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**Assessment of Women Involvement in Fighting for the Rights of Women and Children:  
The Exploits and Challenges Experienced in Akwa Ibom State**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study examines the assessment of women involvement in fighting for the rights of women and children: the exploits and challenges in Akwa Ibom State. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised all the social scientists and women. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 200 social scientists and 200 women which constituted the sample size used for the study. The instrument titled “Women Involvement in Fighting for the Rights of Women and Children Questionnaire (WIFRWCO)” was used for data collection. Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by one expert in test and measurement from University of Uyo to ensure that the instrument had accuracy, appropriateness and completeness. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of the reliability of the instrument. In this case the reliability coefficient obtained was 0.89 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as simple regression in testing the hypothesis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha level. The study concluded that human right is the right which belongs to an individual or group of individuals simply for being human, or as a consequence of inherent human vulnerability, or because they are requisite to the possibility of a just society. Consequence the exploit of women has shown that women’s rights organizations and movements are a vital catalyst for gender equality and the realization of women’s and children rights. One of the recommendation made was that Government should help women in fighting for their rights by discouraging gender-based violence, sexual violence and harassment, workplace discrimination as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.*

**KEYWORD: Women Involvement, Fighting, Rights, Children, Exploits, Challenges and Akwa Ibom State**

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**Introduction**

Women are discriminated against in Nigeria. However, the current is changing. Many Nigerians have access to education and the re-orientation of Nigerians (with respect to women’s rights) has been improving. However, discriminatory practices and laws are still

prevalent in the country. However, with the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, many laws have been promulgated in Nigeria to improve the status of women in Nigeria. Many state in Nigeria have enacted laws proscribing domestic violence against women. According to NHR (2019) The realization of women's rights is a global struggle based on universal human rights and the rule of law. It requires all of us to unite in solidarity to end traditions, practices and laws that harm women and children. The lives of women and children are tightly knit, as are their rights. Women and children have both been subjected to discrimination, so they share that experience. But it is also true that women's health and social and economic status even before a child is born there is directly related to a child's prospects for survival and development.

The struggle for women's human rights must be about making women's lives better everywhere all the time. In practice, this means taking action to stop discrimination and violence against women and the promotion of women's rights. People who believe that women do not need women's rights today, but nothing could be further from the truth. Women have struggled for equality and against oppression for centuries, and although some battles have been partly won - such as the right to vote and equal access to education. women are still disproportionately affected by all forms of violence and by discrimination in every aspect of life (Council of Europe 2020). It is true that in some areas and on certain issues, there have been improvements: for example, women were allowed, for the first time, to vote and run for office. Indigenous women and children are more likely to lack equal access to education and healthcare and to suffer from poverty, preventable diseases and maternal mortality at higher rates than non-indigenous women and children.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent years, women and children are facing discrimination. Negligence of the rights of the women and children by government and individuals, human trafficking and gender inequality is the problem that is extremely affecting women and children. Others in this list are domestic and sexual violence against women and children, lower payment, lack of access to education, and inadequate healthcare. Women and children have been trying to make important steps in advancing their claims for their right through individual and groups voices, including the use of human right activists. Therefore, the study investigates on women involvement in fighting for their rights and that of the children; the exploits and challenges in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Objective of the study**

1. To find the extent of women's involvement in fighting for the rights of women and children
2. To determine the impact of women's involvement in fighting for the specified rights and economic development of Akwa Ibom State.

### **Research Question**

1. What is the extent of women's involvement in fighting for the rights of women and children?
2. What are the impact of women's involvement in fighting for their right and economic development of Akwa Ibom State?

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant impact of women's involvement in fighting for their rights and economic development of Akwa Ibom State.

## Concept of Human Rights

Human rights refers to the rights that belong to an individual or group of individuals simply for being human, or as a consequence of inherent human vulnerability, or because they are requisite to the possibility of a just society. Human rights refer to a wide range of values or capabilities thought that enhance human agency or protect human interests and declared to be universal in character, in some sense equally claimed for all human beings, present and future (Burns 2020). Human rights are commonly understood as inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being. Human rights are at the core of international law and international relations. They represent basic values common to all cultures, and must be respected by countries worldwide. Human rights are inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because he or she is a human being (NDHR 2008). Human rights are introduced as well as general elements of international law, including the application of principles of human rights law. Human rights are moral principles or norms for certain standards of human behaviour and regularly protected in municipal and international law.

Human rights are commonly understood as inalienable, fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being and which are inherent in all human beings, regardless of their age, ethnic origin, location, language, religion, ethnicity, or any other status (United Nations 2014). Human rights are applicable everywhere and at every time in the sense of being universal, and they are egalitarian in the sense of being the same for everyone. They are regarded as requiring empathy and the rule of law and imposing an obligation on persons to respect the human rights of others and it is generally considered that they should not be taken away except as a result of due process based on specific circumstances. Human rights are norms that aspire to protect all people everywhere from severe political, legal, and social abuses. Examples of human rights are the right to freedom of religion, the right to a fair trial when charged with a crime, the right not to be tortured, and the right to education (SEP 2019). Human rights is one of the most important concepts in our modern era. Activists, governments, and corporations use it to draw on a collective understanding that all people deserve certain rights and freedoms. No matter who a person is, where they're from, what they believe, or how they live, everyone has rights that cannot be taken away. (Human Rights Careers 2020). Human rights are also the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world, from birth until death.

## Rights of the Women

Women's rights are the fundamental human rights that were protected by the United Nations for every human being on the planet (GFW 2020), including women. These rights include the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn a fair and equal wage. But across the globe many women and girls still face discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. Gender inequality underpins many problems which disproportionately affect women and girls, such as domestic and sexual violence, lower pay, lack of access to education, and inadequate healthcare (Amnesty International 2020). Women's rights are the rights and entitlements claimed for women and girls worldwide. They formed the basis for the women's rights movement in the 19th century and the feminist movements during the 20th and 21st centuries. In some countries, these rights are institutionalized or supported by law, local custom, and behavior, whereas in others, they are ignored and suppressed. They differ from broader notions of human rights through claims of an inherent historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women and girls, in favor of men and boys (Hosken, 2001). The issues commonly associated

with notions of women's rights include the right to bodily integrity and autonomy, to be free from sexual violence, to vote, to hold public office, to enter into legal contracts, to have equal rights in family law, to work, to fair wages or equal pay, to have reproductive rights, to own property, and to education (Lockwood, 2006). According to Amnesty International (2020) women's right was being violated by gender inequality and gender inequality could include:

**Gender-Based Violence:** Gender-based violence is when violent acts are committed against women and LGBTI people on the basis of their orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics. Gender based violence happens to women and girls in disproportionate numbers. Women and girls in conflict are especially at risk from violence, and throughout history sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war. For example, we have documented how many women who fled attacks from Boko Haram in Nigeria have been subjected to sexual violence and rape by the Nigerian military. Globally, on average 30% of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence committed against them by their partner. Women are more likely to be victims of sexual assault including rape, and are more likely to be the victims of so-called "honour crimes". Violence against women is a major human rights violation. It is the responsibility of a state to protect women from gender-based violence - even domestic abuse behind closed doors.

**Sexual Violence and Harassment:** Sexual harassment means any unwelcome sexual behaviour. This could be physical conduct and advances, demanding or requesting sexual favours or using inappropriate sexual language. Sexual violence is when someone is physically sexually assaulted. Although men and boys can also be victims of sexual violence, it is women and girls who are overwhelmingly affected.

**Workplace Discrimination:** Often, women are the subject of gender based discrimination in the workplace. One way of illustrating this is to look at the gender pay gap. Equal pay for the same work is a human right, but time and again women are denied access to a fair and equal wage. Recent figures show that women currently earn roughly 77% of what men earn for the same work. This leads to a lifetime of financial disparity for women, prevents them from fully exercising independence, and means an increased risk of poverty in later life.

**Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity:** In many countries around the world, women are denied their rights on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics. Lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex women and gender non-confirming people face violence, exclusion, harassment, and discrimination. Many are also subjected to extreme violence, including sexual violence or so called "corrective rape" and "honour killings."

Women are entitled to enjoy the same human rights and fundamental freedoms as other individuals. International human rights treaties require state parties to take proactive steps to ensure that women's human rights are respected by law and to eliminate discrimination, inequalities, and practices that negatively affect women's rights. Under international human rights law, women may also be entitled to specific additional rights such as those concerning reproductive healthcare.

### **Right of the Children**

Children's rights are human rights. Children must be treated with equality, respect and dignity, not because they are "the future" or the "adults of tomorrow", but because they are human beings today. All humans are born inherent with fundamental freedoms and rights. Children must enjoy the same human rights as everybody else - from the right to freedom of

expression to the right to privacy. This means all human rights laws apply equally to children and adults. However, children are afforded a low status in most societies (CRIN 2018). Children's rights include the right to health, education, family life, play and recreation, an adequate standard of living and to be protected from abuse and harm. Children's rights cover their developmental and age-appropriate needs that change over time as a child grows up (CRA 2019). There are four general principles that underpin all children's rights:

***Non-Discrimination***, which means that all children have the same right to develop their potential in all situations and at all times. For example, every child should have equal access to education regardless of the child's gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, parentage, sexual orientation or other status.

***The best interests of the child***, which must be "a primary consideration" in all actions and decisions concerning a child, and must be used to resolve conflicts between different rights. For example, when making national budgetary decisions affecting children, government must consider how cuts will impact on the best interests of the child.

***The right to survival and development***, which underscores the vital importance of ensuring access to basic services and to equality of opportunity for children to achieve their full development. For example, a child with a disability should have effective access to education and health care to achieve their full potential.

***The views of the child***, which means that the voice of the child must be heard and respected in all matters concerning his or her rights. For example, those in power should consult with children before making decisions that will affect them.

Children's rights are a subset of human rights with particular attention to the rights of special protection and care afforded to minors (Amnesty International 2008). Children's rights includes their right to association with both parents, human identity as well as the basic needs for physical protection, food, universal state-paid education, health care, and criminal laws appropriate for the age and development of the child, equal protection of the child's civil rights, and freedom from discrimination on the basis of the child's race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, disability, color, ethnicity, or other characteristics. Interpretations of children's rights range from allowing children the capacity for autonomous action to the enforcement of children being physically, mentally and emotionally free from abuse, though what constitutes "abuse" is a matter of debate.

### **Exploits made by women in the fights for women and children**

The exploit of women has shown that women's rights organizations and movements are a vital catalyst for gender equality and the realization of women's rights. From grassroots organizing to advocacy and campaigning, women's rights organizations are uniquely placed to mobilize and empower women to come together to know and claim their rights. Women's rights organization have the knowledge and legitimacy to represent women's concerns and priorities. Their very existence affirms women's leadership and participation (Womankind 2021). Women's human rights activism has focused on expanding existing definitions of rights to include more gender-specific sensitivity to abuse as well as to provide gender-sensitive solutions and redress. In addition, it has focused on the inter-sectionality of rights, seeking to correlate the principles enunciated in separate conventions and covenants with each other. This has most successfully been done with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereafter referred to as the Women's Convention). However, on other issues there has been little or no progress: for example, there

have been insignificant reductions in cases of violence against women. Women continue to receive lower pay for the same work as men in all parts of the world; there are still countries that do not have laws against marital rape and still allow child brides, and practices such as 'honour' killings and female genital mutilation still exist. In general, women's rights can be seen as a movement to put an end to sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression and to achieve full gender equality in law and in practice.

Women have struggled in every historical epoch and in every part of the world for equal treatment. In the early part of this century, the right of women to receive an education, to obtain paid employment, to enter professions, to vote and to stand for elections were all highly contested issues. However, by the end of the century these rights, which could be described as a part of the "liberal democratic" political agenda, have been both recognized and established through law and customary practice in most societies. However, women in many parts of the world still face multiple obstacles in enjoying these rights. According to Bunch, (2005) Women's ability to enjoy civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights is interlinked with the issue of discrimination. Discrimination based on gender ideology and patriarchy was not initially considered as part of the human rights agenda. Excluding sex discrimination and violence against women from the human rights agenda also results from a failure to see the oppression of women as political. Female subordination runs so deep that it is still viewed as inevitable or natural rather than as a politically constructed reality maintained by patriarchal interests, ideology, and institutions.

The exploits of children of Human trafficking is generally understood to refer to the process through which individuals are placed or maintained in an exploitative situation for economic gain. Trafficking can occur within a country or may involve movement across borders. Women and children are trafficked for a range of purposes, including forced and exploitative labour in factories, farms and private households, sexual exploitation, and forced marriage (United Nation 2014). Trafficking affects all regions and most countries of the world. Child trafficking occurs when children are taken away from safety and exploited. Children who are trafficked are often forced into some form of work, used for sex or simply sold. Trafficking is any part of the process from finding and recruiting children, to transporting and receiving them (Theirworld 2020). Women and children all over the world are victims of trafficking, but children are particularly at risk. The International Labour Organization (ILO) says trafficking is among "forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery" and should be eradicated as soon as possible. Child trafficking is linked to demand for cheap labour, especially where the working conditions are poor. Children may be forced into many dangerous and/or illegal situations, including slavery, domestic labour, sexual exploitation or prostitution, drug couriership and/or being turned into child soldiers.

The widespread contemporary exploitation of women and children is unacceptable to people of conscience the world over. Traditional approaches to preventing trafficking in human beings, to protect and assist trafficked persons and bring criminals to justice have had some small impact on the global phenomenon, but not enough. That even one young person be denied the benefits of childhood, that one young woman be subjected to the brutal humiliation of sexual exploitation and that one man become the slave of a cruel taskmaster in another country are clear signals that we must renew both our resolve as well as our initiatives to protect those who are vulnerable According to UN.GIFT (2008) stated to mobilize state and non-state actors to eradicate human trafficking by: (a) reducing both the vulnerability of potential victims and the demand for exploitation in all its forms; (b) ensuring adequate protection and support to those who fall victim; and (c) supporting the efficient prosecution of the criminals involved while respecting the fundamental human rights of all

persons. The of increase knowledge and awareness on human trafficking; promote effective rights-based responses; build capacity of state and non-state actors, and foster partnerships for joint action against human trafficking.

### **Challenges faced by Women in the fight for Women and Children**

It is obvious that in a quest to fight for their right and that of children women encounter challenges. These challenges include denial of opportunities to air their views, non-implementation of their views and many more. With all these limitations their views and quests for their right are hampered. On the global front, perhaps the most important issue for the international community is their empowering the voices of women. Right now, women and children everywhere face an immense range of challenges from the inability to access food, education and employment to the threat of gender-based violence. Their perspectives and experiences must help shape our collective future. If we want to forge the best solutions for expanding peace and security moving forward, then we need to give smart, dynamic and strong women a seat at the decision-making table both here at home and around the world (Politico Magazine 2021). Despite States' obligations under international law, women around the world continue to experience violations and abuses of their human rights. Some of the most harmful and prevalent abuses occur in the following areas: violence against women, reproductive health, participation in society and government, marriage and family, labor and employment, and property rights. In addition, the international community has recognized the particular challenges faced by women who are human rights defenders (International Justice Resource Center 2018). According to United Nation (2014) the practices associated with modern-day trafficking are clearly prohibited under international human rights law. Trafficked Nigerian women and children are recruited from rural areas within the country's borders, women for involuntary domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, and children for forced labour in street vending, domestic servitude, mining, and begging (U.S. Department of State 2010).

Despite great strides made by the international women's rights movement over many years, women around the world are still married as children or trafficked into forced labor and sex slavery. They are refused access to education and political participation, and some are trapped in conflicts where rape is perpetrated as a weapon of war. Around the world, deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth are needlessly high, and women are prevented from making deeply personal choices in their private lives. Human Rights Watch (2020) stated that working toward the realization of women's empowerment and gender equality, protecting the rights and improving the lives of women and children. Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to trafficking in persons including forced labour and forced prostitution.

### **Method**

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised all the social scientists and members of organized women groups in Akwa Ibom State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 200 social scientists and 200 members of organized women groups in Akwa Ibom State which summed up to the total of 400 respondents used as a sample size for the study. The instrument titled "Women Involvement in Fighting for the Rights of Women and Children Questionnaire (WIFRWCQ)" was used for data collection. Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by one expert in test and measurement from University of Uyo to ensure that the instrument had accuracy, appropriateness and

completeness. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of the reliability of the instrument. In this case the reliability coefficient obtained was 0.89 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as percentage analysis in testing the research question and simple regression in testing the hypothesis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha level.

## Results

**Research Questions 1:** The research question sought to find out the extent of women's involvement in fighting for the rights of women and children. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 1).

**Table 1: Percentage analysis of the extent of women's involvement in fighting for the rights of women and children**

EXTENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH EXTENT	134	33.5**
HIGH EXTENT	116	29
LOW EXTENT	86	21.5
VERY LOW EXTENT	64	16*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*\* The highest percentage frequency

\* The least percentage frequency

**SOURCE: Field survey**

The above table 1 presents percentage analysis of the extent of women's involvement in fighting for the rights of women and children. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (33.5%) of the respondents affirmed that the very high extent of women's involvement in fighting for the rights of women while the least percentage (16%) of the respondents affirmed very low extent of women's involvement in fighting for the rights of women and children.

**Research Questions Two:** The research question sought to find out the impact of women's involvement in fighting for their right on economic development of Akwa Ibom State. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the impact of women's involvement in fighting for their right on economic development of Akwa Ibom State**

Variable	N	Arithmetic Mean	Expected Mean	R	Remarks
Economic	400	13.77	12.5	0.66*	*Moderately Strong Relationship
Women Involvement		12.83	12.5		

**Source: Field Survey**

The above table 2 presents the result of the descriptive analysis of the impact of women's involvement in fighting for their right and economic development of Akwa Ibom State. The two variables were observed to have moderately strong relationship at 66%. The arithmetic



mean for Economic (13.77) was observed to be greater than the expected mean score of 12.5. In addition to that, the arithmetic mean as regards women involvement (12.83) was observed to be higher than the expected mean score of 12.5. The result therefore means that there is remarkable impact of women involvement in fighting for their right and economic development of Akwa Ibom State.

### Hypothesis Testing

**Hypothesis One:** The null hypothesis states that there is no significant impact of women involvement in fighting for their right on economic development of Akwa Ibom State. In order to test the hypothesis simple regression analysis was performed on the data, (table 3).

**TABLE 3: Simple Regression Analysis of the impact of women involvement in fighting for their right and economic development of Akwa Ibom State**

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.66	0.43	0.43	1.67	0.43

\*Significant at 0.05 level; df= 398; N= 400; critical R-value = 0.113

The above table 3 shows that the calculated R-value (0.66) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.113 at 0.5 alpha levels with 398 degrees of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.43 predicts 43% impact of women involvement in fighting for their right on economic development of Akwa Ibom State. This rate of percentage is averagely positive and therefore means that there is significant impact of women involvement in fighting for their right on economic development of Akwa Ibom State. It was also deemed necessary to find out the impact of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 4).

**TABLE 4: Analysis of variance of the impact of women involvement in fighting for their right and economic development of Akwa Ibom State**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	835.37	1	835.37	300.07	.000b
Residual	1108.01	398	2.78		
Total	1943.38	399			

a. Dependent Variable: Economic

b. Predictors: (Constant), Women Involvement

The above table 4 presents the calculated F-value as (300.07) and the P-value as (.000b). Being that the P-value (.000b) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant impact exerted by the independent variables i.e. women involvement on the dependent variable which is economic. According to Bunch, (2005) Women's ability to enjoy civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights is interlinked with the issue of discrimination. The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative was accepted.

### Conclusion

The study concluded that human right is the right which belongs to an individual or group of individuals simply for being human, or as a consequence of inherent human vulnerability, or because they are requisite to the possibility of a just society. It was also concluded that the

exploits of women in fighting for their rights and that of the children is remarkable through individual women or women's rights organizations and movements. It is also factual that the women's fights for their rights and that of children have in a way have become a vital catalyst for gender equality and the realization of women's and children rights which has eventually promoted economic development of Akwa Ibom State.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government should help women in fighting for their rights by discouraging gender-based violence, sexual violence and harassment, workplace discrimination as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity,
2. Government should checkmate the abuse of human rights of citizen by their agencies such as police brutality.
3. Government should backup women's right and enhance their gender equality in the political office to promote rapid economic status of women.
4. Government and international organisations like UNICEF, UNESCO and other should help protect children's rights as they are parts of human rights. non-discrimination as well as the right to survival and development. Policy formulated should also be done in the best interests of the children as well as respecting the views of every child.

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ROLES OF WOMEN SPECIAL