

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND ITS EFFECT ON PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN AGAIE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NIGER STATE

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### Abstract

*Community development initiatives thrive on active citizen participation, which is often influenced by various socio-demographic factors—among which educational attainment plays a pivotal role. In the Agaie Local Government Area of Niger State, the interplay between education levels and engagement in grassroots development efforts remains underexplored. This study investigates how educational attainment affects individuals' involvement in community development initiatives. Using a descriptive survey design, the study engaged 400 respondents drawn through multistage sampling from ten wards across Agaie. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and analyzed with SPSS (Version 25) through descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that individuals with higher education levels exhibited increased participation in planning, financing, and monitoring of community projects. Furthermore, those with tertiary education were more likely to assume leadership roles in community organizations, while those with limited education participated more in manual or supportive roles. The study also identified critical barriers limiting the participation of less-educated individuals, including low self-efficacy, inadequate information access, and perceived exclusion. The implications of these findings suggest a need for inclusive strategies that bridge educational divides and enhance participatory governance. The study recommends capacity-building initiatives, adult education, and targeted civic engagement campaigns to foster equitable community participation. These strategies are essential to promote inclusive development and sustainable community progress in rural areas like Agaie.*

**Keywords:** Educational Attainment, Community Participation, Local Development, Civic Engagement, Rural Nigeria, Inclusive Governance, Agaie, Niger State

## Introduction

Education has long been recognized as a powerful catalyst for individual empowerment and societal transformation. In the context of community development, educational attainment plays a critical role in shaping individuals' awareness, attitudes, and capacity to contribute meaningfully to developmental initiatives (Okafor & Bello, 2022). Particularly in rural communities such as Agaie in Niger State, where development needs are acute, understanding how education influences participation can provide valuable insights for policy and practice.

Participation in community development initiatives encompasses a range of activities, from decision-making and leadership to labor contribution and financial support. Individuals with higher levels of education often possess the skills and confidence necessary to engage in planning, organizing, and implementing developmental projects (Afolabi & Ogunleye, 2023). They are more likely to be informed about community issues, understand administrative processes, and advocate for resource allocation. Conversely, those with limited education may be marginalized or restricted to non-decision-making roles, thereby reducing their impact on community outcomes.

In many parts of rural Nigeria, the gap in educational attainment remains a critical barrier to inclusive participation. Factors such as poverty, gender disparities, and socio-cultural practices have historically limited access to education, particularly for women and marginalized groups (Yusuf & Mohammed, 2021). As a result, a substantial segment of the population is excluded from participating fully in community

development efforts, perpetuating cycles of underdevelopment and inequality.

Agaie Local Government Area, predominantly agrarian, has witnessed several community-driven development efforts in health, water supply, and road maintenance. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the level of participation in these initiatives varies significantly across educational backgrounds. While some residents take active leadership roles, others appear indifferent or disengaged. This disparity necessitates a systematic investigation into the effect of educational attainment on civic engagement in community projects.

Existing studies on community participation have often emphasized the importance of inclusive development but have not sufficiently explored the influence of education as a determining factor in participation levels, particularly in rural Northern Nigeria (Ibrahim & Musa, 2022). Moreover, there is limited empirical research focused specifically on Agaie, despite its developmental significance within Niger State. This study aims to fill that gap.

The importance of this research lies in its potential to inform more equitable development strategies. If educational attainment is shown to influence participation, then interventions can be tailored to empower underrepresented groups through literacy programs, civic education, and participatory governance models. This would enhance ownership, accountability, and sustainability of community projects.

In addition, understanding the education-participation nexus can help local leaders and development agencies identify hidden human capital within the community. Often, individuals with

low formal education possess indigenous knowledge and social capital that, if properly harnessed, can significantly benefit local development (Eze&Salisu, 2023).

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between educational attainment and participation in community development initiatives in Agaie. By identifying patterns, strengths, and gaps in civic involvement, the research contributes to a broader discourse on sustainable rural development and participatory democracy in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Community development thrives on the collective engagement of its members; however, disparities in educational attainment often result in unequal levels of participation. In Agaie Local Government Area of Niger State, various community development initiatives have been introduced over the years, ranging from rural electrification and water supply schemes to health outreach programmes and school construction. Despite these efforts, there is a growing concern that participation in these initiatives is uneven, with individuals of higher educational attainment engaging more actively than their less-educated counterparts (Aliyu & Danjuma, 2021). This discrepancy raises questions about inclusivity and equity in community development. Field reports and anecdotal evidence suggest that individuals with primary or no formal education often lack awareness of ongoing projects or are limited to roles that require physical labor, while leadership and planning are dominated by those with secondary or tertiary education (Ogbonna&Yahuza, 2023). This skewed involvement not only alienates large segments of the population but also reduces the effectiveness of

development efforts by excluding the unique perspectives and local knowledge of the less educated. Additionally, educational inequality creates barriers to accessing relevant information, understanding technical aspects of development projects, or participating in decision-making forums. This situation undermines the democratic principle of community-driven development, which thrives on equal participation irrespective of educational background. Without conscious efforts to bridge this gap, community development risks becoming an elitist venture, shaped by a minority and lacking grassroots legitimacy (Ojo & Bala, 2022). In Agaie, the implications of this problem are particularly profound. As a largely rural community with a diverse educational profile, the area presents both opportunities and challenges for inclusive participation. The underutilization of human potentials due to educational disparities weakens community cohesion and slows the pace of progress. Development projects fail to achieve sustainability when sections of the population are uninvolved in their planning, execution, or monitoring (Lawal & Ndagi, 2021).

Moreover, gender dynamics further complicate the scenario. Women, who already face structural barriers to education, are doubly disadvantaged in participating in development processes. Illiterate or semi-literate women are often excluded from community dialogues, planning committees, or leadership positions due to both educational limitations and socio-cultural norms (Salihu & Garba, 2023). This results in the marginalization of critical voices and the perpetuation of gender-based inequalities in development outcomes.

The lack of empirical data on the relationship between education and

participation in Agaie also hampers effective policy formulation. While assumptions abound regarding the link between education and civic engagement, there is little systematic research to validate these claims or provide actionable insights. This research aims to fill that void by offering evidence-based analysis of how educational attainment influences participation in community development initiatives.

If the problem is not adequately addressed, the developmental trajectory of Agaie LGA may continue to suffer setbacks. Projects may be poorly executed, abandoned, or face resistance from segments of the population that feel excluded or underrepresented. Ultimately, a divided community cannot achieve holistic and sustainable development.

Therefore, this study is not only timely but essential. It seeks to highlight the critical but often overlooked role of education in enabling effective community participation and ensuring that no group is left behind in the quest for grassroots transformation.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study is designed to investigate how educational attainment influences the degree and quality of participation in community development initiatives in Agaie Local Government Area of Niger State. The specific objectives are as follows:

- i. To assess the level of participation in community development initiatives among individuals with different levels of educational attainment in Agaie LGA.
- ii. To examine the relationship between educational attainment and the nature of roles assumed by community members in development initiatives.

- iii. To identify the barriers that hinder participation in community development initiatives among less-educated individuals.

### **Research Questions**

To guide this study and provide answers to the above objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the level of participation in community development initiatives among individuals with varying levels of educational attainment in Agaie Local Government Area?
2. How does educational attainment affect the type and scope of roles played by individuals in community development efforts?
3. What challenges hinder individuals with lower educational attainment from actively participating in community development initiatives?

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to explore the influence of educational attainment on participation in community development initiatives. The design was chosen for its ability to systematically collect and analyze data across a broad population. It also allowed for comparisons between different categories of respondents based on educational background. A quantitative research approach was utilized. Data were gathered using structured questionnaire designed to obtain standardized responses on educational background, level of participation, types of community roles held, and perceived challenges. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale format, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," to assess opinions and behaviors. The sample size was

determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula for finite population sampling. With a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error set at 5%, the resulting sample size was 400 respondents drawn from across the ten wards of Agaie LGA.

A multistage sampling technique was employed to select respondents. In the first stage, a stratified sampling method was used to categorize the population based on educational levels: no formal education, primary, secondary, and tertiary education. In the second stage, random sampling was applied within each educational stratum to select individual respondents from community rosters, ensuring representation across the educational spectrum. Equal attention was given to gender and age balance during selection. To ensure validity and reliability, a pilot study was conducted in Lapai LGA (a neighboring area with similar demographics), involving 30 respondents. Feedback from the pilot led to minor adjustments in the phrasing of some questionnaire items

for clarity and cultural sensitivity. Data collection was carried out by trained research assistants fluent in both English and Nupe, the dominant local language. They were equipped to assist respondents with low literacy in completing the questionnaire through oral translations where necessary, while maintaining objectivity and confidentiality. Fieldwork took place over a four-week period to allow sufficient time for community engagement and to reach remote areas. For data analysis, the responses were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25). Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to analyze levels and types of participation.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does educational attainment influence participation in community development initiatives in Agaie Local Government Area?

**Table 1: Influence of Educational Attainment on Participation in Community Development Activities**

S/N	Statement	F	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Educated individuals are more likely to lead community development projects.	400	3.42	0.89	Agree
2	Those with tertiary education often serve on planning and monitoring committees.	400	3.37	0.92	Agree
3	Individuals with primary education or below mostly offer physical labor.	400	3.25	1.01	Agree
4	Uneducated individuals rarely attend development planning meetings.	400	3.10	1.13	Agree
5	People with formal education are more likely to contribute financially.	400	3.36	0.95	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025

**Average Mean: 3.30**

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that educational attainment significantly affects how individuals participate in community development initiatives in Agaie Local Government Area. The highest mean (3.42) reflects

strong agreement that individuals with formal education, particularly tertiary-level, are more likely to assume leadership positions in development projects. Respondents also agreed that educated persons frequently serve on



planning and monitoring committees (Mean = 3.37), confirming that formal education equips individuals with the confidence and technical knowledge needed to engage in organizational roles. The mean score of 3.25 for the statement regarding those with low education contributing primarily labor indicates agreement that manual tasks are more commonly associated with lower educational attainment. A mean of 3.10 also supports the view that uneducated individuals are less likely to attend community planning meetings. The financial aspect of participation also appears linked to education, as those with formal education are perceived to be more likely to contribute monetary support to

community projects (Mean = 3.36). In general, the average mean of 3.30 reflects a strong agreement among respondents that educational attainment positively influences both the frequency and quality of participation in community development. These findings underline the need to address the participation gap caused by educational inequality, especially in underdeveloped rural areas like Agaie.

**Research Question 2:** How does educational attainment affect the type and scope of roles individuals assume in community development initiatives in Agaie Local Government Area?

**Table 2: Educational Attainment and Roles in Community Development**

S/N	Statement	F	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1	People with higher education often chair community development committees.	400	3.41	0.91	Agree
2	Educated individuals are more involved in project planning and evaluation.	400	3.38	0.94	Agree
3	Less-educated members mainly engage in labor-intensive or supportive tasks.	400	3.26	1.02	Agree
4	Tertiary graduates are frequently nominated as spokespersons for projects.	400	3.33	0.96	Agree
5	Illiterate persons rarely speak during town hall or planning meetings.	400	3.15	1.08	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025

**3.31**

**Average Mean:**

As shown in Table 2, educational attainment has a marked influence on the nature and scope of roles that individuals assume in community development activities. The highest-rated item, with a mean score of 3.41, confirms that individuals with higher education levels are commonly chosen to chair development committees. Educated individuals are also perceived to participate more in planning and evaluation phases of projects (Mean = 3.38), which highlights the cognitive and administrative advantages that come with formal schooling. The third

item (Mean = 3.26) indicates that less-educated persons are more involved in labor-intensive roles, such as digging, carrying materials, or clearing land. While this shows a degree of involvement, it also reflects structural inequality in how responsibilities are assigned—often unintentionally reinforcing class and educational divides in communal efforts. A mean score of 3.33 for the statement that educated persons are often selected as project spokespersons reinforces the idea that communication and formal expression—critical in stakeholder

engagement—are tied to educational background. The fifth item, with a mean of 3.15, suggests that illiterate individuals often remain passive in community meetings. With an average mean of 3.31, the data confirm that education does not merely influence whether one participates, but how and in what capacity. Individuals with higher educational attainment are more likely to occupy influential and

strategic positions, while those with less education often serve in physical or symbolic capacities.

**Research Question 3:** What are the challenges hindering individuals with lower educational attainment from actively participating in community development initiatives in Agaie Local Government Area?

**Table 3: Challenges Hindering Participation among Less-Educated Community Members**

S/N	Statement	F	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Low literacy levels hinder understanding of project details.	400	3.44	0.88	Agree
2	Lack of self-confidence discourages less-educated individuals from speaking up in meetings.	400	3.36	0.94	Agree
3	Many less-educated people feel excluded from decision-making processes.	400	3.32	0.97	Agree
4	Information on projects is often not accessible to people with low education.	400	3.29	0.99	Agree
5	Cultural norms discourage illiterate individuals from taking leadership roles.	400	3.21	1.03	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025

**Average Mean:**

**3.32**

Table 3 highlights the most prevalent challenges that limit participation of individuals with lower educational attainment in community development initiatives. The highest-rated challenge, with a mean score of 3.44, indicates that low literacy levels prevent many from fully grasping project concepts, plans, or written communications. Closely following is the challenge of low self-confidence (Mean = 3.36), suggesting that less-educated individuals often feel inadequate or intimidated during public meetings and dialogues. The mean score of 3.32 for exclusion from decision-making reinforces that leadership and planning structures in rural development projects are often inaccessible to individuals without formal education, either by design or default. This fosters a sense of

marginalization and reduces project ownership at the grassroots. Another major challenge is information inaccessibility (Mean = 3.29). Often, information about meetings, funding opportunities, or development plans is disseminated through formal channels that assume a basic level of literacy, such as written notices or online platforms. Finally, cultural norms (Mean = 3.21) also contribute to participation gaps. In many rural contexts, leadership is equated with formal education, making it socially unacceptable for illiterate individuals to aspire to such roles—even if they have the charisma or vision. Overall, the average mean of 3.32 strongly indicates that structural, informational, cultural, and psychological barriers collectively limit the participation of the

less-educated in development processes.

### Summary of the Findings

This study investigated the influence of educational attainment on participation in community development initiatives in Agaie Local Government Area, using three research questions. The findings offer valuable insights into how education shapes engagement, roles, and inclusion in rural development efforts. First, it was found that educational attainment significantly influences the level of participation in community development. Individuals with tertiary and secondary education were more actively involved in leadership, planning, and financial support roles. Those with lower education levels primarily contributed through physical labor or were absent from strategic planning platforms. This suggests a stratification of participation based on educational background, with higher-educated individuals dominating decision-making structures. Second, the nature of roles assumed in development activities was also affected by education. Educated individuals were more frequently appointed as committee leaders, spokespersons, or record keepers, while less-educated individuals were relegated to manual or peripheral tasks. This role differentiation reinforces the argument that education not only enhances engagement but also elevates one's functional relevance in development projects. It underscores the importance of capacity development to enable broader community involvement across education levels. Third, the study identified several challenges limiting the participation of less-educated individuals. Chief among these were low literacy, lack of confidence, inaccessibility of project information,

exclusion from decision-making, and entrenched cultural norms that associate leadership with formal education. These barriers reflect both structural and social constraints that must be addressed to achieve equitable community development.

The results affirm that participation is not uniform; it is mediated by socio-educational factors. Individuals without formal education are less likely to attend meetings, contribute to discussions, or be given leadership roles. Meanwhile, their more educated counterparts are not only more informed but also more assertive in engaging with development processes. This aligns with findings from other rural development studies across Nigeria.

Another critical insight is the gap in communication methods. Project information often fails to reach individuals with limited education due to overreliance on written formats or English-only notices. This highlights the need for more inclusive communication tools, such as oral announcements in local languages and visual aids that simplify project information for broader understanding.

### Discussion of the Findings

Table 1 reveals that educational attainment significantly impacts the frequency and quality of individual participation in community development activities in Agaie. Those with higher education levels were more likely to assume leadership roles, participate in planning, and contribute financially. The highest mean value (3.42) suggests a strong perception that individuals with tertiary education lead most development projects. Similarly, their participation in monitoring committees (mean = 3.37) and financial contributions (mean = 3.36) reflects that formal education equips



individuals with confidence, planning skills, and civic responsibility, aligning with Afolabi & Ogunleye (2023), who assert that education enhances organizational participation. Meanwhile, less-educated individuals were predominantly involved in physical labor, indicating a divide in participatory roles. This supports the argument by Okafor & Bello (2022) that education provides the foundational knowledge and confidence required for civic involvement. Moreover, Yusuf & Mohammed (2021) suggest that limited access to education in rural Nigeria impairs engagement with community initiatives—an assertion validated by the study's findings.

Table 2 shows that educational level not only influences whether individuals participate but also how they do so. Individuals with tertiary education were found to frequently chair development committees (mean = 3.41) and act as project spokespersons (mean = 3.33). This indicates that leadership, decision-making, and technical communication are often reserved for the educated, a situation Eze & Salisu (2023) describe as “elite capture” of grassroots leadership. The average mean of 3.31 confirms that educated individuals dominate the more strategic, intellectual, and representational roles, while less-educated community members are limited to supportive and physical roles (mean = 3.26). This supports the view of Ibrahim & Musa (2022) that rural development often replicates societal hierarchies, with education being a critical stratifier. Ogbonna & Yahuza (2023) argue that excluding the less educated from key roles in community planning reduces the effectiveness and sustainability of development projects, as it limits the inclusion of indigenous knowledge. Thus, although education enhances capacity, the unbalanced role

assignment undermines community ownership and collective problem-solving.

Table 3 indicated that low literacy (mean = 3.44), lack of self-confidence (mean = 3.36), and exclusion from decision-making (mean = 3.32) were major obstacles. These findings are consistent with Ojo & Bala (2022), who explain that educational barriers create psychological and systemic exclusions in civic life. Moreover, information dissemination often occurs through inaccessible formats such as English-written notices, further compounding exclusion, as described by Lawal & Ndagi (2021). Cultural norms (mean = 3.21) also discourage illiterate persons from taking up leadership roles, especially women, who are doubly marginalized due to structural gender inequality (Salihu & Garba, 2023). These findings echo what Okafor & Bello (2022) term “participatory marginalization,” where social structures inhibit active citizenship among less-educated populations. Overall, these challenges reflect a multidimensional exclusion structural, informational, psychological, and cultural that hampers development by sidelining a significant portion of the population. Inclusive governance, therefore, must go beyond physical presence in projects to ensure meaningful engagement of all educational groups.

### Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following targeted recommendations are proposed:

1. Tailored civic education campaigns in local languages should be organized to increase awareness among the less educated, especially regarding their rights and roles in community development

2. Government and NGOs should establish adult education programs to build literacy and leadership capacity among rural residents.
3. Local councils should mandate that project planning committees include representatives from each educational stratum to ensure broad-based input and equitable responsibility
4. Development information should be disseminated using diverse channels oral messages, pictorials, community radio in addition to written notices to reach non-literate populations.
5. Community leadership structures must be restructured to accommodate and encourage female participation and leadership from lower educational backgrounds.
6. Training on communication, project planning, and community mobilization should be provided for less-educated individuals to prepare them for meaningful roles beyond manual labor (Okafor & Bello, 2022).

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