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Socioeconomic factors influencing performance of community-based women organizations (CBWOs) in rural development projects in Imo and Rivers state

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Abstract

Community based organizations serve as the apex organizations by which communities can embark on agricultural development projects, small scale industries, vocational and trade, skills, rural transportation and other rural economic activities. However, certain factors hinder their performance. This paper seeks to unravel these factors. The study was conducted in Imo and Rivers States, Nigeria. A total of 240 CBWOs were selected for the study. Questionnaire was administered to them and data collected were analyzed with percentages and regression modal. The result of socio-economic characteristics showed that Community-Based Women Organizations had mean years of 21.1 and 28.9 of existence in Imo and Rivers States. Regression results of the socioeconomic factors influencing role performance of community-based women organizations showed that coefficients for age, membership size, number of meetings, type of project, access to credit and income influenced role performance of CBWOs in Imo, while membership size, number of meetings, type of project, access to credit and income were significant variables influenced CBWOs in Rivers State. The implication of the finding is that there was significant relationship between role performance and the selected variables. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that agricultural policy makers should take into consideration the identified socio-economic characteristics of CBOs that influence their role performance.

Keywords: women, community, organization, agriculture

Introduction

Community based organizations otherwise known as local organizations have been given different names in different places. These include 'community development associations', 'neighbourhood councils' and united community among others (Agbola, 1998) [4]. Community based organizations are set up by collective efforts of indigenous people of homo or heterogeneous attributes but living or working within the same environment. Their coming together creates conditions which broaden the base of self governance and diffusion of power through a wider circle of the population (Adeyemo, 2002; Adejumbi, 1991) [3, 2]. It is seen as voluntary, non-profit, non-governmental and highly localized or neighbourhood institutions whose membership is placed on equal level and whose main goal is the improvement of the social and economic well being of every member (Abegunde, 2004) [1].

CBOs are localized institutions in that their spheres of influence hardly extend beyond their immediate communities or neighbourhood. They are non-profit and non-governmental because all members contribute economically towards the fulfillment of their responsibilities to the immediate environment and not depend on government before fulfilling these (Claudia, 2003). Benefits accrued from members' contributions to the associations are shared accordingly with fairness. They are concerned with the development problems of and development programme

projects in their various areas (Esman and Upholt, 1984; Bralton, 1990) [9, 7]. They respond to community felt needs rather than market demand or pressure.

They have been deeply involved in activities that has impacted on the livelihood of rural people. Community based organizations are formal voluntary social groups that are found in communities which differ in size, objectives and degree of interaction among members. In these organizations members have had the ability to influence ideas and actions of others (Matthews-Njoku, Angba, and Nwakwasi, 2009) [11]. For this reason most community and agricultural development agencies have sought the support of these organizations as effective means of changing the structure of communities, harnessing their resources and improving agricultural development. Such is the importance of community based organization's role in the development of the area.

Poor performance of government in meeting the socioeconomic quests of citizens has been identified as one of the reasons behind the proliferation of community based organizations (CBOs) in the new millennium. Along this line, Wahab (2000) [12] observed that people in developing nations have until recently looked up to their governments to meet their basic socio-economic demands. Of a truth, governments in African nations have evolved both top-down and bottom-up approaches to achieve sustainable development of their people. These include establishment of

lead industries at key centers so as to create job opportunities, provide basic infrastructure and utilize regional natural and man-made resources to stimulate growth and economic development that would spread to lagging regions.

The failure of governments' top-down approach and lack of involvement of the people at the grassroots in the bottom-up strategy have weakened the confidence of the public in central authorities. Communities therefore seek solace in indigenous institutions, which pressurize government for attention to development problems in their communities and/or undertake development programmes and projects that they observe that are very needful in their immediate communities. The indigenous organizations are associated with self-help (Ogundipe, 2003) [13]. They constitute the media for resources mobilization to confront local challenges.

The above shows that community based organisations have played far reaching roles in community development. One of which is agricultural development. Certain factors influence the performance or otherwise of CBOs in executing their roles. This study therefore evaluates factors influencing role performance of community based organisations in agricultural development in Imo and Rivers States, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Imo and Rivers States. Imo has three Agricultural zones namely Owerri zone, Orlu zone and Okigwe zone. Two stage sampling technique was used in selecting CBOs. The first stage involved the random selection of four local government areas from each of the zones, to give a total of 12 local government areas. In the second stage, 10 community based women organizations were randomly selected in the following arrangement –4 Women groups, 3 – community development unions and 3 – Co-operative societies to make up the required 10 Community Based Women Organisations per local government. On the whole 120 community-based organizations were used for the study in Imo. Rivers State on the other hand is divided into 3 agricultural zones namely, zone I crop zone in Bori, zone II, fishing zone in Andoni, and zone III, crop/livestock in Omuma by the Rivers State Agricultural Development Project (RISADP). Two stage sampling technique was used in selecting CBOs. The first stage involved the random selection of four local government areas from each of the zones, to give a total of 12 from Rivers State. In the second stage, 10 community based women organizations were randomly selected in the following arrangement –4 Women groups, 3 – community development unions and 3 – Co-operative societies to make up the required 120 Community Based Organisations per local government. On the whole 240 community-based organizations were used for the study for the two states. A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed. Data were collected by use of structured questionnaire and interview schedule and analyzed using percentages presented in frequency table and multiple regression to isolate factors influencing role performance of CBOs. The four functional forms of regression model viz: linear, semi-log, exponential and cobb-douglas were tried. The best fit was chosen as the lead equation based on its conformity with econometric and

statistical criteria such as the magnitude of R^2 , F-ratio and number of significant variables.

The four functional forms are expressed as follows:

i. Linear Function

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + b_7X_7 + b_8X_8 + b_9X_9 + e_i$$

ii. Semi – log function

$$Y = L_n b_0 + b_1 L_n X_1 + b_2 L_n X_2 + b_3 L_n X_3 + b_4 L_n X_4 + b_5 L_n X_5 + b_6 L_n X_6 + b_7 L_n X_7 + b_8 L_n X_8 + b_9 L_n X_9 + e_i$$

iii. Exponential function (Double Log)

$$L_n Y = b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + b_3 X_3 + b_4 X_4 + b_5 X_5 + b_6 X_6 + b_7 X_7 + b_8 X_8 + b_9 X_9 + e_i$$

iv. Cobb Douglas Function

$$L_n Y = L_n b_0 + b_1 L_n X_1 + b_2 L_n X_2 + b_3 L_n X_3 + b_4 L_n X_4 + b_5 L_n X_5 + b_6 L_n X_6 + b_7 L_n X_7 + b_8 L_n X_8 + b_9 L_n X_9 + e_i$$

Where,

Y = Role performance of women in agricultural and rural development projects of their Community-Based Organizations measured as number of roles performed out of the total number of roles expected of the women involved in Community-Based Organizations.

X_1 = Income level (N)

X_2 = Type of project (physical projects = 1, non-physical project = 0)

X_3 = Access to credit (1 for access, 0 for non-access)

X_4 = Age (years)

X_5 = Membership status (Executive member = 1, otherwise = 0)

X_6 = Level of education (years)

X_7 = Household size (number of persons)

X_8 = Amount of fund generated by the project (N)

X_9 = Type of rural development project (physical project = 1, non –physical project = 0)

e_i = Error term

The multiple regression analysis produced coefficients and t-ratios that were compared with t-tabulated values at specified alpha level and n-k degrees of freedom to test the hypotheses.

Results and Discussion

The socio-economic characteristics considered in this study include: age of CBWOs, services rendered, types of social services, types of agricultural production, project identification, membership size, credit access, income and number of meetings per year

Age (Years Of Existence Of CBWOS)

Result in Table 1 shows the CBWOs years of existence for each State. The Table reveals that a good proportion (70.8%) and (57.5%) of the CBWOs have been in existence for 16-35 years and 26-50 years with mean years of 21.1 and 28.9 in Imo and Rivers respectively. This implies that the groups have the stability and doggedness to attend to agricultural and rural development projects. However, there is an indication that the CBWOs in Rivers State with the mean ($\bar{X} = 28.9$) came into existence earlier than the ones

in Imo State ($\bar{X} = 21.1$)

Types of Service

The findings also revealed that the CBWOs of each State were involved fully in social services such as rehabilitation of community hall, provision of toilet facilities, flood control/drainage system, health-care facilities etc. This implies that CBWOs in the study area play dominant roles in social service provision in the rural areas which is also a statutory responsibility of the government. The findings agree with Rivera *et al* (2000) who observed that government alone cannot provide resources for rural development because of dwindling national resources and ever increasing competing needs.

Types of Social Service

The result also revealed that 33.3% and 28.3% of the CBWOs in Imo and Rivers States were involved in infrastructural social services as against 66.6% (Imo State) and 71.7% (Rivers State) who were into non-infrastructural social services. This suggests that majority of the respondents' embrace non-infrastructural social services (agricultural production). The reason could be as a result of their recognition of the great potentials and crucial role agriculture play in contributing to food and nutritional security, income generation, poverty alleviation and the development of the country's economy.

Types of Agricultural Production

The Table indicate that majority (90.8%) and 65% of the respondents engaged in crop production in Imo and Rivers States respectively. Again, few CBWOs (9.2%) (Imo State) and 35% (Rivers State) were engaged in animal production. Crop production has proved to guarantee food security for the household. This result corroborates the findings of Ogbonna and Asumugha (2009) ^[11] which states that over 70% of the rural farmers in Nigeria focus on food crop production as chief source of carbohydrate, income and employment.

Project Identification

In terms of project identification carried out by the group, the overall results reveal that 90.6% of the group members identified the projects by themselves. It is a strong indication that the group adopted a bottom-top approach in project identification. This paradigm shift could be due to the need for getting projects sustained through spirit of collectivism and unity of purpose from project initiation through completion. This finding agrees with Njoku (2008) who avers that community-based organizations are built on the assumption that, "united we stand, divided we fall". It implies that the poor and oppressed can be empowered to participate fully in their society when they act collectively. There might be times when the poor and oppressed may assume power, but if they assume it individually, they will not be successful in changing their community significantly.

Membership Size

From the Table 1 membership size of CBWOs both in Imo State (69.2%) and Rivers State (54.2%) ranges from 1-100

persons, with the overall mean of 142. This suggests a manageable membership size which is an indication that the members can readily pool their resources together to execute reasonable number of agricultural and rural development projects. Also, it shows a good avenue to attract loans from granting bodies, as well as members sharing/ exchanging ideas pertaining to agriculture and development. Until recently, citizens have looked up to their governments to meet their basic socio-economic demands. Wahab (2000) ^[12] observed that people in developing nations have until recently looked up to their governments to meet their basic socio-economic demands. The poor performance of government in meeting the socio-economic quests of citizens, necessitated the proliferation of community-based organizations (CBOs) which encourage membership. This is in line with Abegunde (2009) who identified poor performance of government in meeting the socio-economic quests of citizens as one of the reasons behind the proliferation of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in the new millennium. Along this line Wahab (2000) ^[12] observed that people in developing nations have, until recently, looked to there up government to meet their basic socio-economic demands.

Access to Credit

The result from the Table 1 also reveals that 85.8% of the CBWOs in both States had access to credit which is generated within the group. It implies that members were able to take absolute control of the funds to achieve a specific goal/target. In essence, the CBWOs members could be described as creditworthy. This agrees with the findings of Mathews – Njoku *et al.*, (2009) ^[11] that funding of the association came from contributions made by members and rarely were donations received from external sources.

Annual Income

The mean annual income generated by the groups was N556.950 and N441, 716.7 from Imo and Rivers respectively. This signifies that Imo State CBWOs generated more money than Rivers State, which could be as a result of having a strong desire for the development of agriculture & other rural projects in their communities. This result agrees with Mathews – Njoku *et al.*, (2009) ^[11] stating that with the huge income earned from agricultural activities in Imo State, they would be encouraged to engage more in agricultural development.

Number of Meetings

The result of analysis on number of meetings held per year as shown on table 1 reveals average attendance of (57.5%) in Imo State and (55.8%) in Rivers State within 11-20 times in a year, with the mean score of 12.1 and 13.7 in Imo and Rivers State respectively. This signifies that the CBWOs in both states held meetings at least once per month considering the average mean score of 12.9. this shows a good way of strengthening group work, which diffuses discouragement and abandonment of project work and fine tuning appropriate strategies in carrying out agricultural and developmental projects.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of CBWOS

Characteristics	Imo State		Rivers State	
	Frequency Percentage		Frequency Percentage	
Age				
5 – 15	16	13.3	8	6.7
16 – 25	46	38.3	25	20.8
26 – 35	39	32.5	28	34.2
36 – 50	14	11.7		23.3
51 – 65	5	4.2	18	15.0
Mean 28.9				
Types of Service				
Social Service	120	100	120	100
Non-Social Service	0	-	-	-
Types of Social Service				
Infrastructure	40	33	34	28.3
Non-Infrastructure	80	66.6	86	71.7
Types of Agro Production				
Animal Husbandry	11	9.2	42	35.0
Crop Husbandry	109	90.8	78	65.0
Project Identification				
Executive	15	12.5	8	6.7
Members	105	87.5	112	93.3
Membership size				
1 – 100	83	69.2	65	54.2
101 – 200	19	15.8	40	33.3
201 – 300	14	11.7	15	12.5
301 – 400	4	3.3	-	-
Credit Access				
Access	100	83.3	106	88.3
No Access	20	16.3	14	11.7
Income (N)				
1000 – 300,000	40	33.3	54	45.6
301,000 – 600,500	26	21.7	37	30.8
601,000 – 900,000	51	42.5	14	11.7
901,000 – 1,200,000	3	2.5	11	9.2
1,201,500 – 1,500,000	-	-	4	3.3
Number of meetings				
1-10	47	39.2	43	35.8
11- 20	69	57.5	67	55.8
21 -30	4	3.3	10	8.3

Socioeconomic factors influencing role performance of community-based women organizations

The result of multiple regression estimates of socioeconomic factors influencing role performance of community-based women organizations is shown in table 2. Four functional forms were tested, namely, Linear, Exponential, Double log and Semi log. Double log functional form was chosen as the lead equation for factors influencing role performance of CBWOS in Imo State, Rivers State and in both States combined. This is due to the conformity of the signs of regression coefficients with *a priori* expectation, F-ratio and the number of significant variables. Age, membership size, number of meetings, type of project, access to credit and income were significant variables influencing role performance of CBWOS in Imo State, while membership size, number of meetings, type of project, access to credit and income significantly influenced role performance of CBWOS in Rivers State. On the other hand, the pooled results (Imo and Rivers States), showed that age, membership size, access to credit, income,

membership of social associations and funds were identified as factors influencing role performance of CBWOS.

Coefficient for age of the association (2.179) was significant at 5% and pooled (5.094) at 1% level were positively related to role performance of CBWOS in Imo State at 5% level. This means that as the age of CBWOS increase, the role performance also increases. Increased age could be likened to years of experience in handling issues associated with rural development projects acquired over the years. This result is in tandem with the findings of Effiong *et al.*, (2012) ^[8] where ages of cooperators were determinants of participation in membership of organizations in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Coefficients for membership size (2.076) and (3.070) were positive and significant at 5% (Imo) and 1% (Rivers) levels of probability and pooled (-7.769) are related to role performance of CBWOS in both States. This means that as membership size increased, the role performance of CBWOS also decreases. Increased membership could mean greater pool of human resources towards achieving their set goals. This disagrees with the findings of Boreham (2004) ^[6] that members of an organization/community can team up to attain socio-economic development.

Coefficients for number of meetings in Imo (21.635) and Rivers (2.256) States were positive and significantly related at 1% and 5% respectively to role performance of CBWOS. This means that as the number of meetings held in a year increases, identification and articulation of the roles to perform by CBWOS also increased. Lavery (2005) affirmed that people coming together on a regular basis can increase collaboration and facilitate skill acquisition necessary for project actualization.

Coefficient for membership of other social organizations (1.634) was significant at 10% and positively related to role performance of CBWOS in the pooled States. This means that as membership of other social organizations increases, the role performance also increased. Membership of other social organizations could mean bridging knowledge as well as financial/non-financial resource gaps necessary for actualizing community projects. The result corroborates with Aribaba (2013) ^[5] that performance cooperators influence their participation in rural development projects.

Coefficients for access to credit (3.040) were significant at 1% (Imo State) and (1.970) at 5% (Rivers) and pooled (3.364). This are positively related to role performance of CBWOS in the States. This implies that as access to credit increase, role performance also increased. Increased access to credit could be linked to the high receptiveness of the members to the ideas of the CBWOS and the relevance of the projects to them and their communities. This supports the findings of FAO (2004) ^[10] which states that credit is one of the basic requisites for increasing agricultural and rural development project. Hence, farmers need credit to increase their scope of agricultural and rural developmental project.

Coefficient for funds generated from project (3.264) was significant at 5% levels of probability in Rivers State and pooled (2.311) at 5%. This implies that as funds generated from projects increase, the role performance also increased. Increase in fund generated could be due to the viability of the projects executed by CBWOS. The result is in agreement with Onweagba (2000) ^[14], who stated rural

women organizations help to spread incentives and benefits which allow majority of the populace to be positively involved in the development process.

Coefficient for income realized (16.793) (Imo) and (12.950) Rivers were significant at 1% level respectively and were positively related to role performance of CBWOs and pooled (19.160) at 1% in the study areas. This means that as income increases, the role performance also increases. Increase in income realized could be due to the high level of commitment of members to their monthly contributions/support, and other funds realized outside the organizations.

Types of project executed (4.333) in Imo and (3.143) Rivers were significant at 1% and positively related to role performance of CBWO. This means that as the type of project executed increases, the role performance of CBWOs

also increases. The type of project executed shows general acceptability, and most appropriate project that addresses the needs of the members and the community at large. This shows that rural communities have different perceptions from that of the government as to what constitutes their development and as such they do not share government enthusiasm on what they consider to be their felt needs. He further stated that the communities would always undertake activities/projects that they considers more relevant to their felt needs and aspirations.

The hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of respondents and their role performance in rural development projects in Imo and Rivers States is hereby rejected.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Role Performance of CBWOs in Rural development Projects in the Imo and Rivers State

States	Imo				Rivers				Pooled			
	Linear	Exponential	Double log+	Semi log	Linear	Exponential	Double log+	Semi log	Linear	Exponential	Double log	Semi log
Constant	108.247 (0.304)	6.857 (24.505)***	2.350 (3.180)***	-18882.5 (-4.255)***	-1296.318 (-0.499)	7.394 (14.388)***	3.371 (3.208)***	-22206.6 (-3.715)***	-516.802 (-0.469)	7.106 (32.984)***	2.716 (6.055)***	-20696.1 (-7.952)***
Age	8.959 (0.304)	0.042 (2.625)**	0.183 (2.179)**	421.201 (2.043)**	69.835 (1.958)**	0.012 (1.758)*	0.410 (1.894)	2420.102 (1.967)**	50.924 (2.746)**	0.011 (2.972)***	0.393 (5.094)***	1976.178 (4.419)**
Member size	10.777 (3.936)***	0.036 (7.200)***	0.096 (2.076)**	333.172 (1.909)**	448.181 (2.854)***	0.023 (2.091)*	0.132 (3.070)***	587.428 (3.368)***	-1.686 (-0.594)	0.000 (0.485)	-0.249 (-7.769)***	-1232.364 (-6.633)***
Membership of other organization	512.148 (0.815)	0.149 (2.717)**	0.120 (1.290)	289.326 (0.518)	662.276 (2.521)**	0.136 (1.052)	0.088 (0.917)	419.662 (0.768)	648.578 (1.370)	0.154 (1.662)*	0.112 (1.634)*	386.939 (0.974)
Number of meeting	37.562 (3.763)***	0.211 (1.918)	0.519 (21.625)***	763.925 (2.591)**	162.577 (5.356)***	0.029 (2.258)**	0.644 (3.856)***	1066.912 (2.360)**	40.960 (0.826)	0.006 (0.630)	0.058 (0.742)	414.625 (0.906)
Type of Agric. project	6.989 (2.906)***	0.109 (0.903)	0.091 (4.333)***	356.303 (2.385)**	583.504 (0.741)	0.485 (3.112)***	0.677 (3.134)***	-59.325 (-0.090)	721.307 (1.416)	0.118 (1.191)	0.013 (0.177)	205.434 (0.475)
Access to credit	978.028 (1.329)	0.393 (2.717)***	0.069 (3.040)***	694.599 (2.022)**	295.619 (0.440)	-0.022 (-0.164)***	0.199 (1.970)***	917.519 (1.925)**	355.386 (0.756)	0.078 (0.851)***	0.241 (3.364)***	981.568 (2.364)***
Income	2.094 (11.274)***	0.000 (10.858)***	0.781 (16.793)***	3781.585 (13.540)***	12.517 (7.538)***	0.002 (6.768)***	0.735 (12.905)***	3670.740 (11.326)***	2.134 (10.594)***	0.000 (0.001)	0.650 (19.150)***	3113.235 (15.810)***
Funds generated	5.178 (1.991)*	0.000 (0.584)	0.058 (0.562)	-242.035 (-0.391)	-0.114 (-0.507)	-7.1E-006 (-0.161)	0.047 (3.264)***	336.608 (3.065)***	0.491 (2.396)**	9.30E-005 (2.325)**	0.102 (2.311)**	349.851 (1.366)
R ²	0.548	0.529	0.730;	0.640	0.401	0.368	0.649	0.580	0.352	0.333	0.626	0.534
R ⁻ Adjusted	0.516	0.495	0.711	0.614	0.358	0.322	0.624	0.550	0.330	0.310	0.613	0.518
F-ratio	16.844***	15.606***	37.595***	24.657***	9.289***	8.074***	25.698***	19.145***	15.713***	14.426***	48.354***	33.053***

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Figures in Parentheses are t -values

*** Significant at 1%

** Significant at 5%

*Significant at 10%

+ Lead Equation

Conclusion

Regression results of the socioeconomic factors influencing role performance of community-based women organizations showed that coefficients for age, membership size, number of meetings, type of project, access to credit and income influenced role performance of CBWOs in Imo, while membership size, number of meetings, type of project, access to credit and income were significant variables influenced CBWOs in Rivers State.

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