

# Factors Influencing Academic Aspiration of Females in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State

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## Abstract

The study considered factors that influence educational aspirations of females in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State of Nigeria. Two purposes and two research questions were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey study design was used to carry out the study. The population of the study was all the married and unmarried adults resident in the rural part of the eighteen communities that make up Ezeagu Local Government Area, which stood at 169,718 by the 2006 population census. A structured questionnaire entitled “Educational Aspiration of Ezeagu Females” was designed and used to collect data from respondents. A randomized multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 700 respondents of both married and unmarried males and females in the Local Government Area. The 18 communities that make up the Local Government Area were grouped into four zones for easy sampling and data collection namely: Agu-obu, Akam-ezi, Ob-ele-ofia, and Okpolo-agu. The instrument for data collection was a four-point likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4 points, Agreed (A) = 3 points, Disagreed (D) = 2 points, Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1 point. Items with mean score of 2.5 and above were accepted as agreeing with factors affecting educational aspirations of females in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, while items with mean score below 2.5 were not accepted (rejected). Results showed that most married women that did not acquire university education did not have interest in sending their female children to higher schools having accepted their own status as ideal. Results also showed that while most men acknowledged the complementary values of women with higher academic qualifications to their husbands, most other men see higher education ventures for females as deliberate waste of funds. Based on these findings, recommendations were made, which included that both the local, state and Federal Government should carry out adequate enlighten-

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ment campaign to sensitize both males and females of the inevitable need for higher education for females especially in a developing world as ours. It was also recommended that management of Ezeagu Local Government Area should liaise with Enugu State Government to provide financial empowerment to the poverty-stricken locals of the state with a view to motivating them to educate their females.

## Keywords

Academic Aspiration, Females, Ezeagu, Local Government Area

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## 1. Introduction

Illiteracy has been identified as a major plague in most African countries. According to Shindu (2018), one third of the age population of 15 years and above were unlettered as at the year 2017, in sub-Saharan Africa, but this has risen due to poverty occasioned by wars and other forms of civil unrest. It is worrisome according to Shindu that about 17 countries in Africa still maintain literacy rates of below 50%. According to UNESCO Report (2017), the continent of Africa remains the place where more than half of the parents are incapable of assisting their children to do their homework due to illiteracy.

That report maintains that about 38% of African adults which it puts at about 153 million population are outright illiterates in which women constitute two-thirds of that population. This statistics quickly reveals the gender disparity that exists in male/female education in Africa.

According to The Guardian (2015), two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women. This finding puts the population of illiterate women at 496 million who are daily battling to excel in achieving the global goal of gender equality. There is therefore a significantly larger number of women who are non-literate than their male counterparts and it appears this number is concentrated more in the rural than in Urban communities.

Most men in the African society see women as not only unequal with them, but also not capable of being equal with them. Perhaps, this maybe so partly due to the biblical creation story whereby God commanded that the woman should be under the authority of the man in all things. According to the Holy Bible, "...and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16c, King James Version (KJV)). This position is equally echoed by Apostle Peter "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands... for after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands" (1 Peter 3:1, 5) (KJV). This could be the reason most men in Africa perceive women as not only inferior to their male counterparts but also not fit for a qualitative education. According to BBC Reel (2016), a Nigerian president, Muhammadu Buhari described his wife as belonging to his Kitchen, his living room and the other room.

This, in essence, means that his wife was meant only for domestic use and not for societal improvement. This position is feared to be generally the mentality of most men in Africa about women.

Some people appear to perceive the place of married women to be in the kitchen with their major role being child-bearing and house-keeping. The notion still appears to prevail, that married women do not require formal education since they are meant to work either in the home or to engage in other occupations that don't require formal education. This feeling by the male counter parts appears to have equally influenced the thinking of most females, hence the attitude of most women in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State of Nigeria.

Married women in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State of Nigeria appear to have a negative attitude towards education and this may not be unconnected to the attitude of their male counterparts to ward them. Whereas education develops the mind and sense of the beneficiary, female education appears to have been very negatively influenced in Ezeagu Local Government Area, giving room to highly under-developed personalities among the female folk. Realizing this, [Ukwuaba \(2015\)](#) suggested community education as a means not only to encourage women to fully embrace education, but also to harness the hidden potential in them for community development.

Women education improves children's health and prevents infant mortality, because educated mothers have greater knowledge and awareness of the importance of hygiene which prevents contact of germs and mortal diseases which reduce the population of children. Mothers' education also has significant impact on the educational attainment of the child. The correlation between mothers' education and the educational attainment of their children necessitated the lamentation of [UNESCO Report \(2017\)](#) that most African women are not able to help their children with their school assignment due to illiteracy. Studies have revealed that the home environment is very critical in the child's literacy attainment. National Centre for Learning Disability ([NCLD \(2019\)](#)) succinctly averred that the mother is her child's first teacher, stating that the home is where the child would get his or her first experiences with books and reading.

It can even be averred that the education of women develops the society more than male education.

In Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, women education appears to be low and, this no doubt is expected to have significant effect on the literacy level of the younger generation.

Lack of motivation appears to be a major factor that influences female education in Ezeagu Local Government Area. Most men do not fathom why their girl children would be educated and, since Ezeagu is mostly rural, thriving mainly on subsistence farming and petty trading, parents prefer taking their girl children to farm as helping hands for increased production or sending them to hawk petty articles for the family's daily existence. The girls so trained have nothing that motivates them to school. Poverty still remains the cause and effect of lack

of motivation.

Due to poor living standard, occasioned by low income, most parents see no motivation to get into girl child education which they fear would plunge them into more expenditure. Most men would rather choose to educate the boys whom they believe would live with them, rather than spend on woman that would shortly be married off by other men. To them, it amounts to economic waste investing on other men's family. This study examined factors that influence academic aspiration of females in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State of Nigeria.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The attitude of the society especially the male folk towards the academic aspiration of the female folk is a worrisome issue. The perception about female academic aspiration appears to be negative especially among the male folk. The female child is often seen as not deserving quality education. They appear to be seen as inferior or not actually profitable to aspire for higher education. This attitude has tended to reduce the life ambition of most females especially in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State. Most females appear to have accepted that opinion that no matter how educated a woman might become, her worth does not go beyond the kitchen and the bedroom.

It is most worrisome also when men viewed as the elite in the society as well express such views that tend to trivialize the need for female education. The statement credited to the Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, describing his wife as belonging to his kitchen, his living room and the other room appears to be giving acceptance to such view. Coupled with this attitude of the men against the female folk is poverty, as the rural dwellers in Ezeagu Local Government Area thrive only on subsistent farming which hardly feeds the family, let alone generate enough funds for the education of the children.

Most females equally appear not to have enough confidence on themselves as to summon courage to demand to be educated.

Dearth of job opportunities especially for the female folk also appears to be another limiting factor to the education of the female folk. The consequence of this is the near absence of females from Ezeagu Local Government Area in decision making and policy formulation in the state. If this situation is not reversed, the hope of raising an enlightened society where the younger generation is involved in the structuring and restructuring of the larger society will be a mirage since it is clear that women are reliable stake holders in raising academically vibrant children when themselves are educated.

The problem of this study therefore is to unveil the factors that influence the academic aspiration of the female folk in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

### **1.2. Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to find out the factors that influence the academic aspiration of the female folk in Ezeagu Local Government Area of

Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to.

- 1) Determine the attitude of married men to the acquisition of higher education of the females in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria.
- 2) Ascertain the value placed on higher education by married women in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria.

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

Findings of this study would be of immense educational value to Enugu State Government in particular and the Federal Government of Nigeria in general. It would give them a good knowledge of the precarious situation of the education of the female folk with a view to finding solution to it. Both the State Ministry of Education and the State Education Management Board would be armed with information with which to work to change the ugly situation of poor female education especially in rural areas.

The Local Education Authorities are expected to work vigorously with the Local Governments towards ending the long time seeming marginalization of the female folk especially in seeking higher educational attainment. This would be possible only when they are informed sufficiently on the situation on ground which is what this work is set to achieve.

Men who might be harbouring a similar tendency of derogatory attitude on women would be exposed to the ugly perception their attitude exposes them to the entire society and, this would encourage them to drop their attitude and view.

Most African nations where this ugly attitude of denying the female folk of good education still thrives would think twice on such posture.

Females all over would derive enough courage from this work which would provide the needed drive in them to pursue education.

In a fast-developing world, as we are today, the younger generation cannot afford to thrive in illiteracy; the findings of this study would spur the younger people especially females into efforts geared towards acquiring education at all logical costs.

### **1.4. Scope of the Study**

This work was designed primarily to investigate factors that influence academic aspiration of the female folk in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State. It investigated the attitude of married men towards the academic acquisition of the female folk. It focused on the value placed on higher education by the female folk. It is focused on Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State of Nigeria.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- 1) What is the attitude of married men toward the acquisition of higher education of the females in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State?
- 2) What is the value placed on higher education by married women in Ezeagu

Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria?

## 2. Methodology

The descriptive survey method was used to carrying out this study. The area of the study was Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State with headquarters at Aguobu-Owa. It has an area of 633 km<sup>2</sup>. It consists of the following towns: Agba-Umana, Aguobu-Owa, Aguobu-Umuagi, Aguobu-Umumba, Akama-Oghe, Amankwo-Oghe, Amansi-Odo, Awka-Imezi, Awha Ndiagu, Iwollo-Imezi, Neke, Obeleagu-Umana, Obunofia Ndiagu, Obunofia Ndiuno, Okpo-Gho, Olo, Oyofe, and Umumba Ndiagu.

The population of the study consisted of all the 15,000 married and unmarried men and women (adults) in the eighteen communities of Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

The communities were grouped into four large zones as designated namely Aguobu, Aguobu-Oghe, Awha Imezi and Obele-Ndiagu. These creations were used by the researcher only for the purpose of this study and for inclusion of all the communities in the Local Government Area. By the 2006 population census, Ezeagu Local Government had a population of 169, 718 (Wikipedia, 2009).

A randomized multi-stage sampling technique was used to select seven hundred (700) respondents of both married and unmarried males and females living within the local Government area at the time of the study. There was first a sample of both married and unmarried adults from all the eighteen communities, and then a randomized selection of only the married males and females from the four sub-zones as divided by the researcher. This was to ensure thoroughness and all-inclusiveness.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire entitled “Educational Aspirations of females in Ezeagu Local Government Area (EAFELGA)” which had eight (8) items.

The researcher administered the questionnaire with the help of trained research assistants. A total of seven hundred and fifty (750) questionnaires were distributed while seven hundred (700) were returned.

The data was analyzed on individual item basis using mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard deviation. The 4 points modified likert scale was used. Thus:

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points;

Agree (A) = 3 points;

Disagree (D) = 2 points;

Strongly Disagree = 1 point;

$4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10 \div 4 = 2.5$ .

Items with mean score of 2.5 and above were accepted as agreeing with factors affecting educational aspirations of females in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, while items with mean score below 2.5 were not accepted.

## 3. Results

### Research Question 1

What is the Attitude of married Men towards the Acquisition of Higher Education by Females in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State? (Table 1).

With the grand mean of 2.8, respondents in Ezeagu Local Government Area agreed that the reason most men support their wives to acquire higher education was to assist them in providing for the family economically. They agreed that most men are suspicious of highly educated women since there may be the tendency of such women looking down on their husbands. They agreed equally that most women seek higher education to compete with men and that most other men view women's higher education training as a mere waste of funds.

#### Research Question 2

What is the value placed on higher education by married women in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State?

From Table 2 above, the grand mean response of 3.04 showed that respondents were of the view that most poorly educated married women are not interested in training their girl children up to university level. Though they disagreed with the notion that most women develop apathy to education due to lack of motivation and that most women do not see university education as necessary for life, they however agreed that most people see women with university degrees as coming from well-to-do homes.

## 4. Discussion of Findings

Findings showed that most women seek higher education so as to become helping hands to their husbands in taking care of financial responsibilities in the home. This shows the extent to which economic considerations motivate pursuit for higher education in most communities in Nigeria. This agrees with Ventura (2018) who maintained that education and economic growth hold a relationship with each other. Ventura firmly holds that workers with higher education ultimately earn higher wages than employees without post-secondary education. Corroborating Ventura's position, Investopedia (2018) avers that education and training are not only beneficial to the worker and the employer but also to the country of domicile, insisting that the education and training of a country's workforce is a major determinant of that nation's economy.

**Table 1.** Mean rating on the attitudes of Men towards the acquisition of Higher education by Females.

S/N	ITEM FOCUS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	STD	DEC.
1	Most men believe that some women seek university education to assist their husbands in the home.	220	150	180	150	2.6	1.6	Accepted
2	Most men are suspicious of highly educated women as capable of belittling their husbands.	280	70	250	100	2.8	1.7	Accepted
3	Most men believe that married women seek university education to compete with men.	350	100	50	200	2.9	1.7	Accepted
4	Most men see the university education of the females as unnecessary waste of funds.	250	200	150	100	2.9	1.7	Accepted
	Grand Mean					2.8		



**Table 2.** Mean Rating of value placed on higher education by Women.

S/N	ITEM FOCUS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	STD	DEC.
1	Poorly educated married women are themselves not interested in sending their girl child to school up to university level.	270	130	150	150	2.74	1.7	Accepted
2	Most women developed apathy towards education due to lack of motivation.	380	200	100	20	3.4	1.8	Accepted
3	Most women do not consider university degree necessary in their life.	300	150	150	50	3.21	1.8	Accepted
4	Women with university education are often seen by other women as coming from very rich homes.	290	150	110	150	2.82	1.7	Accepted
	Grand Mean					3.04		

Respondents agreed that that most men were suspicious of highly educated female folk fearing that they could be belittled by such academically intimidating women. Mahare (2017) narrated an ugly testimony of a client who confessed that her husband who was a business man lost her attraction after she bagged a Master's Degree. But Kite (2014) had frowned at such attitude saying that it was dishonourable for women, especially wives, to portray their husbands as useless, wondering that most television stations, comedy houses and even advertorials these days try to portray women as heroines against men. No real man would want to have all of these. Could that be the reason most men of Ezeagu Local Government are averse to having the females attain high educational standard? Judging by Mahare's testimony, those men who are opposed to the education of the female folk could be justified, but when viewed against the backdrop of the importance of educated mothers in the rearing of enlightened society, and especially in view of the fact that most of the females may not be married within the locality, one quickly sees the short-sightedness of the proponents of such ideas.

Respondents equally agreed that most men believe that most married women seek higher education as a way of competing with the men. This view might have equally added to the already existing suspicion of supremacy tussle to dampen the morale of men in supporting and encouraging female higher education.

Respondents also agreed that most men see university education of the females as mere waste of funds and resources. This view appears not to be limited to Ezeagu Local Government Area alone. Advancing reasons why most girls are not in school, Their World (2017) outlined thirteen reasons why girls were not in school on the International Day of the Child to include among other things: early marriage which often results in early pregnancy, violence at school, poor funding, child domestic labour and poor sanitation from lack of private corners to ease themselves and change their menstrual pad. Additionally, there was lack of capable female teachers who would take adequate care of the girl children, in addition to wars and general insecurity. All these contributed to keep the females out of school.

On the value placed on higher education by women themselves, respondents agreed that poorly educated women are themselves not interested in sending



their girl children to higher school. This attitude might not be unconnected to their level of awareness as one cannot give what one does not have. But respondents however disagreed that most women developed apathy towards education due to lack of motivation. This shows that in spite of the discouraging attitude of the male folk to women education, the women have remained undeterred towards acquiring higher education. It could equally be inferred that women in Ezeagu Local Government Area would be willing to embark on higher education given an improved economic base. This position is supported by the fact that respondents equally disagreed with the notion that most women do not see university degree as a necessity in life. On the contrary, Ezeagu females cherish higher education if the socially enabling factors like government support and economic empowerment are given to them despite the position of their male counterparts.

Respondents were of the view that women that have university education are those from rich homes. In a local government area largely populated by peasant farmers and petty traders, it may not be that easy to embark on a capital intensive venture such as tertiary education, especially at such a time as it is in Nigeria when most people even in urban areas find it hard to have three square meals a day. The traditional misconception about the girl child education by the people—that it amounts to spending on another man's family—would make any person believe that a man training a female in a higher institution is too wealthy that he does not actually know what else to do with money.

## **5. Conclusion**

The findings of this study have exposed the real thinking of both males and females that informed their attitude to female education that has in turn influenced educational aspiration of the female folk in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State. Having established the fact that female educational aspiration is in such threatened state in that area of study, it is imperative that both the state government, the private sector and Non-Governmental Organizations should rise to the challenge posed by this condition; but the private sector involvement can only happen if the state government that is the proprietor of state public schools can get them involved.

## **6. Limitations to the Study**

One of the limitations to this study is the uncooperative attitude of some rural folk who were not enlightened enough to appreciate research work. Others were not literate enough to respond to questions in writing. These led to spending much time trying to educate them. Covering the communities involved was another herculean task, especially travelling through un tarred rural roads.

## **7. Recommendations**

The local, state and federal governments should embark on vigorous enlighten-

ment campaign of enlightenment to sensitize both the males and females of the inevitable need for higher education of both males and females, especially in the present day, and given the inescapable need for global development in such areas as technology, science, and information.

Management of Ezeagu Local Government should liaise with Enugu State Government to provide financial empowerment, especially for the rural women of the local Government Area, seeing that that local council is populated with poverty-stricken citizens. This has the capacity of improving their lives and motivating them into spending in the education of all, especially their girl children.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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