

## POVERTY MITIGATION STRATEGIES OF THE RURAL WOMEN IN EJIGBO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

IBITUNDE I. O.<sup>1</sup>, AJAYI, F. O..<sup>2</sup> OLAYODE G. O.<sup>3</sup> AND AKINTAYO A. O.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2&4</sup> Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development;

<sup>3</sup> Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Management, Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.

Corresponding author: [ibidun.ibitunde@uniosun.ed.ng](mailto:ibidun.ibitunde@uniosun.ed.ng), +2348069412142

### ABSTRACT

Mitigating poverty has remained important among Nigeria's developmental challenges. The study assessed the level of utilization of poverty mitigation strategies by the rural women in Ejigbo Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, it described the socio-economic characteristics of the rural women and examined the agricultural and non-agricultural poverty mitigation strategies utilized by the rural women in the study area. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select 120 rural women for the study. Primary data were collected with the aid of a well-structured interview schedule and analyzed with the use of frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and chi-square analysis. The results reveal that the mean age of the respondents was 42.1 years. The majority (73.3%) were married with a mean household size of 5 persons and the majority (60.8%) were members of a cooperative societ(ies). Personal savings (WMS= 2.78) ranked first among non-agricultural poverty mitigation strategies utilized by the respondents followed by petty trading (WMS = 2.64). Also, livestock keeping (WMS = 2.80) ranked first among the agricultural poverty mitigation strategies followed by selling farm produce (WMS = 2.44). A majority (65.0%) of the respondents were at a medium level of utilization of poverty mitigation strategies. Results of the hypothesis testing show that utilization of poverty mitigation strategies was significantly influenced by marital status ( $\chi^2=16.907$ ,  $p\leq 0.05$ ) and educational qualification ( $\chi^2=23.387$ ,  $p\leq 0.01$ ). The study recommended that favoured poverty mitigation strategies; personal savings, petty trading, livestock keeping and selling farm produce should be thoroughly examined to enable policymakers to know the right point of intervention.

**Keywords:** Mitigation, poverty, rural, strategies, women.

### INTRODUCTION

According to Fapohunda (2012), the alleviation of poverty constitutes the major aspect of the international development agenda of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Improving the health and living conditions of millions of people around the world is one of the main priorities of the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at reducing poverty. Also, Osei and Zhaung

(2020) stated that poverty in its context refers to a situation and a process of severe deprivation or lack of resources and materials necessary to live at a minimum standard conducive to human dignity and well-being. They added that it implies deprivation of the means of subsistence.

Social aspects of poverty can include a lack of access to information, education, health care and political power. Poverty as a

multidimensional concept refers to the deprivation of human dignity, opportunity and satisfaction in terms of food, nutrition, power, education, health, trafficking and income (Alkire and Foster, 2011; Arndt *et al.* (2016); Si *et al.* (2015)). The population of a country is generally almost equally divided between men and women, except in special circumstances such as war or highly selective immigration, which normally affect men more than women. However, through the ages, the sharing of power, wealth, influence, employment, etc. between men and women has never come close to equality. Even in the most advanced countries, gender inequality in the distribution of wealth has remained a pressing issue (Nkemnyi, de Haas, Etiendem, and Ndobegang, 2016).

Over the years, many women have faced the formidable challenges of unemployment, lack of source of income, widowhood and single parenthood. Despite these challenges, the roles played by women in national development and in all facets of human activities have been quite remarkable. Although there has been considerable progress in the development of women's capacities, their participation in economic and political decision-making remains very limited (Fapohunda, 2012). The unpleasant experiences that women face affect their lives, their children and other household members. Poverty prevents some women from enjoying their life privileges such as education, access to health facilities, participation in politics and the ability to control resources. Women have low incomes, low levels of education, do not own land, have constraints in accessing health facilities, depend on subsistence agriculture but do not

determine or control sales and do not make their lifestyle choices (Fapohunda, 2012).

Amid such uncertainties, the utilization of diverse mitigation strategies has often been a worthwhile extenuating force available to people. Mitigation is defined as a reduction in how unpleasant, serious etc. something is (Oxford Learner's Dictionary 2021), poverty mitigation strategy may vary from place to place and among individuals. In other words, the capacity of a people to break out of poverty or utilize a mitigation strategy is often associated with the uniqueness of the conditions within their communities. This study, therefore, assessed the utilization of poverty mitigation strategies by rural women of the Ejigbo Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to assess the level of utilization of poverty mitigation strategies utilized by the rural women in Ejigbo Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. describe the socio-economic characteristics of the rural women in the study area; and
2. examine the agricultural and non-agricultural poverty mitigation strategies utilized by the rural women in the study area.

### **The Hypothesis of the Study**

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between the respondents' socio-economic characteristics and their utilization of poverty mitigation strategies.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study area was Ejigbo Local Government in Osun State, Nigeria. Ejigbo is a prominent town in Yoruba Land and the headquarters of Ejigbo Local Government Area, one of the oldest Local Government Areas of Osun State in Nigeria. Ejigbo is situated in the middle of the region, 35 kilometres (22 miles) northeast of Iwo, 30 km (19 miles) from Ogbomoso in the north and 24 km (15 miles) from Ede in the southeast. It is about 40 km (25 miles) northwest of Osogbo, the capital of Osun State, and about 95 km (59 miles) northeast of Ibadan. It is part of the Ede North/Ede South/Egbedore/Ejigbo federal constituency. The average elevation is 426 metres (1,398 ft), and it has an area of 373 square kilometres (144 square miles). The average annual rainfall is 52.35 inches (1,330 mm), though there are great deviations from this mean value from year to year (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

The sample selection was carried out using a multistage sampling procedure. In the first stage, a simple random technique was used to select two (2) districts; Ejigbo and Olla from the four (4) districts (Ejigbo, Olla, Ilawo and Ife-Odan) in Ejigbo Local Government. In the second stage, the purposive sampling technique was used to select three towns and three villages Ejigbo, Isundunrin and, Ayegbogbo from the Ejigbo district and Olla, Masifa and Isoko from the Olla district due to high livelihood activities and popularity of the towns and villages. In the third stage, the simple random technique was used to select twenty (20) rural women from each town and village to make a total of 120 respondents. Primary data was used in this study. The data were collected through the use of a well-

structured interview schedule and analyzed with the use of frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and chi-square analysis.

### Measurement of variables

The dependent variable of the study was poverty mitigation strategies. A list of non-agricultural and agricultural-based mitigation strategies items was presented to the respondents to rate on a four-point Likert-type rating scale of always (4), occasionally (3), rarely (2) and never (1). The addition of the points recorded (as awarded above) for each of the items gives the aggregate or total score for a respondent. Mean was obtained for each of the poverty mitigation strategies items and used to rank the poverty mitigation strategies in descending order of utilization. The maximum and minimum scores were calculated. A composite utilization score was generated, the mean was calculated, the standard deviation was also calculated and these were used to calculate the high, medium and low levels of utilization. High level =  $\geq$  (mean + standard deviation), medium level = between (mean + standard deviation) and (mean - standard deviation) and low level =  $\leq$  (mean - standard deviation).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-economic characteristics

Results in Table 1 reveal that the mean age of the respondents was  $42.08 \pm 11.303$  years. This implies that most of them can afford to engage in various livelihood activities that will contribute towards improved household

well-being. Michael *et al.* (2019) reported a mean age of 46.3 years among rural households in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The results further reveal that the majority (73.3%) of the respondents were married. This implies that the women had marital relationships and as such may have responsibilities. This is in line with the work of Ibitunde *et al.* (2021) who reported that the majority (80.0%) of the women cassava processors in Ijebu Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria were married. The results further show that a majority (75.0%) of the respondents had household sizes of 4-6, the mean household size was  $5.18 \pm 1.408$  persons. This could be because the respondents had learnt about family planning and so did not give birth to too many children. Similarly, Ayoade and Adeola (2012) reported an average of 5 members per rural household in Oyo State, Nigeria. The results further show that some (38.3%) of the respondents had tertiary education, some (35.8%) had secondary education, some (20.8%) had primary education while few (5.0%) had no formal education. The results contradict that of Azeez and Abang (2015) who reported that a higher percentage (52,5%) of the rural farm families in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria had no formal education.

This shows that majority of the respondents had at least a secondary school education and that literacy in the area is at a higher level. The results further reveal that close to half (49.2%) of the respondents had trading as their primary occupation while some (24.2%) were involved in farming. This implies that almost half of the respondents earn their living from trading. The results further reveal that the majority (60.8%) of the respondents were members of a cooperative societ(ies). Membership in cooperative societ(ies) enhances access to credit, the implication of this result is that rural women would be able to access credit that would enhance their means of livelihood and hence strategize better in mitigating poverty. The results also reveal that the monthly income earned by a majority (73.3%) of the respondents was between ₦1-₦50,000. The monthly mean income of the respondents was  $₦52,283.33 \pm ₦62,381.475$ . These results showed that the income of the respondents was quite low and they might not be able to adequately afford the consumption of good food, and basic amenities such as clean water, health, education and energy. Hence, the respondents may not be able to easily utilize capital-intensive poverty mitigation strategies.

**Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to their socio-economic characteristics (n=120)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Mean ± SD</b>
<b>Age</b>			
≤ 30	21	17.5	
31-60	38	75.1	
> 60	9	7.4	42.08±11.303
<b>Marital status</b>			
Single	2	1.7	
Married	88	73.3	
Separated	10	8.3	
Divorced	6	5.0	
Widowed	14	11.7	
<b>Household size (persons)</b>			
1-3	9	7.5	
4-6	90	75.0	
7-9	21	17.5	5.18±1.408
<b>Primary occupation</b>			
Farming	29	24.2	
Civil service	11	9.2	
Artisan	13	10.8	
Trading	59	49.2	
Others	8	6.7	
<b>Cooperative society membership status</b>			
Member	73	60.8	
Not a member	47	39.2	
<b>Monthly income (₦)</b>			
1-50000	88	73.3	
50001-100000	22	18.3	
100001-150000	5	4.2	
150001-200000	2	1.7	
Above 200000	3	2.5	52,283.33±62,381.475

**Source:** Field survey, 2021

**Poverty mitigation strategies utilized by respondents**

**Non-agricultural based poverty mitigation strategies utilized by respondents**

Results in Table 2 show that the non-agricultural based poverty mitigation strategies utilized by the respondents were their personal savings (WMS = 2.78) followed by petty trading (WMS = 2.64), skipping meals (WMS = 2.21), credit from cooperative society (WMS = 2.16), loan from local lenders (WMS = 1.97), gift from friends and family (WMS = 1.92) and others in descending order.

From the measurement scales of 1, 2, 3, and 4 of never utilized, rarely utilized,

occasionally utilized and always utilized respectively, non-agricultural based poverty mitigation strategies whose means measure up to rarely utilized, occasionally utilized and always utilized, that is, approximately 2, 3 and 4 were used as the benchmark for the utilized non-agricultural based poverty mitigation strategies. This means that 5 out of all the non-agricultural poverty mitigation strategies could be regarded as utilized. This result implies that any intervention that would be applied to enhance the utilization of non-agricultural-based poverty mitigation strategies in the study area should be applied mostly to enhance the utilization of the identified non-agricultural-based poverty mitigation strategies in ascending order.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on non-agricultural based poverty mitigating strategies utilized**

<b>Non-agricultural-based poverty mitigation strategies</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Personal savings	2.78*	1 <sup>st</sup>
Petty trading	2.64*	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Skipping meals	2.21*	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Credit from cooperative society	2.16*	4 <sup>th</sup>
Loan from local lenders	1.97	5 <sup>th</sup>
Gift from friends and family	1.92	6 <sup>th</sup>
Divine intervention	1.89	7 <sup>th</sup>
Purchasing food on credit	1.83	8 <sup>th</sup>
Plating of hair	1.67	6 <sup>th</sup>
Catering	1.53	10 <sup>th</sup>
Credit from women’s group	1.43	11 <sup>th</sup>
Causal labourer	1.37	12 <sup>th</sup>
Credit from bank	1.33	13 <sup>th</sup>
Selling firewood	1.32	14 <sup>th</sup>
Weaving clothes	1.18	15 <sup>th</sup>
Withdrawing children from school	1.10	16 <sup>th</sup>
Selling personal assets	1.05	17 <sup>th</sup>

**Source:** Field survey, 2021

### **Agricultural-based poverty mitigation strategies utilized by respondents**

Results in Table 3 show that the agricultural-based poverty mitigation strategies -utilized by the respondents were livestock keeping (WMS = 2.80), followed by selling farm produce (WMS = 2.44), crop farming (WMS = 2.05), processing of farm products (WMS = 1.44), the gathering of forest produce (WMS = 1.38), fish farming (WMS = 1.35), rabbit keeping (WMS = 1.14), grass cutter production (WMS = 1.07) and beekeeping (WMS = 1.04).

From the measurement scales of 1, 2, 3, and 4 of never utilized, rarely utilized, occasionally utilized and always utilized respectively, agricultural-based poverty mitigation strategies whose means measure up to rarely utilized, occasionally utilized and

always utilized, that is, approximately 2, 3 and 4 were used as the benchmark for the utilized agricultural-based poverty mitigation strategies. This means that 3 out of all the agricultural poverty mitigation strategies could be regarded as utilized. This result implies that any intervention that would be applied to enhance the utilization of agricultural-based poverty mitigation strategies in the study area should be applied mostly to enhance the utilization of the identified agricultural-based poverty mitigation strategies in ascending order. The finding is in line with that of Iyela and Ikwuakam (2015) who reported that the sampled respondents were engaged in subsistence agriculture in the form of small vegetable gardens growing maize, beans, melons, tomatoes, cabbages, onions, carrots, spinach, and fruit trees.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on agricultural-based poverty mitigating strategies utilized**

<b>Agricultural-based poverty mitigation strategies</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Livestock keeping	2.80*	1.43	1 <sup>st</sup>
Selling farm produce	2.44*	1.45	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Crop farming	2.05*	1.36	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Processing of farm products	1.44	0.22	4 <sup>th</sup>
Gathering of forest produce	1.38	0.95	5 <sup>th</sup>
Fish farming	1.35	0.92	6 <sup>th</sup>
Rabbit keeping	1.14	0.55	7 <sup>th</sup>
Grass cutter production	1.07	0.36	8 <sup>th</sup>
Bee keeping	1.04	0.27	9 <sup>th</sup>

**Source:** Field survey, 2021

### **Level of Utilization of Poverty Mitigation Strategies**

Results in Table 4 show that the majority (65.0%) of the respondents were at the medium level of utilization of poverty mitigation strategies, some (17.5%) were at a

low level of utilization while some (17.5%) were at a high level of utilization. This result implies that the rural women had a considerable level of utilization of agricultural and non-agricultural poverty mitigation strategies in the study area.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents by level of utilization of poverty mitigation strategies (n=120)**

<b>Level of utilization of poverty mitigation strategies</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
High	≥ 54	21	17.5
Moderate	Btw 37 and 53	78	65.0
Low	≤ 36	21	17.5
Total		120	100

**Source:** Field survey, 2021

**Relationship between the respondents’ socio-economic characteristics and their utilization of poverty mitigation strategies.**

Results in Table 5 show a significant association between marital status ( $\chi^2=16.907$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and utilization and educational qualification ( $\chi^2=23.387$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and utilization, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Marital status had a significant association with the utilization of poverty mitigation strategies. This implied that utilization of poverty mitigation strategies varies among respondents with various marital statuses sampled for the study; a majority (73.3%) of the respondents were married, some (11.7%) were widowed, few (8.3%) were separated, few (5.0%) were divorced while very few (1.7%) were single. This result might also be due to the fact that the majority (73.3%) of the respondents were married. This implied that the higher the number of rural women that were married, the higher the utilization of poverty mitigation strategies may be.

The educational qualification also had a significant association with the utilization of poverty mitigation strategies. This implied that utilization of poverty mitigation strategies varies among respondents with various educational qualifications sampled for the study; some (38.3%) of the respondents had tertiary education, some, 35.8% had secondary education, some (20.8%) had primary education while few, 5.0% had no formal education. This result might also be due to the fact that some (38.3%) of the respondents had tertiary education. This implied that the higher the number of rural women with tertiary educational levels, the higher the utilization of poverty mitigation strategies may be. The implication of these findings is that marital status and educational level should be considered by relevant stakeholders in order to enhance the utilization of poverty mitigation strategies among rural women in the study area.

**Table 5: Chi-square analysis showing the association between the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their utilization of poverty mitigation strategies.**

Variables	$\chi^2$ -value	p-value	Decision
Marital status	16.907	0.031*	Significant
Educational qualification	23.387	0.001**	Significant
Religion	1.922	0.750	Not significant
Primary occupation	12.236	0.141	Not significant

\*\*Significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*Significant at  $p \leq 0.05$

Source: Data analysis, 2021

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study concluded that many of the respondents were at medium level of utilization of poverty mitigation strategies. Also, livestock keeping, selling farm produce, crop farming, personal savings and petty trading were poverty mitigation strategies mostly utilized by the respondents. In addition, marital status and educational level significantly influenced the utilization of poverty-coping strategies among the respondents in the study area. The study, therefore, recommended that the favoured poverty mitigation strategies should be thoroughly examined to enable policymakers to know the right point of intervention.

**REFERENCES**

Alkire, S., and Foster, J. (2011). Counting and multidimensional poverty measurement. *Journal of Public Economics*, 95(7–8), 476–487.

Arndt, C., McKay, A., and Tarp, F. (2016). Growth and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. Oxford University Press.

Ayoade, A.R. and Adeola, R.G. 2012. Effects of Poverty on Rural Household Welfare in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Global Journal*

*of Science Frontiers Research*, 12(4): 44-52.

Azeez A. A. and Abang S. O. (2015). Analysis of poverty status of rural farm families in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria; *Global Journal of Agricultural Sciences* Vol. 14, 45-50

Ibitunde, I. O., Ajayi, F. O., Bamiwuye, O. A. and Sulaiman, O. A. (2021). Women's Involvement in Cassava Processing in Ijebu Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria. *Ife Journal of Agriculture*, 33(3): 32-38.

Iyela, A. and Ikwuakam O. (2015). Poverty mitigation strategies of rural women dwellers of Batagarawa Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Rome-Italy, 6(6 S4), 296.

Michael, A., Tashikalma, A. K., Maurice, D. C., Tafida, A. A. (2019). Analysis of multidimensional poverty in rural Adamawa State, Nigeria. *Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development*, 3(53), 233–241.

National Bureau of Statistics, Annual Abstract of Statistics, 2011, Federal Republic of Nigeria. pp. 57.

Nkemnyi, M. F., de Haas, A., Etiendem, N. D., and Ndobegang, F. (2016). Making hard choices: Balancing indigenous communities livelihood and Cross River gorilla conservation in the Lebialem – Mone Forest landscape, Cameroon. *Environmental Development and Sustainance*, 15, 841-857

Osei, C. D. and Zhuang J. (2020). Rural Poverty Alleviation Strategies and Social Capital Link: The Mediation

Role of Women Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation. *Sage Open Journals*, 1–11

Oxford Learner’s Dictionary 2021. Pp. 1

Si, S., Yu, X., Wu, A., Chen, S., Chen, S., and Su, Y. (2015). Entrepreneurship and poverty reduction: A case study of Yiwu, China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 32(1), 119– 143.

Fapohunda, T. M. (2012). Women and Poverty Alleviation in Lagos, Nigeria. *British Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3 (2), 35-45.