

**Educational Level and Gender-Based Barriers to Youths' Participation in  
Community Development in Boki LGA, Cross River State, Nigeria.**

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**Abstract**

This study examined the educational level and gender-based barriers to youths' participation in community development in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A multi-stage sampling technique involving purposive and accidental sampling was used to select 210 youths (male and female from various communities in Boki LGA. Data were collected using the "Youths' Participation in Community Development Questionnaire" (YPCDQ) and analysed using independent t-test. The results revealed significant effect of educational level and gender-based barriers to youths' participation in community development, with female youths and those with lower educational levels facing more barriers. Based on the findings, it was recommended that stakeholders in community development programmes should prioritise the empowerment of female youths and those with lower educational levels to promote inclusive participation. Also, education and awareness programmes should be implemented to address the gender-based barriers to youths' participation in community development. Additionally, policymakers and stakeholders should develop targeted interventions to support the educational and socio-economic development of disadvantaged youths in Boki LGA.

**Keywords:** Educational level, Gender, Youths' participation and Community development.

## Introduction

The concept of community development is emphasising the uniquely symbiotic nature of youth development to community development by situating the two practices in a common framework. Youths' participation in community development combines the natural instincts of young people as they desire to create change in their surrounding environments by developing partnerships between youth-related organisations and community development agencies to create new opportunities for youth to serve their communities while developing their personal abilities.

Federation for Community Development Learning (2019), defines community development as: A set of values and practices which plays a special role in overcoming poverty and disadvantage, knitting society together at the grassroots and deepening democracy. Community Development Exchange (2008), defines community development as: "both an occupation (such as a community development worker in a local authority) and a way of working with communities. Its key purpose is to build communities based on justice, equality and mutual respect. Community development involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It starts from the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, can be channelled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals.

From the above two definition, it can be seen that Community Development involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It starts from the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, can be channelled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals. Moreover, Community Development (CD) is

also a broad term applied to the practices and academic disciplines of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens and professionals to improve various aspects of local communities.

Globally, community development (CD) is facilitated by the extent to which the local people can mobilise their resources to address local needs. These resources include human and material resources. Over 50 percent of the world population are youths estimated at about 1.8 billion (The Commonwealth, 2016). The role of the youths in facilitating community development (CD) programmes has been recognised, particularly, in local communities where they have played pivotal role in education, health, environmental sanitation, mass mobilisation, religious activities and many others (Udensi, Daasi, Emah & Zukbee, 2013).

The notion of youth participation in community development (CD) programmes has been gaining momentum in the process of human empowerment and development. Contemporary development scholars have been advocating the inclusion of youth participation in development programmes as they believe that the objectives of any programme cannot be fully achieved unless the youth meaningfully participate in it (United Nations, 2015). Stone (2011) noted that youth participation in developmental programmes may help bring effective social change rather than impose an external culture on a society. For the past two decades, there have been concerns about the future of young people globally, particularly on the African continent. The focus on participation of young people in community development programmes has been reiterated in various United Nations meetings and initiatives. In line with this global focus on youth participation in CD programmes, the African Union (as a regional body) declared 2008 as the Year of the African Youth, and 2009-2018 as the African Youth Decade (2009–2018) with the theme: “Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development”. The involvement of today's youth in community development programmes especially in its decision-making and implementation is critical to sustainable youth development. But in Nigeria, youth

participation in community development programmes is low. Thomas and Eforuoku (2016) reported that youths have favourable attitude towards community development programmes, but are constraint by a number of factors including inadequate training facilities. As noted by Akpomuvia (2010), the Nigerian communities have not been able to achieve sustainable CD because youth organisation have not discovered the need to change their own misdirected priorities, shed their dependency thinking, gain skills and knowledge for self-empowerment, decision making, planning and conscientisation in order to enhance sustainable CD in rural communities. The Nigerian government has experimented with various CD programmes like the Operation Feed the Nation, Rural Basin and Rural Development Authorities, National Green Revolution, and National Directorate of Employment among others. All of these programmes were established for the development of rural communities.

Research has shown that there is a positive correlation between educational level and youth participation in community development (Udensi, Daasi, Emah & Zukbee, 2013). Youths with higher educational levels tend to participate more in community development initiatives, as they possess better skills, knowledge, and critical thinking abilities. Conversely, youths with lower educational levels often face barriers to participation, including limited access to information, skills, and resources. Educational level can also influence youths' awareness of community issues, their sense of civic responsibility, and their ability to engage in decision-making processes. Overall, investing in education can empower youths to become more active and effective participants in community development initiatives. Abang and Obong (2021) carried out a study on level of education and participation in community development programmes in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State Nigeria, using In-depth interviews among youth leaders, women leaders, village heads and chiefs. Results show that there is a significant relationship between level of education and participation in community development programmes. The study recommended that government and other relevant stakeholders should implement policies that will encourage education for all.

Okoh, Ugwumba and Elue (2018) noted that gender is not just a means of categorising labour or household leadership, but a basic key for understanding production relationship with and across households, mobilising of resources, willingness to take risks and the right to derive benefits from increased farm production. Woman sex determines the degree of demand pressure placed on the food and fibre system through their fertility behaviour. As child bearers, their decisions to produce new children explain the most part of the population issue. Overpopulation, which causes excess demand for agricultural products, forest products/resources, is the direct consequence of such decisions. Therefore, the quantity of farm products/forest products available for exportation to generate foreign exchange and thereby keeping the dynamics of world trade steady, can be traced to actions of women. Of course, the fertility behaviour also explains the degree of availability of labour to execute farm works or forest exploitation.

Gender relations are the ways in which a society defines rights, responsibilities and the identities of men and women in relation to one another. When we relate gender with community development it is very important to change the perspective of men towards women. Gender and community development is a process towards sustainable way of community development incorporating all the gender with equal participation and involvement. If there is no equal say/ participation of both male and female it is not a sustainable development. In context of Nepal, Women and girls in rural areas play an important, largely unpaid, role in generating family income, by providing labour for planting, weeding, harvesting crops. Girls are usually responsible for taking care of smaller animals, and never sent to schools from the beginning of their childhood, they are discriminated upon. When we see the social inclusion index, women are lagging behind in educational dimension index, health dimension index, social dimension index, economic dimension index. Women are further disadvantaged economically and socially because they often receive

approximately half the years of schooling of men and have less access to health care services and fewer legal right (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2019)

**Theoretical Frame work:** Human capital theory by Schultz (1961)

Human capital theory was propounded by Schultz (1961) and developed extensively by Becker (1964). Becker explained in his publication titled “Human Capital: a theoretical and Empirical Analysis with special reference to education” that human capital theory has been developed in the sixties due to the realisation that the growth of physical capital has only small part of growth in the growth of income.

The human capital theory originated from the article in the American Economic Review entitled “Investment in Human Capital published by Theodore W. Schultz in 1961. In this article, Schultz introduced his theory of Human Capital. He argues that both knowledge and skills are forms of capital, and that this capital is a product of “deliberate investment.” Schultz highlights that those investments in education, training, and health can increase an individual’s productivity and earnings. He also makes a direct link between an increase in investment in human capital, and the overall increase in workers earnings. The first section of the article deals with 'Shying Away from Investment in Man'. It argues that economists have been afraid to relate to human beings as capital.

Schultz believes that the concept of human capital has negative connotations that arise from the American experience of slavery, and that society is hypersensitive towards anything that serves as a reminder of that system. For Schultz, however, the concept of human capital implies an investment in people. He argues that education, training, and investments in health open up opportunities and choices that otherwise would be unavailable to many individuals. Schultz compares the acquisition of knowledge and skills to acquiring the "means of production." Workers no longer have to be at the mercy of others; instead, they can be in control of increasing their own productivity and earnings.

The second section of the article deals with Economic Growth from Human Capital. Schultz argues that the difference in earnings between people relates to the differences in access to education and health. For example, when farm folk move to the city, or when African-American kids seek to find work, they experience a barrier that arises from their lack of human capital (i.e., appropriate knowledge and skill). Schultz also argues that in many underdeveloped countries, food and shelter are of primary concern, and thus there are short-term investments made to deal with these crises. In societies whose main concern is not basic needs, there is the opportunity for long-term investment in education, health, and migration (i.e., helping people adjust by finding them jobs and offering them the opportunity to learn/improve their skills). In the long term these investments will strengthen the economy and raise the standard of living.

The third section deals with the 'Scope and Substance of These Investments'. Schultz argues that investment in human capital must focus on supporting individuals in acquiring education, since it is skills and knowledge that affect one's ability to do productive work. He believes that an investment to enhance these capabilities leads to an increase in human productivity, which in turn leads to a positive rate of return. Schultz criticizes those who see investment in human capital as a cost. He argues that while in the short-term there may be a cost (i.e., cost of facility, loss of earnings for workers while in school, etc), in the long-term the yield from the investment will far outweigh the cost. In the words of Peter Husz (1998) Human Capital Theory is defined as the time, experience, knowledge and abilities of an individual household or a generation, which can be used in the production process. According to the theory, earnings Human capital theory suggests that education or training raises the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, hence raising workers' future income by increasing their lifetime (Becker, 1994). It postulates that expenditure on training and education is costly, and should be considered an investment since it is undertaken with a view to increasing personal incomes. The human capital approach is often used to explain occupational wage differentials.

Human capital can be viewed in general terms, such as the ability to read and write, or in specific terms, such as the acquisition of a particular skill with a limited industrial application.

Human Capital Theory, as posited by Schultz (1961), is relevant to this study as it emphasises the importance of investing in human resources, such as education and skills, to enhance productivity and participation in development initiatives. According to Schultz, education is a key component of human capital that enables individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective participation in community development. This theory supports the study's finding that youths with higher educational levels tend to participate more in community development initiatives. By applying Human Capital Theory, this study highlights the need for policymakers to invest in education and skills development programmes to empower youths to become active participants in community development

### **Statement of the problem**

Youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State is facing significant challenges. Despite the importance of youths' participation in community development, many youths in Boki LGA are not actively involved in community development initiatives. This lack of participation is attributed to various factors, including limited access to education and skills development opportunities. The educational level of youths in Boki LGA is a significant concern, as many youths have limited formal education, which hinders their ability to participate effectively in community development. Furthermore, gender disparities in education and skills development opportunities also exist, with female youths facing more barriers to participation. The intersectionality of educational level and gender further exacerbates the challenges faced by youths in Boki LGA. As a result, community development initiatives in Boki LGA are often characterized by low youth participation, limited skills, and inadequate knowledge. This has significant implications for the sustainability and effectiveness of community development initiatives in Boki LGA. The question arises: what factors influence youths' participation in community

development initiatives in Boki LGA? Is it their educational level, gender, or a combination of both? This study seeks to investigate the relationship between educational level, gender, and youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki LGA. Specifically, the study aims to examine the influence of educational level and gender on youths' participation in community development initiatives. The study also seeks to identify the challenges faced by youths in Boki LGA in participating in community development initiatives. By investigating these issues, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on youths' participation in community development and provide insights for policymakers and practitioners.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To examine the extent to which educational level influences youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. To assess the extent to which gender influences youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent does educational level influence youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does gender influence youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria?

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant influence of educational level on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. Gender has no significant influence on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

This study employed an ex-post facto research design to examine the relationship between educational level, gender, and youths' participation in community development in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The design allowed the researcher to use existing variables, specifically educational level and gender, to observe their effect on youths' participation in community development. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents. Initially, communities in Boki LGA were purposively selected based on their high concentration of youths. Subsequently, accidental sampling technique was used to select the respondents who were present and willing to participate in the study. This resulted in a sample size of 210 youths. The "Youths' Participation in Community Development Questionnaire" (YPCDQ) was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information on the respondents' demographic characteristics, educational level, and participation in community development initiatives. The data collected were analyzed using independent t-test to determine the significant effect of educational level and gender on youths' participation in community development. The data analysis was carried out at a 0.05 level of significance. The results of the analysis from the hypotheses tested was used to answer the research questions. The findings of the study were presented in tables and narratives, and were discussed in relation to existing literature on the subject.

### **Results**

#### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant influence of educational level on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State.

**Table 1: Independent t-test analysis of influence of educational level on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State**

Grouping variables	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Df	t-cal	p-val
Educated	65	23.40	3.44	108	2.212	.563
Uneducated	55	16.54	3.44			

\*Significant at .05 level, t-crit. =1.96, t-cal. =-.212

To test this hypothesis, independent t-test was used. As shown in Table 1, the calculated t-ratio of 2.212 (t-cal= -.212,  $p < .05$ ), is greater than critical t-ratio of 1.96 tested at .05 level of significance and 108 degree of freedom. since  $p(.563)$  is greater than  $p(.05)$ , it implies that, there is a significant influence of educational level on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected

Hypothesis 2: Gender has no significant influence on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State

**Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of influence on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State**

Grouping variable	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	t-cal	p-val
Male	65	30.07	8.06	108	3.72	.049
Female	55	31.09	7.22			

\*Significant at .05 level, t-crit. =1.96, t-cal. =-.212

To test the hypothesis, independent t-test was used. The t-test analysis as found in Table 2 shows that the calculated t-ratio of 3.72 ( $t\text{-cal} = -3.72, p < .05$ ), is greater than critical t-ratio of 1.96 tested at .05 level of significance and 118 degree of freedom, and since  $p(.049)$  is less than  $p(.05)$ , it implies that the null hypothesis which states that, gender has no significant influence on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, was rejected. Meaning that gender has a significant influence on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State

### **Discussion of findings**

Data in table 1 showed that there is an influence of educational level on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The conclusion in this present hypothesis is in line with the study of Udensi, Daasi, Emah and Zukbee (2013) that stated that youths with higher educational levels tend to participate more in community development initiatives, as they possess better skills, knowledge, and critical thinking abilities. Conversely, youths with lower educational levels often face barriers to participation, including limited access to information, skills, and resources. Educational level can also influence youths' awareness of community issues, their sense of civic responsibility, and their ability to engage in decision-making processes. Overall, investing in education can empower youths to become more active and effective participants in community development initiatives.

The result is equally in line with the study of Abang and Obong (2021) who carried out a study on level of education and participation in community development programmes in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. Using In-depth interviews among youth leaders, women leaders, village heads and chiefs.

Results show that there is a significant relationship between level of education and participation in community development programmes.

Data in Table 2 showed gender has a significant influence on youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The result is in agreement with the study of Okoh, Ugwumba and Elue (2018) that noted that gender is not just a means of categorizing labour or household leadership, but a basic key for understanding production relationship with and across households, mobilising of resources, willingness to take risks and the right to derive benefits from increased farm production. Women sex determines the degree of demand pressure placed on the food and fibre system through their fertility behaviour. As child bearers, their decisions to produce new children explain the most part of the population issue. Overpopulation, which causes excess demand for agricultural products, forest products/resources, is the direct consequence of such decisions. Therefore, the quantity of farm products/forest products available for exportation to generate foreign exchange and thereby keeping the dynamics of world trade steady, can be traced to actions of women. Of course, the fertility behaviour also explains the degree of availability of labour to execute farm works or forest exploitation. Gender relations are the ways in which a society defines rights, responsibilities and the identities of men and women in relation to one another. When we relate gender with community development it is very important to change the perspective of men towards women. Gender and community development is a process towards sustainable way of community development incorporating all the gender with equal participation and involvement.

### **Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated that educational level and gender are significant predictors of youths' participation in community development initiatives in Boki Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings indicate that youths with higher educational levels are more likely to participate in community

development initiatives, while female youths face more barriers to participation. Therefore, it is imperative that stakeholders in community development prioritise the empowerment of female youths and those with lower educational levels to promote inclusive participation. By addressing these disparities, policymakers and practitioners can harness the potential of youths to drive sustainable community development in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

**Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:**

- 1 Stake holders in community development programmes should prioritise the empowerment of female youths and those with lower educational levels to promote inclusive participation. Also, education and awareness programmes should be implemented to address the gender-based barriers to youths' participation in community development.
- 2 Additionally, policymakers and stakeholders should develop targeted interventions to support the educational and socio-economic development of disadvantaged youths in Boki LGA of Cross River State, Nigeria.

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