

THE DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION: A CASE OF KWARA STATE, NIGERIA (A PILOT STUDY)

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ABSTRACT

Enormously meaningful research and studies have suggested positive relationship between women empowerment (WE) and poverty alleviation (PA), albeit, insufficient research has been conducted in Kwara state on the field of study. Therefore, the purpose of this current study is to present the outcome of the pilot study on the proposed model connecting the determinants of women empowerment and the latter impact on poverty alleviation in Kwara state-Nigeria. Some respondent's demographic traits have been proposed as controlling variables in the aforementioned relationship in the study. More so, relevant and related literatures are presented to substantiate the proposed relationship in the context of Kwara state-Nigeria. Prior to the real and final study, a pilot study was conducted to ensure clarity, readability, face validity as well as reliability of the purported variables and items of the study. It is concluded that the purported variables have good internal consistencies.

Keywords: Women empowerment, reliability, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is one of the African countries and of course, the biggest in term of size of population and perhaps also natural and human resources. She got independence on the 1st of October, 1960 under the British power. Today, the country has 36 states plus Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. Kwara state is one of the states and politically falls in north central geo-political zone. The state comprises of 16 local government areas (LGAs) with agriculturally based economy. It endows with few mineral resources, few functioning and economically reasonable industries. Poverty has been economic problem of the state since it is unfavourable, resource-wise and allocation-wise. According to National Bureau of Statistics, NBS 2010, the percentage of people that are absolutely and relatively poor in the state is 61.8% and 74.3%, respectively, while 62.0% is poor based on dollar per day (US\$/pd).

Therefore, women are the main victim of poverty problem in the state as the larger percentage of the poor is women. The poverty of women in Kwara state/Nigeria is not merely because of their personal traits but rather the system operating in the society (Abdussalam, O. I. et al. (a), 2013). It is argued that the extent of the openness of the domestic economy to the external economies is part of the exogenous causes of poverty (Abdussalam, O. I. et al. (b), 2013). The situation is being described as the feminization of poverty (Fayomi, O. O. 2009). Similarly, Omoyibo, K. U. et al., (2010) argues that women are being discriminated in all forms that subdue them to their counterpart men in Nigeria. According to the study carried out by Olorunsanya, E. O. and Omotesho, O. A. (2011) in the North Central of Nigeria using Kwara state as a case study found that women-headed households were more less-privileged than their counterpart men-headed households in the state. Likewise, widow-headed

households are more significantly deprived or disadvantaged compared to the mere women-headed households in the state. More so, Hassan, et al., (2012) view gender bias as one of the key challenges to poverty eradication and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Since the problem appears to be feminist face therefore it is required to employed feminist solution to alleviate the problem, in this respect, women empowerment strategy. If women can be empowered in the state, both socio-economically and politically, it can assist them to extensively reduce their suffering and equally alleviate the incidence of poverty in the state. The empowerment as it is argued is to help them to improve their lives (GOI, 1995, cited in Burra, 2007:45; Magnus, L. K. 2007; Narayan, D., 2002: xviii). Empowerment is being used in diverse disciplines and appeared in various levels making it equally multidimensional in nature. It is defined as “the ability of individuals to gain control socially, politically, economically and psychologically through access to information, knowledge and skills, decision-making, individual self-efficacy, community participation and perceived control” (cited in Harris, R. & Veinot, T., 2004). Therefore, economic, social and political poverty alleviation can be achieved in Kwara state/Nigeria through reasonable empowerment of its citizens.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many studies and literatures have proposed and proved direct correlation between women empowerment and poverty alleviation. The more the empowerment of women the higher the level of poverty alleviation in any given society/country, in other words, as the reasonable empowerment is given to women, the extent of poverty would go down in all spheres. Among the authors and researchers posit this relationship are: Singh, B. 2012; Yahaya, K. A. 2011; Appah, E. et al. 2012; Jegede, C. A. 2011; Pramanik, et al., 2008; Kerbo, H. R. 2006; Obadan, I. M. 1997; Alcock, P. 1993.

Gobezie, G. (2010) examines two major women empowerment models in the rural Ethiopia viz-a-viz, Group Guarantee Lending Model (GGLM) and Community Managed Loan funds Model (CMLFM) via microfinance institution. The former has been attributed to the Grameen bank in Bangladesh and it required the beneficiaries under microfinance to form small number of group that would commit themselves to a mutual loan refund guarantee. This is done by releasing credit to group with small number of members between minimum of 5 and maximum of 15 meeting at one point. Discussion on group development, collection of payment and savings are done on monthly-basis. Priority is given to women as the vulnerable gender and the group with majority living on and below poverty line. While, the latter model i.e. CMLFM which is alternative approach involves the use of existing domestic social networks as a platform to deliver financial assistance majorly to the extremely poor women in the locality. Familiarity among the peer group in the latter model is so strong and helpful, unlike the case in the former model.

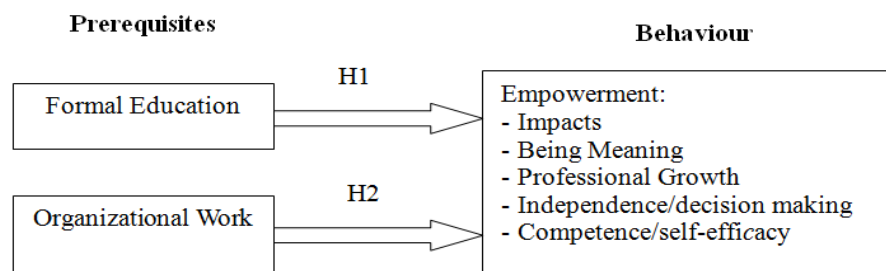


Figure 1. Impact Model of Women's Empowerment (Gholipour, A., et al. 2010)

The finding of the study shows in the model positive relationship between the education and organizational job/occupation as well as psychological empowerment in Tehran, which is harmonized with Iranian women and history (Gholipour, A., et al. 2010).

Another model of empowerment is a multilevel model of empowerment (Seibert, S. E., et al., 2004). In their purported model, empowerment climate is set positively related to the work-unit performance at the group level; meanwhile, the former construct is not directly related with the psychological empowerment, as the latter set as mediating factor in the relationship between the empowerment climate and both individual performance and job satisfaction.

Therefore, in this current study, our proposed model demonstrates that the women empowerment is directly related to the poverty alleviation in which the former comprises various dimensions of empowerment such as economic, political and social. This is built upon the aforementioned theoretical frameworks. The figures 2 and 3 below present the hypothesized research model of the women empowerment.

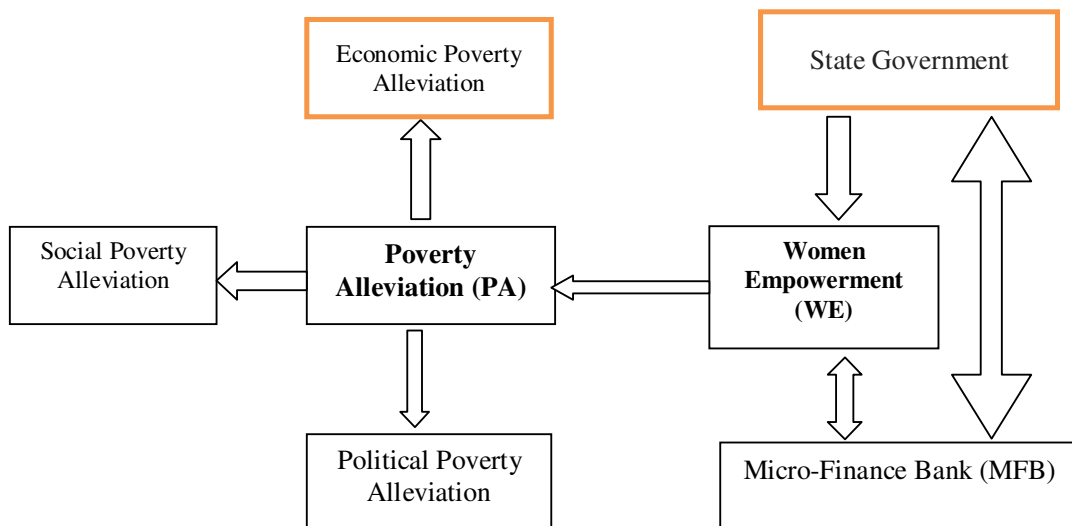


Figure 2. The Link between State Government's Women Empowerment Strategy and Poverty Alleviation: Cause and Effect Model (New Research Model)

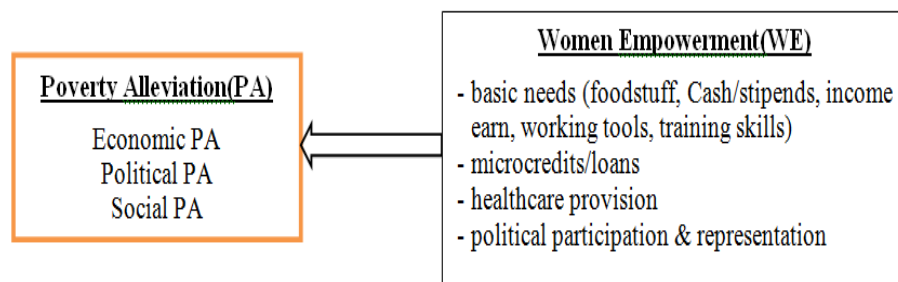


Figure 3. Cause and Effect Model

METHODS

Pilot-Testing

The pilot test is highly important to be carried out in order to satisfy the reliability of the adopted questionnaire used for this particular study prior final and complete data collection. It

involves the verification on the clarity, readability as well as the face validity of the proposed variables in the on-going study. Therefore, this particular process leads to enhancement in the items under each variable. This is very important in the sense that it would assist the researcher such in detecting problems of understanding, ambiguous wording, clarity of questions as well as duration required to complete the questionnaire with each respondent. Some revisions were taken done due to the observation from the respondents used in this pilot study as regard to the questions/items in the questionnaires; however this is helpful to the researcher. For the pilot test, 35 copies of the questionnaire were given out to Nigerian female in which 30 copies were successfully returned. Researcher selects the respondents for the pilot test separately from the total sample, that is, those that are not part of the main sample for the final questionnaire prior conducting final survey.

Concerning face validity of the study, the questionnaires were validated by asking the Senior Special Assistant (SSA) on the poverty alleviation to Kwara state Governor (the head/coordinator of the women empowerment strategy in the state) to crosscheck and on the variables and their items, if in case, there is any possible adjustment, inclusion and exclusion in the questionnaire. Likewise, the supervisor was thoroughly went through the questionnaire to check for the missing of important question of item prior even went to the SSA. Lastly, the checking on the wording, readability and correct use of language is done by the expert in the English and linguistics.

Reliability

To estimate the internal consistency of every scale or variable in the current study using Cronbach's alpha value (.70).

RESULTS

The table 1 below summaries the pilot test study reliability coefficients of the scales/variables equal to or above .70.

Table 1. Reliability values for pilot test (n=30)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No of items used</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
Poverty Alleviation (PA)	7 out 7	.729
Income Earned (IE)	6 out of 7, 1*(ie2)	.762
Foodstuff and Stipend (FSST)	6 out of 8, 2*(fsst4&3)	.723
Training Skill and working Tools (TSWT)	6 out of 7, 1*(tswt3)	.846
Microcredit/loan (MC)	9 out of 10, 1*(mc7)	.784
Political Participation (PP)	8 out of 9, 1*(pp9)	.719
Healthcare Service (HS)	7 out of 9, 2*(hs6&8)	.742
Women Empowerment Strategy (WES)	6 out of 6	.822

Source: Researcher's computation.

Note: *number of item(s) removed/dropped from the scale/variable.

From table 1 above, the result of the reliability of the scales/variables runs for the pilot test shows that all the variables taken into consideration in the study has good internal consistency, with their Cronbach's alpha coefficients above the considered acceptable value of .70 (Pallant, 2005:97; Hair, et al. 2010). More so, the result of the pilot study conducted by

Azizan, N. A. and Wan Embong, W. E. N. (2013) also substantiates the good internal consistency of the variables in this present pilot study. Though, item(s) in some variables have to be removed / dropped before arrived into their acceptable Cronbach's alpha above .70. (See Table 1 above)

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusively, the proposed variables of this current study proved to be good for the final research study, since the items used to measure them had good internal consistencies. Due to insufficient respondents, the factor analysis could not be carried out as the latter requires large quantity of respondents. This could be done in the final study.

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