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# PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS IN INFRASTRUCTURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN OHAFIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract**
This study analysed participation of women in infrastructural community development projects in Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Purposive and multi-stage random sampling procedure was used to select ninety-six (96) women from different organizations. Data for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Tobit regression analysis. Result showed that the women were about 53years, 57.29% were married, with household size of about 6 persons. About 36.45% acquired secondary education, annual income of N435,675.00, and length of residency (44.75years). About 38.45% received trainings in different areas of social organisations and 19.58 years of social organisation membership. Result revealed that construction of markets (97%), equipping school facilities (90%), renovation of schools (89%) and construction of school building (86%) were the major community development projects available in the study area. The women had high participation in construction of school buildings, renovation of schools, equipping school facilities and construction of markets with mean scores of 3.5, building of electricity facilities ($\bar{X}$ = 3.3) and drilling of bore holes ($\bar{X}$= 2.9). Tobit regression result showed that coefficients for age (-0.1772**), annual income (0.00015***), length of residency (0.2126**), number of trainings (0.00116***) and membership of social organizations (0.004521***) influenced women organization participation in infrastructural community development projects in the study area. The results therefore call for policies aimed at increased awareness and sensitisation of younger women to join social organization groups and provision of rural infrastructural facilities by government in order to discourage rural-urban migration for enhanced community development.

**Keywords: Residency, trainings, cooperative organizations, participation, projects**

## Introduction

Globally, the participation of rural women in the rural development has been less encouraging compared to their number and strength. This fact has drawn both national and international recognition. Women empowerment has become the focal goal of development intervention through formation of organisations (Issa, 2019). In Nigeria, women are expected to be within the threshold of their male counterparts. They therefore function within the scope allowed them by the men who mainly see them as home keepers incapable of making sound policies. Women have no direct control over land or labour and have to take permission from their husbands for these resources before they can be used. This has greatly affected the development of the various Nigerian communities. Community development programmes are geared towards enhanced community wellbeing; their economic, social, environmental and cultural welfare (Kuponiyi. 2019). The groups that engage in community development include the women, men and the youth. Community development programmes range from small initiatives within a small group (youth, women, men groups) to large initiatives that involve the broader community (Flo and Smith, 2016). Effective community development results in mutual benefit and shared responsibility among community members. Community development helps to build community capacity in order to address issues and take advantage of opportunities, find common ground and balance competing interests (Nwaobiala, 2014).

Despite all the interventions by the successive regimes in Nigeria, the rural areas still battle the problem of lack or shortage of basic amenities and this is an indication of the failure of these laudable interventions to accelerate the development of the rural sector; that are lacking adequate access to clean and safe water, education and health care facilities, electricity, housing and good road networks (Olaniyan and Okunlola, 2020). Moreover,

current estimate showed that the rural population which constitute about 70% of the entire population of over 170 million people is neglected in terms of infrastructural development and this has in turn made most of the rural areas in underdeveloped (World Bank, 2018). The need to empower women seems to centre on the fact that women constitute over 50% of the nation's population, thus providing the most substantial part of the family farm labour and rural income in addition their house chores, they therefore have potentials to contribute to the development process in the country but are constrained by some factors that reduce effective participation (Olorunfemi, *et al*., 2020). While enormous reasons are responsible for this, it may be necessary to consider that these limitation cuts across every woman irrespective of the country. The common factor may include constraint by customs, beliefs, reproductive obligations, societal norms, and values by which societies differentiate between them and men. In order to complement the efforts of Government and donor sponsored agencies, it is not certain whether women organization play significant role in rural development. Hence this study was undertaken to analyse participation of women organizations in community infrastructural development projects in Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria.

## Methodology

### *Study Area and Description*

The study was carried out in Ohafia Local Government Area, Abia State, Southeast Nigeria. The Local Government Area is an Igbo speaking region and is a distance of 50.1km away from the capital city, Umuahia in Abia State, Nigeria. Ohafia encompasses twenty six (26) villages with a population strength ranging between 968,000-1,044,240 people (NPC, 2016). The study area has twelve (12) registered women organizations. Most of the people in the Area are engaged mainly in subsistence farming. The major farm crops grown include; yam, cassava, cocoyam, rice, maize, plantain, okra, sweet potatoes, melon, oil palm, cocoa and rubber production.

### *Sample Size and Data Analysis*

Purposive and multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. The selection of the respondents was based on women organizations that were prominent in the Local Government Area. First, eight (8) women organizations were randomly selected out of twelve (12) registered ones. From the selected women organizations, eight (8) women each were randomly selected to give a total of ninety-six (96) women. Descriptive (frequency counts, percentages and mean counts) and inferential (multiple regression analysis) statistics were used for analyses.

### *Analytical Techniques*

Level of participation in community development projects were measured using a 5 -point Likert - type scale of; always = 5, sometimes = 4, rarely =3, seldom = 2 and never= 1. A midpoint was obtained thus; 5+4+3+2+1 =15/5 =3.0. Below 3.0 indicating low participation and 3.0 and above indicating high participation.

### *Model specification*

The Tobit regression analysis was used to estimate the effect of some socio-economic variables on probability and intensity of participation of women organizations in community development projects in the study area. Economic choice theory suggested that individuals are rational and if faced with decision to choose between two or more alternatives, preferred the option that provides maximum level of utility. Therefore, farmers are expected, given socio-economic factors influencing participation of women organizations in community infrastructural development projects, which is implicitly stated thus;

$Y1^* = \beta x1+E$

$Y1^* = 0$ if $Y1^* = 0$

$Y1 = 1$ if $Y1^* = 0$

$Y1 = 1$ if $Y1^* = 0$

The explicit form of the function is specified as follows:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \beta_6X_6 + \beta_7X_7 + \beta_8X_8 + \mu_i$

Where,

Y=participation of women organizations in community infrastructural development projects measured by mean scores

$\beta_1$ = age (years)

$\beta_2$ = household size (numbers)

$\beta_3$ = income (N)

$\beta_4$ = marital status (married= otherwise, no = 0)

$\beta_5$ = education (years)

$\beta_6$ = length of residency (years)

$\beta_7$ = number of trainings

$\beta_8$ = membership of social organizations (years)

$\beta_o$ = constant

$\beta_1 - \beta_8$ = Regression coefficients to be estimated

$\mu_i$=error term

## Results and Discussion

### *Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents*

Result in Table 1 shows that the average age of the women was 42.8years. A good proportion (57.29%) was married, with mean household size of about 6 persons, while a fairly good proportion (36.45%) acquired secondary education. These results suggest that the women were young and educated to articulate the areas of community infrastructural development project to participate in their communities. The result is in conformity with the findings of Nwaobiala and Okeke (2020) that education enhances an individual to be more responsive to rural development programmes and policies in order to make accurate and meaningful management decisions. The women had a mean annual income of N435,675.00, with a mean length of residency of 44.75 years, while a moderate proportion (38.45%) received trainings in different areas of social organisations and 19.58 years of different social organisation membership. The length of residency may have influenced the way women perceive themselves as part of the community and the way they consider development and can be viewed as the key factor that stimulates participation in developmental projects of a community (Umeh, 2018). Mbagwu (2018), and Bamigboye *et al*., (2019) indicateds that membership of

social organisation can assist members increase their production and minimize cost since the group would be able to take advantage of economies of scale, overcome barriers to assets and better management of available resources that aid community development.

***Availability of infrastructural community development projects in the study area***

The result in Figure 1 shows the availability of infrastructural community development projects in the study area. The respondents revealed that construction of markets (97%), equipping school facilities (90%), renovation of schools (89%) and construction of school building (86%) were the major community development projects available in the study area. However, construction of health centres (78%), building of electricity facilities (77%), construction of storage facilities (66%) and equipping health centres (62%) were also available facilities in the study area. The result implied a spatial variation in infrastructural development projects among the communities in the study area. This is in agreement with Social System Theory, the projects covered all aspects of human needs, desires and aspirations (Akpomuvia, 2010).

***Levels of participation of women organizations in infrastructural community development projects available in the study area***

The result in Figure 2 shows the levels of participation of women organizations in infrastructural community development projects in the study area. The result indicates that construction of school buildings, renovation of schools, equipping school facilities and construction of markets with mean scores of 3.5 were the infrastructural community development projects the women organizations participated. Also they women participated in building of electricity facilities ($\overline{X}$ = 3.3) and drilling of bore holes ($\overline{X}$ =3.3). This finding confirm that women organizations of any community have great ideas and suggestions which when involved in development planning could be very essential and beneficial (Apu, 2011). Bojanic (2017), Bidoli *et al*., (2019) affirmed that the rural-based organizations donate fund for project implementation which were raised through group efforts since mobilization of resources is a collective action.

***Determinants of participation of women organizations in infrastructural community development projects***

The result in Table 2 shows the determinants of women participation in infrastructural community development projects in the study area. The chi-square value of 29.15 was highly significant at 1.0% level of probability indicating a Tobit regression line of best fit. The coefficient for age was negatively signed and significant at 5.0% level indicating a direct relationship between age and probability and intensity of participation of women organizations in infrastructural community development projects. This implies that younger women participate in these development projects more than the older ones. The coefficient for income was positively signed and significant at 1.0% level of probability. This implies that any increase in the income will lead to a corresponding increase in the probability and intensity of participation of women organizations in infrastructural community development projects in the study area. This result is in tandem with the findings of Atiku *et al*. (2019) who noted that income assist individuals to contribute to the development of projects in their communities. The coefficient for length of residence was positively signed and significant at 5.0% level of probability. This implies that any increase in length of residency will lead to increase probability and intensity of participation of women organizations in infrastructural community development projects in the study area. The implication of the result is that the longer one stays in the in the community, the more favourable attitudes towards participation in community projects. This result is in tandem with Umeh (2018) who noted that length of residence influences youths' participation in community based projects. The coefficient for number of trainings was positively signed and significant at 1.0% level of probability. This implies that any increase in number of trainings received by women organizations will lead to increase in probability and intensity of participation in infrastructural community development projects in the study area. This is in line with a *priori expectation*. This is expected as an individual access more training, she is empowered with skills and knowledge that will encourage their participation in infrastructural community development programmes (UNDP, 2017). The coefficient for membership of social organizations was positively signed and significant at 1.0% level of probability. This implies that any increase in membership of social organizations leads to increase in probability and intensity of their participation in infrastructural community development projects in the study area. The result is in consistent with Nwaobiala *et al*. (2019) who indicated that membership to cooperative organizations enhance participation in donor-sponsored projects because of the benefits they derive.

**Conclusion**

The study showed that construction of markets, equipping school facilities, renovation of schools and construction of school building were the major community development projects available in the study area. The women had high participation in community infrastructural development projects. Tobit regression result showed that age, annual income, length of residency, number of trainings and membership of social organizations influenced women organizations participation in infrastructural community development projects in the study area. The results therefore call for policies aimed at. The study therefore recommended increased awareness and sensitisation of younger women to join social organization groups. Provision of rural infrastructural facilities by government in order to discourage rural-urban migration for enhanced community development.

**Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Women in the Study Area**

| Variables | Frequency (N = 96) | Percentage | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age (years)** | | | |
| 20-30 | 15 | 15.62 | |
| 31-40 | 19 | 19.80 | |
| 41-50 | 27 | 28.12 | |
| 51-60 | 26 | 27.10 | |
| 61-70 | 9 | 9.36 | **42.8 years** |
| **Marital Status** | | | |
| Single | 10 | 10.42 | |
| Married | 55 | 57.29 | |
| Widow | 20 | 20.83 | |
| Divorced | 11 | 11.46 | |
| **Household Size (numbers)** | | | |
| 2-5 | 54 | 45.0 | |
| 6-10 | 34 | 50.0 | |
| 11-15 | 3 | 0.25 | |
| 16-20 | 3 | 0.25 | **6.4 persons** |
| **Level of Education (years)** | | | |
| No formal education | 20 | 20.83 | |
| Primary education | 27 | 28.12 | |
| Secondary education | 35 | 36.45 | |
| Tertiary | 14 | 14.60 | |
| **Annual Income (₦)** | | | |
| 100,000-200,000 | 19 | 19.80 | |
| 201,000-300,000 | 13 | 13.54 | |
| 301,000-400,000 | 11 | 11.46 | |
| 401,000-500,000 | 23 | 23.95 | |
| 501,000-600,000 | 30 | 31.25 | **₦435,675.00** |
| **Length of Residency (years)** | | | |
| 1 - 10 | 12 | 12.50 | |
| 11 – 20 | 13 | 13.54 | |
| 21 – 30 | 19 | 19.79 | |
| 31 – 40 | 24 | 25.00 | |
| 41 – 50 | 28 | 29.17 | **44.75** |
| **Trainings received (numbers)** | | | |
| Weekly | 13 | 13.54 | |
| Fortnightly | 11 | 11.46 | |
| Bimonthly | 16 | 16.66 | |
| Monthly | 37 | 38.54 | |
| Annually | 19 | 19.80 | |
| **Membership of social organization (years)** | | | |
| 1 – 5 | 14 | 14.00 | |
| 6 – 10 | 11 | 11.46 | |
| 11 – 20 | 18 | 18.75 | |
| 21 – 30 | 43 | 44.79 | **19.58** |

***Source: Field Survey, 2020***

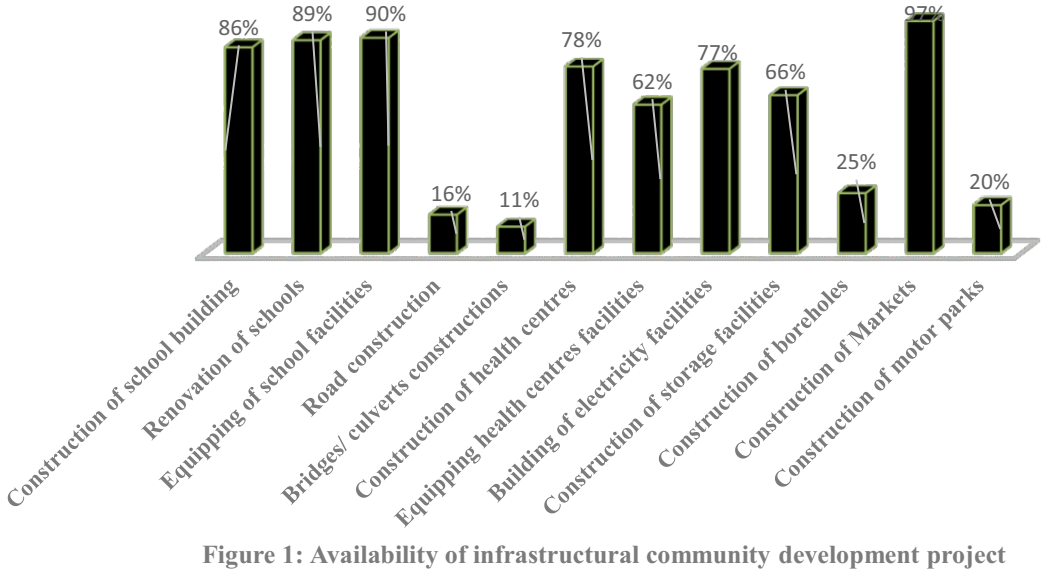


**Figure 1: Availability of infrastructural community development project**

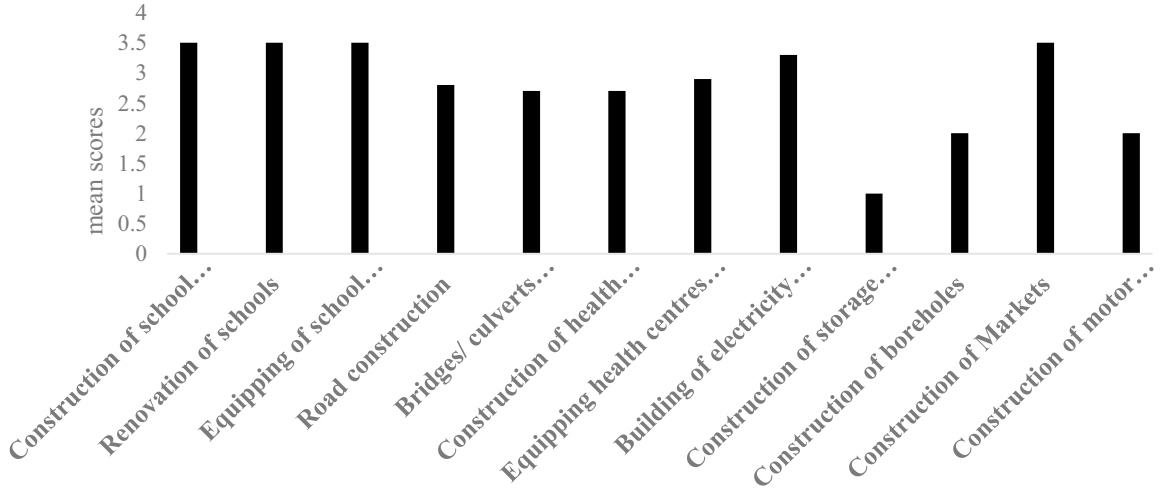


**Figure 2: Levels of participation of women organizations in infrastructral community development projects**

**Table 2: Tobit regression estimates of the determinants of level of participation of women organizations in infrastructural community development projects in the study area**

| Variables | Coefficients | Standard Error | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Constant ($b_o$) | 48.3613 | 5.083 | 11.96*** |
| Age ($X_1$) | -0.1772 | -0.0442 | -2.76** |
| Household size ($X_2$) | 0.2609 | 0.3538 | 0.74 |
| Annual income ($X_3$) | 0.00015 | $3.61x10^{-6}$ | 4.23*** |
| Marital status ($X_4$) | 0.9592 | 1.2352 | 0.28 |
| Education ($X_5$) | 0.0360 | 0.1608 | 0.22 |
| Length of residency ($X_6$) | 0.2126 | 0.00469 | 2.51** |
| Number of trainings ($X_7$) | 0.00116 | $3.41x10^{-4}$ | 4..16*** |
| Membership of social organizations ($X_8$) | 0.004521 | 0.005432 | 4.12*** |
| $Chi^2$ | 29.15*** | | |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.6710 | | |
| Log likelihood | 344.2169 | | |

***Source: STATA 4A Results. Significant at *P≤ 10, ** P≤ 0.5 and ***P≤ 1.0% levels of probability***

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