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**PERCEPTION OF STAKEHOLDERS' ON EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AN ENDURING DEMOCRACY IN  
NORTH- WEST NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The paper examined the stakeholders' perception on empowering women for socio-economic development in a enduring democracy in Nigeria. Women are also in the capacity to assist government achieve its laudable goals and objectives through public enlightenment and national mobilization campaigns. In general, education wipes away ignorance, political apathy and encourages mutual; understanding and cooperation among the various strata in any given society. The population of this study consisted of all the stakeholders in education that comprised the students, graduates, teachers, school administrators, Ministry personnel, Quality Assurances officers in the North-west zone of Nigeria. The population total was 1970 out of this numbers, 1261 respondents were proportionately selected for the study. Four states were selected out of the seven North-western states using purposive sampling technique. 3 research questions were raised for the study and three (3) objectives, descriptive statistics was used to answer the research questions.. The study concludes that significant association exist between empowerment and socio-economic development of women by stakeholders' in an enduring democracy in' Nigeria. It was recommended that empowerment can successfully be achieved by designing and implementing well planned and organized educational programmes . Women need greater access to educational opportunities, skills acquisition and position of authority for them to be truly empowered.*

**KEYWORDS:** women, empowerment, socio-economic, development

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Educating women will encourage technological innovation, improve food production, promote skills development, increase economic efficiency, support family planning and improve the general quality of life. Whether the society believes it or not, an educated woman is saved from frivolous and misleading associations thereby promoting a sense of warm affection and security with her family in particular and the nation at large. Women education can restore and improve the dignity of man and usher in sustainable development. Educating women will involve more and more women in decision making whether at the local, state or national level as Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Directors, Vice

Chancellors, Governors, Deputy Governors, Commissioners and other key top and middle decision making positions.

Akande (1999) stated that the type of education Nigerian women need is that which will equip them for self reliance in the technological world. It is education that will help women utilize their potentials and consequently contribute meaningfully to the family, community and national development. He stated that the undisputed fact is that only women can empower themselves and their empowerment is deeply linked to basic education and economic self-reliance. However, in addition to the indisputable evidence of women's contributions to the survival of national economy, a broadened conceptualization of empowerment would take us beyond the need to prove women's role in national productivity. Development scholars such as Oyebanji (1993) agreed that development must be a matter of fusing social and economic objectives, not only for an increase in production, as a resource of redistribution, resulting in improvements that will benefit the entire community.

Women empowerment can successfully be achieved by designing and implementing well planned and organized educational programmes . Women need greater access to educational opportunities, skills acquisition and position of authority for them to be truly empowered. To this end, development programmes are designed to improve living conditions of women and how to allow them participate in process that will enhance their development at home, community and national levels.

The main objective is to alleviate their burden through appropriate empowerment programmes. In Nigeria, different programmes are embarked upon to improve the welfare, the civic, political, cultural, social, and economic development of women. The Decree No 30 of 1989, which established the National Commission for Women, was promulgated to formulate a national policy on women and development. All programmes for women are carried out by this Commission. The objectives of the commission in the words of Oyiso and Olomukoro (2012) were as follows:

- a. Promote welfare of women in general.
- b. Promote the full utilization of women in the development of human resources and to bring about their acceptance as full participants in every phase of national development, with equal right and corresponding obligations.
- c. Promote responsible motherhood and maternal health of women.
- d. Stimulate actions to improve women's civil, political, cultural, social, and economic education.
- e. Support the work of nongovernmental organization and to play a coordinating role between government and Nigeria women organizations

f. Encourage the sense and essence of cooperative societies and activities amongst women both in urban and rural areas and stimulate in them creative entrepreneurship in the field of cottage and small -scale industries.

g. Formulate and propagate moral values within the family unit and in the public generally and to establish programmes with institutions and organizations to inculcate moral education in women and children, and,

h. Work towards the total elimination of all social and cultural practices tending discrimination against and dehumanization of womanhood.

The National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC) was set up in 1991 by the Federal Government, charging it with the task of eradicating illiteracy in the country. Women were specially targeted in the programmes of the commission with mass literacy classes being conducted in all nooks and crannies of the country..

### **Statement of the Problem**

participation of women in socio-economic development activities are abysmally lower in an enduring democracy. This may be attributed to gender imbalance in the education given. Women inability to significantly contribute to national development and their unprogressive prominence in the national scheme of affairs has to a large extent hindered their socio-economic development. National Bureau of Statistics (2013) indicated that North-west States have the highest percent of female aged between 15-24 who are presently not contributing to socio-economic development of the State even with their acquired qualification. Sani (2011) observed that women in the North-western States suffer a lot of constraints in their ability to contribute to socio-economic development due to cultural and religious inclinations of the North-western people.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The word empowerment means equipping one with the ability to do or act, control, exercise right or authority in ones society. Women empowerment connotes all purposeful efforts aimed at imparting education to women that may be formal or informal, regular or irregular with the ultimate aim of repositioning the knowledge skill and competencies required of them. Apart from the provisions in the National Policy on Education, the Nigerian Government at various levels, has taken several practical steps to improve women's participation in education. For instance, the Federal Ministry of Education in September 1986, established a fully-fledged women's education section charged with the following responsibilities NPE (2013).

- a. Provision of more educational opportunities for girls from primary to tertiary levels.
- b. Creating awareness for all citizens to the fact that equal opportunities exist irrespective of gender, age, locality, creed or special status, and should therefore be made available to all.
- c. Re orientating the attitude of all females irrespective of age towards education.

- d. Provision of functional education for girls and women through skills such as sewing, dying, cooking, baking, typing, knitting,
- e. Awakening the consciousness of all women to the need for the development of a positive self-image.
- f. Promoting the education of girls and women in the fields of science, technology and mathematics.

After more than ten years of the existence of women's education section in the Federal Ministry of Education, women's education is still in dire need of improvement (Omololu, 1985). Perhaps the proliferation of women's bodies and pro women development programmes like Better life Programme (BLP), Family Support Programme (FSP) etc, have only succeeded in creating awareness on the need for improvement in women's education. Existing data are yet to indicate any substantial progress beyond policy and rhetoric. An examination of student enrolment and teaching force data in each of the three tiers of the entire Nigerian school system may assist in making this clearer.

According to Uhn and Hagen (1992), even when empowerment is restricted to the question of re-equipping one with the ability to do or act, control, exercise authority, the role of women remains overwhelming. In Nigeria as in other third world countries, women account for a large percentage of all work in the agricultural, commercial and informal sector. Taiwo (1980) also noted that national statistics for the economically active usually omit women's work in the subsistence sector and this is not commensurate with all available facts. Moreover, in traditional African economies, nearly all production is carried out within the household unit in which women bear the brunt of the demand for productive and reproductive labour.

### **Women Empowerment through Education:**

According to Omololu (1994), for Nigeria to move forward as a nation, she must remove all forms of discrimination against women in education. Equal educational opportunities should be created for both men and women. On the 18 December, 1979, the convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by United Nations General Assembly. This convention become an international treaty on 3rd September, 1981, after twenty-one countries had ratified it. About ten years after, more than one hundred countries of the world, perhaps including Nigeria, have agreed to be bound by the provisions of this convention. For all practical purposes, the twenty seven articles of this convention provide straight forward blue prints for removing all forms of discrimination against women in the Nigerian educational system. Nigeria must therefore, sincerely implement the provisions of the convention.

It should be stated that the Nigerian federal Government is doing a lot to improve women's education as a separate Ministry for Women has been established at federal and state levels. In September 1986, the Federal Government convened a workshop specifically to prepare a

blue print on women education in Nigeria. the blue print prepared by the workshop was adopted by the National Council on Education in 1987 some of the recommendations are:

**Legislation on women education:**

There should be a legislation that girls should remain in school, this is in line with the 1989 UNICEF's convention on the right of the child, which called for national legislation that set 18 years as the minimum age for marriage. This would defeat early marriage prejudices and child bearing, which are factors that cut short the education of girls and women.

- a. Any socio-cultural religious and superstitions belief which inhibit women and prevent them from self-actualization, thus place them in a perpetual subordinate position must also be abandon.
- b. Women in modern technological societies, should be educated in order that they in turn would bring up the future leaders of their countries to meet the expectation of tomorrow.
- c. Career guidance and counseling: in order that the education of women in the developing countries be directed towards the right path, more women should be trained as career guidance counselors, to advice female students at the various institutions.
- d. Women centre and Early Child Care Development (ECCD): these serve as avenues for women to earn income generating skills to give them a firm economic base.
- e. Parents are to give equal opportunity to children irrespective of sex.
- f. Government to discourage withdrawal of girls from primary school
- g. Government to enforce laws prohibiting hawking and street trading by young girls of school age.
- h. Government to establish more single sex boarding schools for girls.
- i. Positive discrimination towards women such that more of them should be admitted into higher institutions.
- j. The curriculum of non-formal education for women to cater for both rural and urban women, and secondary school drop-outs.
- k. Education of women with special needs to be encouraged that is nomadic women, women in pudah, women in rural areas, drop out women, widows, single families and career women.
- l. Government is to encourage special education for women who are specially gifted or handicapped.

For all these provision to be effective, government must go beyond paper works, appropriate legislations should be enacted to implement these provisions. Any parents, employer or educational authority found discriminating against women in educational system should be made to face the full weight of the law. Gender inequality is too deep into the Nigerian mind, that some drastic steps must be taken to curb it.

Amali (2016) stated that many Christian and Muslim women's organizations were active in offering adult and non-formal educational opportunities to women so that they can serve as a tool for sustainable Development. So are many other NGOs such as Officers Wives Associations of Nigeria Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force) . Similarly, many donor

agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, British Council, among others combined enormously to various educational programmer for women in Nigeria especially women in North-western states.

Other initiatives include the United Nations Girls Education Initiatives (UNGEI) which promoted the enrolment of more girls in schools under the African Girls Education initiative (AGEI) with financial support of the Norwegian government that was also put in place to promote women's status (Oladipo, 2007). It is pertinent to note that, women's development can be greatly enhanced through active participation in the aforementioned literacy programmes and application of the skill equipped, thereby improving their livelihood and overall well-being. In order to buttress the link between education and development. Imhabekhai and Olomukoro (2007) stated that literacy is a basic instrument in social transformation and modernization. It influences the rate of development and its possession or otherwise facilitate or retards the level of development. Ezegebe and Akubue (2012) pointed out that any society which neglects women in her human resource potential cannot achieve any meaningful development. They emphasize that the African traditional society women as being resourceful and need empowerment through education.

To buttress the fact that women cannot be empowerment without education. Adekola and Abanum (2010) argued that development cannot take place without education. They stress that development require an educated and enlightened populace, and that the difference between the developed and underdeveloped countries of the world is related to the level of literacy among the populace. In addition, Bolliva (2010) stated that investing in women literacy carries very high returns; it improves livelihood, leads to better child and maternal health, and favours girls' access to education. He further emphasized that when women are literate, it is the society that gains. Education is seen as powerful agent of socialization in that it plays a tremendous role in preparing an individual to render active service in income acquisition, career development, and useful service for self, the family and society at large. Women are also in the capacity to assist government achieve its laudable goals and objectives through public enlightenment and national mobilization campaigns. In general, education wipes away ignorance, political apathy and encourages mutual; understanding and cooperation among the various strata in any given society.

Offorma (2009) said the role of women in the economic benefits include employment, earnings, enhanced general productivity, consumption behaviour, fiscal capacity, and intergenerational effect. One of the most consistent correlations is between increased literacy skills and the probability of employment. Women educations that is properly designed and provided has the tendency of imparting skills and knowledge to participate and makes them more productive in self-employment or in employment by others (UNESCO, 2006). Empowering women education can translate into general political participation and thus contribute to the quality of public policies and to democracy. If the relationship between

education and political participation is well established educated people were more likely to vote and eschew tolerant attitudes and democratic values (Hannum & Buchman, 2012).

### **Women Participation in Income Generation for Family Sustenance:**

Gwadabawa (2003) maintained that in the North Western states educated women are seen as people who know their rights and responsibilities, and who is in a better position to train their children and give them a good foundation on hygienic matters. According to them, an educated woman has the advantage of bringing up children not only hygienically but also provide healthy food and adequate nutritional care for the child's healthy well being. Secondly an educated and gainfully employed mother is often in a better economic position to augment the family's nutritional needs and requirements. The position of the UNESCO (1998) in this regard is that women have the right to the same opportunities as their male counterparts; therefore, they also have to be seen as part of the essential human resource based of every nation.

### **Research Questions**

This study provided answers to the following research questions:-

1. What are the stakeholders perception of empowering women to participate in politics in an enduring democracy in Nigeria
2. What are the stakeholders perception of empowering women to engage in family income in an enduring democracy in Nigeria

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general purpose of this study is to find out stakeholder's perception of empowering women for socio-economic development in an enduring democracy in North-west Nigeria. The following are stated to help address the study, specifically:

1. To investigate the stakeholders perception of empowering women to participate in politics in an enduring democracy in Nigeria.
2. To investigate the stakeholders perception of empowering women to engage in family income in an enduring democracy in Nigeria.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research design that was used for this study is the descriptive survey design. The design allowed for the use of questionnaires, which generated valid data that were analyzed. The population of this study consisted of all the stakeholders in education that comprised the students, graduates, teachers, school administrators, Ministry personnel, Quality Assurances officers in the North-west zone of Nigeria. The target population consisted of all stakeholders in the selected states in the zone. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the selection of the sample needed for this study. The total population of stakeholders in North-west Nigeria was 1970 out of this numbers, 1261 respondents were proportionately selected for the study. This is in agreement with the Research Advisor (2006) sample size

table (see appendix I) as it was recommended that in a population of 1970 at confidence level of 95%. 1261 respondents could be appropriately sampled. Four states were selected out of the seven North-western states using purposive sampling technique.

The following instrument was used for the study, a questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on the Contributions of Women Centres for Continuing Education to Socio-economic Development (QCWCCESD). The instrument was developed by the researcher. QCWCCESD had two sections. Section A contained items that elicit information on respondents demographic data while section B contained items that elicited information on the contribution of Graduates of WCCE to the economic and Political development of women as perceived by stakeholders.

The validity of the instrument was ascertained using content validity technique. This approach was used to ensure if the items of the questionnaire corresponded with the focus of this study. to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted using one centre that is Jigawa State Adult and non-formal learning centre at Dutse, which is within the studied area, but not used by the researcher for this study. A reliability coefficients are: 0.70 was obtained.

## RESULTS

**RQ1:** What are the stakeholders perception of empowering women to participate in politics in an enduring democracy in Nigeria

<b>Perceived Participation</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Poor Participation	193	15.3
Fair Participation	419	33.2
Good Participation	477	37.8
Very Good Participation	172	13.6
Total	1261	100.0

Table 1 show the stakeholders' perceived influence of WCCE graduates participation in politics in North-west, Nigeria. The results show that 193(15.3%) of the stakeholders' perceived the influence of graduates of WCCE participation in politics as poor participation 419 (33.2%) perceived such participation as fair, 477 (37.8%) perceived the participation as good, while 172(13.6%) of the stakeholders perceived their participation as very good. It can therefore be concluded from this result that more than half 649(51.4%) of the stakeholders perceived the participation of graduates of WCCE in politics in the North-west, Nigeria as good, which tends to good participation, The specific stakeholders' analysis is further presented in Table 2



**Table 2 Analysis of Stakeholders' Perception of empowering women to participate in politics in an enduring democracy in Nigeria**

Stakeholders	Perception		Good	%	Total	Rank
	Poor	%				
Students	62	44.0	79	56.0	141	4th
Graduates	32	32.7	66	67.3	98	2nd
Teachers	86	52.8	77	47.2	163	5th
School Administrators	15	27.8	39	72.2	54	1st
Ministry Personnel	40	36.4	70	63.6	110	3rd
Quality Assurance Officers	377	54.2	318	45.8	695	6th
<b>Total</b>	<b>612</b>		<b>649</b>		<b>1261</b>	

Table 2 shows in summary the specific stakeholders' analysis of stakeholder's perception of the influence of women on participation in politics in North-west, Nigeria. It is shown that 62(44.0%) of the students perception of the influence of women graduates on participation in politics in North-west, Nigeria as poor, 79(56.0%) perceived the participation as good, with a total of 141 students. The students perception rank 4th among all the stakeholders, 32(32.7%) of women perceived the participation as poor, and 66(67.3%) of the graduates perceived participation as good. With a total of 98 graduates. The graduate's perception rank 2nd among all stakeholders. 86(52.8%) of the teachers perceived participation as poor and 77(47.2%) of teachers perceived the participation as good, with a total of 163 teachers.

The teacher's perception rank 5th in the perception of stakeholders. 15(27.8%) of school administrators perceived the participation as poor and 39(72.2%) of school administrators perceived the participation as good, with a total of 54 school administrators. The school administrator's perception rank 1st among the stakeholders. 40(36.4%) of ministry personnel perceived the participation as poor, and 70(63.6%) of ministry personnel perceived the participation as good with a total of 110 of ministry personnel. The ministry personnel perception rank 3rd in the perception of stakeholders. 377(54.2%) of Quality Assurance perceived the participation as poor and 318(45.8%) of quality assurance officer perception of the influence of WCCE graduates on participation in politics in North-west, Nigeria as good with a total of 695 quality assurance officers. The quality assurance officers rank 6th in the perception of stakeholders. The individual stakeholders' analysis is further presented as follows:

**Table 3: Analysis of Stakeholders' Perception of empowering women to engage in family income in an enduring democracy in Nigeria**

Stakeholders' Contribution	Perceived	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Poor contribution		108	8.6
Fair Contribution		433	34.3
Good Contribution		527	41.8
Very Good Contribution		193	15.3
Total		1261	100.0

Table 3 show the stakeholders' perceived contributions of women to increase in income generation and family sustenance in North-west, Nigeria. The results show that 108(8.6%) of the stakeholders' perceived the contributions of women to increase in income generation and family sustenance as poor contributions, 433(34.3%) perceived such contributions as fair 527(41.8%) perceived the contributions as good, while 193(15.3%) of the stakeholders perceived contributions as very good. It could therefore be concluded from this result that more than half 720(57.1%) of the stakeholders perceived the contributions of women as contributing to increase in income generation and family sustenance in North-west, Nigeria as good, scale which tends to good contribution. The specific stakeholders' contribution analysis is further presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Analysis of Stakeholders' Perception of empowering women to engage in family income in an enduring democracy in Nigeria**

Stakeholders	Perception				Total	Rank
	Poor	%	Good	%		
Students	58	41.1	83	58.9	141	5th
Graduates	26	26.5	72	73.4	98	1st
Teachers	66	40.5	97	59.5	163	4th
School Administrators	19	35.2	35	64.8	54	3rd
Ministry Personnel	38	34.5	72	65.5	110	2nd
Quality Assurance Officers	334	48.1	361	51.9	695	6th
<b>Total</b>	541		720		1261	

Table 4 shows in summary the specific stakeholders' analysis of Stakeholders Perception of the Contributions of women to Increase in Income Generation and Sustenance in North-west, Nigeria. It is shown that 58(41.1%) of the students perceived the contributions of women to increase in income generation and sustenance in North-west, Nigeria. as poor, 83(58.9%) perceived the contributions as good, with a total of 141 students. The students perception rank 5th among all the stakeholders, 26(26.5%) of the graduate of WCCE perceived the contributions as poor, and 72(73.4%) of the graduates perceived contributions as good, with a total of 98 graduates.

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## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The results shows that more than half of the stakeholders perceived the participation of graduates of women in politics in the North-west, Nigeria as either good or very good. There is the tendency that literacy ability of the women will enhance their participation level in decision making in their communities as well as involvement in mainstream politics which they might hitherto been prevented even with their education?

This finding lends credence to Egbo (2000) assertion that literate women have been known to contribute to the political stability and peace of a country. In addition, Kassim and Eghiator (2005) buttressed the fact that educated women participate in politics and are able to contribute their knowledge to national unity, reconstruction and development. Although, while such stakeholders as school administrators, graduates and students as well as ministry personnel observed such participation in positive direction, many of the quality assurance officials still registered their reservations. However, since Rome as they say is not built in a day, any little progress recorded by women in the area of political participation in this zone should be applauded.

Generally, women in the Northern Nigeria have been noted to be backward in political participation. Many factors which are not the main focus of this present study have contributed to this phenomenon. However, it is suffice to say that backwardness in education most especially of women folk contribute immensely. Education remains an indispensable tool for political participation. The findings of Adebuseye (2007) reveals that educational inequality has been constraining women in northern Nigeria from actively participating in socio-economic and political activities, is not supported by the findings in this study. Findings from this study rather upholds the perception that women participation of women in politics in the North-west, Nigeria as good and very good. This is because; education serves as fulcrum through which any meaningful human activities revolve. Hannum and Buchman (2012) observed that if the relationship between education and political participation is well established, educated people could more likely to vote and exhibit tolerant attitudes and democratic values.

Furthermore, the results shows the result of the influence of stakeholders' status on their perception of contribution of graduates to economic advancement in Northwest, Nigeria. This result therefore, concludes that there is significant influence of stakeholders' status on their perception of contribution of graduates to economic advancement in Northwest, Nigeria. Skills acquisition have a tendency for sustainability and increased level of women participation in societal development needed for socio-economic development. This finding also tends to support the assertion of UNESCO (2006) that women education that is properly designed and provided has the tendency of imparting skills and knowledge to participate and makes them more productive in self-employment or in employment by others

This finding buttresses Anyebe (2001) that feminists have advanced the issue of empowerment of women through education as means of challenging patriarchal ideology of domination and women subordination transforming the structures and institutions that perpetuate gender discrimination

and social inequality as well as creating equal opportunity for women at all levels in all spheres of human endeavour.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn. Concerning the participation in politics, stakeholders perceived the activities and participation of graduates of the centres as encouraging. School administrators, graduates of the centres, and Ministry personnel scored the graduates higher than quality assurance officials, teachers and students on their contributions to political participation. Also, in the area of income generation and family sustenance, more of the stakeholders perceived the contributions of graduates of the centres as good and meaningful. It was also observed that graduates of the centres, school administrators, and ministry personnel scored the contributions of the graduates in income generation and family sustenance higher than the other stakeholders.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are considered relevant.

1. Women participation in politics was marked as encouraging, but they should be given opportunity to be voted for in all spheres of political offices, not being discriminated but should be seen as viable instrument for political participation.
2. Evidence has also shown that resources in women hand result in household expenditure which benefit children, women should therefore, double their effort to utilize their productive role within and beyond the household, in order to reduce the circle of poverty and help to increase additional income for the family. Stakeholders perceived the contribution of women centres to graduates empowerment in North-west, Nigeria as very good. NGOs and State government should provide additional support for women to have access to loans and market facilities. Providing them with soft loans would be required.

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