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Women's Education and Community Transformation in Oro Communities in Akwa Ibom State

Arit Effiong Una
Department of Public Administration
Akwa Ibom State University
Ikot Akpden, Mkpat Enin
arit.timfom@gmail.com
&
Prof. Aniedi Daniel Usoro
Department of Industrial Technology Education
Faculty of Vocational Education, Library & Information Science
University of Uyo, Uyo
usorofortechnical@gmail.com
08020630702

Abstract
The main aim of this study was to examined the influence of Women's Education on Community Transformation in Oro communities in Akwa Ibom State. The study used descriptive design survey methods. The study population was 231,212 which was the projected population of women from 18 years in Oro Nation of Akwa Ibom State. The sample size of the study was 400. Stratified /Simple random sampling techniques were adopted in the study. Three experts one from Department of Public Administration Akwa Ibom State University and two from the university of Uyo, Uyo validated the instrument, their inputs and corrections were imputed into the final copy of the instrument. The instrument was trial tested for internal consistency on 30 respondents who were of the parent population but were not in the main sample used for the study and a reliability coefficient of .89 was realized indication the instrument was reliable. The data collected from primary and secondary sources were analyzed using simple regression analysis with SPSS statistical tool. Findings revealed that there is a positive and significant influence of women's education on political/ civic participation in the communities in Akwa Ibom State. It was also revealed that there is a positive and significant influence of women's education on economic development in communities in Akwa Ibom State. The conclusion indicates that despite some positive achievements by the women as a result of exposure to education, some women lacks the ability to contribute to economic development of their respective communities. The study therefore recommended among others that; Akwa Ibom State Government and relevant stakeholders should invest in educational programmes and adult literacy campaigns beset at women in Akwa Ibom State. Increasing women's access to formal and informal education can empower them with the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to engage meaningfully in political and civic activities, including voting, advocacy, and leadership roles in communities in Akwa Ibom State.

Keynotes: Civic, Education, Development, Transformation, Women

Introduction

Education is a cornerstone of development and an indispensableinstrument for societal progress. Women's education is progressively recognized as a critical driver of sustainable community development and transformation. In Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, the

empowerment of women through education has established significant outcomes on health, economic participation, civic engagement, and family well-being. For women, education signifies a pathway to empowerment, economic freedom, and social equality. The investment in female education in Akwa Ibom State has producednoticeable social, economic, and cultural benefits. This article examines how women's education has contributed to community transformation, examines existing challenges, and gives real-world solutions for policymakers and development practitioners. Educated women in Akwa Ibom State are gradually partaking in small and medium-scale enterprises, particularly in agribusiness, fashion, and hospitality. This contributes to household incomes, reduces poverty, and creates job opportunities within the community (Essien & Etim, 2021).Since it is well known that education for women leads to enlightenment; it is a powerful weapon for emancipating women from ignorance. It also serves as a tool for educating rural women about community development.

The term "women's education" describes the formal and informal learning possibilities offered to women at different phases of their lives.It includes education at the elementary, secondary, university, vocational, and adult levels that give women professional competencies, life skills, and literacy (Ekanem & Ekong, 2022). According to Anugwom (2009), women's education is a multifaceted process that involves empowering the weak and changing their socio-psychological, political, legal, and economic circumstances. Sako (2009) defines it as the process of enhancing women's current abilities and competencies in society so they may work to better themselves, their families, and society at large. It includes all initiatives aimed at maximizing women's unrealized or hidden potential.

Women's education, according to Akubue (2001), is a process of educating girls about the importance of having the fundamental abilities, information, skills, and attitudes necessary to fit in with society in a positive, comfortable, and productive way. According to Okojie (2011), women's education therefore implies empowering women to be self-sufficient so they can have fulfilling lives and make contributions to society. Women's education, according to Varshase (2011), is a process that helps women organize so they can become more autonomous, assert their rights, make decisions, and manage resources that will help them confront and end their own subordination.

In order to raise living standards, promote inclusiveness, and stimulate development, a community must undergo structural, economic, social, and cultural changes. It encompasses improved livelihoods, infrastructure, gender equality, healthcare access, and civic engagement (Udofia & Thompson, 2023).The process of moving a community from underdevelopment to higher living standards encompassing infrastructure, mentality, social systems, and civic engagement is referred to as community transformation, which is frequently used interchangeably with community development or rural transformation. Crucially, rather than physical relocation, it represents structural and cultural transformation.

Sabri (2019) defines transformation as changing an organization’s culture,

systems, and performance to achieve a new standard. Likewise, Gupta, Govindarajan and Wang (2008) sees it as a wide transition between social paradigms. Michalec (2021) emphasizes letting go of unproductive old practices and embracing new ways of being. Veta (2024) critiques projects that adopt only participatory methods without truly empowering disadvantaged groups. He argues that community transformation happens when marginalized people are actively involved in decision-making and action, especially through empowerment-focused models. The Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) framework defines transformation as harnessing a community's own resources, skills, associations, and institutions to drive sustainable development. This bottom-up approach centers community members as agents, not just beneficiaries. Similarly, co-production emphasizes that transformation occurs when citizens help design, manage, and oversee services and policies affecting their community

One of the main factors influencing civic engagement and political consciousness is education. In Akwa Ibom State, educated women are more likely to take part in community advocacy initiatives, town hall meetings, and voting. According to Iyoho (2023), between 2011 and 2021, women's access to basic and secondary education greatly raised voter registration and turnout. Additionally, educated women were more likely to participate in political discourse in their communities and comprehend political manifestos. Women who have completed formal education are more confident when it comes to running for office, voting, and facing sociopolitical discrimination. Essien and Edem (2024) assert that education helps women develop the communication and negotiating skills essential for political leadership. In order to highlight how education affects assertiveness and decision-making in political circumstances, their study employed the biblical Deborah paradigm.

In Akwa Ibom, formal education seems to hve great impact as its offer's opportunity for women inclusivity in civic engagements as well as overall grassroots development. With assistance from Action Aid Nigeria, WUEE (Women United for Economic Empowerment) put community charters also known as "village books" into place, teaching women about their civic duties and rights. Women were able to demand responsibility from elected officials and participate directly in local administration through these programs (Akpan, 2022).

Women with higher levels of education are more inclined to question damaging customs that prevent women from participating in public life.Nse-Abasi and Udo (2021) state that gender-based prejudices and illiteracy are two of the main obstacles keeping women in Akwa Ibom's rural villages from running for office. These attitudes have been changed in part by education, particularly in the areas of political activities/ civic engagement. Prominent Akwa Ibom women politicians, like Senator Akon Eyakenyi (Ph.D. in Education), show how formal education can help one get into high-level political positions. They may successfully negotiate the political landscape and connect with their political networks, legitimacy, and public speaking abilities, which come from their educational background (Etim & Abia, 2023).

Women with higher levels of education in Akwa Ibom State are more likely to engage in formal jobs, entrepreneurship, and agricultural endeavors. Research shows that women's prospects of finding opportunities to earn a living are enhanced when they have access to basic and higher education, particularly in Uyo and Eket (Udoh & Ekanem, 2021).Education gives women the literacy, numeracy, and entrepreneurial abilities they need to make more money and make more decisions for themselves.

In Akwa Ibom State, education for girls has a positive multiplier effect on household income, child welfare, and small businesses run by women, claims Mboho (2020). Socioeconomic development indicators are better in communities where girls complete at least secondary school. According to Mboho, many women are stuck in informal labor with no opportunity for upward mobility if they do not receive a foundational education. Despite advancements, many girls continue to face barriers to education due to poverty, early marriage, and cultural norms, particularly in rural LGAs such Ini, Oruk Anam, and Ikot Abasi (Essien &Etim, 2022).These obstacles perpetuate cycles of poverty and reliance by delaying or preventing women from accessing economic opportunities. Women's access to microcredit and training for entrepreneurship is greatly enhanced by educational achievement. Literate women in Ikot Ekpene and Uyo had more access to bank loans, business registration, and cooperative society membership, fostering financial independence and wealth creation (Udo & Antai, 2023).

Combining literacy instruction with vocational training results in long-lasting empowerment, as demonstrated by recent Akwa Ibom empowerment initiatives such as the Women Empowerment and Enterprise Development Initiative (WEEDI) (Nya & Akpan, 2023).Through the acquisition of ICT, hairdressing, and tailoring skills, participants become micro-entrepreneurs. Groups like Women United for Economic Empowerment (WUEE) have played a significant role in promoting education for girls and giving women access to opportunities for skill development. WUEE operations in Uyo have effectively decreased gender-based violence and improved school retention among females, establishing the groundwork for influence of women's education on economic empowerment in Akwa Ibom State is both direct and systemic. Education enables women to have access to income, leadership, and social independence.

Women Education on Political/ Civic Participation in Communities in Akwa Ibom State.

From the Table 1, it is shown that 3 women contested for elective positions between 2007 and 2023 but were not elected as a result of defeat from relative contestants

Table 1: Showing women education and political/ civic participation in Akwa Ibom State women who have contested for and occupied elective positions from Oro Nation from 2007-2023.

S/N	Name	Education status	Position held between 2007 and 2024
1.	Rt. Hon. (Mrs.) Alice Ekpenyong	Graduate	Former member representing Mbo State Constituency in the State House of Assembly (2007-2015); Contested for Oron Federal Constituency in 2015.
2.	Sen. (Dr.) Akon Eyakenyi	Graduate	Former Senator Representing Eket Senatorial District (2019-2023); Current Deputy Governor of Akwa Ibom State
3	Rt. Hon. (Mrs). Felicia Bassey	Graduate	Former Local Government Chairman of Okobo Local Government Area (2012-2015); Member representing Okobo State Constituency in the State House of Assembly (2015-present)
4.	Hon. (Mrs). KenimOnofiok	Graduate	Former Local Government Chairman of UdungUko Local Government Area (2016-2020); Present member representing Oron/UdungUko State Constituency
5.	Hon. (Mrs). Precious Selong	Graduate	Local Government Chairman of Urue-Offong Local Government (2020-2023); Present member representing Urue-OffongOruko State Constituency

Source: Researcher's computation from Akwa Ibom State Independent Electoral Commission (AKISIEC), 2024).

Table 2: Women who contested but were not elected into political positions in Oro Nation from 2007-2023.

S/N	Name	Education status	Position contested
1.	Dr. (Mrs.) Umo Amba	Graduate	Oron/Okobo/Mbo/Urue-Offong-Oruko/UdungUko Federal Constituency in 2015.
2.	Mrs. Blessing Okpo	Graduate	Oron/UdungUko State Constituency in 2015
3	Mrs. Eno Abia Bassey	Graduate	Okobo State Constituency in 2015

Source: Researcher's computation from Akwa Ibom State Independent Electoral Commission (AKISIEC), 2024).

Table 3: Presentation of Data on whether there is significant impact of women education on economic development in communities in Akwa Ibom State

S/N	Name	Education status	Economic development achieved between 2007 and 2024
1.	Sen. (Dr.) Akon Eyakenyi	Graduate	The Senator empowered women, the physically challenged and female youths with cash amounts to start up petty trading. She had also empowered the constituents with 140 motorcycles, 12 tricycles, 100 sewing machines, 40 grinding machines, 48 sets of scaffold, and 40 sets of snail-nary.
3	Rt. Hon. (Mrs.) Alice Ekpenyong	Graduate	Former member representing Mbo State Constituency in the House of Assembly, (2007-2011) has also contributed to the economic development of the region. While serving as member representing Mbo State Constituency in the House of Assembly from 2007-2011, she contributed to economic development in the region by offering loans, grants and aids as State House member to Oro women in agriculture and different businesses, sponsoring the

	training of over 200 women who later received start-up grants for small businesses, as well as by tailor-made technical assistance and specific professional business advice to enhance growth and ensure sustainability. I also provided fishing gears, including five (5) fiber boats, fishing nets, and other sundry items for use by more than fifty (50) fishermen in Mbo Local Government Area with the long-term goal of improving their livelihoods

Source: Researcher's computation from Akwa Ibom State economic report(2024).

This study is guided by the Human Capital Theory, which posits that investments in education improve individual productivity and societal effects (Becker, 1964). This study adopted human capital approach towards women education because, the human capital approach regards women education as investment in human capital. Human capital is the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the people employed in an organization or any capacity in the society, human capital theory regards people as assets and stresses that investment in people and most in particular women will generate worthwhile returns in the community. The human capital theory finds it relevancy as it's associated with the concept of intellectual capacity, taking into consideration the flow of knowledge available among women, it is also regarded as the intangible asset associated with people. Human capital is the collective value of the capabilities, knowledge, skills, life experiences, and motivation of women workforce, that reflect the thinking, knowledge, creativity, and decision-making that women channel towards contributing to community development.

Research indicates that mommies with higher levels of education are more likely to obtain healthcare services, make sure their children are immunized, and follow healthy eating and hygiene habits (Akpan & Udo, 2022). In the state's rural and peri-urban areas, this has greatly decreased maternal and newborn mortality. Women's greater access to education has raised their political consciousness and engagement in local government. In Akwa Ibom State, women are now local community leaders, council members, and supervisors of education (Effiong & Inyang,2023). It is important to highlight that women's education plays a significant role in the economic development of Akwa Ibom State communities. For example, Oron Nation has produced a large number of elite women, who have in turn drawn numerous road, infrastructure, and market facilities to the Oro communities in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing global recognition of the pivotal role that women's education plays in achieving sustainable development, many communities, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, continue to experience limited transformation due to persistent gender disparities in educational access and outcomes. In Akwa Ibom State and similar regions, the under-education of women has contributed to a cycle of poverty, low economic participation, and weak civic engagement among female populations. First, women's educational attainment has a big impact on their civic and political engagement.Women with higher levels of education are more likely to be aware of their rights, participate in political processes, and assume leadership positions in their communities. However, women's views are frequently left out of political debate and decision-making platforms in areas where they have lower educational attainment.AS a result of this under-representation, democratic processes are weakened, and laws and procedures that disregard the special needs and contributions of women are continued.

Secondly, there is still a lot of worry about economic empowerment. Women who could not have a formal education or specialized skills are frequently shut out of profitable jobs and business prospects. In addition to limiting their personal income and financial freedom, this may also makes it more difficult for some women to make significant contributions to the stability and economic prosperity of their communities. Women who lack sufficient knowledge may find it difficult to obtain loans, negotiate corporate settings, or make wise financial judgments, which perpetuate economic dependence and under-development in communities. The interplay between women's education, economic empowerment, and civic engagement is crucial for meaningful community transformation. Yet, there is a gap in understanding the extent to which improvements in women's education can directly influence these two key areas of development. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how women's education contributes to economic empowerment and political/civic participation, and by extension, the broader transformation of communities in Akwa Ibom State and similar socio-cultural contexts.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of women education on community transformation in Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. examine the influence of women education on the political/civic participation in communities in Akwa Ibom State.
2. determine the influence of women education on the economic empowerment in communities in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the influence of women education on the political/ civic participation in communities in Akwa Ibom State.

2. How does women education influence on the economic empowerment in communities in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Hypotheses

The research has the following hypotheses:

Ho_1: There is no significant influence of women education on the political/ civic participation in communities in Akwa Ibom State.

Ho_2: There is no significant influence of women education on the economic empowerment in communities in Akwa Ibom State.

Methodology

The design adopted in the study was descriptive and survey design. The population was made up of the population of women (18 years and above) in Oro Nation of Akwa Ibom State which is 231,212, of which includes; women politicians, female civil servants and female graduates (Women population report, 2024). The sample size was determined using Taro Yamani's formula (1964). Using stratified/simple random sampling technique a sampled size of 355 respondents was used. Simple linear regression was used to answer the research questions and test all the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Decision rule indicate that If the p-value obtained in the analysis is less than 0.05 (i.e. p-value < 0.05), the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative accepted but if the p-value obtained in the analysis is greater than 0.05 (i.e. p-value > 0.05), the null hypothesis was accepted and alternative rejected

Testing of Hypotheses:

Table 4: Regression analysis showing result of women's education on political/ civic participation in Akwa Ibom State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.072[a]	.119	.074	.12120

. Predictors: (Constant), Women's education

ANOVA Regression analysis showing result of women's education on political/ civic participation in Akwa Ibom State

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	49.445	1	49.445	62.587	.6654[b]
1	Residual	50.576	354	.790		
	Total	**100.021**	**355**			

a. Dependent Variable: political/ civic participation b. Predictors: (Constant), Women's education

Coefficients showing result of women's education on political/ civic participation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.170	.089		6.430	.6654
	Women's education	.115	. 021	.072	12.827	.6654

a. Dependent Variable: political/ civic participation

The model summary in Table 4 shows an R- value of 0.072. This suggests a positive influence of women's education on political/ civic participation in Akwa Ibom State. The R square- value of 0.119 shows that (11.9%) variation in women's education was accounted for by variations in political/civic participation. The ANOVA Table shows that the regression model significantly predicts the dependent variable, with an F-value of 62.587 and a p-value of 0.6654. This suggests a positive and significant impact of women's education on political/ civic participation. Additionally, the B-coefficient of 0.115 indicates that, holding other factors constant, a one-unit increase in political/ civic participation is associated with a 0.115 unit increase in women's education.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant impact of women's education on economic development in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Regression analysis showing result of women's education on economic development in Akwa Ibom State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.052[a]	.076	.071	.11220

1. Predictors: (Constant), Women's education

ANOVA Regression analysis showing result of Women's education on economic development in Akwa Ibom State

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49.445	1	49.445	62.587	.7550[b]
	Residual	50.576	354	.790		
	Total	**100.021**	**355**			

a. Dependent Variable: Economic development

b. Predictors: (Constant), Women's education

Coefficients[a] of Women's education and Economic development

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.170	.089		6.430	.7550
	Women's education	.117	. 021	.052	12.827	.7550

Dependent Variable: economic development

The model summary in Table 5 shows an R-value of 0.052. This result shows a positive impact of women's education on political/ civic participation in Akwa Ibom State. The R square- value of 0.076 shows that (7.6%) variation in women's education was accounted for by the variation in political/ civic participation. The ANOVA Table shows that the regression model significantly forecasts the dependent variable, as evidenced by the F-value of 62.587 and its associated p-value of 0.7550. This implies that there is positive/ significant impact of women's education. Also, the B-coefficient of 0.117 implies that holding every other thing constant, the model predicts 0.117 unit increase in women's education given a unit increase on political/ civic participation in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

Women's Education and Political/Civic Participation in Akwa Ibom State

From the Table 4, it is shown that 5 women contested and won seats into elective positions within the period under study. However, other women who did not win seats but contested for elective positions within the period are still worthy of notice owing to the level of political awareness created by them especially in relation to women politics in the Oro Nation. The table below shows the women who contested but were not elected within the period under study.

It was found that Former member representing Mbo State Constituency in the State House of Assembly (2007-2015); Contested for Oron Federal Constituency in 2015. Former Senator Representing Eket Senatorial District (2019-2023); Current Deputy Governor of Akwa Ibom State. Former Local Government Chairman of Okobo Local Government Area (2012-2015); Member representing Okobo State Constituency in the State House of Assembly (2015-present) Former Local Government Chairman of UdungUko Local Government Area (2016-2020); Present member representing Oron/UdungUko State Constituency Local Government Chairman of Urue-Offong Local Government (2020-2023); Present member representing Urue-Offong Oruko State Constituency.

Women's Education and Economic Development in Akwa Ibom State

From the Table 5, it was found that the Senator empowered women, the physically challenged and female youths with cash amounts to start up petty trading across the five Local Government Areas of Oron, Akwa Ibom State. The Senator also empowered the constituents with 140 motorcycles, 12 tricycles, 100 sewing machines, 40 grinding machines, 48 sets of scaffolds, and 40 sets of snail-nary. Former member representing Mbo State Constituency in the House of Assembly, (2007-2011) has also contributed to the economic development of the region. While serving as member representing Mbo State Constituency in the House of Assembly from 2007-2011, she contributed to economic development in the region by offering loans, grants and aids as State House member to Oro women in agriculture and different businesses, sponsoring the training of over 200 women who later received start-up grants for small businesses, as well as by tailor-made technical assistance and specific

professional business advice to enhance growth and ensure sustainability. She also provided fishing gears, including five (5) fiber boats, fishing nets, and other sundry items for use by more than fifty (50) fishermen in Mbo Local Government Area with the long-term goal of improving their livelihoods

Conclusion

Women's education is not only a matter of gender impartiality but a critical path to an all-inclusive community development in Akwa Ibom State. From leadership to economic empowerment, and the ripple effects of educating women are deep and far-reaching. For sustainable community transformation to occur, government including all stakeholders, civil society, and community leaders must prioritize and protect women's right to education.

Recommendations

From the above findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Akwa Ibom State Government and relevant stakeholders should invest in educational programmes and adult literacy campaigns beset at women in Akwa Ibom State.
2. The state government through the ministry of women affairs should increase women's access to formal and informal education which would empower them with the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to engage meaningfully in political and civic activities, including voting, advocacy, and leadership roles in communities in Akwa Ibom State.
3. Development partners in Akwa Ibom State should integrate professional training, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy into women's education programmes. This would equip women with practical skills that contribute to job creation, income generation, and ultimately enhance economic development in Akwa Ibom State.

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