



WOMEN ORGANIZATION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION AMONG IKWERRE COMMUNITIES IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State. The study adopted the survey research design with a study population of 1,234 adult women and members of the Ngweta, Nde-Ogboto, Nde-Achama and Osusu women organizations in five Ikwerre communities, while the sample size consists of 303 (three hundred and three) adult females which was randomly drawn from women organizations in each of these village understudy. A self-structured questionnaire titled: Women Organization and Poverty Alleviation (WOPOAQ) was constructed as instrument for data collection. The study was guided with three research questions and three hypotheses while the reliability of the instrument was determined through test-re-test method, using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical tool. A reliability coefficient of 0.75 and 0.85 was obtained for the study. The mean scores and standard deviation (SD) were employed in answering the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested with the Z-test with a criterion means of 2.50 used to determine the range and decision level. The outcome of the study reveals that the Ngweta and Nde-Ogboto women organizations significantly relate with poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State, and that the Nde-Achama and the Osusu women organizations have both helped in alleviating poverty among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State to a great extent. The study then concluded that women groups are trying in their efforts to contribute meaningfully to societal development through poverty alleviation and finally recommended that women, should be granted equal education opportunity with the opposite sex as well as be empowered, since these are the major ways they can be encouraged to contribute meaningfully to societal development.

Keywords: Women, Organization, Poverty Alleviation, Ikwerre Community, Rivers State.

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations are entities made up of people who work together to achieve set goals and objectives (Nwachukwu, 2006). Every organization is made up of human and material resources. Anybody in the organization who is involved in its activities is part of the human resources of the organization, while the material resources include the machineries, equipments, materials etc that are used in the accomplishment of stated objectives (Nwachukwu, 2006). Organizations strives to achieve its desired goals through the efforts of its human resources, no wonder Baridam (2009) states that the building up and efficiency of any organization whether private or public depends to a large extent upon how effective human resources are utilized. According to him, for an organization to attain its desired objectives, it must seek and obtain the willing cooperation of the people who work there, thus, management must work with employees by developing programs and policies that will enable it obtain the required result from employees through the provision of conducive work environment, good remuneration, effective motivation as well as good organizational policies to guide employees action towards the enhancement of team effectiveness as well as organizational success.

Worldwide, women organizations have contributed greatly to sustainable development, promoting development and encouraging progress, which will help reduce or eliminate poverty. This they do by spelling out actions which transform the lives of hundreds of millions of poor people, thus making the planet a better and safer place through environmental protection, economic well-being and special equity (Warhan, 2011). Common knowledge that behind every successful man is a woman, according to him, women have been regarded as fragile and therefore should be subordinate to the men but they can play very important role for the betterment of the society, this fragile nature has proved women taking domineering influence on many occasions in the history of mankind. Across the country, women have created innovative, comprehensive programs to meet the needs of their communities.

In Nigeria, women represent about 49 percent of the population, but they form only about 36 per cent of the total labour force (Alapiki, 2009). Majority of the women are in the agricultural and the informal sectors of the economy, accounting for about 60% of Nigeria's farm labour and producing over 90 percent of the domestic food supply (Aina, 2001). The first major attempt at institutionalizing the women's question is what has become known as Women in Development (WID), an approach that emerged out of the First UN Decade for Women, Peace and Development (Levy, 1986). The Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged to correct the inadequacies of WID.

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, women provide between 60-80 percent of the work that leads to economic development. Traditionally, it is regarded as unpaid family labour outside the sphere of subsistence agriculture, women do not play much appreciable role. Evidence abound that women make up about half the population of many countries in the world (Newman, 2009). This fact notwithstanding, international agencies and government fail to recognize that women have a significant role to play in the economic development of the local government system. In some countries, women do men's work such as being primarily responsible for house-keeping and maintenance as well as education and feeding of the children.

Many women are also becoming head of the household either because of death or separation of husbands, aged parents or sick relatives. This means that the nuclear family and

the extended ones depends so much on them for survival. Why then do the women occupy a very low position in the society? Position in this context means the place that women are given and have in our societies. Nigeria is the most populous country in sub Saharan Africa and is termed the ninth most populous country in the world. The 2006 National Census puts Nigeria's population at about 150 million of which about 50% are females. Many of the women in Nigeria live largely in poverty. Their personal poverty is a lot more pervading than that of the male and this threatens the very survival and health of the nation. Poverty has a woman face since 70% of people living in poverty are women and is a challenge to sustainable development.

Women in Nigeria have always participated in productive labour. The National Report for the 2004 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development indicates that women perform at least 40% of Agricultural production activities and 85% of agricultural produce, processing and marketing. Women constitute the majority of the poor and the illiterate in both urban and rural areas in Nigeria (Anele, 2013). In recent times, the developing countries have started making some effort to involve women in micro-enterprises (income generating activities). However, there is hardly enough programme for providing systematic information and knowledge to the third world women to manifest some of the economic roles (Newman, 2012). According to Newman, the role of women in economic development and their participation in income generating activities has not been given due attention that it deserves. Women have been side tracking national income development plans and this phenomenon negated the role of women in not only poverty alleviation, but also in economic development. Women through vendor activities contribute a lot in reduction of unemployment rate in the economy.

Poverty reduction concerns should in modern times, set target as vision for driving persons and resources in the proper direction, possible areas on which emphasis should be placed as given by Ohale (2008) include improved access to productive assets, technological development and replication information on inputs and output markets and specifically targeted women programmes etc. From the analysis above, poverty alleviation remains the biggest challenge of every successful government all over the world. It is the greatest challenge of the developing societies. In view of the above, this study sought to examine the role of women organization in poverty alleviation among Ikwerrri communities in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

It has been understood that poverty is a state of being poor and lack of some basic needs of life. It is a state of demand of basic life necessities, and involves sub-optimal utilization of basic need such as good food, education, healthcare, jobs political power etc. Alleviating poverty is regarded as the most important goal of human development and vital concern of all responsible government the world over and one of the ways through which poverty can be alleviated is through the active involvement of women organization in both entrepreneurial and economic development. Worldwide, women organizations have contributed greatly to achieving sustainable development, promoting development and encouraging progress, which has help to reduce or alleviate poverty. This they do by spelling out actions which transform the lives of hundreds of millions of poor people and make the planet a better and safer place through environmental protection, economic well-being and special equity.

As effective builders of social capital, women organizations play key roles in establishing and maintaining important relationships and networks in their communities. Some of the past and present women organizations in Nigeria includes; The National Council for Women (NCW), Country Women Organization of Nigeria (COWON), The Miliki Organization of Igbo Women (MOIW), The Dancing Women Movement (DWM), Abeokuta Women Union (AWU), The National Council for Women Society (NCWS), The Family Support Programme (FSP), The Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Child Trust Fund and the National Association for Nigerian Women in Business (NANWIB). While some women organizations in Ikwerre land includes; The Ngweta Women Organization, The Nde-Ogbota Women Organization, The Nde-Achama Women Organization and the Osusu Women Organization, etc.

In spite of the positive role of women organization in employment generation, poverty alleviation and economic transformation, women organizations are faced with numerous problems, some of them include: high cost of operation, lack of managerial know how, illiteracy, and lack of governmental support to mention but a few, these problems among others have impinged on the successes of women organizations generally. This study is therefore carried out to ascertain the extent to which women organizations have help in alleviating poverty, with focus on women organizations in Ikwerre communities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

This study is aim at providing answers to the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between Ngweta women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerri communities in Rivers State?
- What is the relationship between Nde-Ogboto women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerri communities in Rivers State?
- To what extent has the Nde Achama women organization helped in alleviating poverty among Ikwerri communities in Rivers State.

Research Hypotheses

The following provisional hypotheses are used to moderate this study:

- Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated women on the relationship between Ngweta women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerri communities in Rivers State.
- Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated women on the relationship between Nde-Ogboto women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerri communities in Rivers State.
- Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated women on the extent to which the Nde-Achama women organization has helped in alleviation poverty among Ikwerri communities in Rivers State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

The power theory of poverty and the theory of personal income distribution. The underpinning theories adopted for this study are the power theory of poverty and the theory of personal income distribution. The power theory of poverty propounded by Jeremy in 1956 situates poverty within the structure of political power in the society. According to the theory, poverty is a necessary concomitant of any situation in which the few possess much political power to organize the economic system in their own selfish interest. It insists that poverty will remain prevalent as long as there is no effective pressure from the poor to restructure the distribution of political power in the society in favour of the majority. The concentration of wealth in the hands of the few while the majority languishes in poverty is a 'manifestation of the same historical process.

The implication of the theory for poverty alleviation is that power will continue unless there is a 'revolutionary consciousness of the subject class, of their organizational capacity to resist exploitation and to overthrow the property system and to what happens over time. Power theory seems more relevant to developing countries in view of the tendency of those without economic power to seek political power to amass ill-gotten wealth. This is compounded by the low political consciousness of the generality of the people, the high degree of - centralization of natural resources, and the tendency towards one-party and dictatorship. The power theory explains the paradoxical situation in a country like Nigeria which is rich, yet the generality of the people is poor.

Political structure in every society accounts for the extent and distribution of poverty, especially where the ruling class establishes and legitimizes an exploitative property system through which it determines the allocation of properties, income and wealth, relying on the use of state power to its advantage. The theory is applicable to the Nigerian society as the struggle for political power is propelled or triggered by socio-economic exploitation tendencies. Under this theory, the rich get richer while the poor get poorer.

The Theory of Personal Income Distribution

The theory of personal income distribution propounded by Power in 1995 posit that majority of families or households rely on labour market earnings for most of their income. Consequently, a rise in unemployment may result to large income declines particularly among those whose income are low, to begin with. Hence the theory predicts apposite relationship that may be mitigated by government transfer payments which reduce the role of income earned. With respect to inflation (another variable reflecting the macroeconomic condition of a country), the theory is unambiguous. It is well known that during periods of inflation, those depending on fixed income payments such as pensioners suffer.

Thus, households are driven into poverty when inflation rises. This phenomenon according to the theory is consistent with the positive relationship predicted between unemployment and inflation rate. This theory also suggests that policies to eradicate poverty should reduce inflation, inequality as well as deal with the problem of unemployment.

Concept of Woman

A woman is an adult female human being, as contrasted to men, an adult male, and a girl, a female child. The term woman (irregular plural: women) is used to indicate biological sex distinctions, cultural gender role distinctions, or both (Wikimedia, 2005). Women are at the heart of development as they control most of the non-monetary economy (subsistence, agriculture, bearing children, domestic labour etc.) and plays important role in the monetary economy (trading, wage labour, employment, etc. (Yawa, 2005). Everywhere in the world, women work both around the home and outside the home. The most topical issue in international developmental programme is women. The woman as a person is an agent of reproduction of life itself. This according to Ogume (2012) places her in the position of the lifeblood of the entire humanity.

She is the first teacher, the sustainer and maintainer of the home, the peacemaker, the symbol of beauty and major molder of the character of the child. She is a mother of the human race. As mothers and wives, women do exert considerable impact on the productivity of male workers. As workers in their own rights, women can conveniently be linked to the rejected stone in the Bible, which became the cornerstone of the house (Jones 2010). By their sheer psychological, physiological, and intellectual make up, women do perform more than mere and had not been recognized until recently when the United Nations declared the Decade for Women (1976-1985) making it mandatory for governments to focus on issue of women as an integral component of national development.

In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Consequently, subsequent conferences on women were held in Copenhagen, Denmark 1980, Nairobi in Kenya 1985 and Beijing in China 1995. However, an international news magazines 'Africa Today' reported in July 1995 that the full implementation of all the strategies and recommendations of the various conferences on women issues had still not been achieved and enthusiasm was waning. According to the magazine, the United Nations itself reported that only six out of its 184 ambassadors are women and only four out of its 32 UN specialized agencies and programmes are headed by women. Coming home in Nigeria, the 1995 constitutional conference in Nigeria had only eight women out of a total of 369 delegates. Much of women's work remains invisible, unremunerated, and unrecognized. However, women are now challenging the status quo.

Mechanisms to right the so-called "Cultures wrong" are being put in place. Women's voices are now being heard clamoring for an improvement in their socio-economic status and for the recognition of their immense contributions to not only poverty alleviation, but also national development.

Women Organization

Worldwide, women organizations have contributed greatly to achieving sustainable development, promoting development and encouraging progress, which has help to reduce or alleviate poverty. This they do by spelling out actions which transform the lives of hundreds of millions of poor people and make the planet a better and safer place through environmental protection, economic well-being and special equity (Warhan, 2011). In Nigeria, women represent about 49 percent of the population, but they form only about 36 per cent of the total

labour force (Kalu, 2016). Majority of the women are in the agricultural and the informal sectors of the economy, accounting for about 60% of Nigeria's farm labour and producing over 90 percent of the domestic food supply (Aina,2001). The first major attempt at institutionalizing the women's question is what has become known as Women in Development (WID), an approach that emerged out of the First UN Decade for Women, Peace and Development Levy (1986) cited in (Nwachukwu, 2009). The Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged to correct the inadequacies of WID.

Following the UN Women's Decade (1975-1985), Nigeria launched the Better Life Programme (BLP) in September 1987, through the initiative of the First Lady, Mariam Babangida. The broad objectives of BLP were: to help alleviate poverty especially in the rural areas: to encourage and stimulate the rural women in particular, and rural populace in general towards improving their standards of living, their families and their environment; to inculcate the spirit of self-development particularly in the rural area in the areas of education, business and recreation; and to create greater awareness among the populace about the plight of women (Aina, 2011).

Also, in compliance with the United Nations Directive, the Nigerian Military Government in 1989, under Decree 30, established the National Commission for Women (NCW) which was to bring all women's organizations and programs under its umbrella. Amongst her objectives were to promote the full utilization of women and to improve the welfare of women in general (Ekpo, 2012).

Country Women's Association of Nigeria (COWAN) is an example of a grassroots organization formed by rural women, founded in 1982 as a non-governmental organization with the objective of helping rural women in their various economic activities, including food production, trade/handicraft and social development (Aina, 2011). Prior to the United Nations declaration on women in the 70s, Nigerian women organizations had been very active. In 1920s Lagos Market Women gave a big boost to Herbert Macaulay's Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and subsequently the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) during this period. In the same vein, women wielded significant influence through the sizes of their organizations and the homogeneity of their membership (Adeyeye, 2011). For instance, under the leadership of Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti in Abeokuta, women protested against the tyranny of traditional rulers and the male folk generally. Also, the Mikiri Organisation of Igbo Women spearheaded the Aba Women's Riots of 1929- 30 against the Native Administration System (Williams,1992).

Women in Calabar, Owerri and Aba, from 1925 to 1928, demonstrated against cultural imposition, the introduction of the native authority system and payment of tax by women. They were able to mobilize themselves using the extensive market women networks at their disposal. The *Aba* Women's Riots came to be regarded as a feminist movement in itself, because the women acted as a group to protect their economic and political interests endangered by taxation. Women grassroot organizations became stronger when taxation became fully introduced in 1956 in the Eastern Region. It was the genesis of the *Aba* Women's Association, which later played a dominant role in mobilizing support for the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (Olumese, 2011).

Mrs Funmilayo Kuti provided the needed leadership by organizing women in Egband in 1914 and 1947, to protest the colonial tax system. By reforming the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) in 1946, she succeeded in bringing both the elite and non-elite Egba women

under the same umbrella. The success of AWU in abolishing the flat rate tax for women provided the incentive needed to form the Nigerian Women's Union which was concerned with women's welfare in the country. The National Council for Women's Societies (NCWS) protested against the exclusion of women from the Constitution Drafting Committee in the transition to civil rule in 1979 and, through its efforts women's interest was represented in subsequent phases of the programs (Olumese, 2011).

Due to the activities of those women's societies, many of the women's advancement curtailed by cultural, traditional and religious practices have been eliminated, giving room now to social, cultural and religious practices that promote the advancement of women. For instance, women are now being conferred with chieftaincy titles in their communities; some churches also ordain women as preachers and prophets while taboos prohibiting women from eating certain types of food are no longer observed. In addition, in order to curb domestic violence against women and children, a number of NGOs have been in the forefront of creating awareness while some have established *safe houses* for victims of such violence (National Planning Commission, 2001). However, it is disheartening that all these services, activities, efforts and types of information are limited to the urban centres in Nigeria and the positive impact is not felt by the rural women.

Women in Precolonial Period

From pre-colonial times to the early 21st century, the role and status of women in Nigeria have continuously evolved. However, the image of a helpless, oppressed, and marginalized group has undermined their proper study, and little recognition has been granted to the various integral functions that Nigerian women have performed throughout history. In the pre-colonial period, women played a major role in social and economic activities. Division of Labour was along gender lines, and women controlled such occupations as food processing, mat weaving, pottery, and cooking. Moreover, land was communally owned, and women had access to it through their husbands or parents. Although a man was the head of the household in a patrilineal system, older women had control of the labour of younger family members. Women were also central to trade. Among the Yoruba, they were the major figures in long-distance trade, with enormous opportunities for accumulating wealth and acquiring titles. The most successful among them rose to the prestigious chieftaincy title of *iyalode*, a position of great privilege and power.

In politics, women were not as docile or powerless as contemporary literature tends to portray them. The basic unit of political organization was the family, and in the common matrifocal arrangement, which allowed a woman to gain considerable authority over her children, a woman and her offspring could form a major bloc in the household. Power and privileges in a household were also based on age and gender, thereby allowing senior women to have a voice on many issues. Because the private and public arenas were intertwined, a woman's ability to control resources and people in a household was at the same time an exercise in public power. She could use food production to gain respect. She could control her children and influence men through this power. She could evoke the power of the spirit or gods in her favor. On the other hand, she could simply withdraw and use the kitchen as her own personal domicile for interaction with her colleagues, friends, and children (Dadire, 2005).

Beyond the household level, men generally dominated power, but in many areas, specific titles were given to women. The queen mother, a powerful title among the Edo and Yoruba,

could be bestowed upon the king's mother or a free woman of considerable stature. In her own palace, the queen mother presided over meetings, with subordinate title holders in her support. Yoruba and Hausa legends describe periods when women were either the actual kings or heroines. Such women as Moremi of Ile-Ife and Amina of Zaria are notable legendary figures, as are the powerful queens in the Ondo and Daura histories. The most serious threat to the influence and privileges of women occurred during the 20th century, when patriarchy combined with colonial changes to alter gender relations. As male chiefs collaborated with the British colonial administration in collecting taxes and governing, the position of female chiefs declined in importance.

When the economy became increasingly geared toward the production of cash crops for export, Nigerian men and European firms dominated the distribution of rubber, cocoa, groundnuts, peanuts and palm oil, women were pushed to the background and forced to shift to the production of subsistence crops. A previous land-tenure system that had prevented land alienation gave way to land commercialization, favouring those with access to money gained from the sale of cash crops. Western-style education also favoured boys over girls and thus largely excluded women from many of the new occupations introduced by colonialism. The most powerful agency of change for the modern woman has been Nigeria's formal education system, from which a large number of elite women have emerged. Intelligent, educated, and confident, they can be found in all leading occupations; they now challenge many aspects of patriarchy and are gradually organizing to ensure that the political arena expands sufficiently to accommodate them.

WOMEN IN NIGERIA

Among the majority of rural and low-income urban dwellers, women perform all domestic tasks, while many also engage in farming and trade. They are responsible for the care of children, the sick, and the elderly, in addition to performing essential social functions within their communities. Many rural and urban women belong to women-only mutual-aid/societies, benevolent groups in churches, cooperatives and market women's groups, some of which allow them to pool resources to reduce their workload and to invest in savings societies or cooperative ventures (Amah, 2014). Cooperative societies according to Amah have provided women access to resources. Informal rotating credit associations have been used by the estimated 55 per cent of economically active women in the non-agricultural informal sector to invest in businesses and farms, home improvements and school costs for their children.

Women rarely have the same access to resources as men. In the past some resources were available to them. Wives in many Nigerian societies were not fully economically dependent upon their husbands (Akaniwor, 2005). Mba (2009) affirms that women's power and spheres of influence largely disappeared under the impact of colonialism and external religions, which upset existing economic and social complementarities between the sexes. New "customary" laws on marriage created in response to men's anxieties about the independence of women transformed the previously fluid and negotiable relations between them into rigid duties and obligations of wives and women. Women came to be regarded as primarily dependent on men, making it unnecessary to plan and provide for their needs; they were to work in the fields and home to produce food and other crops to support their men, who worked in visible, documented activities.

Ogbomo (2005) asserts that initially women shared in the promises of independence and saw gains in their access to education, formal sector employment, health care and nutritional profiles; their life expectancy at birth rose from 37 to 50 years by the end of the 1960s. But development plans continued to be formulated and implemented without an adequate understanding of women's contributions to the economy. Women were also absent from formal positions of decision-making and power. The lives of women in Nigeria have been profoundly affected by three main developments since the onset of economic and social decline in the 1970s and 1980s. First, the Structural Adjustment Programme implemented in the country in 1985 emphasized demand management and supply-oriented measures narrowly focused on export-led growth and efficiency, often to the detriment of social welfare. The programmes also introduced liberalization of trade regimes and of the financial sector, as well as privatization and reduction in the role of the state in economic life.

Owing to their specific roles and positions within society, women have been among the worst affected by cuts in social sector spending, where substantial costs have been shifted from the state to the household. Therefore, women have been forced to take on an increasing burden of unpaid work in caring for the sick, obtaining food and ensuring the survival of their families more generally. Second, there has been increased civil strife, unrests and conflicts. Alapiki, (2009) notes that most displaced persons and post-conflict returnees are usually women and children. Conflicts and civil unrests have increased violence against women and worsened the social and economic conditions under which they live. Third, there is the AIDS crisis, high and increasing rates of HIV infection and the costs in human lives. UNDP (2008) reports that just over half of the estimated 20 million cases of HIV in Africa are female. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable because of their lack of power over their sexuality and reproductive functions.

Poverty

Perhaps the only consensus among scholars on the definition and measurement of poverty is that the phenomenon is very difficult and exclusive both to measure and define. This has often led scholars to proceed with analysis without identifying the problem hiding in disguise that we all know what poverty is or who is said to be poor. Although, the word poverty is frequently used, the familiarity and frequent usage has in no way eliminated the problem of definition because the concept means different things to different people. For instance, while the economists think of poverty in general terms, the sociologists and psychologists think of it in relative and comparative terms.

Ajakaiye (2014), sees Poverty as dimensional in nature as a result, massive literature on it shows that the standard concept of it remains elusive. According to Oladeji and Abiola (2008), Poverty in developing economy like Nigeria includes low level of income, inadequate housing, poor health care, limited or no education, high degree of unemployment, underdevelopment, corruption, etc. Aluko (1995) views poverty as lack of command over basic consumption needs such as food, clothing and shelter.

Anyanwu (2007), using the basic needs approach categorized poverty in the Nigerian context. In the categorization, household below the poverty line and whose income are insufficient to provide for their basic needs are regarded as being poor, people in isolated rural areas who lack essential infrastructure, persons who have no job or lost employment and unable

to find one or alternative employment. These group of people are seen or classified as been poor in Nigeria according to Anyanwu. In analogy therefore, poverty is linked to economic growth, inflation, unemployment, education expenditure, expenditure on health and availability or otherwise of basic infrastructure.

Oladeji and Abiola (2008), Anyanwu (2007), Ukwu (2005) asserted that the middle income worker in the formal employment sector have had their wages and salaries reduced in real terms, becoming impoverished by the depreciation of Naira and inflation. In simple terms the rate of exchange, the real wage rate, GDP, expenditure on education, expenditure on health and inflation are the macro-economic variables among other things that determines poverty in Nigeria.

According to Jones (2010), Poverty in Africa has intensified because of lack of family planning. Poverty as a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his or her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter; is unable to meet social and economic obligations, lacks gainful employment, skills, assets and self-esteem; and has limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water and sanitation; and consequently, has limited chance of advancing his or her welfare to the limit of his or her capabilities'

Poverty can be categorized as either relative or absolute on the one hand, while on another, it can be classified as penanent or transient. Ayemoni (2009) explains absolute poverty to be "the condition where an or group of people are unable to satisfy their basic requirements for human survival in terms of education, health, housing, feeding, employment and transportation, etc". Relation poverty is a comparison of poverty levels in different or within the same group of people. Someone may be poor within a particular setting but such situation may be classified as rich in another group depending on the affluence of the society.

On the conceptualization of poverty, Balogun, (2009) noted that some consensus has emerged in recent literature. According to him, this body of literature has poverty in its absolute sense, as a situation where a population is able to meet only a bare subsistence essentials of food, clothing and shelter in order to maintain minimum standard of living. Englama et al. (2007) summarized the definition of poverty in both absolute and relative terms as a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his or her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Alfred Marshal (1920), identified the basic necessities of his time and place as consisting of good house with several rooms, warm clothing's, pure and clean water, enough supply of food, moderate allowance of meat and milk, a little tea, some education, recreation and lastly, sufficient freedom for his wife from other work to enable her to perform properly her material and household functions efficiently.

Poverty in Nigeria

The world bank's report on sub-Sahara African, (2010) focusing attention on Nigeria identified the following factors as the root causes of poverty:

- **Inadequate Access to Employment Opportunities:** This is a situation whereby people who are willing and able to work cannot find job to do. This is because, the managers of the economy have failed in their own part to cater for the employment needs of its

citizenry. The long-run effect of this situation is to stick or mire in abject poverty without alternative or panacea.

- **Low Economic Growth Rate:** The Nigeria economy is growing at a sluggish rate as a result of the exportation of few primary goods. The excessive dependence of Nigeria on the importation of virtually all the goods needed in the country is dragging the economy to the mud and backward. Imagine a country that has four refineries, yet, petroleum products like diesel, kerosene gas and fuel, etc. are imported on a daily basis. Even toothpick, matches, tissue, soap that can be produced locally and exported are being imported, this slows down the growth rate of any economy as well as results in poverty among the populace.
- **Inefficient Allocation of Resources:** This is a situation where by the abundant resources that would have catered for the yawning and aspiration of all the populace is inefficiently managed or allocated. The allocation is between the managers of the economy, their political associates, relatives and well-wishers at the detriment of the larger society. Only the wealthy ones and their families can own shares, companies and other businesses. Services to be provided by the government as its social responsibilities are either privatized or at the concluding stage of privatization which will be bought by those at the helm of affairs, their families and associates.
- **Inadequate Social Services:** Currently, the availability of social services in the country is low. Malaria, HIV are increasing in the country. Life expectancy has remained stable for many years and will probably be brought even lower by HIV/ AIDS. In surveys, the rural poor in Nigeria have emphasized access to rural roads and domestic water supply is extraordinarily bad. For example, about 74 per cent of all people in rural Nigeria have to fetch water daily. In education, there are a lot of irregularities inequalities as Nigeria education and other vital sectors are not well funded.
- **High Population:** Population growth, in relation to the limited and often fragile resource base is both a cause and consequence of poverty. It is projected that by 2025, Africa's population could be more than double, to 1.2 billion while Nigeria will have the greater population. The high rate of population growth will offset any reduction in the number of poor in most countries because the rate is higher among the poor than among the non-poor. The projected increase will place a huge strain on the region's natural resources base and governments' ability to provide even minimal social services. The increase in the labor force and high proportion of young people will put considerable pressure on the labor market unless employment opportunities are increased substantially. It will be futile for the government to alleviate poverty without reducing its population.
- **Low Rate of Investment:** In Nigeria, the rate of investment is extremely low compared to what is obtainable in other countries of the world. Wealthy Nigerians that would have invested in Nigeria prefer taking their investment to Europe and America because of the fear of insecurity. Even foreign investors are retreating as a result of what is obtainable now in the Niger Delta — militancy and hostage taken.
- **Marginalization of Economic Resource Producers by both Government and Multinational Cooperation:** The Nigerian government and multinational cooperation operating in the country is faulty of claim. Imagine the Niger Delta region that produces all the oil and gas exported as the only source of revenue to the Nigerian government is neglected to the backdrop. An area which is supposed to look or be like a paradise is like

a slum. This is a clear manifestation of marginalization. Instead of fighting poverty in the region to curb militancy and hostage taken, the military option is used. The military option is still not working as planned. Billions of naira is being spent on military personnel rather than on youth program and development of infrastructure, etc.

- **Social and Political Instability:** - Poverty not only constitutes an inefficient use of society's resources but also causes social and political instability. Poverty and its associated inequities can compound ethnic tensions. The inability of public institutions to address this issue may lead to political instability, especially within budding democracies, and to economic uncertainty, destroying otherwise favorable environment for domestic and external private investment.

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty alleviation is a set of both economic and humanitarian measures, that are intended to permanently lift people out of poverty. According to him, Poverty alleviation also involves improving the living conditions of people who are already poor. Poverty Alleviation according to Onuchukwu (2006) can be referred to as sustained development. Since development is not seen as a cluster of benefits, which a needy country simply requires, but as an indigenous process that should rely primarily on the strength and resources of the society concerned Therwall (2009). The aim of any poverty alleviation of any government is to achieve lasting improvement in the quality of life and not just short-term improvement that disappear at the end of the project cycle. Poverty alleviation is therefore aimed at maintaining the natural resources base through a process that adapts properly to the natural environment by making appropriate improvement in the social values of people (Paul, 2007).

Poverty have its resources far lower than those possessed by average individuals or households to the extent that, they are, in effect excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities. Subjective poverty is a perception of respondents about their standard of living. The feeling of whether one is poor or not depends on the absolute minimum standard of living below which one is categorized as poor Holborn (2004); World Bank, (1996). Absolute poverty is the focus of this study because attempts made by the government to reduce poverty have led to the establishment of poverty alleviation programmes aimed at attacking absolute poverty. Furthermore, in Nigeria and many developing countries, attempts by governments to address poverty have focused more on reducing absolute poverty.

In Nigeria, most of the poverty alleviation measures or initiatives are embedded in entrepreneurship but have suffered several challenges culminating into their failure. Some of the schemes include National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructural Development Scheme (RIDS), and Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS). In the attempt of the Lagos State government to alleviate poverty, entrepreneurship training and education has been geared by including the education in the curriculum design and development in university. Similarly, training centers such as technical and vocational schools, and apprenticeship centers on all were established to absolve the unemployed and intending public to eradicate poverty in the state.

In Nigeria, the poverty alleviation measures implemented so far have focus more on growth, basic needs and rural development approaches. The different anti-poverty measures or

strategies adopted by the various governments in Nigeria would be broken into three eras; viz the pre- SAP era, the SAP era and the democratic era (Momodu, 2013).

METHODS

This Chapter focuses on the methodology for the study. It presents the following: the research design, population of the study, sample size determination and sampling techniques, method of data collection, validity of the instrument, reliability of the instrument and methods of data analysis.

Research Design

This study adopted the survey research design. This is because the survey design is concerned with specific predictions, narrations of facts and characteristics concerning individuals, groups or situations.

Study Population

The population of this study consisted of 1,234 Adult women and membership of the Ngweta, Nde-Ogboto, Nde-Achama and Osusu women organizations in five Ikwerre communities in Rivers State, namely: Rumuigbo, Rumuchakara, Rumuapu, Rumuji and Ndele communities.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Sampling is the selection of a representative number from a given population, where it is believed that a common feature exists between the population and the sample selected. The population of the study comprised 1,234 adult women in five Ikwerre communities in Rivers State. The study is a survey research, as such, 303 (three hundred and three) adult females were randomly drawn from women organizations in each of these village to serve as sample representatives.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data are usually gathered from primary and secondary sources, which researchers' can extract relevant information that are related to the phenomenon and specific problem. The primary source of data for this study was the questionnaire.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by experts in the faculty of education and two other experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the faculty of Education, who ascertained the face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-re-test method, using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical tool. A reliability coefficient of 0.75 and 0.85 was obtained for the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation (SD). The mean scores and standard deviation was employed in answering the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested with the Z-test. The criterion means of 2.50 was used to determine the range and decision level. Where the mean score is equal to or above 2.50, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted. Where the mean score is below 2.50, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter presents the analysis of data and results of the findings gathered from the research questions posed in chapter one. The presentation is made in tables according to each research questions posed in chapter one.

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between the Ngweta women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the relationship between the Ngweta women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State

S/N	Item Statements	Educated = 151			Non-educated = 152		
		\bar{x}	SD	Remarks	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1	The Ngweta women organization has helped in poverty alleviation in ikwerre communities	3.05	0.83	Agreed	3.00	1.10	Agreed
2	The Ngweta women organization has boost the development of small scale industries to a great extent	3.47	0.57	Agreed	2.96	1.18	Agreed
3	Working equipment, stationeries and machineries are provided for my business through the Ngweta women organization	3.09	1.15	Agreed	2.94	1.19	Agreed
4	The Ngweta women organization has significantly related to poverty alleviation in Rivers State	3.2	1.00	Agreed	2.89	1.21	Agreed
	Total Mean & SD =	12.81	3.55		11.79	4.68	
	Grand Mean & SD =	3.20	0.88		2.94	1.17	

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

Table 1 which is for research question one showed that all the items were agreed. The respondents agreed that the Ngweta women organization significantly relate with poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State. The confirmation was made with a grand mean of 3.20 and standard deviation of 0.88 for educated women, while that of non-educated were 2.94 and 1.17 for mean and standard deviation respectively.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between the Nde Ogboto women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the relationship between the Nde Ogboto women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State

S/N	Item Statements	Educated = 151			Non- educated=52		
		\bar{x}	SD	Remarks	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1	Nde ogboto women organization have engaged my community youths in productive activities	2.96	0.89	Agreed	3.18	0.89	Agreed
2	Access to fund by prospective and intended business persons both in the rural and urban areas has been made possible by the Nde Ogboto women organization	2.82	0.91	Disagreed	3.17	0.89	Agreed
3	The Nde Ogboto women organization has uplifted my economic status	2.95	1.23	Agreed	3.06	0.74	Agreed
4	The Nde Ogboto women organization has made members of my community to be financially independent	3.04	1.09	Agreed	3.04	0.83	Agreed
Total Mean & SD =		11.08	4.12		12.45	3.35	
Grand Mean & SD =		2.95	1.03		3.11	0.83	

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

Table 2 which is for research question two revealed that all the items were agreed. The respondents agreed that the Nde Ogboto women organization has helped in alleviating poverty among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State. The confirmation was made with a grand mean of 2.95 and standard deviation of 1.03 the educated ones and a grand mean of 3.11 and standard deviation of 0.83 for the non-educated ones.

Research Question 3: To what extent has the Nde Achama women organization helped in alleviating poverty among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State?

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which Nde Achama women organization has helped in alleviating poverty among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State.

S/N	Item Statements	Educated = 151			Non educated = 152		
		\bar{x}	SD	Remarks	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
21	Idle youths in my community have been transformed to entrepreneur through the activities of the Nde Achama women organization	3.0	1.11	High Extent	2.99	0.95	High Extent
22	The Nde Achama women group has put in place various poverty alleviation programmes in my community.	2.92	1.24	High Extent	3.22	0.84	High Extent
23	The level of poverty in my community has to a great extent been alleviated through the Nde Achama women organization.	3.07	1.05	High Extent	3.16	0.95	High Extent
24	The economic status of indigenes of my	3.08	0.94	High	3.4	0.94	High Extent

community has been transformed for the better by the Nde Achama women organization					Extent				
Total Mean & SD	=	12.07	4.34			12.77	3.68		
Grand Mean & SD	=	3.01	1.08			3.19	0.92		

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

Table 3 which is for research question three showed that all the respondents indicated that the Nde Achama women organization has helped in alleviating poverty in Rivers State to a high extent. The confirmation was made with a grand mean of 3.01 and a grand standard deviation of 1.08 for the educated respondents, and a grand mean of 3.19 and a grand standard deviation of 0.92 for the non-educated ones.

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated women on the relationship between the Ngweta women organization and poverty alleviation among ikwerre communities in River State.

Table 4: Z-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of educated and non-educated women on the relationship between the Ngweta women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in River State.

Respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	Std Error	DF	A	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Educated	151	3.20	0.88	0.14	302	0.05	1.85	1.96	Accepted
Non educated	152	2.94	1.17						

From the z-test in Table 4, the z-calculated value of 1.85 is less than t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 levels of significance and 301 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted implying that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of educated and non-educated women on the relationship between the Ngweta women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in River State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated women on the relationship between the Nde-Ogboto women organization and poverty alleviation among ikwerre communities in Rivers State.

Table 5: Z-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of educated and non-educated women on the relationship between the Nde-Ogboto women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in River State.

Respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	Std Error	DF	A	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Educated	151	2.95	1.03	0.01	302	0.05	1.06	1.96	Accepted
Non-educated	152	3.11	0.83						

From the z-test in Table 5, the calculated value is 1.06 while the z – critical value is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The z – calculated value is lesser than z– critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore Accepted, thus there is no significant difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated women on the relationship between the Nde-Ogboto women organization and poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in River State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated women on the extent to which the Nde-Achama women organization has helped in alleviating poverty among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State.

Table 6: Z-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of educated and non-educated women on the extent to which the Nde-Achama women organization has helped in alleviating poverty among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State.

Respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	Std. Error	DF	A	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Educated	151	3.01	1.08	0.14	302	0.05	1.28	1.96	Accepted
Non-educated	152	3.19	0.92						

From the z–test in table 6 above, the t–calculated value of 1.28 is less than t–critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 levels of significance and 301 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. Meaning there is no significant difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated women on the extent to which the Nde-Achama women organization has helped in alleviating poverty among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researcher wishes to say that having completed this study on women organizations and poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State, it could be concluded that women groups are trying in their efforts to contribute meaningfully to societal development through poverty alleviation. But they could make their efforts to yield more dividends if utmost cognizance of the study’s recommendations is taken. Although, the outcome of the study reveals that the Ngweta and Nde-Ogboto women organizations significantly relate with poverty alleviation among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State, and that the Nde-Achama and the Osusu women organizations have both helped in alleviating poverty among Ikwerre communities in Rivers State to a great extent.

The fact remains that the issue of poverty alleviation demands that all hands must be on desk. Therefore, the contributions of women organizations alone will amount to little realization of Nigeria’s poverty alleviation objective, so, there is need for all those mentioned in the study’s recommendations to play their roles effectively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings made in this study, the researcher recommends that:

- Since financial problem pose a challenge to women organizations, government should endeavor to provide them with financial aid, to make their efforts in poverty alleviation a success;
- Women, should be granted equal education opportunity with the opposite sex as well as be empowered, since these are the major ways they can be encouraged to contribute meaningfully to societal development.;
- Women organizations should embark more on lunching ceremonies, as this is one of their major sources of income for poverty alleviation.
- The issue of poverty and family engagement should be address as they constitute major factors that constrain women from contributing meaningfully to the societal development;
- Apart from poverty alleviation, women organizations should endeavor to actively involve themselves in community development initiatives, since active involvement, leads to maximum success.; and
- Community development workers with the government should make more meaningful policies in favor of women organizations, this is in order to help them contribute more meaningfully to community development.

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