



Assessment of Poverty Alleviation Strategies Used By Rural Farming Households in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Poverty has plagued many rural farming household in Nigeria. Despite several approaches adopted by Government to ameliorate poverty among its citizenry, the number of people living in impoverished condition has continued to rise. This study therefore aimed at assessing the poverty alleviation strategies used among farming household in Ondo State, Nigeria. A validated interview schedule and questionnaire were used to elicit information from 140 respondents. Data collected were subjected to both descriptive and inferential analyses. Findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents were male (94.3%), married (76.5%) with most of them were educated with mean age of 50 years. Finding revealed that 72.4% of the respondents had extension contact. It was also revealed that unemployment is king problem facing the respondents in the study area. The findings revealed that embarking on petty business was ranked highest among all coping strategies used by the respondents. The result showed that marital status, farming experience and educational level of the respondents had positive and significant relationship at $p < 0.05$ with the poverty coping strategies adopted among the rural farming household. The study concluded that financial mismanagement was the major causes of poverty while they engaged in petty business as strategy to ameliorate the poverty among them. It is therefore recommended that the extension agents should be more proactive to encourage the rural farming household to intensify more effort in farming rather than petty businesses as this is most reliable and sustainable business to combat poverty.

Keywords:

Poverty,
Alleviation,
Strategies, Rural
farming,
Household

1. Introduction

Poverty is one of the greatest challenges facing rural households in most developing world today with 40% of the world's population living with the reality of extreme poverty (World Bank, 2013). Globally, extreme poverty continues to be a rural phenomenon despite increasing urbanization and out of the world's 1.2 billion extremely poor people, 75% lived in rural area and they largely depend on agricultural activities for survival (Gustavo and Kostas, 2007). According to the World Bank (2013), poverty is hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to go to school, deprivation of farm productive assets, not knowing how to read, not being able to speak properly, not having a job, fear for the future, losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water, powerlessness, lack of freedom. Abumere and Oluwasola (2001) further explain that

poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which cannot be defined or measured by one single variable like income but must be defined in terms of many other variables such as consumption, socio-economic resources, access to social and political infrastructure and demographic variable such as life expectancy and infant mortality, political participation, freedom and human rights.

In most of the rural areas of Nigeria; poverty surfaced by hunger, conflict, climate change, poor food and agricultural policy and large world population. Of all hunger is the most critical as it is the driving force for poor health, small body size, low level of energy and reduction in mental functioning. It is reported that almost all the countries in sub Saharan Africa including Nigeria are classified as either low human development countries by the UNDP or low income economies by World Bank

(2013). The high level of poverty in Nigeria to attain an endemic nature has become so worrisome. Poverty has made Nigeria to attain an unenviable status as one of the poorest countries in the world, such that no organization, family can survive effectively without introducing one kind of poverty reduction strategy or the other. Nigeria has not been known to lack in such efforts; yet still ranked among the 44 poorest nations in the world (World Bank, 2013). However, what answered is the extent to which poverty alleviation programme has impacted on the living standard of the rural dwellers. It is pathetic that the bulk of agricultural production takes place in rural areas where the level and incidence of poverty is prevalent (NBS, 2012). In Ondo state, the sight of rural communities is a definition of poverty all-encompassing in itself, the rate of poverty is so alarming that people are wallowing in abject poverty in all ramifications. According to Nigeria Poverty Profile (NPP, 2010) released by (NBS, 2012) food poverty in Ondo state was 52.0%, absolute poverty 66.5%, dollar per day 68.3% while based on the derived subjective poverty measure, 60.4% were core poor, 37.0 moderate poor, and 2.6% non- poor. This is quite disheartening. It seems that the efforts of various governments are ineffective and therefore not much has been done to actualize the benefits. For poverty reduction agencies, their results do not seem to justify the huge financial allocations to them. Poor rural people's perceptions on poverty reduction are large but ineffective and irrelevant to their lives, as government poverty reduction activities contribute little in their struggles to survive and rarely help them to escape poverty. Based on these aforementioned scenarios the study sought to provide empirical assessment of poverty alleviation strategies used by rural farming household in Ondo State Nigeria. Specifically to ascertain the socio-economic characteristics of the rural farming household, investigate the perceived causes of poverty among the rural farming household, examine the poverty alleviation programme benefitted by the rural farming household and identify the coping strategies adopted by the farming household in the study area.

Hypothesis:

The hypothesis tested for the study was:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between some selected socio economic characteristics of the respondents and the poverty alleviation strategies used in the study area.

2. Materials and methods

The study was conducted in Ondo State Nigeria. It covers a land mass area of about 13,595 square kilometers and about 370m above sea level. It has Akure as its capital city with 18 Local

Government Council. The 2006 Population Census put the population figures of Ondo State at 3,441,024 (NBS, 2012). The climatic condition of Ondo state is tropical and this is divided into 2 major seasons, dry and wet season. The wet season began toward the end of March and end toward the end of October, Dry season begins in November and last until February. The vegetation consists of rainforest in the southern part of the state and savannah in the northern extreme. Generally land mass is flat, gently undulating and mountainous. Farming is the predominant occupation of the people, the land use pattern is fallow cropping system operated with hoes and cutlasses, they cultivate food crop such as cassava, maize, yam and melon etc.

A three-stage sampling technique was used for the study; four local government areas were randomly selected from the four agricultural zones in the state. Secondly, two rural communities were randomly selected from each Local Government area, after which eighteen rural farming households of respondents were randomly selected from the rural community which translated to 144 respondents used for the study. Data obtained were analyzed with descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, mean, standard deviation and charts. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to make deductions from the study.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Result shows that majority of the sampled respondents were male. Only (5.72%) were female among the rural farming household. This implies that majority of respondents were men who are naturally endowed with the strength to embark on farming. This finding is consistent with the finding of Afolabi, (2010) who observed that male dominance in farming activities may be due to the drudgery nature of agriculture. According to Adofu et al., 2012 male dominance confirms the notion that males are bread winners of the family and are saddled with responsibility of putting food on the table and providing for the other needs of the family. The results in Figure 1 revealed that the respondents within 30 years of age were (7.8%), 19.3% were aged between 31-40 years. The modal age of the respondents were between 41-50 years with the mean of (49.9), indicated that respondents were in their active and productive years in farm production. However, only 17.1 % of the respondents were single with majority (76.5%) been married. With respect to their educational status, 17.1 % of the respondents were not formally educated, 31.4% had tertiary

education while most of them had secondary school education.

Table 1 showed that (42.1%) of the rural farming household cultivate between 6-10 hectares of farm with 2.56 mean farming land size. This implies that the respondents cultivated within the range but only (34.3%) cultivated on less than 5 hectares. Farming experience also varies among the sampled population of the study, (47.2%) of the respondents had less than 10 years farming experience, (51.4%) had above the aforementioned experience, (30.7%) had 10-19 years' experience while 1.4% of the respondents had above 30 years of farming

experience .In the same vein, majority of the crop farmers (70%) had contacts with the extension agents. Meanwhile, differences surfaced in amount realized by the rural farming household on average monthly basis. Larger percentage of the farmers realized income of (₹21,000-40,000) monthly on average while (25%) earned income less than ₹ 20000. On the other hand, (19.3%) of the respondents earned average monthly income between 41, 000-60,000 while 21.4% earned above the former respondents.

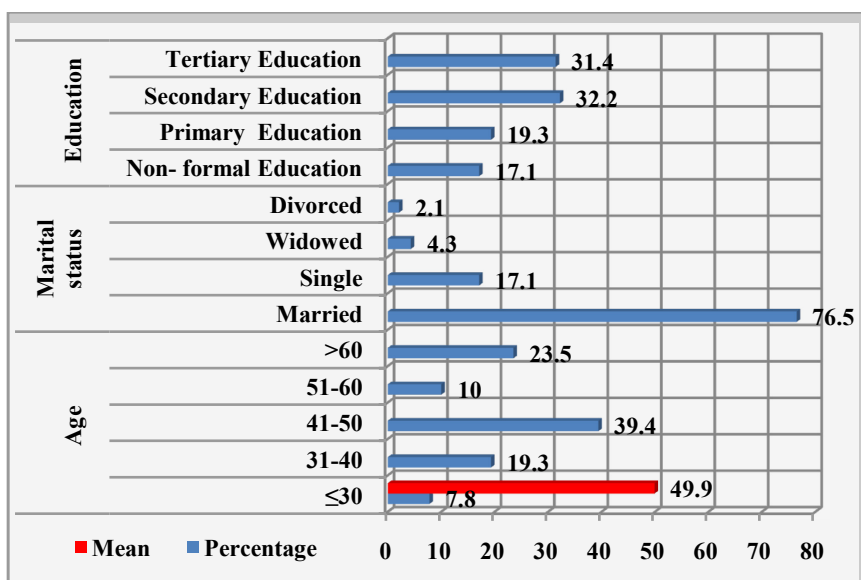


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents according to their age, marital status and educational status

Table 1. Distribution of respondents' based on farming experience, household size, farm size, income and extension contact

Variables	Range	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Farming Experience	≤10	66	47.2	
	11-19	43	30.7	
	20-29	29	20.7	
	≥30	2	1.4	
Household size	≤5	60	42.8	
	6-9	54	38.6	
	≥10	26	18.6	
Farm size (ha)	≤3	26	18.6	2.56
	4-6	22	15.7	
	7-9	59	42.1	
	≥10	33	23.6	
Income per month (₹)	≤20,000	35	25	2.37
	21,000-40,000	48	34.3	
	41,000-60,000	27	19.3	
	≥61,000	30	21.4	
Extension contacts	Yes	104	74.2	
	No	36	25.8	

Source: Field survey, 2016

3.2 Perceived causes of Poverty among the Rural Farming Household

Results in Table 2 showed that financial mismanagement among the rural farm household was major causes of poverty in the study area. This suggests that most of the rural farm household may not have orientation on financial aspects since most rural setting do lack financial institutions to take control of the financial aspect of the rural people. This priority cause of poverty could make the respondents spend on project worse enough to give them return rather than being rational. Corruption was ranked 2nd among the causes of poverty in the area. This could imply that corruption in all facets of life is eminent. Not only that it make majority poorer, but also create under-development in an area. Hence this might have affected the respondent to achieve the

project needed to be executed in the area. Inadequate access to employment opportunities was ranked 3rd. This causes are in synergy with the former ranked 2nd causes of poverty in the area. This could probably be that the respondents could not access the desired job nor there is almost entirely absent of job opportunity in the area except farming.

Finding also revealed that the respondents lack adequate farmland and capital which was ranked 4th. This implies the inputs of food production among which (land and capital) cannot be access among the sampled population. This condition could be pathetic if the rural farm household could not have the required land to produce food for the immediate population. Meanwhile, the rural farm households were saddle with the responsibility of producing food all year round.

Table 2. Distribution showing causes of poverty among the rural farming household

Perceived causes of Poverty	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Rank
Financial Mismanagement	97(69.3)	28(20.0)	7(5.0)	6(4.3)	2(1.4)	4.51	1 st
Inadequate access to employment opportunity	60(42.9)	69(49.3)	7(5.0)	3(2.1)	1(0.7)	4.31	3 rd
Corruption	83(59.3)	33(23.6)	14(10.0)	6(4.3)	4(2.9)	4.32	2 nd
Lack of asset such as land and capital	71(50.7)	40(28.6)	18(12.9)	9(6.4)	2(1.4)	4.21	4 th
Over population	61(43.6)	41(29.3)	18(12.4)	11(7.9)	9(6.4)	3.96	9 th
Inadequate access to market	67(47.9)	48(34.3)	9(6.4)	7(5.0)	9(6.4)	4.12	7 th
Laziness	59(42.1)	44(31.4)	12(8.6)	10(7.1)	12(8.6)	3.91	10 th
Poor orientation about good health, education and good sanitation	71(50.7)	44(31.4)	12(8.6)	7(5.0)	6(4.3)	4.19	6 th
Inadequate assistance for victims of drought, flood pest and war	50(35.7)	62(44.3)	17(12.1)	10(7.1)	1(0.7)	4.01	8 th
Inadequate involvement of poor in designing developmental programme	63(45.0)	57(40.7)	11(7.9)	5(3.6)	4(2.9)	4.20	5 th

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree and SD=Strongly Disagree

Source: Field survey, 2016

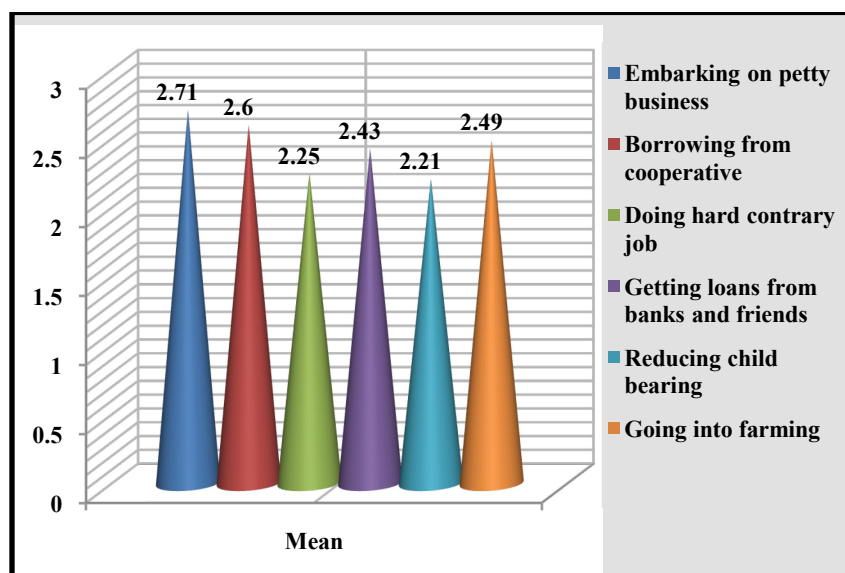


Figure 2. Coping strategies adopted among rural farming household to ameliorate poverty

Table 3. Results of relationship between some selected socio economic characteristics and the poverty coping strategies adopted among the rural farming household

Variable	Coefficient	P-value	Remark
Age	0.199	0.348	Not significant
Marital status	0.229*	0.007	Significant
Household size	-0.052	0.543	Not significant
Farming experience	0.197*	0.019	Significant
Educational level	0.236*	0.005	Significant
Income	0.012	0.888	Not significant

Source: Field survey, 2016. *Correlation is significant at 0.05 (-2 tailed)

Other notable cause of poverty include; inadequate involvement in designing development programme, poor orientation about good health, education and good sanitation, inadequate access to market ,inadequate assistance to victim of drought and food pest and disease, overpopulation and laziness of the people were ranked 5th,6th ,8th,9th,and 10th respectively.

3.3 Coping Strategies adopted by the Respondents' in ameliorating Poverty

The results presented in the Figure 2 revealed the position of the coping strategies adopted among the rural farming household. The finding showed that majority of the respondents engaged themselves in petty businesses to cope with poverty status. This implies that the respondents engaged in most of the agricultural marketing of goods and services to sustain their living in the study area. The second ranked coping strategy was borrowing from cooperative society. This could indicate that, they have access to credit from such institution in which they used in financing their petting businesses and farming activities. The farm household could have a formidable group or organization that forms cooperative society in the study area. However, they may regards farming as a minor occupation probably because it takes a long time on return in investment. Coping strategy was therefore placed high on petty businesses. The respondents also cope through the means of getting loan from financial institution and friend's as ranked 4th. Possibly because; they may have collateral security to secure the credit or have good farm record to access the financial credit and cope with poverty. Other coping strategies used by the respondents includes; engaging themselves in hardy labour job and reducing child bearing were ranked 5th and 6th in their respective position of coping strategies.

3.4 Relationship between some selected socio economic characteristics and the poverty coping strategies adopted among the rural farming household

Results in Table 3 showed that marital status, farming experience and educational level of

the respondents were positive and significant $p < 0.05$ level. This suggests that as married population, farming experience and educational status of the respondents' increases they are likely to cope with various strategies to ameliorate the effect of poverty. This is because as the population of the married respondents increases, the more they will be able to adjust to cope with the poverty in all dimensions. Meanwhile, the married populations probably were been assisted by their husband who provides for the needs of the farm household. Also, farming experience indicated that the longer the farm household stayed in farming the likely they would cope with the poverty in all ramification. The farming household could be able to provide for the immediate or self-food consumption of the household through farming.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that the respondents perceived financial mismanagement as a key cause of poverty in the study area, and that corruption inclusive. The respondents therefore devised poverty coping strategies among which they engaged in petty business as a major technique to survive in the face poverty. They also borrowed from cooperative society, reduced child bearing among other were coping strategies adopted by the respondents. It is therefore recommended that extension agents should be more proactive to encourage the rural farming household to intensify more effort in farming rather than petty businesses as this is most reliable and sustainable business to combat poverty. Also, the extension agents should help orientate the farmers to be scrupulous in financial management that could help them out of poverty.

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