

# Influence of Women Empowerment on Community Development in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

*This paper examines the influence of women empowerment on community development. The study was conducted in Metropolis, Kwara state in Nigeria. The population for this study comprised of all women in Ilorin Metropolis. A total of 300 women were sampled using simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was used for data collection while the data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics of a linear multiple regression to test the hypothesis postulated at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that, the combination of the independent variables significantly predicted the dependent variable ( $F_{(3, 296)} = 9.370, p < 0.05$ ). It was recommended in this study that government and non-government organizations should periodically empower women through the provision of financial assistants and health facilities.*

**Keywords:** community development., healthy living, human capital, participation, women empowerment

## Introduction

Women empowerment can be described as the provision of adequate opportunities to women to develop their potentials and this will lead to the development of many nations and the world in general. Efforts made so far by various societies towards women empowerment have yielded little success because of the failure of incumbent administrations to maintain the previous programs embarked upon by their predecessors. Over the years, many women have faced daunting challenges of joblessness, no source of livelihood, low income, poor widowhood practice and single parenthood. These challenges notwithstanding, the roles played by women in

national development and in all facets of human endeavors have been quite notable and have affected negatively various women empowerment programs embarked upon by many countries. Though, there have been considerable progress in developing the capabilities of women, their participation in economic and political decision making remains very limited because of the clogs on the wheels of the progress of the women empowerment programs. Obviously, there is no deliberate policy for discrimination against women in Nigeria, yet some obnoxious traditions, habits and ideas about women inhibit their progress and active participation in national decision making affairs.

Empowerment has a multi-dimensional focus and its success depends on environmental forces in a given society. Thus, a healthy environment is mandatory for women's empowerment at all facet of life. Drawing lessons, experience and case studies from the local, national and international levels is very important for government to use as instances through which women could be motivated to participate in various empowerment programs and such will lead to their own development and development of their countries (Steward, 2005). According to UNIFEM (2000) five important dimensions of women's empowerment and opportunity have been identified concerning global patterns of inequality between men and women including; economic participation; economic opportunity; political empowerment; educational attainment and health well-being. The impact of women empowerment on development is that, it will improve their economic status because it will help them to manage their business ventures properly and also acquire more vocational skills knowledge. Apart from this, there will be more participation of women in politics and the level of educational enhancement of women will be promoted. Although significant progress has been achieved in a number of ways that contribute to women's empowerment such as education, political participation and improvement in health status of women, the pace of this empowerment has been slow as a result of poor communication of various empowerment programmes to the members of the public (UNIDO, 2009).

In a study conducted by Hadebe & Mpofu (2013) in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe on women's economic empowerment and agriculture, the empirical findings showed that women participated greatly in such empowerment programs. The major importance of these was that it helped the women who participated to take decisions on what to grow, when and how to cultivate their plots, as well as choosing how to dispose their produce (Hadebe & Mpofu, 2013). Those who participated in such programs also faced a number of challenges including lack of finance to buy inputs, limited land for use in agricultural activities and the problem of marketing their produce (Hadebe & Mpofu, 2013). Importantly, women who were economically

empowered in agriculture were able to use the experienced gathered to make significant investments on their farms which led to an increase in their annual harvest (Applefield & Jun, 2014).

The level of empowerment is related to political participation. In the process of empowerment, women were able to build their capacities towards political participation in their localities. It helps women to build certain personal traits, skills; self-identity and articulate their interests in a manner they can achieve. It also helps them to agitate for their interest through active political participation by joining various political parties and other social organizations. Moreover, Muhammed (2017) asserted that, at a deeper level, it requires effective redistribution of power and resources to bring women to the level where the rest of the society is. This level may require affirmative action and quota reservation which are used to improve women's participation in politics.

The concept of development has been viewed differently by different authors in the areas of; social, economic, political and cultural perspectives. Okemakinde (2014), for example, viewed development as a positive change and a progress in socio-economic and political conditions of the society. Olomukoro (2012) views development in terms of human capital development while Gboyega (2003) views it as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It also implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future generation.

Healthy living has great potentials to contribute to the social-economic development of the communities. It has been observed that improvement in the health of a community has a multiplier effect on the productivity and outcomes of other (non-health) sectors and enhances both the local and the national economy. Spencer (2017) asserted that, if the government adopts bottom up approach where young people will be encouraged to identify their needs in the health empowerment programs, this will contribute immensely towards the success and sustainability of such scheme.

In a study conducted by Spencer (2017) on empowerment and healthy living, he pointed out that community-based empowerment initiatives that led to improvements in health outcomes have focused largely on environmental changes. These often have an immediate impact on behaviors that are measurable during the time covered by the intervention. It was asserted further that, the evidence showed that community action has led to sustainable changes in the social and organizational environment that is linked to improvements in health. For example, alcohol abuse

has been prevented among women. Community action at Piha in New Zealand led to bans on public drinking resulting in reduction in crime wave and an improved sense of well-being (Conway, 2002).

The role of women in the development of any nation state or community cannot be undermined. The reasons for this is that, women participation in various empowerment serves as the tools to enhance contribution to the development of any given community (Spenser, 2017). It should be noted, however, that despite various empowerment programs embarked upon by the Governor of Kwara state in Nigeria, disparities still exist in different areas such as; cultural discrimination against women, gender discrimination against women in various professions, control over assets, personal security and participation in the development processes. The identified problems still exist nowadays as a result of lack of adequate legislation and policies to support the rights for women including; unequal access to education, limited access to land, as well as lack of assertiveness among women. Over the years, women have been relegated to the background in the issues of development in Nigeria. The level of women participation in community development programs is poor especially in Ilorin Metropolitan city. It is on this note that women need to be enlightened, sensitized, and empowered so as to enhance their contributions towards community development in their various communities.

This study has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the study will add to the body of knowledge on the levels of women's empowerment at the local and community levels. It will throw more light on the existing literature with regard to the role of empowerment on women's participation in developmental processes, the factors that limit women's empowerment and participation in development processes. It will also be of great help to students and researchers who may want to investigate issues relating to women.

Practically, the results from this study will enhance the understanding of major factors that hinder women empowerment and participation in developmental processes and the best strategies for eliminating the constraints. Based on this, governmental and non-governmental organizations will be able to mount effective policies and empowerment programs that are beneficial to women and the world in general. This study will also serve as a working document to women community-based organizations and other established women organizations that are interested in improving the status of women.

The theory of human capital development was adopted as the theoretical framework upon which this work is anchored. This theory has its roots from a branch of Economics which is labour Economics. Economist Theodore Schultz introduced

return on investment, which highlights the cost benefit analysis of training and education. Gary Stanley Becker developed the Human Capital Theory based on Schultz's research on return on investment. Becker also introduced the concept of general purpose human capital and firm specific human capital that is widely used by human resource development practitioners worldwide. The human capital theory posits that human beings can increase their productive capacity through greater education and skills training.

Human capital theory emphasizes how education increases the productivity and efficiency of workers by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human capability, which is a product of innate abilities and investment in human beings.

This theory is relevant to this study because the contributions of both men and women to the development of the society are dependent upon possession of appropriate knowledge and skills. The economic prosperity and functioning of a nation depends on its physical and human capital stock. Human capital theory is also relevant to the study of women participation in community development because it sees human beings both men and women as the capital necessary for the development of any society both in the developed and less developed countries like Nigeria. The development of any community hinges upon the quality and quantity of the human capital available in such community. Quality human capital development is obtained through quality education which is the focal point in human capital theory.

Education which is the central theme of the theory brings about the transformation of human beings both male and female. These transformed human beings in turn transform the society into a place to live and make a living. When we have quality human capital, we are bound to have rapid development in all aspects of the society. All the good things of life such as health care facilities, safety and security, electricity, clean water, industries and others are made available to mankind by human beings who acquired the skill through education. A community is described as developed or less developed based on the conditions of its human capital. The contribution of women to development heavily depends upon the quality they have acquired through education as emphasized by the theory. Women who are seen by many scholars as the engine of growth and development cannot make meaningful contribution to development if their potentials are not developed through quality education.

Unfortunately, Nigerian women are disadvantaged in education especially those who reside in Muslim communities where purdah system (women seclusion) is being observed. Also, women outside Muslim communities are still disadvantaged since the society accord more importance to male gender. Employment opportunities are more open to the male sex therefore women participation in development is so much limited. If women who constitute the bulk of human capital in Nigeria are educated and given all round empowerment, they will be better positioned to make meaningful contribution to the development of Nigerian society but this is not the situation.

Women have been playing an important role in community development even in the developed countries like New Zealand where both the Prime Minister and the deputy are both women. The first and only female president in West Africa, Saleef Johnson has also been playing an important role in the growth and development of Liberia; yet Nigerian women are still far removed from such enviable positions in leadership.

### **Objective of the Study**

The study investigated on the influence of women empowerment on community development in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study assessed the economic, health and political empowerment

The general purpose of this study was to examine the influence of women empowerment on community development in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The specific objectives were;

1. To find out the influence of economic empowerment of women on community development in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.
2. To examine the influence of health empowerment of women on community development in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.
3. To investigate the influence of political empowerment of women on community development in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

### **Research Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis was postulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

**HO1:** There is no significant influence of women empowerment (i.e. economic, health and political empowerments) on community development in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

### **Study Methodology**

This research adopted survey type of descriptive research design to measure the extent at which women empowerment could influence community development in Kwara state, Nigeria. The study population size comprised of 10,000 women in Ilorin metropolis. A sample of 300 women were selected through simple random sampling technique from Ilorin metropolis to participate in the study. A questionnaire titled Women Empowerment Questionnaire (WEQ) was used to elicit information from the respondents on the influence of women empowerment on community development in Ilorin metropolis. The questionnaire consisted of four sub-divisions measuring political, health, economic empowerment and community development, each division has five items making 20 items. The four point Likert scale labelled: Always (A), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R) and Never (N) was adopted. To test validity, the questionnaire was given to experts in the field of Evaluation and Adult Education in University of Ilorin. The suggestions from these experts were incorporated in the questionnaire, as such, this ensured face and content validity of the instrument. WEQ was latter subjected to reliability test whereby about 96 questionnaires were administered to women in Kwara North senatorial district, the data collected was analysed with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the reliability index value of 0.85 was obtained. The data collected for the study were analysed with multiple regression and the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis was tested with the use of a linear multiple regression at 0.05 alpha level

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant influence of women empowerment (i.e. economic, health and political empowerments) on community development in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State

**Table 1: Regression Analysis of Influence of Women Empowerments (i.e. Economic, Health and Political Empowerments) on Community Development in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Regression	793.688	3	264.563	9.370	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	8357.192	296	28.234		
Total	9150.880	299			

a. Dependent Variable: Community Development

b. Predictors: (Constant), Women Empowerment (Economic, Health and Political Empowerment)

The model in Table 1 indicates the linear combination of predictor variables i.e. women empowerments (economic, health and political empowerments). The F-value is 9.370 with 3 and 296 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis one is rejected. Therefore, the combination of the independent variables significantly predict the dependent variable ( $F_{(3, 296)} = 9.370, p < 0.05$ ). Thus, there was significant influence of women empowerments (economic, health and political empowerments) and community development. In order to ascertain the contribution of the independent variables together, r-square was computed and results illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Regression Model Summary of the Influence of Women Empowerments (i.e. Economic, Health and Political Empowerments)**

<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>
1	.202 <sup>a</sup>	.441	.021	9.15877

a. Predictors: (Constant), Women Empowerment (Economic, Health and Political Empowerment)

As shown in Table 2, all independent variables (Economic, Health and Political Empowerments) jointly contributed R-Square of 0.441, representing 44.1% to the dependent variable (community development). To determine the contributions of each independent variable, Beta Weight was calculated and the outputs were shown in Table 3

Table 3: *Relative Contributions of Independent Variables to Community Development*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	46.20	3.26		19.41	0.000
Economic	0.96	1.36	0.11	1.29	0.037
Health	2.09	1.06	0.10	2.34	0.001
Political	2.84	1.28	0.13	2.58	0.000

- a. Dependent Variable: Community Development
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Women Empowerment (Economic, Health and Political Empowerment)

Table 3 shows the relative contribution of each independent variable. The table reveals that all independent variables were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, women political empowerment has the highest influence with the Beta weight of 0.284 followed by health empowerment with the Beta weight 2.09; while the economic empowerment had the least influence on the community development. Thus given a linear equation below

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3$$

The weight of each independent of the variables in this study can therefore be substituted in the equation as

$$Y = 46.20 + (2.84) X_1 + 2.09X_2 + .96X_3$$

where

Y = community development

a = Constant (other factors that influenced the community development)  
= 46.20

$b_1$  = Political Empowerment = 2.84

$b_2$  = Health Empowerment = 2.09

$b_3$  = Economic Empowerment = 0.96

## Discussion of Findings

Findings from this study revealed that there was large extent of economic empowerment of women in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. This shows that through

thrift, women were given loans which assisted them economically to contribute their quota to the development of their society; farmers among them were provided with equipment for farming and there was periodic donation of money to women to boost their business ventures. This correlates with the findings of Adeyeye (2007) who in the study conducted on economic empowerment and development pointed out that women who were given loans for business development were able to generate more profit and this also contributed to the expansion of their business ventures.

The result shows further that there was large extent of health empowerment of women in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. There were various immunization programs organized for women and their children to prevent diseases. There were health centers and maternity homes for pregnant women to take care of them during pregnancy and postnatal; health education programs were organized for the women by Kwara state leaders so as to improve their health status. This substantiates the findings by Nwagbara, Etuk and Baghebo (2012) who revealed that women ability could be strengthened through social and health facilities and as such, they realized their civic duties within the community.

In addition, findings from this study revealed that there was a very large extent of political empowerment to Ilorin Metropolis women. There was high participation of women in politics; women were mobilized and sensitized to know their political rights. Also women were encouraged and supported to contest for various political positions in the state. These results negate the assertion of Ityavyer (2007) who pointed out that women are often discouraged to participate in national politics in Nigeria because of the political coercion structured by gender, class, ethnicity, and other social factors.

Furthermore, findings from this study revealed that various community development projects which were super-headed by women in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State were well executed and it was an indication that economic, health and political empowerment of women significantly influenced community development in the state. This signifies that empowerment has the potential to address and reduce gender gap that limits or even prohibits women's active participation in community developmental related decision-making. Economic, health and political empowerments to women has been found to foster and enhance women's opportunities by not just allowing them to participate in community decision-making but also make them part of the community developmental process. The findings negate the views from Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland (2006) who asserted that the strongest barrier to improving female participation in policymaking is the widespread perception that women cannot make competent leaders.

## **Conclusion**

Findings from this study revealed that there was large extent of economic empowerment of women in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. It was also revealed through the study that there was large extent of health empowerment of women in the locale of the study. Based on the findings obtained from this study, it could be concluded that women empowerment serves as the key to community development; women empowerments have significant influence on the community developmental process. The study revealed that political empowerment of women was found to have the greatest influence on the community development followed by health and economics. Findings from this study revealed that there was large extent of economic empowerment of women in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The result shows further that there was large extent of health empowerment of women. There was high participation of women in politics due to the fact that women were mobilized and sensitized to know their political rights.

## **Recommendations**

With respect to the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. Government and non-government organizations should periodically empower women through the provision of financial assistance, health facilities as well as sensitizing women on political rights, duties and obligations which could enable them to partake and contribute to the community development.
- ii. The government should promote Agricultural activities among women. This can be enhanced through employing Agricultural extension workers who will teach them how to improve their farm harvest through modern techniques.
- iii. Health education programs should be organized on regular basis for women; this will help them to have good healthy living and it will help them to contribute meaningfully to the development of their communities. Apart from this, Government should frequently organize health programs through which women and their children will be regularly immunized to prevent cholera and other diseases.
- iv. There is a need for the government to organize different mobilization and political sensitization programs for women, this will enhance their interest and participation in politics.
- v. The legislative arms of government should make by laws that will protect the interest of women and also eradicate customs that relegate the roles of women in the society. If these are done, there will be increase in women participation in community development programs.

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