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Analysis of Socio-Economic Constraints of Fisher Folks on Poverty Alleviation in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The study identified various socio-economic constraints militating against the poverty alleviation strategies of fisher folks in Lagos state, Nigeria. A total of 215 fisher folks were surveyed through simple random sampling and interview schedule was used to obtain information from them. The fisher folks were categorized into cooperators and non-cooperators to capture difference in the constraints level. The findings show the socio-economic constraints to poverty alleviation strategies are not only technical but also sociological, economic and political. Spearman rho correlation coefficient showed a significant relationship between poverty alleviation strategies and lack of technical expertise ($r = 0.554$, $p<0.05$) and inadequate raw materials for construction of simple gear ($r = 0.05$, $p<0.05$). Respondents poverty alleviation strategies were inversely but significant correlated for provision of credit facilities ($r = -0.31$, $p<0.05$), joint ownership and usage of facilities being often difficult ($r = -0.61$, $p<0.05$); lack of commitment and adequate cooperation in the part of fisher folks ($r = -0.68$, $p<0.05$). It was also inversely related to diversion, delay and high cost of input supply ($r = -0.27$, $p<0.05$) and inaccessibility of spare part of outboard engine ($r = -0.16$, $p<0.05$). However, respondents poverty alleviation strategies were not statically related with prioritization of resources ($r = 0.09$, $p>0.05$), political instability ($r = 0.09$, $p>0.05$) and unstable climate and tides ($r = 0.06$, $p>0.05$). It is concluded that there is need to stem up extension activities to the fisher folks to assist them remove the constraints that limit their production in effort to take them out of the poverty bracket.

Key words: Analysis, constraints, socio-economic, poverty alleviation, fisher folks, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

One of the most valid generalizations about the poor is that they are disproportionately located in the rural areas and that they are primarily engaged in agricultural and associated activities.

Poverty is sometimes described as the inability of individuals to satisfy their minimum basic needs of food, clothing and shelter (Oladoja, 2005). Poverty therefore, is often the result of a number of interactive and mutually reinforcing socio-economic constraints in which the poor are trapped (Akpoko, 2003; Akinbile and Ndaghu, 2005).

The most persistent challenge facing the world today is poverty alleviation in developing countries, hence, poverty alleviation strategies with special reference to the dynamics of socio-economic constraints.

Poverty alleviation in Nigeria requires among other strategies the access of the poor to productive assets, the raising of their returns on assets, increasing their access to education and health services, improving their employment opportunities and supplementing their resources with income or resources transfers.

The poor including the fisher folks continuously make effort at alleviating poverty. It is therefore, essential that the constraints to poverty alleviation strategies are examined. This become essential as majority of the rural dwellers in Nigeria are still poor (Osho, 2008), despite the poverty alleviating strategies they employ. It is therefore, important to know the constraints to their poverty alleviating strategies. This supports the belief that fisher folks are understandably risk averse and they are willing to adopt strategies that limit the effect of poverty (Akpoko, 2003; Akinbile and Ndaghu, 2005). However, problems confronting fisher folks vary form one place to the other. Hence, there is need to investigate the problems that are importance in a production environment with a view to providing solution to them.

At the background of poverty, lie socio-economic constraints, which combine with the unfavourable

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environment of trap Nigerians in a vicious circle of poverty. Access to physical capital assets is hindered. The result is that marginal productivity at the fisheries level is reduced, income levels and living standards are generally very poor irrespective of what parameters are used for analysis. Hence, this study was set up to analyze the socio-economic constraints of fisher folks that are of economic importance to poverty alleviation in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Consequently, the following objectives were addressed in this study:

- Identified the personal characteristics of the fisher folks
- Assessed the socio-economic constraints confronting the fisher folks
- Examined the poverty alleviation strategies of the fisher folks in the study areas
- Determined the poverty alleviation strategies employed by the fisher folks and their socio-economic constraints

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in Lagos state Nigeria. The population of the study is all fisher folks in the major fishing communities in the state on the list of Lagos state agricultural development programme. Epe community was therefore, purposively selected for the study based on the volume of fishing activities that take place in the community. Multi-stage random, sampling technique was used in the selection of 215 respondents as sample for the study.

The data were collected using interview schedule. The pre-testing of the instrument was done with 10 fisher folks not registered with Lagos state agricultural development programme authority in one of the communities in Ikorodu local Government area. This attempt was carried out to eliminate ambiguous questions and to facilitate clarity.

Measurement of variables:

- The dependent variable is fisherfolk's poverty Alleviation strategies. Fifteen poverty alleviation strategies were identified. This was measured on the basic of 3 points scale ranging from never use, really use and frequently use. The use scores were thus, calculated for fisher folks (both male and female). A total score of respondents for the numbers of items indicated were experienced with the maximum score obtained being 45 points and minimum is 15 points
- Constraints fishing activities were measured. Respondents asked to indicate as many socio-economic constraints as they experience in fishing activities and ran them as high and low

Data analysis: Descriptive statistics involving the use of frequencies and percentages were employed to describe the data, while inferential statistics such as Spearman rho correlation co-efficient was used to test the significance relationship between fisherfolk's poverty alleviation strategies and socio-economic constraints.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics of respondents: One of the objectives of the study is to describe fisherfolks personal characteristics that could predict socio-economic constraints to their use of poverty alleviation strategies. The selected personal characteristics include age, gender, education, marital status, religion, vocational training and their being cooperators and non-cooperators.

Table 1 reveals that majority of the sampled respondents are between ages of 31-50 years old with the 41-50 years age bracket being predominant (41.4%). It is indicative of the position of Oladoja (2005) and Adeokun *et al.* (2002) that many of the fisher folks (males and females), who remain in the profession are there because they have difficulty in starting another profession rather than out of sustained interest. It can therefore, be implied that the majority of the fisher folks were middles age and might still have energy to cope with the rigorous of fishing.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents characteristics n = 215

Variables	Operationalisation	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21-30	46	21.40
	31-40	80	37.20
	41-50	89	41.40
Gender	Male	162	75.40
	Female	53	24.60
Education	No formal education	77	35.70
	Primary education	80	37.30
	Secondary education	55	25.40
	Tertiary education	3	1.60
Religion	Islam	130	60.40
	Christianity	85	39.60
	Traditional	-	-
Marital status	Single	9	4.20
	Married	206	95.80
Vocational training	No vocational training	6	2.80
	Livestock	30	13.95
	Gear repair	147	68.20
	Blacksmith	20	9.30
	Carpentry	12	5.75
Fishing population	Cooperators	185	85.90
	Non-cooperators	30	14.10

Source: Field Survey (2006)

Table 1 also reveals that majority of the sampled respondents are male (75.4%). This implies that majority of the listed respondent were males. Although, the percentage difference between males and females could have also arisen from the random sampling procedure adopted by this study, which gave every respondent equal chance, ir-respective of gender. About 36% had no formal education, while most of them (64.0%) had completed one form of formal education or the other. It shows that 25.4% have secondary education, while 1.6% acquired tertiary education. This is good for the respondents as only a few of them had no formal education. This implied that the level of education achieved by the respondents is good enough to aid their propensity of improve their fishing activities. Majority of the surveyed fisher folks in the study are (95.8%) were married. This might corroborate the stand that the marriage institution is still cherished and an indication of economic responsibilities of the respondents in caring for dependents (Jibowo, 1992; Adeyemi *et al*., 2002). The Table 1 further reveals that about 60.4% of the respondents in the study area were Muslims while, 39.6% were Christians. Religion often play important role in the way of life and occupation of people and so it is important that the religion of the respondents is considered on the basis of how it affects their calling.

Table 1 also reveals that the sampled respondents (68.2%) had vocational training on fishing gears repairs. Training has the tendency of affecting the fishing activities among the respondents. Oladoja (2005) and Adeokun *et al*. (2002) opined that difficulty in fishing operations are individual specific, two people may pass through the same training but still have different difficulties in tasks. About 86% of the sampled respondents in the study are cooperators. It can therefore, be implied that majority of the fisher folks were members of fishing cooperatives societies.

Fisherfolks distribution of 15 identified poverty alleviation strategies: In Table 2, fisher folks (both males and females) were engaged in several poverty alleviation strategies.

Table 2 revealed the poverty alleviation strategies embarked upon by respondents of all the mentioned activities joining Esusu groups as well as forming daily contribution were most positively responded to with means 3.86 and 3.60, respectively, while the least responded to were activities with scores below average of 2.0 as cottage industry, fabrication of low cost fishing gears and gathering of mushroom and other seasonal product. Means response score are 1.09, 1.76 and 1.96, respectively. This implication is a positive response to the activities as the total activities means was 2.71 for non-cooperators and 2.58 for cooperators. Thus, an average non-cooperators is involved in more poverty alleviation strategies than cooperators. This may be due to the fact that cooperators have better access to credit, which the non-cooperators have to seek through several means. Consequently, the implication of this is that almost all the identified poverty alleviation strategies are involved by both cooperators and non-cooperators fisher folks in the study area.

Distribution of respondents in their attitude scores towards poverty alleviation strategies: Table 3 shows that the poverty alleviation strategies of most of the respondents (31.2%) were 44-55 scores. Following are 24.4% with scores 56-65. Generally, a high proportion of the respondents had between 44-55 scores on poverty alleviation strategy scores. This implies that most of the respondents (55.6%) are involved in less income generating activities. Those, that are involved in more income generating activities are expected to be the core-poor.

Socio-economic constraints encountered by respondents: When fisher folks were asked to rank the socio-economic constraints and indicate the very serious constraints to them in use of fishing activities.

Table 2: Mean score of respondents poverty alleviation strategies

	Mean score	
Poverty alleviation strategies	Cooperators	Non-cooperators
Marketing and distribution of catches for other fisher folks	2.48	2.43
Processing and preservation of catches for other fisher folks	2.44	2.61
Picking of cowry shells for sale	2.51	2.94
Picking of fish scales as ornaments for sale	2.58	2.96
Vegetable production	2.85	3.41
Processing of farm produce	2.78	3.41
Borrowing from relatives for production activities	3.24	3.53
Joining Esusu group	3.86	3.80
Joining daily contribution	3.60	3.55
Raising of sheep and goat	2.61	2.63
Joining cooperatives societies	2.18	2.35
Gathering mushroom and other seasonal products	1.96	2.22
Making handcraft	2.87	2.71
Fabrication of low cost fishing gears	1.76	1.84
Cottage industry e.g., dying clothes	1.09	1.00

Source: Field Survey (2006)

Table 3: Distribution of respondents total poverty alleviation strategy score n = 215

Poverty alleviation strategy score	Frequency	Percentage
44-55	67	31.20
56-65	52	24.40
66-75	39	18.20
76-85	35	16.10
86-95	22	10.10
Total	215	100.00

Source: Field Survey (2006)

Table 4: Distribution of respondent according to ranking of constraints in order of severity n = 215

	High		Low		
Ranking of constraints in order of severity	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Lack of technical expertise	80	37.21	135	62.79	6.70
Lack of collateral and provision for credit facilities	191	55.84	24	11.16	2.33
Diversion, delay and high cost of input supply	17	90.07	45	20.93	3.38
Inadequate raw material for construction of simple gears	114	53.02	101	46.98	5.74
Inaccessibility for spare parts of outboard engines	179	83.26	36	16.74	2.73
Joint ownership and usage of facilities often difficult	121	56.28	94	43.72	5.18
Prioritization of resources	58	26.98	157	73.02	7.77
Political instability	78	36.28	137	63.72	7.10
Lack of commitment and cooperation	125	58.14	90	41.86	4.90
Unstable climate and tides	167	77.67	48	22.32	3.20

Respondents constraint scores	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
31-65	Low	209	97
66-95	Medium	4	2
96-125	High	1	1

Table 5: Relationship between respondents constraints and poverty alleviation strategies

Variables	df	r-value	p-value	Decision
Lack of technical expertise	215	0.437	0.05	S
Lack of collateral and provision of credit facilities	215	-0.314	0.05	S
Inadequate raw material for construction of simple gears	215	0.554	0.05	S
Diversion, delayed and high cost of input supply	215	-0.274	0.05	S
Inaccessibility for spare parts of outboard engines	215	-0.156	0.05	S
Joint ownership and usage of facilities often difficult	215	-0.612	0.05	S
Prioritization of resources	215	0.090	0.20	NS
Political instability	215	0.088	0.20	NS
Lack of commitment and cooperation on the part of fisher folks	215	-0.680	0.05	S
Unstable climate and tides	215	0.580	0.40	NS

Source: Field Survey (2006)

Table 4 reveals that the general response to constraints was above average as reflected by the mean scores for each item. It was revealed that item on prioritization of resources was the most negatively responded to (mean = 7.77) least negatively responded to was item on list of collateral and provision of credit facilities with a mean response of 2.33 (below average as average is 2.50).

However, lack of collateral and provision of credit facilities, fund diversion and delay, high cost of input supply, inaccessibility of spare parts of outboard engine and unstable climate and tides was the poverty alleviation programme exercise to which fisherfolks had low constraint.

Table 4 also shows that only 1% of the respondents had high constraint score (96-125), 2% had medium constraint score (66-95), while 79% had low constraint score (31-65). Effort to remove this constraint will therefore, assist in improving their fishing activities.

Relationship between respondents socio-economic constraints and poverty alleviation strategies: Table 5 shows that lack of technical expertise ($r = 0.437$, $p<0.05$) and inadequate raw material for construction of simple gears ($r = 0.554$, $p<0.05$) had a high positive correlation between the respondents and their poverty alleviation efforts. The implication might be that the higher the lack of technical expertise or the inadequate raw material for construction of simple gears the higher will be their level of poverty alleviation strategies employed. Lack of collateral and provision of credit facilities ($r = -0.314$, $p<0.05$); joint ownership and usage of facilities being often difficult ($r = -0.612$, $p<0.05$) and lack of commitment and adequate cooperation on the part of respondent ($r = -0.680$, $p<0.05$). On the other hand, showed a negative correlation with poverty alleviation efforts. It was also inversely related to diversion, delayed and high cost of input supply ($r = -0.274$, $p<0.05$) and inaccessibility of spare parts of outboard engine ($r = -0.156$, $p<0.05$). However, respondents poverty alleviation strategies were not statistically related with prioritization of resources ($r = 0.09$, $p>0.05$); political instability ($r = 0.088$, $p>0.05$) and unstable climate and tides ($r = 0.58$, $p>0.05$) as constraints and extent of poverty alleviation efforts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of the study, the level of socio-economic constraint in poverty alleviation strategies execution was very high in construction of

simple gears, capital input availability outboard engine repairs in descending order. Fisher folks, who had high level of their poverty alleviation strategies often used the opportunity when things are increasingly difficult for an average individual to survive. More importantly age, marital status, education, gender and vocational training influence the level of constraints to poverty alleviation strategies used by the fisher folks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sequel to the findings from the study, it is concluded that in order to attain the goal of reducing the degree of constraints to poverty alleviation strategies among fisher folks in the study area so as to increase productivity thereby increasing their standard of living, the following recommendations are made:

- Overcoming socio-economic constraints to poverty alleviation among the respondents should be a pragmatic approach to solving the pervasive socio-economic problems of the fisher folks, the challenge is not insurmountable. All that is required is to make poverty alleviation programme central guiding objectives of all the fisher folks development/alleviation programmes
- Extension efforts should also be geared towards addressing the constraints faced by the fisher folks in their activities through participatory problem identification and solution. This will ensure that the production level of the fisher folks can be improved to enhance poverty reduction
- Addressing fisherfolk's socio-economic constraints to poverty alleviation strategies should be the basis of future developmental research

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