

# Women and Community Development: A Study of Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The paper investigated women's participation in community development in Nigeria, using a Local Government in Ebonyi state. Essentially, in Nigeria the male child is believed to be better equipped both educationally and otherwise to take care of the family, hence women are relegated to the background in all things except child bearing. Consequently, it is also believed that men become more useful to the society than their female counterpart. It is believed in some societies that women are only for reproduction and domestic activities. In analysing the above problematique, the paper adopted descriptive survey design which is carried out through questionnaire. It adopted both primary and secondary data, and quantitative method of data analysis using simple percentages as the tool for testing the research hypotheses. The study is anchored on Human Capital Theory. The study raised the following hypotheses: 1. Discrimination of women in politics affects community development in Ebonyi State. 2. Low level of education has negative effect on women participation in community development in Nigeria. 3. Women participation in politics enhances community development in Ebonyi State. Findings include: Cultural practices, among women; poor educational conditions of women in the area; lack of access to landed property prevents women from contributing to Development in Ebonyi State. The paper recommends thus: cultural practices that deny women free access to land, relegate women to the background and regard them as second class citizens, should be abrogated. To improve the level of women education in the country, girl child education should not only be made free but also compulsory at both primary and secondary school levels and also made affordable at the tertiary level. To enhance women political participation, politics in the country should fall within the reach of both the poor and the rich. The high cost of playing politics should be reduced to a minimum in Nigeria*

**KEYWORDS:** *Women, Community, Development and Nigeria*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Internationally, women's contributions to community development has been generally less than encouraging despite their numerical strength. The situation has grown so bad that it has generated both national and international recognition [1, 2, 3, 4]. Women empowerment remains the focal point of international conferences on women held in Beijing, China in 1995. The number three item in the table of the moribund Millennium Development Goals is gender equity and women empowerment [5,6]. Before the MDGs programme, there has been other global treaties, declarations, and conventions on women such as the ones held in Mexico, Nairobi, Dakar and New York in 1975, 1985, 1994 and 2000 respectively. In Nigeria, various interventions and conferences such as the ones held in 1989 were embarked upon to improve the status of women in the society [7]. Nigeria is a signatory to many international instruments such as convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) signed on 13th June 1985 [8,9]. All these efforts were made by both the Nigerian government and other international communities and point to the fact that the status of women and development have remained abysmally low both in the developed and developing countries alike. However, the situation is worse in developing countries like Nigeria where women are regarded as inferior and second class citizens [10,11].

It has become incontrovertibly clear among the policy makers and international agencies that women constitute the bulk of Nigerian's population and they are indispensable in the issues of community development. According to 1991 Nigerian census cited in [12], Nigerian women were reported to represent about 49.7% of the nation's population. The 2006 National Population Census reveals that women make up 48.78% (about half) of the population. Despite the numerical strength of women as revealed by the various censuses, women are under-represented almost in all aspects of the nation's economy such as politics, education, agriculture, business enterprises etc [13]. This could be why the wives of all of the Nigerian presidents since the return of democracy in 1999, have all been on the lead in the mobilization of women to demand for 35% women representation in all affairs of the nation. If according to Julius Nyere, "a person does not walk very far or very fast on one leg", then the development of Nigeria should be a balanced effort of both men and women at all levels [14].

This significant women population is not making commensurate impact in the development of the society. The Nigerian society is so patrilineal that women are expected to conform to and confine themselves to the dictates of their male counterparts. They therefore operate within the scope allowed them by the men (their husbands) who see them as mere home managers incapable of making or contributing to sound policy decision making processes [15]. This has greatly affected the development of the various Nigerian communities especially in Ebonyi State. It is an indisputable fact that the level of development of any country rely heavily on its human capital utilization. When about half of the country's population's (women's) talents are poorly utilized, the level and pace of development must be generally low [16]. According to the [17], the productive use of all human resources is a key factor in development. It is argued that if women are to join forces with their men counterpart at all level of development, the pace of development will be accelerated. Yet Nigeria is using only a small proportion of the talents of her women. The question is can development be achieved in any society without maximum utilization of its human capital?

In the education sector, women have fared worse than the men. Education is known to be the best investment in development, yet girls' education has become a major issue in most developing countries like Nigeria. Educated girls develop essential life skills including self-confidence and the ability to participate effectively in society. In Nigeria, girls' access to basic education especially in the northern states has remained low. According to [18], report cited in [19], about 67.3% of the Nigerian women are illiterates. Education brings benefits to the educated in the form of access to information and it equips men and women alike for greater participation in economic, political, and other forms of community development. Low level of education among Nigerian women especially those in Ebonyi State, constitutes an obstacle to development efforts in the area [20].

It is believed that although in many countries including Nigeria, school dropout rates are steadily increasing, they continue to be higher among the girls than among the boys. According to [21] "the most recent available national MDGs progress report states that in Nigeria, the gross enrolment ratio for the boys has remained consistently higher than that of girls by over 10% with a male: female ratio of 55.9%:44.1%. At the level of secondary enrolment, girls have a much higher dropout rate such that by terminal class only 48.83% reach senior secondary school. Consequently, only 39.7% of female students graduate from universities and 37.54% from polytechnics. This is because some parents do not see the benefit of girl's education as girls are given away in marriage to serve in the husbands' families. This goes a long way to impairing women participation in all aspects of community development. Accordingly, [20], surmised that it is generally believed in Nigerian communities that the family name is preserved in the lineage of the male child. The male child is therefore better equipped both educationally and otherwise to take care of the family. Consequently, they become more useful to the society than their female counterpart. It is believed in some societies that women are for reproduction and domestic activities, hence some of our women especially among the Muslim faithful are kept in purdah (house seclusion of women) where they are excluded from social functions and participation in community development.

As if this was not enough, some female graduates of different higher institutions of learning have not been equipped to make maximum use of their talents and skills acquired in the course of their education for the development of the society. It is common to find some firms and financial institutions which prefer male employees to female employees and as a result make their employment opportunities more open to the men than the women, especially the married ones [10]. This situation is worsened by the pervasive mass unemployment in the country of which the women are more vulnerable and also the fact that Nigerian education has over the years been quantitatively impressive and qualitatively deficient. Many who secured employment in certain organizations are under employed. Their talents and potentials are poorly utilized and as a result, their contribution to community development is impaired. Some educated women who are married to some rich men are conditioned by their husbands to be at home to take care of the family. This is more prevalent among the less educated husbands. Their husbands provide for them and their talents and skills lie dormant and waste at their various homes [14].

In the political scene, only a small number of exceptional women have achieved prominence within the modern political and government spheres despite their numerical strength. Being almost half of the population, if not more now the representation of women in government though it has improved little is still very low compared to their population and what obtains in other nations of the world particularly in the developed nations. According to [16] in April 2007 general elections, there were a total of 1,200 women aspirants to 1,532 offices. Some 660 of these women won their primaries. Of the 660 candidates who contested elections for various posts, 96 finally emerged as winners: six deputy governors, nine senators, 27 national representatives, and 55 in various State Houses of Assembly. Even though this represents a significant increase in female participation in the political process, it is still a far cry from the aspirations of women the world over for full participation. According to [6] in 2007 election in Nigeria, women got 96 out of 1531 elective positions in the country. This was however a major improvement in the sense that it was 27 in 1999 and 67 in 2003. However, [8] maintains that out of 369 delegates to the constitutional conference of 1995, only 8 were women and

currently about 7% of parliamentary seats only are occupied by women. No woman has ever been elected as governor in Nigeria in the real sense of the matter despite the fact that Dame Virgy Etiaba was at one time sworn in as governor of Anambra State when the substantive governor, Peter Obi was impeached. Enugu State has never had a female governor or deputy. Nigeria has not recorded a female president, vice president, senate president, deputy senate president, and the speaker of the House of Representatives or the deputy speaker except for Patricia Etteh, the first and only ex speaker of the house of representative, who could not finish her tenure in office before she was removed. The facts and figures on representation of women in Nigerian politics from 1999 to 2007 show that they are inadequately represented in the executive arm, senate, House of Representatives, state legislature and local government councils. In the politics of Ebonyi State, women are almost out of the scene. There has never been a female chairman of the 13 local governments in Ebonyi State. Women do not even venture into politics and very few women who attempted, did not survive after primary elections. Financially, most Nigerian women are backward. Much of their work remains invisible, unremunerated and unrecognised. Their annual income has declined so sharply that most of the rural women are living below poverty line. Financial backwardness of Ebonyi women has made them to depend on their husbands for living thereby making it difficult for them to take active part in development activities within their communities. Since it is said that he who pays the piper dictates the tune, they do not go beyond the limit set by their husbands virtually in all they do. Very few women who tried in the past to go beyond the limits set either had to be divorced or received severe punishment from their husbands. The data enumerated so far about the position of women in community development are mere tips of the iceberg. It exposes us to the fact that women are grossly disadvantaged. This raises the issue of how to reposition Ebonyi women for effective participation in development activities in the State. This is the background of the paper.

### **Problem and Objectives**

Low level of women participation in community development is the problem that triggered this paper. Over the years, women have been relegated to the background in the issues of overall development in Nigeria. The level of women participation in Nigerian development is lamentably poor especially in 13 Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State. This is borne out of the sentimental attachment on feminine gender to their husband's. The Nigerian society bequeaths inferior status on her women who are therefore regarded as subordinates and second class citizens who should submit themselves to the control of the men (their husbands). According to [8], it is surprising to note that the subordination of women knows no boundary or barrier and is not dependent on social, educational or economic status of women in Nigeria. One of the 13 Local Government Councils of Ebonyi State namely Izzi LGA, is used as a case study. Moreover, tradition and customs make the men believe that women should be seen and not heard and as a result, women in this part of the country have no voice on certain aspects of the community. These cultural norms and practices have entrenched a feeling of inferiority in the women and place them at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their male counterpart in the socio-economic and political spheres.

It is against this backdrop that the following research questions are raised to guide the study.

1. Does discrimination of women in politics affect community development in Izzi Local Government Area?
2. Does low level of women education have negative effect on women participation in community development in Izzi Local Government Area?
3. Do women participation in politics enhance community development in Izzi local government area? The broad objective of the study is to examine the participation of women in community development in Nigeria, with emphasis on Izzi local government area of Ebonyi State.

## **II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD**

The descriptive survey design was carried out through questionnaire and in selecting a sample of the population in Izzi Local government area of Ebonyi state. Izzi local government area is one of the 13 local government areas in Ebonyi state, harbouring the north-eastern Igbo subgroup, in south-eastern Nigeria. It is also the name of the territory in which they live. The people in Izzi LGA, speak the Izzi dialect of the Abakaliki variant. Izzi LGA is bordered in the north by Ebonyi LGA and Benue State, to the East by (Ukele) Cross River State, to the south by Ikwo LGA and to the west by Abakaliki LGA. According to 2006 population census, Izzi local government area had 478,000 population. The local government is an agrarian entity, as almost all the people engage in agricultural activities ranging from rice farming to yam and cassava cultivations etc. as their major source of livelihood. The people of Izzi LGA are predominantly Christians and with few animists (African traditional religion adherent).

**Population and Sample**

According to the 2006 population census, there are seventy four thousand, seven hundred and forty five (74,745) women out of the total number of 478,000 population in Izzi LGA. The study being gender (women) based, has the population of seventy four thousand, seven hundred and forty five (74,745). This figure was obtained from the 2006 National Population Result.

Due to the difficulty involved in studying a population of such magnitude, a sample was therefore chosen out of the entire population. The sample size of the above population was determined by using Taro Yamane's proportional sampling technique formula.

Taro Yamanes's formula:

$$n=N(1+N(e)^{-2})$$

or

$$n=N \frac{1}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n= sample size

N= population size

e= sampling error (usually .10, 0.05 and .01 as the acceptable error).

-2 = raised to the power of two

$$\text{Therefore } n = \frac{74745}{74745(0.05)^2}$$

$$N = 1 + \frac{74745}{74745(0.0025)}$$

$$N = \frac{74745}{1 + 187}$$

$$N = \frac{74745}{188} = 388$$

Approximately, the sample size is 388,From the calculation above, a sample size of 388 was used for the study. This sample was drawn randomly from the nine (9) communities that made up the local government. For the purpose of this paper, we used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. 'Random sampling' represents probability sampling technique; 'purposive and quota sampling' represent non probability sampling technique. They were 74,745 women population in Izzi local government area studied. Hence, the aforementioned sampling techniques were used to administer questionnaire to the sample size of 388.

**Data Collection**

There are two main sources of data used in this paper, viz.: primary source and secondary source. For the primary source, questionnaire was extensively used to get the required data. The secondary sources of data were gotten from existing literature like text books, journals, academic research project and the internet. The questionnaire was structured and designed in a liker scale and in a close ended response format. The questionnaire was made up of three (3) sections. Section one introduced the topic of the paper and its purpose to the respondents. Section two was designed to elicit bio-data of the respondents such as gender, marital status, and qualification etc, while section three dwelt on the substantive issues of the paper. The method of data analysis adopted in this paper is 'quantitative' analysis, which has to do with facts and figures. In the analysis of this investigation, the data collection were classified, tabulated and later analysed. The data collected were represented in simple percentages, and each number represented the respondents who aired their views for a particular issue. The responses to every question on the questionnaire were tabulated and analysed to help conclusions.

**Validity and Reliability Measures**

The research instrument was pilot tested to establish its content validity test. The questionnaire constructed, was back translated in order to enable the women of Izzi local government area to understand the questions easily and give accurate information. The reliability test adopted in this paper was 'Test-Retest reliability; which refers to administering the same test instrument to the same targeted group under investigation on two or more occasions and a coefficient of 0.71 was obtained.

**Analyses and presentation**

This section presents the responses of the respondents to those questions that relate directly to our objectives. This was necessary in order to test the hypotheses formulated. A total of 388 questionnaires were distributed to a sample size of 388 respondents chosen for the study. Some 350 copies of the distributed questionnaire were for the data analyses.

The data would be presented in a tabular form and analyzed using simple percentages.

**Section A: Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
20-29 yrs	50	14.2%
30-39 yrs	100	28.6%
40-49 yrs	100	28.6%
50-above	100	28.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: 2018 Field Survey.

The above table shows the age distribution of respondents. It shows that 14.2% of the respondents were between 20-29 years of age, 28.6% were between 30-39 years, 28.6% were between 40-49 years, while 50 years and above constituted 28.6% of the respondents, total 100%.

**Table 2: Marital status of respondents**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Single	100	28.6%
Married	200	57.1%
Widow/ Widower	35	10%
Divorced	15	4.3%
Total	350	100%

Source: 2018 Field Survey.

The above table shows the marital status of respondents. It shows that 28.6% of the respondents were singles, 57.1% were married, 10%, were widows and widowers, and 4.3% were divorced, total 100%.

**Table 3: Education Level of Respondents**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
First leaving School Cert.	120	34.3%
WAEC/NECO/GCE	110	31.4%
NCE/OND	90	25.7%
HND/B.Sc.	30	8.6%
Post graduate/Ph.D	Nil	
Total	350	100%

Source: 2018 Field Survey.

The above table shows the level of academic qualification of respondents. It shows that 34.3% were first school leaving certificate holders, 31.4% of the respondents were WAEC/NECO and GCE O-Level holders, 25.7% of the respondents were NCE/OND holders, 8.6% of the respondents were HND/B.Sc. holders. None was a postgraduate/PhD holder. Total was 100%.

**Table 4: Religion of Respondents**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Christian Religion	340	97.1%
Traditional Religion/others	10	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: 2013 Field Survey.**

The above table shows the religion of respondents. 97.1% were Christians, while 2.9% of the respondents constituted of traditional and other religions, total 100%.

**Tables 5-8, relate to Hypothesis One: Discrimination of Women in politics affects community development in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State of Nigeria.**

Table 5: Culture constitutes a barrier to women participation in community development.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	138	39.4%
Strongly Agree	162	46.3%
Undecided	20	5.7%
Disagree	20	5.7%
Strongly Disagree	10	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

In the table above, the responses from 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that culture constitutes a barrier to women participation in community development; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; 20 respondents representing 5.7% had no idea; whereas, 20 respondents representing 5.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 10 respondents representing 2.9% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

**Table 6: Property rights in Izzi LGA of Ebonyi State of Nigeria is a limitation to women participation in community development.**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	138	39.4%
Strongly Agree	162	46.3%
Undecided	20	5.7%
Disagree	20	5.7%
Strongly Disagree	10	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

Responses from 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that property rights in Izzi LGA was a limitation to women participation in community development; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; 20 respondents representing 5.7% had no idea; whereas, 20 respondents representing 5.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 10 respondents representing 2.9% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

Table 7: Women do not have easy access to land in Izzi LGA of Ebonyi State of Nigeria.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	120	34.3%
Strongly Agree	147	42%
Undecided	30	8.6%
Disagree	27	7.7%

Strongly Disagree	26	7.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

In the table above, the responses from 120 respondents representing 34.3% of the entire sample studied indicated that women do not have easy access to land in Izzi LGA; 147 respondents representing 42% strongly agreed to the statement; 30 respondents representing 8.6% had no idea; whereas, 27 respondents representing 7.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 26 respondents representing 7.4% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

**Table 8:** Patriarchal and patrilineal systems in Izzi LGA are limitations to women participation in community development.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agree	138	39.4%
Strongly Agree	162	46.3%
Undecided	20	5.7%
Disagree	20	5.7%
Strongly Disagree	10	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows that the responses from 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that patriarchal and patrilineal system in Izzi LGA are limitations to women participation in community development; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; 20 respondents representing 5.7% had no idea; whereas, 20 respondents representing 5.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 10 respondents representing 2.9% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

**Tables 9-13, relate to Hypothesis Two: Low level of education has negative effect on women's participation in community development in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.**

**Table 9:** Poor women education serves as an obstacle to women participation in community development.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agree	120	34.3%
Strongly Agree	147	42%
Undecided	30	8.6%
Disagree	27	7.7%
Strongly Disagree	26	7.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows the responses from 120 respondents representing 34.3% of the entire sample studied indicated that poor women education serves as an obstacle to women participation in community development; 147 respondents representing 42% strongly agreed to the statement; 30 respondents representing 8.6% had no idea; whereas, 27 respondents representing 7.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 27 respondents representing 7.4% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

**Table 10:** Education of the girl child will promote community development.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agree	138	39.4%
Strongly Agree	162	46.3%
Undecided	20	5.7%
Disagree	20	5.7%
Strongly Disagree	10	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above indicates that the responses from 138 respondents representing 39,4% of the entire sample studied indicated that education of the girl child will promote community development; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; 20 respondents representing 5.7% had no idea; whereas, 20 respondents representing 5.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 10 respondents representing 2.9% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

**Table 11:** Women should be given quality education that has real life application.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agree	150	42.8%
Strongly Agree	185	52.8%
Undecided	10	2.9%
Disagree	3	0.9%
Strongly Disagree	2	0.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows that the responses from 150 respondents representing 42.8% of the entire sample studied indicated that women should be given quality education that has real life application; 182 respondents representing 52.8% strongly agreed to the statement; 10 respondents representing 2.9% had no idea; whereas, 3 respondents representing 0.9% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 'and 2 respondents representing 06% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

**Table 12:** Lack of community development is as a result of low level education of women.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agree	138	39.4%
Strongly Agree	162	46.3%
Undecided	20	5.7%
Disagree	20	5.7%
Strongly Disagree	10	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

Responses from 138 respondents representing 39,4% of the entire sample studied indicated that lack of community development was as a result of low level education of women; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; 20 respondents representing 5.7% had no idea; whereas, 20 respondents representing 5.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 10 respondents representing 2.9% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

**Table 13:** Youth restiveness in the community is caused by uneducated women.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agree	120	34.3%
Strongly Agree	147	42%
Undecided	30	8.6%
Disagree	27	7.7%
Strongly Disagree	26	7.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

Responses from 120 respondents representing 34.3% of the entire sample studied indicated that youth restiveness in the community was caused by uneducated women; 147 respondents representing 42% strongly agreed to the statement; 30 respondents representing 8.6% had no idea; whereas, 27 respondents representing 7.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 26 respondents representing 7.4% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.



**Table 14-17, relate to Hypothesis Three: Women participation in politics enhance community development in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State of Nigeria.**

**Table 14:** Women should be given equal opportunity in elective and appointive position.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agree	138	39.4%
Strongly Agree	162	46.3%
Undecided	20	5.7%
Disagree	20	5.7%
Strongly Disagree	10	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows the responses from 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that women should be given equal opportunity in elective and appointive position; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; 20 respondents representing 5.7% had no idea; whereas, 20 respondents representing 5.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 10 respondents representing 2.9% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

**Table 15:** Women in Izzi Local Government Area should be given political empowerment.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agree	120	34.3%
Strongly Agree	147	42%
Undecided	30	8.6%
Disagree	27	7.7%
Strongly Disagree	26	7.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

Responses from 120 respondents representing 34.3% of the entire sample studied indicated that women in Izzi Local Government Area should be given political empowerment; 147 respondents representing 42% strongly agreed to the statement; 30 respondents representing 8.6% had no idea; whereas, 27 respondents representing 7.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 26 respondents representing 7.4% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

**Table 16:** Political empowerment of women can reduce the hindrances to women participation in community development.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agree	138	39.4%
Strongly Agree	162	46.3%
Undecided	20	5.7%
Disagree	20	5.7%
Strongly Disagree	10	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows the responses from 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that women should be given equal opportunity in elective and appointive position; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; 20 respondents representing 5.7% had no idea; whereas, 20 respondents representing 5.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 10 respondents representing 2.9% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

**Table 17:** Removal of violence in Nigerian politics will enhance women participation in politics and women participation in community development.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>34.3%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>8.6%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>7.7%</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7.4%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above captures the responses from 120 respondents representing 34.3% of the entire sample studied indicated that removal of violence in Nigerian politics will enhance women participation in politics and women participation in community development; 147 respondents representing 42% strongly agreed to the statement; 30 respondents representing 8.6% had no idea; whereas, 27 respondents representing 7.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, and 27 respondents representing 7.4% also strongly disagreed to the statement, total 100%.

### **Testing of Hypotheses**

#### **Hypothesis One: Discrimination of Women in Politics affects Community Development in Izzi Local Government Area**

To test this hypothesis, tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 were used. In table 5, the responses from 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that culture constitutes a barrier to women participation in community development; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement, total 85.7%. In table 6, the responses from 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that property right in Izzi LGA is a limitation to women participation in community development; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; total 85.7%. In the table 7, the responses from 120 respondents representing 34.3% of the entire sample studied indicated that women do not have easy access to land in Izzi LGA; 147 respondents representing 42% strongly agreed to the statement; total 76.3%. In table 8, the responses from 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that patriarchal and patrilineal system in Izzi LGA are limitations to women participation in community development; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; total 85.7%.

To substantiate the views held by the respondents above, [5] has this to say "Social conventions, values, and mores combine to maintain the stereotype of women as kitchen dwellers who are only gate-crashers into spheres outside of their matrimonial homes. Women are socialized from birth to see their place as second to that of men. The birth of a male child is warmly received, to the extent that women often feel that their marriage is not secure until they give birth to male children. Cultural practices are often harmful to women. For example, burial rites in the Eastern parts of the country ensure that women remain social outcasts: widows are forced to drink the bath water of their dead husbands as part of the mourning process. Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) results from the early marriage of teenage girls in Nigeria. Victims of these cultural practices cannot participate socially as they are viewed as outcasts. However, there is a National Obstetrics Fistula Centre in Abakaliki Ebonyi State today.

Religion is an accomplice in the stereotyping of women and reinforces the barriers that prevent them from participating politically, economically, and socially. For instance, in the northern part of Nigeria, women are held in Purdah in deference to Islam. Only their husbands have unfettered access to them and their movements are restricted to their quarters. They depend entirely on their

Husbands and families to meet their needs. The conditions of their lives can only be guessed at, as most households subsist below the poverty line. Religion ensures that a significant number of women are barred from participating in politics, either as voters or as aspirants to elective offices, as well as economic activities!

To support the above view, [5], states "The culture and traditions of many ethnic groups in Nigeria are full of obnoxious signs of gender stereotyping. Education for girls' right from the very beginning was designed to make them primarily effective mothers and housewives. Hence girls were brought up in the traditional family setup to be passive, obedient, "ladylike" and always submissive to men. Boys on the other hand, were encouraged to be aggressive, competitive and independent. A woman is brought up to see marriage as her ultimate goal and ambition. From birth to betrothal, her whole life is just one long preparation for assuming the role of wife and mother. In some ethno cultures in Nigeria, for example, she is moulded for a life of anonymity and sacrifice. One dimension of patriarchy which limits women's economic and educational activities is the

prejudice of purdah or female exclusion, whereby women are confined to the house and are denied access by tradition and culture to participation in the socio-political development of their society."

In the history of Nigeria, cultural factors have been a serious source of problems for the development of women politically and have continued to affect the development and prominence of Nigerian women in their roles in the development of Nigerian society. In the political sphere, the country has governments run by men at all levels, not because there are no women fit to fill the positions but because most women think of political participation as hopeless for them due to the cultural orientation received by the women. Judging from the view upheld by majority of the respondents and those expressed by many authors in the literature in favour of the above hypothesis, the paper therefore accepts the hypothesis as valid and true.

**Hypothesis Two: Low level of education has negative effect on women participation in community development in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria**

In a bid to test the above hypothesis, facts and figures in tables 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 were used. Table 9 above shows the responses from 120 respondents representing 34.3% of the entire sample studied indicated that poor women education serves as an obstacle to women participation in community development; 147 respondents representing 42% strongly agreed to the statement; total 76.3%.

Table 10 above indicates that the responses from 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that education of the girl child will promote community development; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; total 85.7%.

Table 11 above shows that the responses from 150 respondents representing 42.8% of the entire sample studied indicated that women should be given quality education that has real life application; 182 respondents representing 52.8% strongly agreed to the statement; total 95.6%.

In table 12 above, the responses from 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that lack of community development is as a result of low level education of women; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; 85.7%. Table 13 above, shows the responses of 120 respondents representing 34.3% of the entire sample studied indicated that youth restiveness in your community is caused by uneducated women; 147 respondents representing 42% strongly agreed to the statement; 76.3%. In support of the view held by the majority of the respondents above [9] contends as follows "In all countries of the world, education is recognized as the cornerstone of any structure for sustainable development of any nation. It is a fulcrum around which the quick development of economic, political, sociological and human resources of any country revolves. In fact, the 1981 National Policy on Education states that education is the greatest investment that the nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources [10]. Having recognized education as "an instrument par-excellence for effective national development" as well as "a dynamic instrument of change," it is also the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women. Education empowers women by improving their living standard. It is the starting point for women's advancement in different fields of human endeavour. It is the basic tool that should be given to women in order to fulfil their role as full members of the society. In fact, the educational empowerment of Nigerian women is the spring board to every other form of empowerment (political, social, economic etc.). Unfortunately, a cursory look at the pattern of women's involvement in education in Nigeria reveals abysmally low levels.

Accordingly, [14], stated that:

*...as more women acquire education their percentage of the manpower resources of the nation increases. Therefore, more women are going to acquire the mental skill and capability necessary for work life. Besides the well-known fact that the involvement of educated women in the labour force aids the development of society, there is also the positive impact this exerts on the women themselves. As a result, education produces the work force needed to keep the wheel of the economy turning. Education then contributes in concrete terms to development basically when those educated submit themselves to work and seek some form of actualization or fulfilment in the work process.*

In addition to the above exposition, [18] states as follows "One of the barriers identified in the exclusion of women from political participation is poverty. Predominant populations of African women are living below the poverty line. Women will face fewer barriers to entering politics if they were empowered economically. Increasing income levels for women can in turn increase confidence. The link between female economic empowerment and quality of life leads to more discussion on women's issues, such as the number of children per couple, quality of education for children, health and hygiene, and the environment. Women also tend to be better stewards of economic development. Studies have shown that women are more likely than men to cycle profits back into human capital development, including female education. Educated women are better suited to participate in decision-making processes in the society. Women who are empowered economically

have less difficulty in playing active roles in politics as they can assert themselves and are unlikely to become pawns for existing political interests.

According to [15], "the underlying cause of female poverty are deep-rooted in inequalities in the control of assets, pervasive gender discrimination in labour markets and a lack of voice in the power structures that control resources allocation. The alleviation and eradication of poverty is a task that must be done in Nigeria in the 21st century so as to change the poor conditions of the Nigerian women. An important element in the eradication of poverty among women is empowerment, the process of which involves entitlement and access to economic resources (Economic empowerment) and access to decision making (political empowerment). These are two aspects of the same concept, which are reciprocally interdependent. In order to pursue the empowerment of women as a means and a goal for sustainable development, there must be a change in the 21st century and this calls for economic and political empowerment.

Judging, from the above views from the respondents and those obtained from various literature, the paper is of the new that the above hypothesis is correct and is therefore accepted.

### **Hypothesis Three: Women Participation in Politics Enhance Community Development in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria**

In order to test the above hypothesis, tables 14, 15, 16, and 17 were considered. Table 14 above shows the responses of 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that women should be given equal opportunity in elective and appointive position; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; total 85.7%. Table 15 shows the responses of 120 respondents representing 34.3% of the entire sample studied indicated that women in Izzi Local Government Area should be given political empowerment; 147 respondents representing 42% strongly agreed to the statement; total 76.3%. Table 16 above indicates the responses of 138 respondents representing 39.4% of the entire sample studied indicated that political empowerment of women can reduce the hindrances to women participation in community development; 162 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed to the statement; total 85.7%. Table 17 above captures the responses of 120 respondents representing 34.3% of the entire sample studied indicated that removal of violence in Nigerian politics will enhance women participation in politics and women participation in community development; 147 respondents representing 42% strongly agreed to the statement; total 76.3%.

In connection to the opinion of the respondents above [14] maintains as follows, "It must be understood that historically education in Sub-Saharan Africa and even Asia was initially available only for males. This then entails that women were from the onset disadvantaged in the formal employment sector since jobs in this sector are mainly negotiable through acquisition of education and skill. In fact women's late entrance into education and the tailoring of women's education to meet mainly domestic needs is not peculiar to Nigeria. Thus, it has been reported that even in Latin America where the expansion of the educational system started earlier, women were denied formal education during colonialism but often received instructions to enable them perform domestic tasks and raise their children". The quantity and quality of education available to Nigeria women will invariably determine the developmental pace of Nigerian families, children from such homes and the Nigerian nation at large. It has been noted that what Nigerian women are today and what they will be tomorrow depend on what plans Nigeria has for her women. Nigeria is craving for patriotic citizens to develop her potentials politically, economically, socially and technologically. The actualization of these goals is dependent on the provision of functional education to the citizenry especially the women who, as mothers, are the teachers of the child in his/her first and last school (i.e. home). Thus, unless the mother herself is adequately enlightened, she cannot inculcate in the child the spirit and principle of true patriotism- a basic requirement for national development. According to [18], among the factors militating against the development of the spirit of true patriotism are:

(i) Home indiscipline (ii) tribalism (iii) corruption in public life and (iv) lack of national ideology. It has thus been argued that Nigeria cannot develop fully without mothers who are patriotic and sincerely committed to the training of the young ones in the patriotic norms. The spirit of true patriotism advocated a socio-ethical value which inclines a citizen to the enlightened and legitimate love of his home, community and native land.

Marital harmony has also been found to be dependent on academic/intellectual compatibility among the couples. According to [15], marital conflict is heightened among couples who are educationally incompatible. It was observed that educational difference between the sexes further aggravate the social and economic differences between husband and wife. For instance, educated men now discover to their dismay that their uneducated wives are unable to fit into their social and public life in the sense that such wives are incapable of responding to the requirements of their husband's new ideas, status, and official positions.

Another implication of the poor education opportunity for women is involvement in low paying ventures. It has been noted by [2] that because of societal stereotype and stigmatization on certain professions and subjects as the exclusive preserve of men and or women most Nigerian women have been

forced into less paid jobs like teaching, nursing services, agriculture, small scale food processing, secretariat duties, clerical duties, notes counting in banks, cleaners and middle level professional occupations. It was thus submitted that some of the effects of this is that majority of these women are poor and impoverished. This is critical bearing in mind that there is a relationship between level of education and poverty with most of the illiterate women being poorer than the educated counterparts. According to [5], education equips one with marketable skills thereby lifting the possessor up from the poverty arena. Essentially, through education, the individual learns good health habits, principles and practices which promote healthy living and longevity as well as acquire marketable skills that confer economic power on the educated.

Another implication of poor women education is that their lower access to education automatically denies them the opportunity and power of influencing significantly public policies and programmes unlike their male counterparts. It thus implies that women will continue to play second fiddle in the sociopolitical and economic scheme of things; they would remain marginalized and exploited. It can thus be said that the poor educational opportunity for Nigerian women would rob them of two things, the ability to positively affect their children's educational development and the opportunity to make meaningful contribution to their socialization process (and by extension the overall national development of the country). Therefore, judging from the above facts and literature, the researcher believes the above hypothesis is valid and is therefore accepted.

### **III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study looked at women participation in community development in Nigeria, with emphasis on Izzi Local Government area, in Ebonyi State. Essentially, in Nigeria and Izzi LGA in particular, the male child is believed to be better equipped both educationally and otherwise to take care of the family, hence women are relegated to 'the background in all things except in child bearing. Consequently, it is also believed that men become more useful to the society than their female counterpart. It is believed in some quarters that women are for reproduction and domestic activities. Hence, findings have been made by the researchers in the course of the study. These findings are drawn from the hypotheses and are presented as follows:

1. Discrimination of women in politics affects community development in Izzi Local Government Area.
2. Low level of education has negative effect on women participation in community development in Izzi Local Government Area.
3. Women participation in politics enhance community development in Izzi Local Government Area.

Thus, the exorbitant nature of the country's politics. Women are disadvantaged in the political life of the people due to the poverty that characterized the rural women. Most of the women are so poor that they cannot satisfy the financial conditions which the country's politics requires. Political violence and victimization. It is discovered in the course of this study that political violence destroys the women political enthusiasm to a great extent and as a result hinders their positive contribution to the politics of the people. Again, lack of political education amongst most women limits their knowledge about politics. They view politics from wrong perspective and this wrong conception scare from taking part in politics due to the evils they wrongly assume are associated with politics. Very few women who attempted to get involved in politics are given different kinds of abominable names and are regarded as socially evil. This further hinders other from taking part in politics.

A look at the entire work, especially at the findings of the study reveals that there is a yawning gap in the level of involvement of male and female gender in the development of the Nigerian society especially in the political economy of the country. This less involvement of the female folk has contributed in no small measure to the backwardness of the country despite the enormous resources with which the country is endowed. It has to a great extent slowed down the pace at which the communities grow and develop.

Therefore if the Nigerian society should develop like other countries of the world, there is urgent need to get more Nigerian women involved in the development of every facet of the economy. This will help to pull all the human resources together for the upliftment of the society. Hence the study concludes that:

1. Discrimination of women in politics affects community development in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
2. Low level of education has negative effect on women participation in community development in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
3. Women participation in politics enhances community development in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Based on the findings made in the course of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Cultural practices that deny women free access to land, relegate women to the background and regard them as second class citizens, should be abrogated.
2. Government in partnership with community development partners should not only provide modern farm implements such as tractor, planters, harvesters etc. to the rural women farmers but also educate them on how to use the implements to enhance their production since the lives of millions of Nigerians depends heavily on proceeds from agriculture.

3. To improve the level of women education in the country, girl child education should not only be made free but also compulsory at secondary school levels and affordable at tertiary level. This will help to dig out those hidden potentials of the women which the Nigerian society has not actually started appreciating.
4. In conjunction with the effort of the current First Lady of the country, Hajiah Aisha Buhari, and some notable Nigerian women have achieved excellence in their various fields especially leadership, the paper therefore recommends that more women should be absorbed in the leadership of this country not only at the local government level but also at levels of the state and federal government. This will help to pull the various human resources which God has blessed the country with together for the upward growth and development of the entire country.
5. For business ideas needed to boost the economy of the local government as well as the country, the paper recommends that skill acquisition centers be established in the nine communities that made up the local government, as well as in the 13 LGAs of Ebonyi State.
6. To enhance women political participation, politics in the country should fall within the reach of both the poor and the rich. The high cost of playing politics should be reduced to minimum. This should be done by removing the high charges placed on forms for those that want to contest for political offices, the high cost of electioneering campaign, the art of using money to buy votes and compromise consciences and lots more.
7. Equally recommended is the removal of violence from the country's politics irrespective of how minute it may be. This is because women are known to be more scared of any violent situation and in most cases would always fall victims.
8. The mass media, community, religious and opinion leaders as well as leaders of various women organizations should be employed to give the women right orientation about politics. This is to put an end to the age long wrong perception of politics by the rural women.
9. The paper also recommends that payment should be made for the domestic responsibilities of women especially when such responsibility denies them access to other sources of income. Alternatively, both the men and the women (husbands and wives) should be equally involved in the domestic responsibilities at home and at the same time, both should be equally involved in the financial responsibilities at home.

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