was 49.75%. This is an indication that women involvement in politics decreases yearly. There is need therefore, to encourage women participation and involvement in politics to promote greater community development projects that would benefit the people and the society at large.

Furthermore, Okueze (2020) opined that educated women are more likely to possess critical thinking skills, leadership abilities, and awareness of development issues, which enable them to mobilize resources, participate in decision-making, and influence positive change within their communities. Conversely, low level of education among women may limit their participation, weaken sustainability, limit local ownership, reduce their confidence, and hinder their ability to contribute meaningfully to development initiatives (Koledoye et al., 2026). The study aimed to provide insights into how educational attainment among women influences their participation, leadership roles, and overall contributions to community development efforts, with a view to informing policy and practice. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine women education as a panacea for improving community development projects in Oron Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate women education as a panacea for community development projects in Oron Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the relationship between political education and community development projects in Oron Local Government Area.

Research question

1. To what extent does political education relate to community development projects in Oron Local Government Area?

Statement of hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between political education and community development projects in Oron Local Government Area.

Methodology

Survey research design is adopted for this study. This design is preferred, because it involves observing two variables in order to establish a statistically corresponding relationship between them. In other words, the design is used in the study since it is intended to investigate and determine the correlation between the variables. The area of study is Oron Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The geography of Oron Local Government Area is characterized by its coastal location in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It is situated between latitude 5° North and longitude 9° East, at the right bank of the lower estuary of the Cross River. The population of this study was made up of all community members between 20 years to 50 years in five communities of Oron Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State with a population of 2,020 male and female adults. The sample of this study is made up of two hundred and two (202) respondents randomly selected from five (5) communities in the study area using simple random sampling technique. The questionnaire which was used to collect data had two sections A and B. section 'A' contain demographic variables while section 'B' contained information on the research sub-variables and was validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the University of Calabar, this was done to ensure that the items measured what they were expected to measure. 200 questionnaire copies were distributed and retrieved accordingly. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to analyse the data.

Results

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant relationship between health education and community development projects in Oron Local Government Area. The independent variable is Vocational education while the dependent variable is Community development projects. To test this hypothesis Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used and the result as presented in Table 1 showed that the calculated r-value of 0.51 is greater than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 200 degrees of freedom. The result of the analysis is significant since the calculated value is greater than the critical value. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between political education and community development projects in the study area.

TABLE 1
Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between political education and community development projects (N=202)

	Σx	Σx^2		
Variables	Σy	Σy^2	Σxy	r-cal
Political education	2719	7632	81465	0.51
Community development projects	2385	5830		

* Significant at .05, critical $r=.138$, $df= 200$.

Discussion of Findings

The result of this hypothesis indicated that there was a significant relationship between political education and community development projects in the study area. The findings of this study coincide with Okueze (2020) however maintained that, there is adequate support for women to gain political offices. Unlike before when women were not supported by their fellow women to participate in politics, today, the awareness is high, and many more women are vying for key political offices at the local, state and federal government levels. This because attention has been shifted away from the men who have exhibited high-handedness and lack of respect for the public offices they had been voted into. Notably however, the few women who have been voted into power have performed credible well and impacted positively on the lives of their community members. It is believed that the greater women participation in Nigerian politics, the better for the society and the people at large.

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Conclusion

Based on the result of findings of the study, it was concluded that political education has a significant positive relationship with community development projects in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and civil society organizations should design and implement structured political education programmes for women, focusing on civil rights, governance processes, public policy, and community leadership. Such programmes will enhance women's political consciousness and empower them to contribute meaningfully to community development projects.
2. Educational curricula at both formal and adult education levels should integrate civic and political education components. This will ensure that women acquire knowledge of democratic principles, electoral processes, and local governance systems, thereby strengthening their capacity to influence development decisions at the community level.

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