



“CO-OPERATIVE BUSINESS ANALYTICS AND DIGITIZATION

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**NATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF THE INSTITUTE
(ABUJA COOP2021)**

th

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OF THE INSTITUTE
(ABUJA COOP2021)**

Theme:

“CO-OPERATIVE BUSINESS ANALYTICS AND DIGITIZATION IN COVID AND POST -COVID ERA”.



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ABUJA 2021
CONFERENCE

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AN ADDRESS PRESENTED BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 5TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE INSTITUTE (ABUJACOOP2021) HELD FROM 8TH - 11TH NOVEMBER 2021 AT NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WOMEN DEVELOPMENT, GARKI, ABUJA.

Protocols

I am extremely delighted addressing this gathering, the 5th National Conference of the Institute and the 2nd in my tenure as the President. As you may all be aware, the conference ordinarily should have been held last year but for the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. A refreshed journey to the conference started after a review by the National Executive Council (NEC) in May 2021 and here we are, to the glory of God. I equally thank God for the journey mercies enjoyed by all members to the Conference.

I wish to welcome specially all our very special guests, serving ministers and members of the National Assembly, for making out time to honour our invitation. To our Royal father of the Conference, HRH MAI Alhaji Abubarka Ibm Umar Suleiman, OFR (MAI BADE), Emir of Gasua, Yobe State, whom we not only had to take out of his domain but had made tremendous contribution to the success of the conference, we are indeed very grateful. To the Conference Chairman, HE. Alhaji Dr. Muktar Ramalam Yaro, Former Governor Of Kaduna State and other distinguished guests, we are immensely grateful for your presence.

Just as many facets of life were devastatingly slowed down, the COVID-19 pandemic left its effects on the Institute and the business model - Co-operative, which is central to us. It is one medical crisis that had not only impacted negatively on man's health but has gravely affected its economic and social order, and co-Operative is not an exception. The Institute was barely able to achieve anything in year 2020 but for a few virtual meetings of its organs. It is therefore expedient to us to brainstorm on the practices that best promote this world's renown business model we all represent in the situation we found ourselves and beyond, so that the Institute as well as the business interest we represent can stay afloat. Hence, the theme — **"Co-operative Business Analytics and Digitization in COVID and Post-COVID Era"**.

I am convinced that the eggheads we have assembled will do justice to the theme. We have as well a few other contributions submitted for our joint review all directed at coming up with sound positions that could positively impact on the Institute as well as the economic and social lives of an average co-operator and indeed the world's population at large. I therefore urge all to put in our best of attention to all sessions at the conference.

This year's conference has been planned to induct our new members over the years as well as elevate a number of our dedicated hands to the highest membership rank of the Institute. While I commend you all for attaining these feet, we must understand it is not an award for the shelf, rather it is a call for more dedication as we still have a long journey to our preferred destination as an Institute and it is a journey for all of us.

Let me seize this unique opportunity to congratulate our dear President of the Cooperative Federation of Nigeria (CFN), High Chief Tajudeen Oriyomi Ayeola on his deserved election as the President of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA-Africa). The reward for hardwork is more worked to whom much is given much is expected. You have our support as always as you have been a good partner to the Institute and we sincerely wish you success in the new post as well as pray that God will be your guide. I also wish to congratulate you and

by extension the CFN on the success of the just concluded Co—operative summit held last week in Abeokuta, Ogun State. More wins by God's grace.

In between the last conference, EKOCOOP2018 and now, we have a number of significant leaps. Let me highlight a few for the records and more importantly as they will henceforth affect the relationship of members with the Institute:

You will recall that the Institute had taken a decision for some time now to relocate its headquarters office to Abuia, FCT which is adjudged to be more central and more likely to facilitate easier co-ordination of the National Secretariat. I am pleased to announce that this long-standing aspiration was fully realized last July. The new Headquarters office is located at suite 311, National Council of Women Society Building, Area Eleven (11) Garki, Abuia. Members should therefore freely relate with the Institute from there henceforth. There are plans to keep the secretariat on real-time for prompt attention to members requests.

Secondly, the Bill for the Institute Act has seen reintroduce for the first reading to the Lower Chambers of the National Assembly through a concerted effort, chief of which is that of Rep. Kolamole Lawal Modolorunduro (KLM). The Institute is grateful to the entire House for this. We are however apprehensive that the bill may suffer the same fate as it happened in the 5th and 6th Legislative Sessions, when the Bill was introduced by Hon. Abba Anas Adamu, fcp. and Hon. Segun Williams respectively. While we got to Public Hearing in the first attempt, the Bill terminated at the Second Reading on the second attempt. I therefore passionately and specially appeal to all who can assist in this regard especially our Honorary Fellow Conferees from the National Assembly to assist maximally, please.

Also, in line with the spirit of the 5th ICA principle which stipulates the practice of continuous co-operative education, training and information and in order to ensure that there is always access to accurate knowledge of co-operative practices in Nigeria, the ICOPRON has finalized arrangements to organise annual mandatory continuous professional training throughout Nigeria for our members which would commence in 2022 on zonal arrangements. These trainings would be held in conjunction with the best cooperative professional hands in the academia, including those with relevant field experience within Nigeria and from other countries where cooperatives are doing well.

In addition to that, professional progression from one level of membership of ICOPRON to another shall no longer be based on personal assessment but will require passing the relevant professional examinations. Consequently, the ICOPRON Professional Examination Board, established by NEC in May 2021 has concluded arrangements for such examinations, including the entrance examination, which would be held in June and November each year commencing from 2022.

Details of these can be gotten from members of the ICOPRON Professional Examination Board or from the ICOPRON website. Membership of the Professional Examination Board as

approved by the NEC are:

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. | Dr. Okafo Okoreaffia | Imo State | Chairman |
| 2. | Dr Dickson Okolo | FCT | Vice Chairman |
| 3. | Muhammed S. Bello | Lagos State | Secretary |
| 4. | Lawal Tclofeek O. | Lagos State | Member |
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- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---------------|---------|
| 6. | Oluyiga Babasola Gbodi | Ogun State | Member |
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| 8. | George S. Bari | Kaduna State | Member |
| 9. | Mrs. Elizabeth Chidi-Wike | Rivers State | Member |
| 10. | Dr. Okonkwo J.C. | Enugu State | Member |
| 11. | Lady Norah O. Egwuatu. | Anambra State | Member. |

The Board shall be formally inaugurated in the course of the Conference.

I am equally happy to announce that the Institute's new website is now on. It is an interactive platform for members to learn more about ICOPRON and its programmes, officers and chapters. It hopes to feature the history of its growth, curriculum, examinations and examination centres. Also, books, Journal and articles of members shall feature.

Another dynamic feature of the website is the dedicated e-mail addresses for all state chapters which will ensure regular and unbroken communication, transmission and safekeeping of essential documents and forms. You are encouraged to visit and publicise the website which is accessible at www.icopron.org and mail the national office atinfo@icopron.org or your state chapter at youtstate@icopron.org. Let me use this medium to appreciate all that have identified with the Institute one way or the other particularly members of other professional bodies, regulatory organisations and all stakeholders. We cherish your relationship with us. I wish to assure all that the Institute is not taking this for granted and shall not do anything to rubbish our collective integrity. Indeed, our collective efforts is aimed at enshrining good image to the age long profession we found ourselves. I urge all hands to be on deck to achieve same.

It is in this regard that we have extended invitation to all stakeholders, and our resolve is to continue to expand on all necessary fronts. We intend to utilise the opportunities created by these relationships to tackle the challenges limiting the growth and development of Co-operative business and professionalism. We believe our continuous collaboration would entrench best practices amongst professionals and co-operative business will be better for it.

We have enjoyed the support of past and serving Federal and States Directors of Co-operative Services, Presidents of Federations and Conglomerates. There have been significant results from such of the national and states levels. We hope the collaborative efforts will continue especially from the regulatory ministries at the federal and state levels for better understanding, progress and development of co-operatives. We look forward to various supports as an Institute from our collaborators and partners that will facilitate quicker and more rewarding business outcomes for the co-operative professionals who work in government and private organisation.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Guests, let me also use the same medium to say thank you to you once again and indeed all dignitaries especially those in government for being here. I also say thank you to all who made the conference possible especially members of the Joint NOC/LOC. I thank all our resource persons, my friends and colleagues particularly members of Course 42 2020, NIPSS, Kuru and all our members who spared the time to be here in Abuja. I wish you all journey mercies back home.

I thank you all for your attentiveness.

COOPERATIVE BUSINESS ANALYTICS AND DIGITISATION IN COVID AND POST COVID ERA

By

HON. ABBA ANAS ADAMU,
National President of Kaduna Polytechnic Alumni Association

Opening

I am very happy to see that this Institute has grown and is organising its 5th Annual Conference: I remember how we presented the first bill for its establishment in the House of Representatives and could not get Senate concurrence before the tenure of the 6th Assembly ended. I can see that a lot of progress has been made and this gladdens my heart.

I am always delighted to be associated with cooperators, custodians of the future of Nigeria's economy. At no time have I lost hope that cooperative societies hold the future for the movement of Nigeria from a backward third-rate economy to an advanced favoured economy. All we need to do as a country is to give cooperatives their rightful place. With efforts like that of the Institute of Cooperative Professionals of Nigeria (ICOPRON), this shall soon come in place. I therefore congratulate the Institute for organising public enlightenment activities such as this conference. It is in this wise that I wish to commend the organisers for breaking the theme into topics to be handled in more detailed by specialists including academics. I believe that this shall help to provide the Institute a philosophical framework for operation and enrich the cooperation community. My job is therefore made simpler: I shall take an overview of the theme, while the

experts do justice to specific issues related to it.

COVID19 Ravages on

Every day we receive updates on the ravage of COVID-19 and its lethal variants the world over. This is because COVID has become a world killer disease. It has restricted physical contacts and physical activities with fellow humans to the barest minimum. The result of this is that the world economy has suffered consequences that have negative effect on economic indices.

The COVID-19 global recession is the deepest since the end of World War II. According to the April 2021 World Economic Outlook Report published by the IMF, the global economy contracted by 3.5 percent in 2020. The US Congressional Research Service states, "The pandemic has disrupted lives across all countries and communities and negatively affected global economic growth in 2020 beyond anything experienced in nearly a century." The same legislative research unit that services Congress and its committees revealed that the virus reduced global economic growth in 2020 to an annual rate of -3.4% to -7.6%, with a recovery of 4.2% to 5.6% projected for 2021. If it were not for the interventions of various governments the world outlook would have been much worse by the end of 2021.

The situation is certainly not over. World oil prices that fell by all time record of 55% is only beginning to pick up. This has increased the hardship in countries like Nigeria. In the case of Nigeria, it lowered the daily crude oil production consistently. In January 2019, the price per barrel was 57 dollars; but in April 2020 the price dropped to as low as 15 dollars per barrel. In his review of the 2021 fiscal performance during his presentation of the 2022 budget at the National Assembly, President Buhari said, "actual revenues were 34 percent below target as of July 2021, mainly due to the underperformance of oil and gas revenue sources". He further stated that the Federal Government's share of oil revenue totalled 570.23 billion Naira as of July 2021, which was 51% below target. This oil price crash caused one of the most serious economic shocks that Nigeria has ever faced, especially as the oil sector contributes about 65% and 90% to government earnings and total export revenues, respectively. This has in turn put intense pressure on the Naira, contributed along with other COVID caused factors, increased job losses and unemployment and further affected peace and security.

As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, African Development Bank Group says the GDP of Nigeria shrunk by 3% in 2020 and inflation rose to 12.8% in the same period. It also reports that public debt is 25% of National GDP being \$85.9b (with domestic debt at 63% of that). Nigeria's unemployment rate which was a high 27.1% in 2019 has further shot up to 33.3%. Even our peasant farmers are becoming unemployed as many can no longer go to their farms freely due to insecurity.

The United Nations Food and Agricultural

Organisation reported that at least 9.2 million people faced terrible levels of food insecurity in Nigeria between March and May this year. There are high crime rates like kidnappings, banditry and terrorism. Though COVID is not the only direct cause of these problems, it certainly worsened the situation and oiled other factors.

This simply means that COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the hunger situation in Nigeria as it impacts on food supply and prices. And one of the major sources of food production and supply in Nigeria is Cooperatives.

Cooperatives as Businesses: the Threat of COVID 19

The modern cooperatives as we know it today is alleged to have been introduced by the colonial government of Sir Graeme Thomson in 1926 when the colonial Ministry of Agriculture found it opportune to 'organise' the coca producers' of Agege Planters Union and Egba farmers Union into marketing cooperatives for steady supplies for their industries in Europe.

But we know that cooperatives are traditional to Africa. If cooperatives are an autonomous voluntary association of persons willing to come together for the purpose of pooling their resources for business, economic, social and cultural improvements, then pre-colonial communities in today's Nigeria had cooperative societies. In most Northern communities various forms of *adashi* existed which was either in the form of farm labour which was pooled together and allocated on rotational basis or rotating savings and credit for members in the succeeding cash economy. *Adashi* is being called different names in various communities in Nigeria: *Esusu*, *osusu*,

isusu, dashi, and so on.

Historically, co-operatives are the product of people working together for the betterment of their lives. With increased monetisation of economies as dictated by capitalism, the otherwise communal means of production became business enterprises with individuals as shareholders. Cooperatives have therefore become likened to small and medium enterprises. Members hold meetings, elect officers usually by direct elections, transact businesses and share profits.

Internationally, the character of cooperatives has been set by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) which has defined the Cooperative Principles and Values which have in turn explained how cooperatives exist and operate.

The ICA states Principles of cooperatives to include: Autonomy and Independence, Concern for Community, Education, Training, and Information, Voluntary and Open Membership, Participation and Cooperation among Cooperatives. Traditionally viewed, these principles require personal communication to get them accomplished. But no longer. Businesses all over the world now thrive without physical contact. What now with the ravage of the deadly COVID 19!

Because cooperatives are businesses, they need to plan how to outlive COVID 19: No cooperative exists without members and dead members are of no use to cooperatives. So plans must be made on how to reduce physical contact to the barest minimum in the age of COVID. The pandemic precipitated the fusion of technologies, enabling digital technologies to extend their reach, almost

uncontrolled, into every home, group and aspect of life. There is no doubt that the prospect of physical distancing lies in digitisation of the operations of cooperatives. And that is an operative word in this discussion. To understand digitisation, we need to relate it with digitalisation and these two have often been mixed up.

Digitisation and Business Analytics for Cooperatives

The records of a cooperative society which may include a register of members, minutes of meetings and financial records kept in hand-written form in files and books are analogue. These same records kept in the computer are in digital form. The process of converting the analogue into digital is digitisation.

On the other hand, digitalisation refers to how the digital world impacts on people and work. In other words, digitalisation refers to how cooperators or people deploy the digital world and its gadgets for things like meetings (using video conferences through platforms like zoom, WhatsApp), social contacts through the many chat rooms, maintain and analyse cooperative data. So digitisation allows cooperatives to avoid meeting physically in one hall in favour of virtual meetings with members in different locations.

It is imperative for cooperatives to digitalise. The world is not just a global village now, it is said by some to be in 'digimodernism' or 'post-digitalism'. The digital world has become 'crucial' to the functioning of society. This goes to stress the importance of digitisation in running of businesses.

The other concept the theme gives for consideration is "Business analytics".

Earlier, we said that digitisation involves the conversion of data into electronic means. When this data becomes plenty and in various categories and need to be processed for use by cooperatives, some sort of analysis and interpretation is required. This is where business analytics comes to play. EDUCBA, an online data science training site says, "The process of collecting, sorting, processing and analyzing the business data so that different insights could be gained and business planning could be done is called Business Analytics. It includes the skills, methods, and techniques used in an organisation to measure performance related to the products". It also evaluates the entire company data. The Harvard Business Analytics Program/Blog agrees that Business Analytics focuses on data, statistical analysis and reporting to help investigate and analyse business performance, provide insights, so as to find ways to improve performance. Once analysis goes beyond data to processes and functions of an organisation, this becomes the concern of the Business Analyst.

Business Analytics therefore employs different forms of tools and programming languages in order to translate data sources into tangible solutions that can be beneficial to cooperatives and other organisations. Since statistical software such as SPSS, SAS, Sage, Mathematica, and even Excel can be used when managing and analysing data, cooperatives in Nigeria should take advantage of them in order to achieve better organised cooperatives not just within the COVID era but after it.

There are four types of analytics that are available to the Cooperator.

1. Descriptive Analytics: This

would ask the question, "what is happening to our cooperative business right now? Data may give an idea as to the state of the cooperative and identify patterns of behaviour that may influence future outcomes.

2. Diagnostic analytics: Why is it happening? Diagnostic analytics look at the past performance of campaigns and processes to determine what happened and why. It isolates all data to identify an accurate cause-and-effect relationship.

3. Predictive analytics: It inquires what is likely to happen in the future? Statistical models can be used to predict likely scenarios of what might happen. This form of analytics can be used to support complex forecasts.

4. Prescriptive analytics: This seeks for solutions to identified problems. Prescriptive analytics gives focused answer to a specific query.

All these are done with the help of data accumulated over time and computer softwares

It must be stressed that for cooperatives to succeed, they must be managed well and with the precision of established companies. Days when cooperatives were run without data, market research or modern management skills and knowledge are gone. Lack of good records and corruption killed many cooperatives in Nigeria. Digitisation can assist provide cooperatives with enhanced records and data that can be drawn upon any time; it can also facilitate financial investigations like auditing and, performance evaluation. Digitalised records may not easily be lost, depending on the safety and security components introduced. Records can be kept on cloud (online) using various means like Google Drive, WPS, and even yahoo.

Digitalisation consolidates information and resources into a suite of tools for

business. Rather than dispersed manual scripts, software and databases, it integrates applications, databases, and software into a central repository for business analysis and understanding.

Also, cooperative members can easily be kept abreast of the activities and financial records of their business from their various locations without necessarily gathering in one venue. Apart from the various facilities available for video conferences, regular briefs including financial reports could be made through popular media like WhatsApp, Imo, Yahoo Messenger, Telegram, facebook Messenger and so on.

To operate as businesses, cooperatives must court clients and maintain them. One of the things that the shift to digitisation will do is to make it easy to collect data on customers and optimising data analysis that can drive the business forward.

This means that the cooperative community in Nigeria needs to take urgent steps to do the following:

1. Acquire computers. Cooperatives must be willing to spend money on purchases that will help protect their finances as it ends up been cheaper if allowance is not allowed for a few persons to swindle the group.
2. Training persons in not only the use of these gadgets, but in programming language and software. The use of Excel is good but not good enough.
3. Where the literacy level in IT is weak, members must be trained on the use of andoid phones to attend online meetings and access information, briefs and updates on their cooperatives.
4. This Institute has a role in creating wider awareness on these needs. It

should also encourage its members to be consultants to cooperatives and help them set up their data bases.

5. This will mean more in-house training for its members too. Without the requisite skills, your members will have little or nothing to offer in this regard.
6. Extensive member enlightenment needs to be embarked upon to orient cooperative societies and members on the advantages of digitalisation, digitisation and business analytics for cooperatives. Many Nigerians still aver the entry of the online world, including online banking for instance!

Closing: Digitisation is inevitable

It is my position that what COVID 19 has done is to speed up the challenge of digitisation in Nigeria and most third world countries. Digitisation is a consequence of the Age we are in: where technology has created a virtual world and is part of the development of productive forces. Which is why for countries considered advanced, this is no longer an issue for public discussion. It is already part of social life, political contest and economic activities. We are trailing behind rather sluggishly.

It should be noted that the extent that any country can go digitaly is largely hinged on its internet capability and coverage. That is why, reports Eurostat in 2018, the European Commission had taken interest on growth of internet usage across EU member states mindful of the need to ensure that digitisation would benefit the majority of the population. The EU study reveals that by mid-2020, 58% of the world population was estimated to be

internet users, compared to almost 90% in the European Union. Within the EU, the same study showed that usage ranged from nearly 98% in Denmark to less than 70% in Bulgaria. In the case of Nigeria, Statista reports that in 2021, Nigeria has 108.75 million internet users, which amounts to 51.44 % of the population. Even if this figure is not overstated, 51% is still very low. The rate of internet coverage has a great effect on the capacity of our cooperatives to digitise. Government must therefore take special steps to grow the internet coverage in Nigeria.

One of the problems of the growth of the internet in Nigeria and therefore of digitisation, is the cost of the technology in a country where the GDP per capita is low competing in the same market with the developed countries. Speaking to BBC News reported on 20th February 2020, an entrepreneur in the telecommunications business, Funke Opeke, observed that the GDP per capita in most advanced markets is at least 10 times that of Nigeria, yet the technology infrastructure is the same. This has caused high costs in delivery and usage.

The other problem of note to this gathering is the negative impact of digitalisation on society which Covid-19 also brought some to fore. The prevalence of the social media brought by the internet means that everyone on the internet can be a publisher and editor. And many are. This introduces the factor of fake news as the traditional gate-keepers who filter news for 'accuracy' have been removed. Cooperatives can be destroyed by misinformation and gossips. At the same time, in the effort of government to control fake news and information distortion, this can lead to totalitarianism and stifling of the democratic space. In its public enlightenment, each cooperative must

encourage constructive self-sensorship amongst its ranks: self-censorship should not be out of fear or threat but should meant to help build the cooperative society.

All said, the weaknesses discussed are to drum into our consciousness on the need to be alert. But this does not take away the benefits of digitising cooperatives. This theme is therefore a timely reminder to cooperatives in Nigeria that digitisation is the way to go and that the digital economy has come to stay. We must not be left behind.

I thank you for your invitation and you have been a lovley audience.

REBUILDING THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY AFTER THE PANDEMIC: THE ROLE OF CO-OPERATIVE STAKEHOLDERS.

ICHIE PROF. EMMA O. OKECHUKWU,
Ph.D, fnim, ficp, fimc, cmc

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the world woke up to find herself at war—a third world war, this time with an unseen enemy—a microcosm, a coronavirus caused illness code-named COVID-19. It was a world war because no nation developed or undeveloped was spared, death was massive, businesses world over collapsed, economies of nations nosedived, there was unprecedented global fear and uncertainty. Social life of groups and individuals were not spared; places of worship became ghosts of themselves, handshakes and embraces, the core of our greetings culture even in churches, became tabooed for fear of transmission and even burials of the dead were denied of the usual gathering of sympathizers as it became reduced to family affair. Schools at all levels were closed down, government ministries and industries including financial institutions were compelled to work halfday. Certain establishments at a point asked their staff to work from home. The consequences of the COVID-19 became so impinging that the World Health Organisation had to declare it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The pandemic was first reported in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, in the People's Republic of China in November, 2019 and it quickly spread over all Continents affecting most countries in the world (Miller, et al. 2020) In a bid to contain the spread of the dreaded virus governments

across the world adopted total lockdown strategy and social distancing for months. Socially, lockdown and social distancing measures to prevent spread of COVID-19 heightened fears of increasing levels of domestic violence, which includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse (Maria Nicola et al, 2020). These measures were aimed at reducing to the barest minimum body and close contact which was believed to be the fastest medium of transmission of the virus.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE OF NIGERIA

In Nigeria the lockdown started with Lagos and Ogun States and the Federal Capital Abuja before gradually spreading to other states of the Federation as death tolls kept increasing across states. The little gain Nigeria made in her recovery effort from the economic recession of 2016 was lost as unemployment doubled coupled with the fall on oil revenue which happens to be the nation's major source of income. The World Economic Forum (2020) publication had it that Nigeria's economy contracted by 6.1% year on year in the second quarter of the year 2020 and 27% of Nigeria's labor force (over 21 million Nigerians of) were unemployed. This was compounded by the drop in oil prices during the pandemic which harmed government revenue at a time when it was especially needed to fight COVID-19; interest rates and the deficit were higher

and the excess crude account was not sufficient to cover the needs of the people or allay the impact of the pandemic on poverty in Nigeria (Hilary Brown, 2020). World Bank x-raying the Nigerian situation opined “Inequality, in terms of income and opportunities, remains high and has adversely affected poverty reduction. The lack of job opportunities is at the core of the high poverty levels, regional inequality, and social and political unrest. Without the COVID-19 shock (the counterfactual scenario), about 2 million Nigerians were expected to fall into poverty in 2020 as population growth outpaces economic growth. With COVID-19, the recession is likely to push an additional 5 million Nigerians into poverty in 2020, bringing the total newly poor to 7 million this year.” It was estimate that during the lockdown periods Nigeria's GDP suffered a 34.1 percent loss due to COVID-19, amounting to USD 16 billion, with two-thirds of the losses coming from the services sector. The agriculture sector, which serves as the primary means of livelihood for most Nigerians, suffered a 13.1 percent loss in output (USD 1.2 billion) (Andam et al, 2020). Although the Presidential Taskforce issued exemptions for agricultural activities, food manufacturers and retailers, the broader agri-food system was affected indirectly because of its linkages with the rest of the economy. It was estimate that households lost on average 33 percent of their incomes during the period, with the heaviest losses occurring for rural non-farm and for urban households (Andam et al, 2020).

EFFORTS AT COMBATING THE PANDEMIC BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS

The Federal government has to be appreciated for rising up to the emergency by putting a lot of measures in place to

ensure minimal spread and cushion off the impact of the pandemic on the citizens. The President, Mohammed Buhari, leaning on provisions of Sections 2, 3, and 4 of the 2004 Quarantine Act, proclaimed a number of measures. Restrictions were imposed including border closures, suspension of movement of all passenger aircrafts both commercial and private jets. The President also directed that a three-month repayment moratorium for all Trademoni, Marketmoni and Farmermoni be immediately implemented. Similar moratorium should also apply to all Federal Government funded loans by Bank of Industry, Agriculture and Nigerian Export-Import Bank. Only courts handling urgent, essential or time bound cases in accordance with Nigerian's extant laws were allowed to sit. To ease the suffering of the vulnerable members of the society, the President directed that conditional cash transfer be made available to them for two months. These were in addition to other measures announced by the President in his proclamation of 30th March 2020. Similar alleviating policies were made by State Executives in their respective States. Some of the States mounted very strong gates at all entry points to their state to enforce border movement restrictions. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), in its own way towards ameliorating the sufferings of Nigerians announced some monetary policies on the 16th of March 2020:

1. A 1 year extension of a moratorium on principal repayments for CBN intervention facilities;
2. The reduction of the interest rate on intervention loans from 9 percent to 5 percent;
3. Creation of NGN50 billion target credit facility for affected households and small and medium

- enterprises
4. Granting regulatory forbearance to banks to restructure terms of facilities in affected sectors
5. Additional NGN100 billion intervention fund in healthcare loans to pharmaceutical companies and healthcare practitioners intending to expand/build capacity
6. Identification of few key local pharmaceutical companies that will be granted funding facilities to support the procurement of raw materials and equipment required to boost local drug production.
7. N1 trillion in loans to boost local manufacturing and production across critical sectors.
8. CBN adopts the official rate of NGN360 to a dollar for International Money Transfer Operators rate to banks.
9. Provision of credit assistance for the health industry to meet the potential increase in demand for health services and products "by facilitating borrowing conditions for pharmaceutical companies, hospitals and practitioners".

The Nigerian private sector formed a coalition known as Coalition Against Covid-19 (CACOVID) to assist the government in its bid to fight the pandemic. The leading organizations were the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Aliko Dangote Foundation and Access Bank Plc. Their objectives were to mobilize the private sector resources towards supporting government in its response to the crisis, mobilize private sector thought leadership, raise public awareness, buy-in for COVID-19 prevention and provide direct support to strengthen the health care sector's capacity to respond to the crisis. They had a target of raising N120 billion from the private sector. The Coalition's

focused on strengthening the healthcare response to the crisis by providing funding to expand and strengthen medical facilities in the six geo-political zones of the country. This includes:

- The creation of testing, isolation and treatment centers;
- The provision of Intensive Care Units (ICUs); and
- The establishment of molecular testing labs.

CACOVID took exception to the vulnerability of women and girls in crisis situation given their role as mothers and housewives as well as challenges they face in accessing sexual and reproductive health services at a time when sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and violence against women (VAW) are on the rise. They therefore decided to incorporate a gender perspective into CACOVID's response to COVID-19 by ensuring that gender is proactively built into its thought leadership and advocacy functions, and that gender dimensions are embedded within existing funding programmes (UN

CO-OPERATIVES IN POST PANDEMIC

Co-operative is a child of necessity, a survival strategy from history based on the concept of self help through mutual help and each for all and all for each. Collin McClain (2020) argued that historically, during periods of crises, the values of cooperation, solidarity, and mutualism experience an increase in popularity. In the face of adversity, be it natural or manmade, co-operative and mutual enterprises (CMEs) in the region have shown their relevance, proven their resilience and demonstrated their endurance, he opined. ILO and ICA (2014) argued that the cooperative model is well placed to address the challenges posed by transitions to sustainability, including those such as

poverty, gender inequality or economic and social exclusion. First, the original cooperative values and principles stand in close and harmonious relation to the aims and objectives set out in the 17 SDGs and 169 indicators. Second, in a similar way, cooperatives can act along what Simel Esim, Manager of the Cooperatives Unit at the ILO in Geneva, has termed a 'triple bottom line': as social organisations, environmental actors and economic actors, cooperatives often meet these goals simultaneously. Third and in addition to the triple bottom line, cooperatives also address challenges of governance, by fostering member economic participation and facilitating education and training, ways in which they can solve common problems and enable people to take charge of their own development. In crisis, co-operatives usually experienced great surge in membership and turnover. This was very evident in post Nigerian civil war in the East. It became a spring board for reorganization, rejuvenation and restart with the Federal Government mandatory N20,000 for bank account holders. This was also the case during and in the aftermath of the 2001-2 financial crisis in Argentina, the 2007/8 global financial crisis and the 2009-17 debt crisis in Greece. Similarly, co-operatives have been key community actors in responding to public health epidemics such as AIDS in Swaziland and Vietnam, the relief and reconstruction efforts after natural disasters in Japan and Australia and in post conflict setting in Sri Lanka and Rwanda. The European Union (EU) (2017) recognized that 'cooperatives have become instrumental partners in reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized people', alongside other actors, and the EU pledges to promote and defend the 'space where these development actors can operate

safely ... for achieving sustainable development. The EU is further committed to 'promoting the creation of farmers' organisations and cooperatives, to address, among others, better productivity of family farms, land use rights and traditional farmer-based seed systems' Through the provision of a collective voice and negotiation power for their members with the public authorities, or by providing decent work opportunities through training and education programmes, cooperatives make a strong contribution to economic and social rights. The initiatives taken under this action area strongly impacted on promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises through access to financial services (Mohit Dave, 2021) The ICA (1995) in its "Statement of Identity" defined co-operatives as an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. Key issues contained therein:

- i. The association is autonomous and independent;
- ii. Membership is voluntary
- iii. Management of the joint enterprise is democratic
- iv. Responsibility to themselves covers economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations

In the same release, basic co-operatives values of *self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity* were specified. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members not only believe but are seen to practice the ethical values of honesty, openness, social

responsibility and care for others. These features explain why co-operative has remained the most resilient business enterprise, a gold coin with two faces—social and economic.

Socially, co-operative:

- a) Restores self confidence, an imperative for a restart after crisis like COVID-19 devastation
- b) Restores self-esteem in the participants, confidence and belief in themselves
- c) Ensures mutual assistance and communal relationship to rebuild trust and team spirit necessary for community development and peace
- d) Attracts government and NGOs' assistance and collaboration to their communities
- e) In the honest and democratic management of their businesses, co-operatives constitute barriers to exploitation of the community by middle men and usurious money lenders.

Economically: co-operative features:

- a) Patronage rebate—improves the income of the member to the tune of his/her patronage in the society's business
- b) Access to economic goods at reduced cost due to direct large scale procurement from producers.
- c) Even distribution of business risk
- d) Elimination of bad debts in business due to principles of cash sales
- e) Perpetual succession guaranteed on incorporation ensures its longevity even if all its founders should die or declared insolvent.

The co-operatives, based on the above features, become the best pivot upon which revitalization and resuscitation of the socio-economic life of the people

especially in the third world countries like Nigeria lies. To achieve the expected result there must be a synergy between the co-operative professionals (regulators, administrators, managers, facilitators and academia), the co-operative practitioners and the government which can rightly be branded co-operative stakeholders.

CO-OPERATIVE PROFESSIONALS

Who are these professionals? These are co-operative academia, administrators, regulators/facilitators and managers of co-operative enterprises. This group of people shall be saddled with the responsibilities of educating people on the advantages of co-operative as the best alternative business strategy during and after severe national crisis; promote and assist in the organization of co-operative combines; help in setting standards of knowledge and skill to be attained by persons seeking to become management executives of co-operative societies in particular and practitioners in general; ensures proper and adequate legislative framework that will make the practice of co-operative rewarding in their areas; organize seminars, workshops, town hall meetings with co-operative practitioners on production, marketing and packaging as well simple book-keeping practice. It is no longer surprising that the Register of Co-operative Societies in most states of the Federation has thousands of registered co-operative societies while less than 20% of that number being active. With the exception of some very few states, societies annual accounts, auditing, routine inspection and inspection reports, preparation of vital statistics are in unimaginable arrears. In this post pandemic period, Directors of Co-operatives should enlist the services of these professionals in revitalizing the co-operators and co-operative enterprises in

their respective states. Recall that the United Nations General Assembly recognized the huge potential in co-operatives when in its resolution A/RES/64/136 declared the year 2012 the International Year of Co-operatives. The declaration was aimed at encouraging all member states and other stakeholders to promote the role of cooperatives, and to raise awareness of their important contribution to social and economic development (UN, 2021). The Federal Department of Co-operatives (FDC) can emulate this noble idea by setting up a unit or division known as “Research, Development and Promotion (RDP) under its supervision solely charged with responsibility of research, development and promotion of the golden values and ideas of a “new co-operative” in post crisis when frustration and despair has taken the centre stage in the life of our people using all available means of communication and rural education.

CO-OPERATIVE PRACTITIONERS

In this post pandemic imbroglio where the national economy, private and public businesses, self confidence, health, food security etc are in sorry situation, the only possible and resilient panacea is co-operative combine. Co-operators or those wishing to go co-operatives should be guided towards organizing societies in those economic sectors most relevant to our revitalization as a nation. The case of Nigeria is exasperated by national insecurity, decline in the oil revenue, rising graduate unemployment and of late the hullabaloo over value added tax (VAT). The co-operatives with its principles of **Voluntary and Open Membership; Democratic Member Control; Member Economic Participation; Autonomy and Independence; Education, Training and**

Information; Co-operation among Co-operatives and Concern for Community along with co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity stand out as the most guaranteed and resilient alternative to a bounce back of both social and economic life of a battered nation. The key sectors co-operatives need to pay more attention at this critical period are health/environment, agriculture and food sufficiency and credit.

Health/environmental

Good health and general human well-being are essential factors for any thriving and productive society. An unhealthy society shaded with fear can suffocate production, consumption, recreation, travel and overall well-being (Smith, et al. 2019). Given the illiteracy level within our rural populace, proactive directives for the prevention of possible infection by the virus, worsened by proliferation but unconfirmed cure of the pandemic dished out on regular basis in the social media, the co-operatives with its principles of marketing unadulterated goods, concern for community, can come up with arrangements with seasoned doctors and pharmacists to attend to their members and by extension their host communities. Co-operatives can equally set up health clinics or have a full co-operative health society. This was the case in Canada in the 1960s when the government introduced universal health care in Saskatchewan and the provincial doctors went on strike (MacPherson, 2007), Co-operatives being grassroot organization, it provides the best and safest corridor for government to reach the rural poor for pandemic palliatives, resuscitation and health education.

Agriculture/Food security:

This is an opportunity to exploit our rich

natural agricultural resources—land and sea especially the “Fadama” areas. Fadama is a Hausa name for irrigable land, usually low-lying, and flood plain areas underlined by shallow aquifers found along Nigeria's river system (Echeme and Nwachukwu, 2010). It is an alluvial lowland formed by erosional and depositional actions of the rivers and streams. They comprise of land and water resources that could easily be developed for irrigation agriculture. It has a character of being waterlogged during the rainy season but retains moisture during the dry season (Nwachukwu, et al, 2009). Despite being exempted from many of the government's lockdown policies, we estimate an 11% decline in agri-food system GDP due primarily on restrictions on food services (Kwaw Adams, Hyacenth Edeh and James Thurlow).

Agriculture is the major contributor to the livelihood of most Nigerians especially the rural populace. Due to mobility restrictions, agriculture and the food systems in sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, Nigeria inclusive, have been seriously hit by the pandemic. Farmer support systems were affected due to restrictions on social distance, movement and office operations (Nwafor & Hoza Ngoga, 2020). It was difficult for farmers to access agricultural inputs (fertilizers, pesticides). Extension and technical services (e.g.: veterinary services and pest control, agro-dealer services, land administration services and financial services) have also been negatively affected (Massawe et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has therefore exposed the vulnerability risks of agricultural value chains against external shocks and shed light on the needs of building the resilience of the agricultural sector (IFAD, 2020c). This is where co-operative stakeholders should come in

imploing its resilient character to stem the tide. The control measures and imposed lockdowns intensified this vulnerability, adding more barriers on the food availability, accessibility and affordability, and resulting into very serious downwards of the agricultural industry in different countries. Lowder et al., 2016 argued that the impacts hit both the agricultural business services of food and nutrition services (production, post-production, access to finance) and the other categories of actors involved in agribusiness notably youth and women entrepreneurship and agricultural co-operatives. Co-operatives can be formed in all subsectors of the agricultural sector of the economy. Increase in livestock production in post pandemic Nigeria is very essential given the poor dietary and malnutrition hazards of the period due to movement restriction and social distancing measures. Moreover the HDI protein consumption index in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria inclusive have never been encouraging.

Within developing countries, the amount of protein consumed is insufficient in comparison with requirements. The quality of protein from the foods consumed in developing countries is often limited and reduces the availability of the protein for use in the human body. Protein is an essential ingredient forming part of a healthy balanced diet. Animal-based food products in general contain the highest amount of protein per unit energy, and protein derived from animal foods is considered the best quality protein, providing all the dietary essential amino acids in adequate proportions. Increasing indigenous livestock production in Africa could increase the economic status of populations, increase availability and access to good quality protein sources, while simultaneously preserving the

environment through promoting biodiversity (Schonfeldt and Hall, 2012). We in Nigeria can emulate the Middle Eastern region, where ICA dedicated Economic and Social Development Centre (ESDC) of Palestine to improving food security through strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity of small-scale farmers through improving the service delivery capacity of cooperatives and building cooperatives' production, business and institutional capacity and the technical aspects of their livelihood and business (FAO,2018). This will go a long way in reassuring the rural poor and less privileged in the society that they are not abandoned and forgotten by policy makers

Credit

It has been a reoccurring issue in most co-operative literature that the bane of co-operative societies had been poor capitalization worsened by their inability to borrow from commercial banks due to dearth of collateral and high interest rate. Farmers need fund for the procurement of farming inputs and labour. Acquisition of commercial farmland requires fund too. Most credit societies concentrate attention on their members and are very reluctant lending to other co-operative societies due to paucity of fund. The co-operative movement may have to think of mergers as a means of sufficient lending fund mobilization. Looking at the vital statistics provided in the offices of Directors of co-operatives nationwide, one deduces that greater percentage of thriving co-operatives are Institutional Co-operatives concentrating more on Thrift and Credit or Thrift and Investment Co-operatives. These societies can be a good base for co-operative banks that can operate at various geo-political zones if not states. These banks can then play key roles in ensuring on-lending services to member-households and the host community in

compliance with the co-operative principles of concern for community. Post pandemic rehabilitation could be the best opportunity for us in the co-operative movement to revisit the idea of setting up a Central Co-operative Bank to serve as a clearing house for co-operative societies and their members. Co-operators can operate normal banking transactions through their co-operative societies.

GOVERNMENT

Post pandemic era provides the co-operative movement an opportunity of putting into practice the co-operative 6th principles of cooperation among cooperatives through proper linkages both vertically and horizontally. Through the co-operative supra apexes, apexes, secondary to the primary levels, the government can assist primary producers have access to inputs and markets for their produce thereby providing consumers both household, agribusiness enterprises and wholesalers quantity and quality products. Government should encourage the co-operatives through enhanced provision of improved seedlings, high breed livestock and farming implements like tractor, fertilizers, herbicides at highly subsidized prices. It should be able to guarantee credit facilities for co-operative societies, Where it cannot provide credit, grants can be considered. Agric Extension Agents and Co-operative field officers should be provided with the necessary logistics especially mobility to enable them provide the necessary assistance and training to the co-operators through regular visits, farm-site education and setting up of demonstration farms within a given farming population radius.

Mohit Dave (2021) argues that by supporting the growth of the cooperative movement through the principles of cooperation among co-operatives,

cooperative federations help the cooperative values of equality, honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others to become instrumental in post crisis era. Exchanges between organisations that share the same cooperative values and principles are more likely to take into account concern for the community and thus sustainability concerns and it is frequent that they cooperate together to that end through sharing of experience or joint training (Voina, 2020)

Co-operative movement is one single organization that has not only the largest number of followers with the greatest spread of membership cutting across classes of people and profession including the military and paramilitary organisations. This positions it as the surest and fastest medium information and policy dissemination. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) can exploit this feature of the co-operatives to boost production and distribution in the economy by providing a one digit interest rate and one year moratorium on special fund designated for on-lending to co-operatives through commercial banks.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19, a coronavirus caused infection brought the whole world both developed and undeveloped nations to a standstill socially and economically even scientifically from 2019 climaxing in 2020 when death toll became astronomically high all over the globe. Being an air borne disease spread through body contact, lockdown and social distancing were implored by governments of nations in varying degrees depending on the intensity in their countries as means of reducing transmission. The Nigerian government adopted policies to reduce its effect on socio-economic life of her citizens.

Mr. President directed that a three-month repayment moratorium for all Trademoni, Marketmoni and Farmermoni be immediately implemented. The moratorium should also apply to all Federal Government funded loans through development banks. Cash transfer was made available to ease the suffering of the vulnerable members of the society for two months. Similar alleviating policies were made by State Executives in their respective States. The Nigerian private sector formed a coalition known as Coalition Against Covidd-19 (CACOVID) to assist the government in its bid to fight the pandemic. Their objectives were to mobilize the private sector resources towards supporting government in its response to the crisis, mobilize private sector thought leadership, raise public awareness, buy-in for COVID-19 prevention and provide direct support to strengthen the health care sector's capacity to respond to the crisis.

There has to be a synergy between the three main stakeholders in co-operatives—the co-operative professionals, the practitioners and the government to resuscitate, revitalize and reassure the people especially the very low segment of the country by introducing measures and policies to that effect. The professionals will think in direction of research, education, development and promotion, it will be needful for practitioners to concentrate on areas of the national economy most fundamental to survival—health, food security and credit. The government and CBN will come in with measures to improve the relevant infrastructure, guarantee and provide loanable funds at least with one unit digit interest rate and help create a level play ground for co-operative society producers and consumers of their products to do their

business. Through co-operatives, with its principles of open and voluntary membership and concern for communities, these measures if adopted and implemented religiously, the physical and psychological effect of the pandemic on the people will be reduced to the lowest ebb.

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COOPERATIVE: A POSITIVE GROWTH DRIVER IN A PANDEMIC ECONOMY

ABSTRACT

The pandemic economy is an economy inflicted with deadly disease or plague such as the corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The economy is characterized with setbacks in social and economic activities including deaths as a result of deadly disease. This study therefore examined the COVID-19 Pandemic: its meaning, origin and the need to overcome the pandemic. The paper described how global, regional and national cooperation can help overcome the pandemic using cooperative as a platform. However, considering the economic, social and environmental challenges of the pandemic, this paper contends that the cooperative model of enterprise has in recent time proven to be more sustainable and reliable platform for social and economic transformation in the Nigerian economy in the pandemic era for obvious reasons. The paper posited that the government and donor agencies have relied on cooperative in fighting hunger and poverty. The cooperative has also been relied upon for achieving national food security programme. Institutions both educational and other agencies are setting up one form of cooperative organization or the other for solving their social and economic needs. Research has shown that many micro business owners rely on cooperative group membership for their business growth. Today, the cooperative ideals are spread across all sectors of the economy even without much publicity. Most importantly the pandemic made thousands if not millions of people informal members of cooperative organization in an effort to survive the vicious attack of the pandemic. The paper concludes that it is imperative that a clear-cut cooperative sector that will serve as a professional and institutional base for cooperative growth and development in Nigeria be established.

Key word: Cooperative, Growth Driver, COVID-19, Pandemic Economy

1. INTRODUCTION

a. The COVID-19 Pandemic: Meaning and Origin

The COVID-19 Pandemic is a recent and topical global malady that affected all sphere of human life including the ecosystem. The intent of this paper is not to give the scientific origin of the COVID-19. That aspect will be left for the natural and medical scientists who are already in a heated argument on whether the virus is a product of nature or a product of human genetic engineering (Law, 2020). This paper will rather present us with where the cases were first recorded and what the acronym COVID-19 represents.

COVID-19 emerged as an infectious disease called corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19). It was described as a novel severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Lone & Ahmad, 2020). The disease was first reported by officials in Wuhan City, China, in December 2019 following the increasing reports of the outbreak of the disease among stall owners, market employees and regular visitors to the wholesale food market in Wuhan City, China (World Health Organization, 2020). The increasing cases and spread of the virus at record speed became so alarming that the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a public

health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020, by this time the COVID-19 pandemic has spread to more than 114 countries (Balkhair, 2020; Anjorin, 2020).

Africa recorded its first COVID-19 case in Egypt on 14 February 2020. Since then, 52 countries have reported cases. Initially confined to capital cities, cases are now reported in a significant number of countries, and in multiple provinces and states. On 4th May 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases had risen to 44 873 and caused 1 807 deaths. The African countries with the highest number of infections at the early stage are South Africa, Egypt, Morocco and Algeria. However, the full scope of the pandemic remains uncertain, as cases are underreported and accuracy of data collection varies considerably. In Nigeria, from 3rd January 2020 to 8th October 2021 there have been 207,210 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 2,742 deaths, reported to World Health Organization (WHO). As of 29 September 2021, a total of 6,852,590 vaccine doses have been administered in Nigeria (OECD, 2020, WHO, 2021).

b. Characteristics of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The most common and notable means of contacting the COVID-19 is through the respiratory droplet transmission. It can also be transmitted through person-to-person contacts by asymptomatic carriers. However, when contacted, pneumonia appears to be the most frequent serious manifestation of infection, characterized primarily by fever, cough, dyspnea, and bilateral infiltrates on chest imaging (Gennaro, Pizzol, Marotta, Antunes, Racalbutto, Veronese & Smith, 2020). Other, less common symptoms have included headaches, sore throat, and rhinorrhea, in addition to

respiratory symptoms, gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g., nausea and diarrhea). *Hu, Guo, Zhou and Shi (2020) posit that it appears that all ages of the population are susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection, and the median age of infection is around 50 years. However, clinical manifestations differ with age. In general, older men (>60 years old) with co-morbidities are more likely to develop severe respiratory disease that requires hospitalization. The incubation period is ~5 days, severe disease usually develops ~8 days after symptom onset and critical disease and death occur at ~16 days.*

However, to prevent contacting and spread of the disease, a number of COVID-19 protocol compliance measures have been put forward, which include:

- i. Wear your face mask regularly
- ii. Avoid touching surfaces, especially in public settings or health facilities, in case people infected with COVID-19 have touched them
- iii. Clean Surfaces regularly with standard disinfectants
- iv. Frequently wash your hands with soap in a running water
- v. Apply sanitizer where there is no water available
- vi. Greet without physical contact to ensure physical distancing
- vii. Avoid very large public gatherings among others

2. GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

a. The Pandemic Economy

The economic and social disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic globally has devastated **tens of millions of people. These millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty** while the number of undernourished people, currently estimated at nearly 690 million

and could increase by up to 132 million by the end of the year 2021 (WHO, 2020). The pandemic has affected the economic, social and ecosystem in diverse ways:

i. Globally, over the past 12 months, the pandemic has harmed the poor and vulnerable the most and it is threatening to push millions more into poverty. This year, after decades of steady progress in reducing the number of people living on less than \$1.90/day, COVID-19 has ushered in the first reversal in the fight against extreme poverty in a generation. The latest analysis warns that COVID-19 has pushed an additional 88 million people into extreme poverty this year – and that figure is just a baseline.

ii. Those restrictions – enacted to control the spread of the virus, and thus alleviate pressure on strained and vulnerable health systems – have had an enormous impact on economic growth.

iii. COVID-19 has triggered a global crisis like no other – a global health crisis that, in addition to an enormous human (death) toll, is leading to the deepest global recession since the Second World War.

iv. This economic fallout is hampering countries' ability to respond effectively to the pandemic's health and economic effects. Even before the spread of COVID-19, almost half of all low-income countries were already in debt distress or at a high risk of it.

v. **It has also resulted in migrants sending less money home by way of remittances** – the money that migrants send to their home countries – are of special concern. Over previous decades, remittances have played an increasingly important role in alleviating poverty and sustaining growth. Just last year, these flows were on par with foreign direct investment and official development assistance (government-to-government

aid). But COVID-19 has spurred a dramatic reversal, with the latest forecasts finding that remittances will decline 14% by the end of 2021 – a slightly improved outlook compared with the earliest estimates during the pandemic that should not belie the fact that these are historic declines.

vi. The pandemic slowdown has deeply impacted businesses and jobs. Around the world, companies – especially micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the developing world – are under intense strain, with more than half either in arrears or likely to fall into arrears shortly.

vii. **It has resulted into high cost of health care.** The pandemic has highlighted the need for effective, accessible and affordable health care.

viii. **It resulted in closing classrooms.** At the height of the COVID lockdown, more than 160 countries had mandated some form of school closures for at least 1.5 billion children and youth.

ix. COVID-19's effects on education could be felt for decades to come, not just causing a loss of learning in the short term, but also diminishing economic opportunities for this generation of students over the long term. Due to learning losses and increases in dropout rates, this generation of students stand to lose an estimated \$10 trillion in earnings, or almost 10 percent of global GDP, and countries will be driven even further off-track to achieving their Learning Poverty goals – potentially increasing its levels substantially to 63 percent, equivalent to an additional 72 million primary school aged children (The World Bank Group, 2021).

x. National lockdowns have had an immediate impact on the energy sector, both in terms of consumption and

production. The result has been a slump in electricity demand unparalleled since the Great Depression, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). Usage has typically fallen by up to 20 per cent for each month of lockdown, creating what the IEA has described as a 'prolonged Sunday' of extended low-level consumption. Although home working has increased domestic electricity use by around 40 per cent, this has not been enough to offset the demand lost due to the closure of offices and factories. Overall global power use is predicted to fall by around six per cent in 2020 compared to the previous year (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2021)

b. The need to overcome the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the global economy to a halt. In fact, some economies particularly some of the emerging economies went into recession and some at the verge of depression. The pandemic no doubt has created a new order and normal in the global economy. Most of the governments had to take the very hard decision of locking down social and economic activities. This singular decision affected the global economy leading to loss of millions of jobs thus ushering most developing countries including Nigeria back into poverty and hunger (UNCTAD, 2020; IMF, 2020).

Therefore, it is important that effort is made to combat the COVID-19 pandemic particularly in Nigeria and Africa by extension, because of the obvious social and economic losses the Nation and region suffers as a result of the pandemic. While developed countries are providing trillions of dollars in relief, support and bailouts, developing countries are more constrained on the fiscal, monetary and external payments fronts

making it difficult for many of them to respond to the multiple shocks triggered by the crisis (UNCTAD, 2020). Nevertheless, some larger developing countries have provided immediate relief through financial bailouts and income support while Nigeria continues to borrow. Presently the debt profile of the Nigeria is over 30 billion USD and still counting (UNCTAD, 2020, CBN, 2021).

3. COOPERATION

a. Meaning and characteristics

Literally, cooperation describes the act of coming together by way of taking a joint action to achieve a mutually beneficial goal and purpose. Khamis, Kamel and Salichs (2006) posit that cooperation linguistically refers to the practice of people or entities working together with commonly agreed-upon goals and possibly methods, instead of working separately in competition. Zagumny (2013) posits that cooperation includes both behavioral and instrumental components. The behavioral component is that people are working or acting together, while the instrumental component involves a common purpose or benefit for those involved. Therefore, cooperation is an occurrence involving two or more people who share an activity for the purpose of achieving a goal that benefits all of those involved. Cooperation is often defined within a goal structure that includes: 1) cooperation, in which achieving one's goals is dependent on other people achieving their goals; 2) competition, which requires that to achieve one's goals, others must not achieve their goals; and 3) individualism, in which attaining one's goals is not dependent on whether others attain their goals. The various forms and components of cooperation notwithstanding, the outbreak

of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased global cooperation as people, even warring nations were compelled by the pandemic to come together to fight the virus.

b. Areas of Cooperation

Globally, cooperation has been centered on development cooperation which revolves around financial aid. Alonso and Glennie (2016) stated that development cooperation can also include market flows like remittances or foreign direct investment. They also noted that development cooperation should have three major tasks:

- i. Supporting and complementing efforts of developing countries to guarantee the provision of universal social basic standards to their citizens, as a means for people to exercise their basic human right;
- ii. Promoting the convergence of the developing countries to higher levels of income and wellbeing, correcting extreme international inequalities; and
- iii. Supporting efforts of developing countries to participate actively in the provision of international public goods.

Contrary to the above aims of development cooperation which was aimed at the developing countries alone, the COVID-19 pandemic created a paradigm shift by making the development cooperation not only an African agenda but also a global focus as virtually all countries reached out for assistance during the pandemic and the post pandemic era.

4. COOPERATIVE

a. Meaning and characteristics

The cooperative has been touted as an organizational form that is structurally different from the Investor Oriented Firm (IOF) in terms of its ownership and management composition. Cooperative by

definition is described as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned enterprise" (ICA, 1995). It is therefore a user-owned and democratically controlled enterprise in which benefit is received according to use. In this case, membership of cooperative avail a member the opportunity of social and economic safety. Cooperatives are democratically owned by their members, with each member having one vote in electing the board of directors. Generally cooperatives may include:

- i. businesses owned and managed by the people who use their services (a consumer cooperative)
- ii. organizations managed by the people who work there (worker cooperatives)
- iii. multi-stakeholder or hybrid cooperatives that share ownership between different stakeholder groups. For example, care cooperatives where ownership is shared between both care-givers and receivers. Stakeholders might also include non-profits or investors.
- iv. second- and third-tier cooperatives whose members are other cooperatives
- v. platform cooperatives that use a cooperatively owned and governed website, mobile app or a protocol to facilitate the sale of goods and services (*Worldwatch Institute, 2014*).

b. Cooperative as a Growth Driver

Arguably, the cooperative model of enterprise has in recent time proven to be more sustainable and reliable platform for social and economic transformation in the Nigerian economy in the pandemic era for obvious reasons:

- i. The government and donor agencies have relied on cooperative in

fighting hunger and poverty.

ii. The cooperative has also been relied upon for achieving national food security programme

iii. Institutions both educational and agencies are setting up one form of cooperative organization or the other for solving their social and economic needs

iv. Research has shown that many micro business owners rely on cooperative group membership for their business growth

v. Today, the cooperative ideals are spread across all sectors of the economy even without much publicity.

vi. Most importantly the pandemic made thousands if not millions of people informal members of cooperative organization in an effort to survive the vicious attack of the pandemic.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper has shown that the COVID-19 pandemic was devastating to the global economy including Nigeria, even in this Post COVID-Era, a lot of people are still not recovered from the devastating effort of the pandemic. Poverty is wide spread and inequality and unemployment still soars. This paper however contends that the cooperative model of business has proven to have very strong efficacy in lifting millions of Nigerian from the devastating effect of the pandemic. Many growth and recovery efforts from the government and donor agencies were seen to be carried out on the platform of cooperative. It therefore becomes imperative to strive to have a clear-cut cooperative sector that will serve as a professional and institutional base for cooperative growth and development in Nigeria.

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IMPROVED COOPERATIVE PARTICIPATION IN OGUN STATE: THE PANACEA FOR TECHNICAL EFFICIENCY OF CASSAVA FARMERS IN POST-COVID NIGERIA

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Abstract

More than ninety percent of cassava production in Nigeria was processed into food for human consumption, thereby, leaving a significant industrial demand for the output as raw materials. This has made the country a major importer of cassava derivatives in spite of her arable lands. The challenge is not unconnected to inefficient use of improved technologies and poor participation in agricultural cooperatives which appears to be exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic induced food crisis. This paper examines improved cooperative participation as the panacea for technical efficiency of cassava farmers in post-COVID era in Ogun State, Nigeria. This paper was guided by Agriculture Development Theory (ADT). Ex-post facto research design which was based on documented evidences was used. The results showed that since COVID-19 pandemic the Nigeria State is experiencing food shortage. It also revealed that majority of cassava farmers were not into agricultural cooperatives and as a result were bereft of ideas on improved cassava production technologies. This paper also established a nexus between cooperative societies and technical efficiency of cassava farmers. The paper concluded that through effective cooperative membership and patronage of cooperative services, technical efficiency of cassava farmers may not only be enhanced but their productivity would improve. It recommended among others that the government should encourage farmers to join agricultural cooperative societies. This is to enable them learn new techniques of farming and pull resources together to solve challenges that ordinarily they could not individually.

Keywords: Cassava farmers, cooperative participation, technical efficiency, post-COVID.

Introduction

Agriculture is a major source of livelihood and contributes tremendously to the development of many economies. It continues to be a strategic developmental sector in the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), and employs about 40% of active global labor force (World Bank, 2021). Agriculture generates employment for about 70% of Nigerians and accounts for more than 40% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with crops accounting for 80%, livestock 13%, forestry 3% and fishery 4% (Federal Government of Nigeria - FGN, 2016). The crop sub-sector is dominated by food crops such as root and tuber

production.

Cassava is one of the major root crops cultivated in Nigeria and it is a major source of food and income for most urban and rural communities (Abang, Ekpe & Usani, 2001; Itam, Ajah, Ofem & Abam, 2015). Cassava is a crop for international trade which can boost foreign earnings and also create jobs for many (Ayoola, 2013). In spite of upward production from 9.3 million tonnes in 1970 to 59.5 million tonnes in 2018, Nigeria's cassava export value is still significantly low (CBN, 2019; FAO, 2018).

Over 90% cassava production in Nigeria

was processed into food for human consumption, thereby, leaving significant industrial demand for the output as raw materials. This has made the country a major importer of cassava derivatives valued at about \$600 million annually in spite of her leading position in cassava production (CBN, 2019; Channels, 2019; Olukunle, 2016). This area of agriculture in Nigeria is dominated by small-skill farmers with significant level of inefficiency in resource use.

In Ogun State, cassava occupies a prominent position in economic enhancement and is being cultivated in virtually all local government areas. However, the production levels are not meeting with high demand for the product at local markets and the requirements of a variety of processing industries. According to Makinde, Balogun, Bello and Afodu (2015), there is rising demand for cassava products which local production is yet to meet. The inability to meet existing demand may not be unconnected with farmers' resource use inefficiency and non-involvement in agricultural cooperatives. The farmers dependent mainly on traditional technologies which are characterised with inefficiency and poor yield. This is in spite of growing emphasis on the potency of agricultural cooperatives in enhancing technical efficiency of farmers. Thus, they lack the needed platform for learning and adopting modern agricultural technologies.

It has been established that members of cooperative societies stand a better chance to get useful information and empowerment than non-members. Yet, many farmers still prefer to operate in isolation of cooperative societies (Olagunju, Ogunniyi, Oyetunde-Usman, Omotayo and Awotide, 2021). Efforts at encouraging improved cooperatives involvement still appear to have achieved limited success, especially among rural

farmers. It is against this background that this paper examines improved cooperative participation as the panacea for technical efficiency of cassava farmers in post-COVID Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Concept of Cooperative and Cooperative Participation

Agricultural cooperatives have for a very long time assisted farmers in crop production. Cooperatives from their antecedents are suitable vehicle for mobilization of resources for agricultural development. Multi-purpose cooperative is one form of cooperatives that are providing different services to better economic activities of her members. Their general tasks have been provision of farm inputs, credit and other activities which helps to enhance agricultural production. There is conventional believe that declining agricultural production could be arrested through active cooperative involvement (Nwezi & Umehali, 2021). Within Africa, there is growing interest in supporting agricultural cooperatives as a platform for enabling vulnerable smallholder farmers to secure sustainable livelihoods.

Cooperatives have long been in existence and serve the interests of many in various societies. Globally, there are over 750,00 cooperatives that are serving about 730 million members, while over 48,000 cooperatives serves 120 million people in the United States alone (Ortmann & King, 2007). They provide services such as financial, equipment and farm supplies, marketing of agricultural products, consumer goods, utilities (e.g., electricity, telephone), housing, and others. Although cooperatives are common in many parts of the world, there is growing interest in supporting agricultural cooperatives and cooperative union development as a platform for enabling vulnerable smallholder farmers to secure sustainable

livelihoods (Barton, 2010). This is because agricultural cooperatives hold much potential to help economically weak farmers to improve their livelihoods standard (World Bank, 2009).

Efforts have been made to profile cooperatives with suitable meaning and interpretation. International Labour Organization (ILO, 1990) conceived a cooperative as an association of persons that voluntarily come together to achieve a common end through the formation of a democratically-controlled organisations, making equitable contributions to the capital required and accepting a fair share of the risks and benefits of the undertaking in which the members actively participate. Similarly, a cooperative was described as a voluntary, democratic, autonomous association of persons, whose purpose is to encourage members to grow in community and to act collectively both for the intrinsic value of being part of a living community and to overcome their problems of economic dependency and need by providing access to and ownership of the means of subsistence and welfare (Agba, Attah & Ebong, 2015). According to Alufohai and Ahmodu (2005), agricultural cooperatives are associations that unite agricultural producers for production or other activities needed by members (such as processing, marketing or supply).

Historically, agricultural co-operatives are structured for 'member use', whereby the co-operative is a user-owned, and controlled form of business in which benefits are derived and distributed on the basis of use (Gray, 2016). In summary, Dunn (1988) captured the usage aspect of co-operatives in three principles:

1. The User-Owner Principle: Those who own and finance the co-operative are those who use the co-operative.
2. The User-Control Principle: Those who democratically control the co-operative are those who use the co-operative.g

3. The User-Benefits Principle: The co-operatives sole purpose is to provide and distribute benefits to its users on the basis of their use.

Liebrand and Ling (2014) posit that the key to operating a successful co-operative is for it to perform functions and provide services needed and desired by the member-owners to their satisfaction. This suggests that where a cooperative fall short of this basic principles, it may find it difficult to achieve its set objectives.

Furthermore, agricultural cooperatives play important roles in the mobilization and distribution of credit to farmers. It also provides members with a wide range of services such as credit, health, recreation and housing facilities (Bhuyan, 2007). Agricultural cooperatives are also useful in the dissemination of information about modern technical practices. They can enhance functional education to members in the areas of production, processing and marketing of agricultural produce. The education of cooperative members could be formal where members are trained in courses like accounting and farm management. Agricultural cooperatives help to reduce inequality and promote equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of sustainable development.

Over 85% of the total cassava production in Ogun State is cultivated by smallholder farmers (The Guardian, 2020). It stressed that the State has over 200,000 estimated cassava farmers, however, lesser proportion are registered with the appropriate authorities or agricultural organizations. This does not only endanger their technical efficiency and production, but also their managerial capacity of the farm produce.

Agricultural Production in Post-COVID Era

In a country like Nigeria where food insecurity has been a challenge prior to the

compound impact of COVID-19 there exists sparse research documentation of this dynamics. Over 70 percent of Nigeria's population live in rural areas and are responsible for about 75 percent of Nigerian's food production. This is comprised of mostly older persons and people having other health issues, thereby making them more susceptible to the deadly virus. Majority of the rural populace are predominantly smallholder farmers who produce staple food crops such as rice, yam, cassava, maize, sorghum, cowpea, millet, cowpea and vegetables (Bidemi, 2020). This makes it imperative to highlight agricultural activities during the early stages of the pandemic and possibly chair the way forward in the post-COVID era.

COVID-19 is the acronym for the novel dreaded corona-virus disease that was discovered in December 2019 at Wuhan, China. The alarming levels of inaction towards the virus made the World Health Organization (WHO) declare it a global pandemic on March 21st, 2020 (Ghebreyesus, 2020; WHO, 2019). The virus was declared a pandemic because it was an infectious disease with increasing person-to-person spread in multiple countries at the same time.

Nigeria was one of the few African countries that first recorded COVID-19 cases in the continent and among those that experienced significant economic disruptions because of the pandemic. In an effort to curtail the spread of the virus, lockdown and physical distancing were among other measures adopted by the government. This brought about mobility restrictions and avoidance of close contact with people (Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning - FMBNP, 2020).

The extreme control measure left many Nigerians, especially farmers without alternative access to their economic

activities. Agriculture is the mainstay of the nation's economy, and contributes more than 30% of the total annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employs about 70% of the labour force, accounts for over 70% of the non-oil exports and, most importantly, provides over 80% of the food needs of the country in a bid to ensure food sufficiency (Adegboye, 2004). Cassava farmers, just like others, were unable to move about to source for farming inputs or even to go to their farms. The spillover effects of the hindered access to farm lands were rising spate of food cost and food shortage. In other words, since there was restrictions and inadequate cultivation, insufficiency of basic foods to meet high demand occasioned by growing population of the country becomes glaring.

A study conducted by Reuters (2020) revealed that crops of several farmers in Nigeria were rotting in fields or at depots due to logistical challenges occasioned by the pandemic. In addition, access to inputs, especially seeds, was hindered. According to Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN, 2020), the lockdown control strategy seriously affected harvest, processing and supply flow of food value chain, like cassava, rice etc. Mobility restrictions and lockdowns disrupted processes involved in the valuation and release of new seed varieties, as well as timely production of early generation seed and the planning of its supply.

Ogun State accounted for about 14% (6.28 Million tonnes) and over 16% total annual national cassava production in Nigeria as at 2011 and 2017, respectively (OGADEP in Hoback, Olori, Collins-Chibeze & Rosales-Rogge, 2015; Adeogun, Adeleye, Fashola & Osabuohien, 2017). They posited that the State government's intervention policies have contributed to the increase in output levels. However, this progress dropped significantly in 2020 due to impact of Covid-19. FAO (2020)

reported that the virus did not only destroy farm inputs and produce, but also brought about intense hunger and negative coping habits due to non-availability of foods. World Bank (2021) noted that many farmers' crops that were due for harvest were destroyed and farm produce that were due for marketing got spoilt as a result of restriction in movement. This informs of the capacity level and technical efficiency of the farmers. In other words, the farmers were not efficiently prepared with the right capacity to preserve their inputs or produce and again appears lacked market networking that could have aided sells.

Technical Efficiency

Efficiency of production is a measure of how much output have been obtained with a given level of inputs. It is also the ratio of output from inputs. Farrel (1957) as cited in Audu, Girei and Umar (2020) classified efficiency into technical, allocative and economic. The concept of technical efficiency which is the focus of this paper entails comparison between observed and optimal values of output and inputs of a production unit. It is concerned with how closely the production unit operates to the frontier of production possibility set (Audu et al, 2020).

Technical inefficiency was conceptualised as a situation in which actual output produced from a given input combination is greater than the maximum probable output (Fan, 1999). In another view, technical efficiency was referred to the ability of firms to employ the best practices in their production processes, so that not more than the necessary amount of a given set of inputs is used in producing the best level of output (Carlsson, 1972). More succinctly, Olayide and Heady (1982) opines that technical efficiency is the measure of a firm's success in producing maximum output from a given set of inputs.

Studies have established that a farmer's ability to be technically efficient or savvy to improved agricultural technologies is a determinant of notable factors, amongst of which is level of cooperative involvement. Alufohai and Ahmodu (2005) were of the view that cooperative participation provides a farmer the opportunity to acquire new knowledge that can help eliminate drudgery or obstacles and boost agricultural production. In another vein, Okoye, Abass, Bachwenkizi, Asumugha, Alenkhe, Ranaivoson, Randrianarivelo, Rabemanantsoa and Ralimanana (2016) posits that gender, age and educational level can significantly influence technical efficiency of cassava farmers. Where female cassava farmers were more technically efficient than their male counterparts, the former may be constrained by cultural factors from playing a more active economic role and technical development, as well as restrain on the lands they farm. An increase in age could lead to a decrease in technical efficiency. This implies that younger farmers are more likely to be technically efficient than the elderly or older farmers. This is understandable, as older farmers are more likely to be less energetic; this leads to lower technical efficiency and poor productivity.

Furthermore, uneducated farmers were observed to be more technically efficient than their educated counterparts (Okoye, Abass, Bachwenkizi, Asumugha, Alenkhe, Ranaivoson, Randrianarivelo, Rabemanantsoa & Ralimanana 2016). Similarly, Simonyan, Umoren and Okoye (2011) align with this view as they argued that when women education level increases, there is the possibility of diverting their skills to off-farm employment opportunities. The reason for this unexpected outcome is probably that the more educated farmers tend to work part-time on their farms since they may have other livelihood options, while their

uneducated counterparts work committedly in their farms as they could be their major source of livelihood. By so doing, they get perfected since it is their main occupation.

Cassava Farmers and Production in Ogun State

Ogun is one of the States with a high stake in cassava production in Nigeria. Analysis of the State's agricultural production has shown that Ogun has competitive advantages in the cultivation of food crops such as cassava (The Guardian, 2020). It argues that the State's proximity to Lagos, the industrial and commercial capital of Nigeria and by extension, Africa, strategically place her in a vantage position for agricultural investments, value chain development and produce exports.

Ogun State as an agro-allied investment destination in Nigeria is housing notable cassava processing value-chain industries, like the Allied Atlantic Distilleries limited (AADL). The industry uses about 75 million tonnes of cassava yearly to produce about 9 million litres of ethanol annually. This is just about 4 percent of Nigeria's 400 million litres annual ethanol consumption (Nnabuife, 2017). Therefore, there is still huge gap in meeting the remaining 96 percent local demand and this informs of the lucrative fortune that can be accruing through improved cassava production in the State.

One of the current State administration's priority crops is cassava. Realising the strength of the State in closing food production gaps and saving the nation's economy from collapse, as well as the foreign exchange crisis associated with food importation, the government has placed its focus on the sector as a pillar upon which the economy of the State could solidly rest (Guardian, 2020). The overall objectives of the State's agricultural policy are to;

i. achieve self sufficiency in food

- production,
- ii. provide raw materials for agro-based industries,
- iii. generate employment opportunities, and
- iv. attain desirable levels of exports in order to improve the country's foreign exchange earnings (Ogun State Ministry of Agriculture, 2021).

Despite this noble agenda, several odds however still work against the efforts to produce abundant food for not just the State, but the nation in general. These odds amongst others are impact of Covid-19 and poor technical efficiency which has made cassava production levels lesser the demand for local markets and requirements for processing industries (Akerele et al, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

Agricultural Development Theory (ADT) is the theoretical underpinning of this paper. The theory was postulated by George Norton, Jeffrey Alwang and William Masters. The agricultural development theory tries to show how the interaction between factors of production and effective supervision of good government policies could boost food production and lead to development (Norton, Alwang & Masters, 2016).

The ADT is an agriculture-centric economic development theory that explains the forces in an economy that lead to agricultural change. It looks at existing agricultural systems in developing nations and means of improving the systems to increase its contribution to national development (Agbaeze, Ohunye, Obamen & Ibe, 2020). The theory posits that the basic sources of growth such as labor, increase in specialization and technological progress could be stimulated and combined to increase agricultural growth or outcome (Norton et al., 2016).

In application to this paper, the theory

infers that production resources such as land, money, technical implements and labour can be utilised in harnessing cassava production. Through proper assessment of the farmers' technical efficiency and re-training initiative, their production capacity can be improved, especially when exposed to cooperative resource. This is because during the COVID-19 pandemic there was glaring distortion in the relation among production resources. The restriction measures disconnected one from another, example the inability of the farmer to access his/her farmer or the processing plants and markets substantiated this narrative. Therefore, to step up capacity operations or efficiency of the farmers bring to fore the need for proper supervision, evaluation and skill empowerment of the farmers in line with modern best practices. These and many more are what agricultural cooperatives stand to offer to enable farmers do better, even in the face of challenges.

Nexus between Cooperative Societies and Technical Efficiency of Cassava Farmers

Studies have explored the roles of agricultural cooperatives in enhancing use of improved technologies, economic performance, land management practices and welfare of farmers (Zhang, Sun, Ma & Valentinov, 2019; Ahmed & Mesfin, 2017; Ito, Bao & Su, 2012). A study conducted by Michalek, Ciaian and Pokrivcak (2018) indicates that farmers who belong to agricultural organizations have higher value-addition, profitability, labour productivity and employment than non-cooperative members.

In a similar vein, Wossen *et al* as cited in Olagunju, Ogunniyi, Oyetunde-Usman, Omotayo and Awotide (2021) established the positive impacts of cooperatives on improved agricultural technology utilisation and household welfare in rural Nigeria. In addition, Nwankwo, Ewuim

and Asoya (2013), as well as Ma, Renwick, Yuan and Ratna (2018) clearly informed that cooperative membership is not only a viable tool for increasing production, but also helps to maximise outcomes by facilitating efficient use of inputs. This suggests that cooperative membership is the panacea for productive agricultural venture.

Be it cassava farmers or any other agricultural activity, it has been established that cooperative participation would enhance the production and technical efficiency of the farmers. This is in view of the fact that cooperatives have the capacity to avail cassava farmers with new ideas, improved technologies, seedlings and as well as credit facilities. This implies that the individual farmer may not derive such benefits when operating in isolation or alone.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Many farmers in Nigeria are not only operating outside of agricultural cooperatives, but are also disadvantaged on modern technological ideas for improved production. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated their frustration and as well exposed their inefficiencies. The adverse effects in Nigeria are much and more devastating as it relates to food production, processing and availability, especially cassava. It also interrupted food supply chains, cash flow, weakened import/export demands for food products and inability to meet delivery needs. This was occasioned by the fact that majority of the farmers are not in cooperatives; hence, they lack the requisite technologies for processing, preserving and even marketing. Consequently, crops, inputs like cassava stems and produce that were ordinarily to be preserved through harvest and processed into finished products got damaged. This therefore, do not only transcend to losses in income but also amount to food wastage as well as worsening food insecurity crisis in the country. In conclusion therefore, the paper

submits that through effective cooperative membership and patronage of cooperative services, technical efficiency of cassava farmers may not only be enhanced but their productivity would improve. To this end, it recommends that;

1. Cassava farmers should be made to understand the importance of cooperative societies and usefulness of being a registered member. This is in view of the possibility that many of these farmers who are not members might be dwelling on erroneous assumptions or unguided perceptions about cooperatives.
2. The government should encourage farmers to join agricultural cooperative societies. This is to enable them learn new techniques of farming and pull resources together to solve challenges that ordinarily they would not individually.
3. The food shortage crisis which has exacerbated prices of food commodities in the market since post-COVID should be addressed mass supply of food varieties by the government. This can be done either by bringing out enough staples from the national food reserve bank or through short importation. This is in view of the fact that when there is sufficient supply of foods in the market, demand and supply matrix would control the price.

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CAPACITY BUILDING FOR YOUTHS AND WOMEN IN COOPERATIVES IN THE COVID ERA

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ABSTRACT

*Nigeria, like many other countries, is facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of June 2020, the number of confirmed cases continues to rise, with the government deploying different interventions to control the spread and address the resulting socioeconomic challenges. Apart from its effect on the economy as a whole, women and youth are particularly affected. Women face increased domestic responsibilities, including childcare, children's education due to school closure, and higher cooking and cleaning demands with family members home full-time during shutdowns. The demands to meet these gender role expectations have often led to higher stress and poorer physical and psychological health outcomes. **The economic impact of the pandemic is especially harsh on the young population and micro and small businesses. With more than 16 million children out of school, the future of these children is indeed bleak. A way out could be a strategy that is anchored on capacity-building. Capacity-building efforts are particularly needed at the individual, organisation, and systemic levels and must cater to the needs of women, youths, and other vulnerable groups in the communities. Evidence in the literature gives high hopes that the cooperative is well-positioned to offer capacity training and other services that could bring out members from the morass of the pandemic. It is suggested, among others, that governments at various levels: federal states and local governments play and will continue to play a key role in the capacity-building efforts of the cooperative movement. To be more effective in this regard, the state's essential role will be to create a favourable statutory climate that facilitates the development of economically viable cooperative enterprises, and minimises the bureaucratic procedures for the establishment, registration, and regulation of cooperatives.***

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems, and the world of work (WHO, 2020). The economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic

is devastating. Millions of enterprises face an existential threat and nearly half of the world's 3.3 billion global workforces is at risk of losing their livelihoods. Informal economy workers are particularly vulnerable because the majority lack social protection and access to quality health care

and have lost access to productive assets. Without the means to earn an income during lockdowns, many are unable to feed themselves and their families. For most, no income means no food, or, at best, less food and less nutritious food. The pandemic has been affecting the entire food system and has laid bare its fragility. Border closures, trade restrictions and confinement measures have been preventing farmers from accessing markets, including for buying inputs and selling their produce, and agricultural workers from harvesting crops, thus disrupting domestic and international food supply chains and reducing access to healthy, safe and diverse diets. The pandemic has decimated jobs and placed millions of livelihoods at risk. As breadwinners lose jobs, fall ill and die, the food security and nutrition of millions of women and men are under threat; with those in low-income countries, particularly the most vulnerable populations, which include women, children and young persons, the old and infirm, ethnic minorities and the disabled, are often found to be the most adversely affected victims. Nigeria, like many other countries, is facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of June 2020, the number of confirmed cases continue to rise, with the government deploying different interventions to control the spread and address the resulting socio-economic challenges. Interventions have included lockdowns and various forms of restrictions to promote social distancing, as well as requirement of the use of masks in public places (Gender & COVID 19, 2020).

Before the pandemic, the Nigerian government had been grappling with weak recovery from the 2014 oil price shock, with GDP growth tapering around 2.3% in

2019. In 2020, Nigeria experienced its deepest recession in two decades, but growth resumed in 2021 as pandemic restrictions were eased, oil prices recovered, and the authorities implemented policies to counter the economic shock. Nigeria was highly vulnerable to the global economic disruption caused by COVID-19, particularly due to the decline in oil prices. Oil accounts for over 80 percent of exports, a third of banking sector credit, and half of government revenues. In 2018, 40% of Nigerians (83 million people) lived below the poverty line, while another 25% (53 million) were vulnerable. The number of Nigerians living below the international poverty line is expected to rise by 12 million in the next two years.

Relatedly, the country's debt profile has been a source of concern for policymakers and development practitioners as the most recent estimate puts the debt service-to-revenue ratio at 83%, which is likely to worsen amid the steep decline in revenue associated with falling oil prices and increased borrowing to finance budget deficit. These constraining factors were to later aggravate the economic impact of the COVID 19 outbreak and make it more difficult for the government to weather the crisis (Onyekwena & Ekeruche, 2021).

Compared to rural men, traditionally, rural women have greater workloads and time constraints in both productive and domestic activities. The COVID 19 pandemic has clearly exacerbated these workloads and time constraints. Precisely speaking, women face increased domestic responsibilities, including childcare, children's education due to school closure, and higher cooking and cleaning demands with family members home full-time during shutdowns. The demands to meet these gender role expectations have often

led to higher stress and poorer physical and psychological health outcomes in women. Adding to the above scenario of increased responsibilities for the women folk, the pandemic appears to be deepening pre-existing inequalities across different spheres, from health to the economy, security to social protection, all with gendered impacts. Women and girls who are generally earning and saving less feel the economic impacts more. Unpaid care work has increased. With children out-of-school, deepened economic and social stress together with restricted movement and social isolation measures, gender-based violence is increasing (Gender & COVID-19, 2020).

The economic impact of the pandemic was especially harsh on the young population and micro and small businesses. Oyebode (2020) reports that 60% of Nigeria's population is under the age of 25, yet, 16 million Nigerian children were out of school in 2019, up from the last count of 13.2 million in 2018. Furthermore, the growing number of uneducated youths is a significant burden on the economy as this demographic is likely to struggle amidst an economic downturn. **To worsen the situation, most of the approximately 40 million Small**

and Medium Scale Enterprises in the country, where young people find employment, have also been badly hit by the pandemic and necessary restrictions to business activity. The study by Adebimpe, Adetunji & Nwachukwu (2021) reveals that the unemployment rate among young people, aged between 15-34 years in Nigeria is 30.1%, up from 26.7% in the previous year. The study also finds that 64% of the considerably increased inflows from employment into unemployment were due to the COVID 19 shutdown measures. Indeed, this situation has led to deterioration in livelihoods, and unprecedented poverty. Some estimates reveal that these unemployment numbers may yet double because of COVID-19, leading to further job losses and erosion of decent livelihoods. The World Bank acknowledges that Nigeria's economic outlook remains highly uncertain. Uncertainty around the pace of vaccinations and the duration of COVID-19 persists, with no hope in sight. The Executive-Director of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), Faisal Shuaib, disclosed that as at September 13, 2021, only 1.6 million of the country's estimated 206 million population has been fully vaccinated (Adebowale, 2021).

Table 1: Nigeria: Some Macro_Economic Indicators

	2018	2019	2020
Population, total (millions)	195.9	201	206.14
Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population)	40.1	40	40.1
Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population)	39.1	37.2	39.1
GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$)	5,040	2030	2,000
GDP (current US\$) (billions)	397.2	448.1	432.29
GDP growth (annual %)	1.9	2.2	-1.8
GDP per capita (Current US\$)	2,027.8	2,229.9	2,097.1
External debt stocks, total (DOD, current Naira) (trillions)	24.4	27.4	916
Total debt service (% of exports of goods, services and primary income)	60	54.7	83

Source: World Development Indicators database, World Bank; DMO, Nigeria, 2021

From table 1, it is seen that the key macroeconomic indicators do not portend a favourable economic climate for Nigeria: GDP growth dropped to -1.8% in 2020 after increasing from 1.9% in 2018 to 2.2 in 2019; poverty profile of the country shows that 39.1% of the population is poor; external debt stock rose to N916 trillion from a low N27.4 trillion in 2019; and total debt servicing to total export was 54.7% in 2019 but rose to 83%. The country is therefore going into the COVID-19 era with a very weak economic outlook. Countries dealing with existing humanitarian crises or emergencies, such as Nigeria is presently experiencing in many parts of the country, are particularly

more susceptible to the adverse effects of COVID-19. Searching and coming up with strategies to ameliorate the situation is particularly critical. Capacity building by governments and organisations appears very appropriate and critical at this time for swift recovery and progress. Certainly, cooperatives can play important roles in overcoming the barriers faced by poor and vulnerable people and in supporting small agricultural producers. Evidence shows that efficient cooperatives have the capacity to empower their members economically and socially and to create sustainable employment through equitable and inclusive business models that are more resilient to shocks, which can

provide succor to victims of adverse impacts of COVID Pandemic.

NATURE OF COOPERATIVES

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise (International Cooperative Alliance, ICA, 1995).

Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. The cooperative model is built around seven principles. According to ICA (1995), the Principles of cooperative are guidelines by which cooperatives put their values into practice. The principles include: **Voluntary and Open Membership (1); Democratic Member Control (2); Member Economic Participation(3); Autonomy and Independence (4); Education, Training and Information (5); Cooperation among Cooperatives(6); and Concern for the Community(7).** Cooperatives have a comparative advantage in the field of capacity building that can greatly benefit vulnerable groups in various communities. Indeed, in accordance with the fifth principle, cooperatives are intrinsically committed to providing education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees, so that they are able to fully assume their responsibilities and contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. We could say that education is the lifeblood of cooperatives, which may allocate parts of their annual

surplus for this purpose.

Cooperative emergent in Europe in the mid-1700s was in response to the problems confronting farmers and workers in the wake of industrial revolution. Socio economic changes have continually provided impetus for reinvigorating, reinventing and recreation of the cooperative model worldwide. In Britain, cooperatives were formed as a tool to deal with the depressed economic and social conditions related to the struggles with Napoleon and industrialization. Researchers sometimes trace the origin of cooperatives from the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers' Society, an urban, consumer cooperative organized in England in 1844. It sold consumer goods such as food and clothing to persons unhappy with the merchants in the community. While neither the first nor most successful early cooperative, the Rochdale Society developed an active outreach program, encouraging and assisting others to form cooperatives. It also prepared a written list of practices and policies that seemed consistent with success of such efforts. This list became one of the first sets of cooperative principles, characteristics that distinguish cooperatives from non-cooperative businesses. Historically, cooperatives have been known to emerge in communities that are going through major transformations, be it industrial revolution, earthquakes and tsunamis or financial crisis. Birchall and Ketilson (2009), and Birchall (2013) provide historical and empirical evidence on how the cooperative model of enterprise survives crisis, maintaining the livelihoods of the communities in which they operate. Certainly, there are as many types of cooperatives as there are crises. Housing cooperatives come to the rescue in communities where homes and

businesses have been destroyed in natural disasters. Cooperative banks step in during times of financial turmoil and the resulting crisis of trust in investor-owned banks. Workers' cooperatives emerge as a viable option for transferring ownership of businesses that are facing bankruptcy.

The Karakas (2019) notes that based on its historical antecedents cooperatives have proved themselves to be even more resilient in times of crisis than many conventional enterprises and notes that there is considerable evidence of this resilience, particularly in relation to cooperative banks and industrial and service cooperatives (worker cooperatives, social cooperatives and cooperatives formed by SMEs). Clearly, this greater resilience is in large part due to the cooperative model of governance, which is based on joint ownership and democratic control by their member-stakeholders, and that it is also due to their characteristic method of capital accumulation; considers that this model helps to ensure that cooperatives take a long-term approach and anchors them in the local economy, giving them a stake in local sustainable development and ensuring that they do not delocalise, even when they internationalise.

Cooperative Response to Crisis Situations among Vulnerable Persons

Cooperatives can most frequently have a contribution to make in connection with vulnerable individuals and groups such as women, children and young persons, the old and infirm, ethnic minorities and the disabled, who most often are found to be the most adversely affected victims of crisis (Parnell, 2001).

It is the view of Terrasi (2018) that being people and community-based, the cooperative model is very well suited to

detect and understand new societal and environmental needs and to provide innovative and comprehensive solutions. Services to elderly people, integration of migrants and refugees, environmental and education services are just some of the activities where cooperatives and social cooperatives in particular, are positioning themselves as relevant service providers, often in close cooperation with local public authorities. By fulfilling this role, they represent a major opportunity not only for delivering innovative answers to emerging needs, but also as a source of employment for young generations.

Cooperatives that meet some of the needs of vulnerable groups should be encouraged and supported as a means of significantly impacting on their economic and social conditions. The role expected of the cooperative could be one or more of the under listed:

- i. Developing a capacity for advocacy - groups of people organized in Cooperatives can have a much stronger voice in shaping policy and communicating the concerns of vulnerable communities.
- ii. Providing essential services and employment/livelihoods for vulnerable groups in times of crisis.
- ii. Strengthening the capacity of communities to cope in times of crisis. Where Cooperatives exist they can form a readily available organisation to act on behalf of the crisis-affected population.
- iv. Increasing disaster preparedness - Cooperatives can be involved in forecasting and taking precautionary measures to an imminent threat and by organizing the delivery of timely and effective assistance.
- v. Reducing the vulnerability of women, youths, old people, etc in communities with a propensity to

experience substantial damage, disruption and casualties as a result of crises. Cooperatives have the capacity to create the necessary wealth needed to purchase essential resources.

- vi. Recovery and reconstruction – Cooperatives can provide the basis of development interventions that do not simply seek to restore the damage or return to the status quo appertaining pre-crisis, but instead address medium- and long-term development needs.

Cooperatives, judging from their antecedents, can do the above and more because they have the capacity and capability to do so.

CONCEPTS OF CAPACITY AND CAPACITY BUILDING

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *in the global context, capacity refers to the ability of individuals and institutions to make and implement decisions and perform functions in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner* (Di Pierro, 2021, Garriga, 2021)

Capacity Building according to UNDP/UNDOALOS (1994) involves human resource development, the development of organisations and promoting the emergence of an overall policy environment, conducive to the generation of appropriate responses to emerging needs. Indeed, capacity building as a concept is closely related to education, training and human resource development. However, this conventional

concept has changed over the years towards a broader and more holistic view, covering both institutional and country based initiatives. Therefore, capacity building can be seen as the *development of knowledge, skills and attitudes in individuals and groups of people relevant in design, development, management and maintenance of institutional and operational infrastructures and processes that is locally meaningful* (Groot & van der Molen, 2000).

Certainly, the above definition is quite broad both in words and context and includes the ways and means by which the overall goals are achieved. Furthermore, it is similar to the one given by The United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI, nd) which sees capacity building as the process of developing and strengthening skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organisations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in a fast-changing world. An essential ingredient in capacity building is transformation that is generated and sustained over time from within. Transformation of this kind goes beyond performing tasks to changing mindsets and attitudes.

Matachi (2006) and Di Pierro (2021) suggest that capacity must be discussed in a broader context and must involve three levels of interest: individual, organisation and environment.

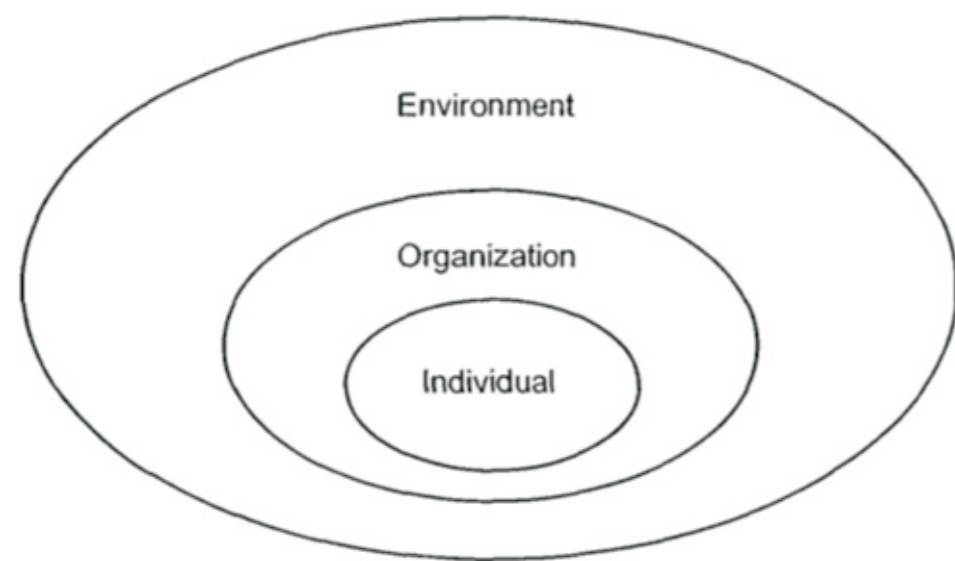


Figure 1: Levels of capacity (adapted from UNDP, 1998; p. 7) in Matachi, 2006

Definitions and examples of capacity at different levels are summarized below.

1. Capacity at the individual level

Capacity at the individual level is the most fundamental element of capacity. It becomes the foundation for organisational capacity and refers to **the will and ability of an individual to set objectives and to achieve them using one's own knowledge and skills** (Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA, 2004). Capacity at the individual level includes knowledge, skills, value, attitude, health, awareness, etc. It can be developed through various ways such as formal, non-formal and/or informal education, training, on-the-job-training (OJT), independent reading, etc. In the context of organisational development, it is also referred to as human resources development.

2. Capacity at the organisation level

Capacity at the organisation level will determine how individual capacities are utilized and strengthened. It refers to **anything that will influence an organisation's performance** (JICA, 2004) and includes: human resources

(capacities of individuals in the organisation); physical resources (facilities, equipment, materials, etc.); intellectual resources (organisation strategy, strategic planning, management, business know-how, production technology, program management, process management (e.g., problem solving skills, decision-making process, communications, etc.); inter-institutional linkage (network, partnership, etc.); incentive and reward systems; organisational culture and leadership of managers.

3. Capacity at the environment level

Capacity at the environment level refers to **the environment and conditions necessary for demonstrating capacity at the individual and organisational levels** (JICA, 2004). This includes systems and frameworks necessary for the formation and implementation of policies and strategies beyond an individual and organisation. There are various dimensions on environment such as administrative, legal, technological, political, economic, social, cultural, etc. that impinge on and/or mediate the effectiveness and sustainability of capacity building efforts.

Elements on which capacity is based on at the environment level include formal institutions (laws, policies, decrees, ordinances, membership rules, etc.), informal institutions (customs, cultures, norms, etc.), social capital and social infrastructure, and capacities of individuals and organisations under the environment.

Traditionally, interventions at the environmental level or systemic level were simply termed **institutional strengthening**. This reflects a concern

with human resource development as well as assisting in the emergence and improvement of organisations. However, capacity development at this level majorly emphasizes the overall policy framework in which individuals and organisations operate and interact with the external environment, as well as the formal and informal relationships of institutions (Lafontaine, 2000).

Table 2, further illustrates the major features of the three levels of capacity building.

Table 2: Key Capacity Features and Elements at the Three Levels of Engagement

Level of Capacity	Definition of Capacity	Elements on which the capacity is based
Individual	The will and ability to set objectives and achieve them using one's own knowledge and skills.	Knowledge, skills, value, attitude, health, awareness, etc.
Organisation	Anything that will influence an organisation's performance	Human resources (capacities of individuals in organisations)
		Physical resources (facilities, equipment, materials, etc) and capital
		Intellectual resources (organisational strategy, strategic planning, business know-how, production technology, program management, process management, inter-institutional linkage, etc.)
		Organisational structure and management methods that affect the utilization of the resources (human, physical intellectual assets) such as organisational culture, incentive and reward system, etc.
Environment/ Systemic	The environment and conditions necessary for demonstrating capacity at the individual and organisational levels. It includes: systems and frameworks necessary for the formation/implementation of policies and strategies beyond an individual organisation. It includes administrative, legal, technological, political, economic, social and cultural environments.	Leadership of managers
		Formal institutions (laws, policies, decrees, ordinances, membership rules, etc)
		Informal Institutions (customs, cultures, norms, etc)
		Social capital, social infrastructure, etc.
		Capacities of individuals and organisations under the environment

Adopted from JICA & Lusthaus et al., in Matachi (2006)

Be that as it may, capacity building is **the process of developing an organisation's strength and sustainability**. More than just important, it is essential for an organisation's growth and sustainability. Little wonder then for the persistent call by development agencies and governments for greater involvement of cooperatives and other self-help organisations in capacity building and capacity development processes.

Strengthening Capacity Building in Cooperatives

Success of cooperative business model in a competitive environment depends to a large extent on the availability of appropriate and unique activities that will strengthen its capacity (Nwankwo, Abdulahi & Onwuchekwa, 2017). Capacity, in this sense, is the ability of cooperative organisation to perform and rationalize its resources towards the attainment and sustenance of cooperative goals.

Therefore, it is necessary to explore possible capacity building examples in the three primary areas where a cooperative can focus on to build capacity: individual, society and environment/Systemic.

i. Successful capacity building implementation should begin at the **individual level**, where capacity building activities increase the cooperative member's knowledge and skill. An individual who's been empowered to facilitate change can impact their organisation and their community, and they can further work to effect environment or systemic change. At the individual level, examples of capacity building activities include:

(a) **Training:** One-on-one or group training, whether face-to-face or online, can increase personal knowledge and skills surrounding an issue. Individuals receive the tools they

need to take meaningful actions and advocate and help educate others in their organisation, community, or personal sphere.

(b) **Mentorships:** Mentoring provides intensive, personalized guidance and builds knowledge and skills. By learning from those with expertise and experience, mentees can gain confidence and build personal and professional networks.

ii. At the **organisation level**, capacity building activities in cooperative societies may focus on shoring up sustainability, improving governance, supporting collaboration, or strengthening infrastructure. The entire activities have a common goal of strengthening the skills, resources, and abilities that allow the cooperative, its members and workers to grow and thrive. Examples of capacity building activities at the organisation level include:

(a) **Business development. The focus should be overall cooperative business performance and functioning capabilities, as well as the ability of the cooperative to adapt to change.**

(b) **Fundraising: Under this, the techniques of raising funds for cooperative business and other expenses are emphasized. Capacity building activities that focus on fundraising lead to improved sustainability. This may include training on fundraising techniques, fiscal management, or developing skills. Therefore, reaching out to affluent members of the community**

(c) **Hiring new people or seeking members with expertise:** Recruiting (and retaining) staff or member volunteers with relevant knowledge and expertise mean they can then pass their knowledge to the rest of the organisation (both staff and members).

(d) **Forging partnerships with other**

societies: This could be in form of vertical or horizontal collaborative relationships with other primary, secondary and apex cooperatives.

(e) **Investing in new IT capacity:** New technological innovations can cut down on busywork, freeing staff to do more important tasks. If applicable, new IT systems or platforms represent a smart investment in the cooperative's future.

At the **systemic level**, capacity building **emphasizes the overall policy framework in which member and cooperative organisations operate and interact with** the external environment. Included at this level would be the various cooperative laws, cooperative regulations and cooperative byelaws. Capacity building at this level will also focus on lobbying legislators and policy makers for favourable laws and policies that could promote and enhance cooperative development.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING FOR YOUTHS AND WOMEN IN COOPERATIVE

i. Youths in Cooperative

The cooperative form of enterprise provides young people a means to create their own employment, find jobs with enterprises that often align themselves with their own values, and participate as member-owners of enterprises where their voice is heard. An increasing interest has been observed in recent years on how cooperatives can, amongst other things, be a concrete tool in the hands of young people for improving their employment conditions and access to entrepreneurship. It is through the full inclusion of young cooperators in the intrinsic practices made available by the cooperative movement, such as commitment to training and democratic governance, that the survival and sustainability of cooperatives can be

ensured through generations.

Capacity building for young people should necessarily focus on the following:

1. Recognize and emphasize the importance of youth participation in cooperative activities. Skills and knowledge enhancement is paramount here.

2. Improve employment prospects of youths within the scope of the digital transformation to provide access to demand-orientated skills development in selected innovative, digital and non-formal training vocations, including virtual vocations.

3. **Establish regular seminars and workshops with the aim of influencing the youths' attitude and perceptions toward a paradigm shift to cooperating thinking.** Clearly, changing the way youths think in this digital era is definitely not something that can be accomplished in a few days. To achieve this, the cooperative will likely need longer term activities, such as mentoring or a series of exchange visits.

ii. Women in Cooperative

Building the capacity of cooperative women is an indispensable strategy for enhancing gender equality, and improving their livelihoods. When women are living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, they can reach their full potential, contributing their skills to the workforce and can raise happier and healthier children.

1. Cooperatives should respond to the practical and strategic needs of women; provide organisational effective means for members; work on improving their standard of living through respectable employment opportunities, savings, credit, health, housing, social services, education and

training; provide opportunities to participate in and influence economic activities; and allow them to achieve equality and change the bias of state institutions toward specific groups.

2. Cooperatives capacity building programmes should help women to participate in the activities of income-maximizing projects by organizing their work in a flexible manner, while respecting the multiple roles of women in society. Zain (2014) informs us how cooperative movement in Egypt has taught women practical cooperation and on how the pooling of otherwise meager resources had multiplied the women's economic means. This empowering lesson has demonstrated how cooperative can confront seemingly insurmountable obstacles to their well-being. The components of this collective force specifically include:

- Working to alleviate the impact of poverty resulting from the market disorientation of the COVID pandemic, but working to liberate its members from the control and exploitation of private capital; mobilizing members to manage their economic interests collectively not on the basis of the size of property, but on the basis of one member, one vote; and
- (a) Improve employment prospects of women cooperators within the scope of a digital transformation to provide access to demand-orientated skills development in selected innovative, digital and non-formal training vocations, including virtual vocations.
 - (b) Through collective means, cooperatives could enable the empowerment of women wage earners and heads of households and the most marginalized groups

in the society.. Through capacity building, cooperative development efforts can serve the interest of women to achieve a real change, as well as enhancing their capability to innovate, and find solutions for local problems and maximize the scattered capacity into a social and economic force.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The economic and social disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is devastating. Millions of enterprises face an existential threat. Nearly half of the world's 3.3 billion global workforce is at risk of losing their livelihoods. Cooperatives play an important role in delivering services to those in need within the communities.

For cooperatives, Capacity building efforts are very crucial in increasing their effectiveness and addressing problems associated with limited administrative and organisational capacity. By providing technical assistance, training, and grant funds, the functioning of the cooperatives is enhanced and ultimately the outcomes are improved.

Capacity-building efforts are particularly needed at the individual, organisation, and systemic levels and must cater for the needs of youths and women who are obviously likely to be the most affected by the fall outs of the COVID 19 pandemic. Evidence in the literature gives high hopes that the cooperative is well- positioned to offer capacity training and other services that could bring out members from the morass of the pandemic. However, **despite their history and the mounting evidence that they are viable enterprises that can play a leading role in this respect, there is unease about cooperative effectiveness in some development circles. Reasons for such include**

perceived government paternalism, imposition and control, lack of solid data and unrealistic expectations (Esim, 2013). Cooperatives as value and principle-driven ethical enterprises can provide critical capacity building and socio economic services to their members and communities, given the right conditions.

Nevertheless, governments at various levels play and will continue to play a key role in the capacity building efforts of the cooperative movement. To be more effective in this regard, the state's essential role will be to create a favourable statutory climate which facilitates the development of economically viable cooperative enterprises, and minimises the bureaucratic procedures for the establishment, registration and regulation of cooperatives.

Internally, managers and leaders of cooperatives must receive appropriate education and training to prepare and strengthen them in the task of imparting knowledge, enhancing skills and changing attitudes among cooperative members. Externally, legislation and policies are needed to allow cooperative enterprises to function as autonomous, independent, member-owned, democratic enterprises. Until these are done our optimism must have a limitation clause.

Thank you.

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**CAPACITY BUILDING FOR YOUTH AND WOMEN IN
COOPERATIVES IN COVID AAND POST-COVID ERA (NORTHERN
PERSPECTIVE)**

LEAD PAPER PRESENTED BY:

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INTRODUCTION

I sincerely appreciate the gesture and privilege extended to me to stand before this gathering of erudite scholars, respected professionals and technocrats in Science and Technology to present a Paper. I most heartedly appreciate the conference organizers choosing such a relevant, topical theme and considering me worthy of this privilege to address you. I firmly intend to utilize the opportunity to share my thoughts on issues that I hope will stimulate further insightful discussions, policy intervention and corporate action for an overall meaningful and positive impact on our women and youth in cooperatives. Hence, the theme of this National Conference on Cooperative Business Analytics and Digitalization in COVID and Post COVID Era is pertinent considering the enamours challenges posed by the Virus across the country.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 Pandemic originated from an outbreak in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, as declared by the WHO on March 11, 2020. Its adverse effects were unnoticed until the report was widespread in other countries, including Nigeria, on February 27, 2020. Surprisingly, several African people do not believe in its negative consequences to every spear of human life. To control the

spread of Coronavirus, people were restricted from movement, public gathering, and physical contact was discouraged. Further, public places were locked down to limit its spread, resulting in severe economic impacts and contraction of the world economy.

The lockdown prevented physical communication between youth in various institutions from Primary to institutions of higher learning and their Lecturers, so student interaction was affected, resulting in a change in students' attitudes toward academic activities. Furthermore, the lockdown caused by the Pandemic has affected students' morale toward engaging in academics-related activities. Thus, students would not graduate at the expected time. Thus, the number of youths out of school would increase with overall negative consequences if not controlled.

As many countries declare lockdown as preventing measures in the wave of COVID-19 Pandemic, economic severe activities and livelihoods rapidly decrease, leading to the healthcare crisis and social loss epidemics. In the North, with the physical distancing, their traditional channels (farming & petty trading) of income are broken, several others stranded away from their homes, without proper shelter and supplies, and often without the capacity and awareness to prevent the Virus exposure.

Amongst the worst hit is the informal sector workers, women and youths who bore the impact of economic crises, resulting in the inability of farmers to take their produce to the market for sale due to the shutdown of the markets. Shopkeepers took advantage of the crises and hiked prices for sanitary/ health products and other basic needs. This is a setback for non-working women who do not have somebody to care for them and their dependent children. Regrettably, Low-income earners, cleaners and casual workers were sacked, others relieved of the job for the shutdown duration.

The Pandemic has posed a severe threat to the lives of 1.9 million IDPs in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states mainly due to the highly congested living environment characterized by the excessive prevalence of comorbidities, including chronic malnutrition and poor WASH conditions and endemic malaria. The positive COVID-19 cases reported in the Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states have significantly reduced compared with other parts of Nigeria. In Kano, the Pandemic severely affected the Professorial cadre of the academic community and the elderly amongst the populace. According to the UNDP, 2020 report, as of December 2020, a total of 1,431 confirmed COVID-19 cases (Adamawa (424), Borno (806), Yobe (201)) had been recorded, including 69 deaths, 242 active cases and 1,120 (78%) recoveries in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states. These were attributed to high population, high poverty rate, lack of good quality basic service infrastructure (health, WASH, shelter etc.), continued displacement due to the insurgency causing congestion in existing IDP camps, and no means of livelihood.

Approximately 1.723 billion youths have been affected by the school closure.

According to the UNESCO monitoring report, as of April 21, 2020, 191 countries have implemented nationwide closures, and five have implemented local closures, impacting about 98.4 per cent of the world's student population. In addition, on March 23 2020, Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) cancelled all its regulated examinations for the May/June 2020 series across all countries; International Baccalaureate exams were also cancelled. While some students reported that they enjoyed online classes during the lockdown, most reported a lack of motivation and adverse attitudes towards online learning as barriers to their academic success.

During COVID-19 lockdown, the unpleasant family environments were identified as significant reasons students felt disconnected from their academics. Indeed, the COVID-19 Pandemic complicated the lives of everyone, particularly the academia, who always relied on the gathering of persons to teach and disseminate knowledge. The need for social distancing, legal restrictions on meetings, travel difficulties, and financial uncertainty constituted major impediments to higher education conferences.

Consequently, as of July 2, 2021, the Federal Government extended the travel ban on Brazil, Turkey, India, and South Africa. It, thus, signifies the continued threat of the Virus to Nigerians. In lieu of the Delta version of the Virus, the coronavirus pandemic safety protocol has been reviewed with steeper precautionary/health and safety protocols guide. Those who believed in the Pandemic's conspiracy theory should rethink and recall that this is not the first time such a pandemic occurred in Nigeria and globally. The Nigerian public places

and institutions of learning are avenues for youths gathering and interactions. Hence, the need to work out modalities aside from the Federal and State Government's health and safety protocols of keeping the community/school environment, students and lecturers safe from the Virus.

Fundamentally, one may ask, with or without lockdown, are our hospitals equipped with the required health facilities, especially in the rural areas, to provide first aid services to the people? Did COVID-19 Centres work for the patients? What happens to the Centres Post COVID-19 pandemic? Based on the preceding background and the report that Nigeria faces a fourth wave of COVID-19 infections, it becomes paramount for this conference to address the consequences of the Virus to the teeming youth and women at home and in the market or farms in a time of Pandemic, natural disaster and insecurity in Nigeria.

Economic and Food Security in crises period

Security is a critical issue with diverse dimensions that attracts different meanings to scholars, analysts, security agencies, policymakers, and cooperative organizations. It concerns peace, safety, happiness, human and physical resources protection and respect for human dignity. Besides, it involves the ability of a country to uphold an independent identity away from hostility, harm, fear, anxiety, oppression, danger, poverty etc.

Economic Security

It assured vital income for individuals, mostly from productive and remunerative work or a publicly financed safety net. Most people in Nigeria are economically unsecured due to the country's economic situation. This threat leads to political

hostilities and other forms of violence. The most critical threats to economic security are poverty, unemployment, indebtedness, lack of income. In this regard, the political class continue to neglect the engagement of our youth into the productive sectors of the economy by way of real investment in agriculture, construction, telecommunication etc. Most of our youths in the North-West are used by politicians as thugs, security guards and tools for attacking, harming and killing political opponents.

Food Security

Food security requires that people have both physical and economic access to basic food. The main threats to food security include hunger, famines, lack of physical and economic access to essential food, and money/purchasing power. According to the UN, the importance is to tackle the challenges associated with access to assets, work, and stable income (economic security). According to the , "Over 750 million people in the world's 80 least peaceful countries experience food insecurity, compared to slightly over 100 million in the high peace countries. Recent food security projections by the UN Food and Agriculture Organizations (FAO) show that almost all scenarios highlight an increase in the number of people that will face hunger and undernourishment in the coming decades to 2050. The COVID-19 Pandemic and the associated economic consequences will accelerate adverse impacts on food security".

Furthermore, the UN reported that "over 3.2 million individuals are displaced, with 4.4 million food-insecure people at crisis and emergency levels and millions of civilians subjected to extreme hardships." According to the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Edward Kallon, "in North-East alone, 13.1 million people

live in areas affected by conflict, out of whom 8.7 million need immediate assistance.

Besides, it was reported that over 7.5 million people need humanitarian assistance across the Borno Adamawa and Yobe states due to the ongoing insurgency that has made the security situation volatile and unpredictable, making it one of the most severe humanitarian crises. People in need of assistance in the North-East (NE) rose from 7.9 million in 2020 to 10.6 million commencement of COVID-19. It is expected that 5.1 million people risk being seriously good unsecured between June and August 2021, compared to 2016-2017, when famine was imminent over Borno State . Beyond, North-East, North-Western has recorded severe food insecurity due to banditry and kidnapping for ramson, depriving peasant farmers of going to farms. The consequence would result in food shortages, inflation, and an increase in the crime rate.

The assembly of erudite schoolers, professionals/practitioners should chart a way forward that would bequeath hope for Nigerian women and youths, the academic community and assurances to the international community of the safety and ease of doing business in Nigeria. The conference should remodel a proper assessment of the role of productive youths and women in the informal sector as a solution to the economic and social challenges facing Nigeria.

Women in Cooperatives and economy

Several studies on women and cooperatives covering gender equality and women's empowerment issues with mixed cooperatives are available in the literature. Such studies focus on women and cooperatives from countries, regions, and communities worldwide ; hence, the focus

of this paper is on Northern Nigeria.

; argued that studies about women and cooperatives mostly ignored the organizational structure but raised the issue of collective work organized in accordance with the cooperative principles. Concerning this, the care provided through cooperative research has revealed persuasive findings that cooperative knowledge and management skills revolving around financing constitute impediments to the growth and survival of the informal cooperative structures . Sometimes, these studies concentrate on using cooperative values (self-help, democracy, equity, equality, solidarity, honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others) not on an incorporated cooperative, but essentially on analyzing formal cooperatives.

When we talk of women in Nigerian settings, we say more about their care, concern, and relation and work. A woman would first do wherever she finds herself to look for someone to talk to, even in a bus/Taxi. Unlike men, whenever a woman nakedness is exposed, other women come and cover her with their rappers immediately until she is fully protected and against all forms of embracement. To me, this is a sign of teamwork or natural cooperation. The 2011 World Bank report reveals that women between 15 and 64 years in Nigeria engaged in one form of employment.

Presently, in northern Nigeria, the women in their various households are fully involved in one form of economic activity or the other. They participate in marketing activities and significantly contribute to the economic development of society. Equally, women are in the Micro-Enterprise businesses, employing over 84% of Nigeria's labour force with a

48.47% contribution to GDP. Thus, Women entrepreneurs constitute more than 50% of micro-enterprises businesses with less financial support and collateral to secure a bank loan.

One of the sustainable development goals aimed is to build democratic participation of all gender. It further tries to ensure women's full participation in the Management of cooperatives, affords career development for women. Again, it would enable access for women to cooperative resources, education, financial services, and child care. Although women are considerably involved in agriculture with a steady increase in membership in agricultural cooperatives, their numbers remain unnoticed in the leadership positions. To ensure the availability of funds, women form saving contribution schemes in traditional names of Adashi, Esusu and Ajo, respectively. At the end of the monthly contribution, the total sum is rotated among all the group members.

PERCEPTION OF YOUTH COOPERATIVES

The general perception about the youth refers to people between the age of 18 and 40 years. But we find people aged 50 and above being categorized as youth who dominate programmes meant for the youths in Nigeria. Thus, a general mistrust seems too apparent in cooperatives due to overaged people meddling into the youths' affairs and corruption. Consequently, the cooperatives in Nigeria are poorly managed and do not engage the right people in managing the meagre/limited resources. On the other hand, the well-known and focused cooperative societies disappeared with the fall-down of socialist and communist countries that were replaced with the capitalism of free-market economy and survival of the fittest.

In most North, cooperatives strive only when a new government funding programme on small and medium scale businesses or agriculture that require group guarantee would begin to mobilize membership. Again, there was evidence of cooperative executives mismanaging facilities acquired through the societies and a lack of transparency that gave rise to mistrust and insolvencies of many of them.

The most disheartened is the abandonment of the actual cooperative movement and self-help groups in Northern Nigeria. In the early 1960s and late 1980, Northern Nigeria remained an agrarian society with vast land for rainy and dry session farming. The region was known internationally as the producer and marketer of crops, cotton, hide, and skin, who later produced consumables (Sweets, Biscuits, Confectionaries etc.). These industries spread across the region, with several migrant workers moving freely and well-integrated amongst their host communities. The factory workers began to lose work due to the closure of factories due to epileptic power supply, changes in the economic policies, unfavourable exchange rates, frequent military coups, and ongoing retrenchment of workers. The International Airport was closed for foreign airlines with Cargo flights moved to another International Airport. The Four Industrial Estates in Kano closed down some moved to the South-West and out of the country.

Further, Kaduna State is well known with Textile factories with a steady supply of cotton (raw materials) from Gusau, Funtua and Gombe became a history. In Plateau State, the home of Nasco Biscuits and Jos Foods is another sad story. Other constituent states in the North were towns and Local Government headquarters then. They remained civil servants states with no

political or economic agenda for industrialization, talking less about creating jobs for the youth. However, the emergence of the new cooperative trend among the civil servants is yielding results and providing financial assistance to members in need.

However, many cooperative organizations do not observe the cooperative objectives, regulation, finance, and regular auditing and meetings. Another challenge is meeting membership criteria, initial and subsequent subscription payments, as a collective effort to join the cooperative makes it challenging to join a cooperative for many rural youths. This conference should fashion out new strategies of reinvigoration the objectives of cooperative in the country. Additionally, new ways of encouraging cooperative effort and interest should be designed and advocated in our youth.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

As a policy, the Federal Government, through the Central Bank of Nigeria, reviewed its micro-credit policy of empowering the poor and the less privileged of our societies through Microfinance Banks/Institutions. The objective is to access micro-credit facilities without collateral, stringent loan conditions, and affordable interest. Unfortunately, many of these banks contravened the policy through unauthorized activities; some collapsed, liquidated, and their licenses revoked.

Although, few microfinance banks are doing well in providing micro-credit facilities to organized women societies. In Kano, for instance, Women Microfinance Bank, Rakib Microfinance Bank, Kano West, Wudil and Danbatta Microfinance

Banks are well known for their credit support loans to women and low-income earners. Besides, many are yet to meet the CBN recapitalization requirements, signifying the possibility of losing their operating license. If that happened, women cooperatives would be significant economic and financial losers.

Similarly, the Enterprise and Empowerment Programme, GEEP, Market Moni scheme targeted smaller micro-businesses like the market women (traders), petty traders, artisans and the youths who are promised collateral-free loans were uncomfortable managing the programmes. According to a World Bank Report, when women invest in a business venture, they can earn income, save and reinvest a large percentage of it back into their families. It thus signifies the multiplier effect and impact on the social and economy of the communities. An increasing damming trend of unemployment among the youths is a significant challenge Nigeria faces. If empowered, cooperatives can save Nigeria from youths' restiveness through productive engagement, reducing unemployment.

It is pertinent to note that various States and Local Government Councils in the North, on different occasions, introduced one form of Youths empowerment Programmes with lots of incentives ranging from free training costs, monthly stipends to working capital for the economic self-reliance of the youths. Unfortunately, many beneficiaries abandoned the training; some mid-way others disposed of the facilities/working tools for a token fee and returned to square one. This has been a recurring event without any progress. The fact remains that the youths don't see the programme as an innovative and productive venture towards

their economic survival and aims to remove them from poverty. They consider it to be part of their national share from the corrupt politicians that are irregularly distributed.

However, one would think that given the population of the North and the number of women in the region, women are actively involved in agriculture or farming. The majority of women engaged in agriculture are primarily found in a large part of the North East, few in the North-West, a more significant percentage in the North-Central. Consequently, the statistics would be different on trade and commerce. Most of the Hausa/Fulani women are not very active in the core farming business. Still, they have been involved in home-based cattle rearing, partly in harvesting the agricultural produce and processing. Few of them engage in the marketing of the products, unlike in the North-Central, Kaduna South, Gombe South, Borno-South, and some part of Adamawa States. Therefore, this conference should reinvigorate the concept and practice of cooperative organization in developing women and society through a well-articulated advocacy programme targeted at Northern women and youths irrespective of the trade.

POST COVID-19 ERA

Before COVID-19 Pandemic, Nigeria spent 0.5 per cent in 2017 of its GDP on health which is lower than the sub-Saharan average of 2.4%, thus, resulting in higher households health expenditure by 10%. Correspondingly, Nigeria spent 0.3% of its GDP on social assistance, again lower than the regional Sub-Saharan average of 1.5% and 1.4% of its income group in 2016. In 2018 alone, Nigeria recorded an increase in government revenue to 8.5% of GDP. This is lower than the Sub-Saharan

regional average of 20.6% and the average income group of 27.3%. However, the data on public spending on social assistance, out-of-pocket household expenditure, and government spendings on health could not be accessed during the COVID-19 Pandemic period of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021.

Consequently, the Post-COVID-19 Pandemic continues to interrupt Nigeria's youths' employment, including fragilities in the financial sector with slight improvements on employees moving to small-scale, informal businesses with unstable retail and trading income. Again, Nigeria faces developmental challenges ranging from exploring non-oil revenue sources, massive investment in infrastructure, focus on public sector financial management, and vigorously addressing poverty reduction amongst the Nigerian youths.

The report emphasized the absence of job opportunities for the youths as poverty in the country. In addition, inequality amongst the citizenry, social and political unrest is likely to rise if unchecked. Subsequently, the reviewed economic policies, global oil prices increase and eased COVID-19 restrictions indicate a renewed hope for Nigerians as the economy grows steadily in 2021. It further suggests that 40% of Nigerians (83 million people) lived below the poverty line, which is to rise by 12 million people between 2019 and 2023, while 25% (53 million) were susceptible.

Furthermore, the rate of economic recovery is expected to be slow, with slight GDP growth in 2021. Nevertheless, the GDP per capita; would continue declining, with productivity contributing to growth throughout this period. Unless proactive measures are taken to attract investment in critical infrastructure and diversify its

economy, private investors are joining to create adequate employment the slow growth would continue. Otherwise, the country would remain in perpetual poverty with an insignificant growth pace.

Until policymakers realize the danger facing Nigerians on poverty, unemployment, security, education and higher individual and group spending on health, investment and economic growth would be a mirage and achieving sustainable development goals unattainable. The insecurity of the country would further deteriorate to an unimaginable level.

THE WAY FORWARD

1. Although the fourth wave of COVID-19 is with us, society's combined efforts through social support and sincere empowerment programme aimed at improving the economic wellbeing of the Youths and women during and after the COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 Era should be addressed by this conference.
2. Many Nigerians, particularly the Youths, seems to believe in conspiracy theories about the coronavirus pandemic. Hardly Youths observe COVID-19 protocols using the face mask, social distancing, self-submission for the vaccine shots, handshaking etc.; we should submit ourselves to experimental protocols; we must endeavour to save our lives and save other people's life.
3. We must improve our national policies and training techniques to foster more significant entrepreneurial talent and increase success in harnessing technology for growth and competitiveness in the youths/learners.
4. Critical information is missing to explain the mismatch between supply and demand for graduates; planning

reform would be difficult without policy articulation. Thus, very little collaboration between industry and training institutions occurs for curricular and policy reform or joint research on the relevant courses and programmes that would engage our youths in the productive sectors of the economy.

5. If Nigerians continue to ignore poverty challenges, unemployment, insecurity, poor educational standard and higher individual and group spending on health, investment and economic growth would be a mirage and achieving sustainable development goals is unattainable.
6. There is a shortage of academic literature on the role of cooperatives in women and youth empowerment in major disciplines. Researchers should conduct research precisely on cooperatives and their support for youths and women's social and economic empowerment.
7. There is a lack of universal and standardized data about women and youth participation in cooperatives. Thus, researchers should collect quarterly and annual, reliable and disaggregated data about women and cooperatives in Nigeria.
8. Given the numerous challenges women encountered, the Institute should develop indices, tools, indicators, and social or economic measures on the challenges women face in the cooperative and informal sector to measure the impact on youth and women's empowerment.
9. The Institute, academics and practitioners should conduct a study focusing on the emerging women's cooperative sector in Nigeria to obtain the statistical data on women

participating, information describing women's cooperatives and patronage. That would assist in understanding the actual of how women and youth cooperatives are supported.

Conclusion

Given the changing labour market, today's youths expect to have work lives that require them to be more agile and ready to undertake upskilling and reskilling. Over time, we continue to advocate for skills acquisition against paper certification, yet Governments at various levels employ only those with certificates. Even the certificates are rated and discriminated against without regard to competency or ability to perform the expected roles. Therefore, the earlier we realize the danger facing this country, the better for all of us. Training in our tertiary institutions failed to integrate significant work experience opportunities into the learning experience, forcing the graduates to enter the labour market unprepared. This makes companies invest heavily in further training, and a significant number of those companies tend to avoid that by poaching experienced employees. The Management of our tertiary education should share their human resource assets and knowledge across institutional and international boundaries, thus allowing for collaboration and linkages between institutions and the industry. Until and unless we recognize skills and competency, we shall continue to produce unwanted graduates by the industry, and Youths unemployment would flourish spontaneously.

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Cooperative Enterprise: A Panacea for Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery

By

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Abstract

The need for accelerated economic recovery from COVID-19 pandemic economic crisis which resulted in a unique global recession through cooperatives informs this paper. This paper highlights the potential of cooperatives in combating the negative economic impact of COVID-19, both at short and long terms. This paper investigated the economic transmission channels through which the shocks will adversely affect the economy and the macroeconomic implications. The paper posited that cooperative could bring economic recovery and even building a more balanced economy through cooperative networks, investment promotion, risk mitigation, improved access to finance, cooperative resilience and enterprise development. Policy implications are drawn on cooperatives strengthening its wealth re-generation sustainability and moving towards a growth- and job-orientated strategy.

Keywords: - COVID-19, Cooperative Enterprise, Economy Recovery, resilience, Employment creation

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic is a global crisis with profound impact for all aspects of the economy and society, some of which are irreversible. From March 2020, Covid-19 became a global pandemic and more than 3.9 billion people; about half of the world population, in 90 countries and territories were under lockdowns (Euronews, 2020). The shock of the pandemic has resulted in a unique global recession which is the deepest in eight decades (World Bank, 2020). The International Monetary Fund forecasts a 4.4% contraction in global GDP in 2020 (IMF, 2020) and the World Trade Organization forecasts a 9.2% decline of world trade volume (WTO, 2020). UNCTAD estimates foreign direct

investment (FDI) flows to decrease by 30–40% in 2020–2021 (UNCTAD, 2020). The lockdowns and social distancing restrictive measures also resulted in the shutdown of some businesses, reduced working hours and mass job losses in many countries, including Nigeria. Although economic and labour market indicators showed improvement from August 2020 when some restrictions were lifted, most of the affected countries, have not returned to normal (IMF, 2020). Governments in these countries, at different levels, are still seeking effective measures to control further spread of the disease and to restore their economy. The COVID-19 pandemic is a black swan, changing the way the global economy

operates (Umiński and Borowicz, 2021). The sharp drop in international trade and supply disruptions were the first signals of the impending pandemic economic crisis. The broken global production linkages will result in deeper regional economic integration and strengthened cooperative links within (Enderwick & Buckley, 2020; Ernst & Young, 2020). The pandemic encourages countries to move towards being less reliant on others because, in the wake of the pandemic, individual EU countries closed their borders. The economies of the 36 states in Nigeria are so much interrelated through trade and the national and state lockdowns evoked serious welfare consequences.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic can be interpreted using the concept of vulnerability, as discussed by Turner et al. (2003) in three dimensions: social, economic, and ecological, in terms of exposure, sensitivity, and resilience. Economic vulnerability determines the extent to which the economy is affected by external factors (including shocks) (Briguglio, Cordina, Farrugia, & Vella, 2009). These shocks may result, among others, from changes to trade policy, exchange rate fluctuations, or significant changes in commodity prices (Leichenko, 2018; Xiaolan, Jing and Liming, 2020; Umiński and Borowicz, 2021).

This study discusses the impact of COVID-19 on the economy of the Nation, Nigeria, cooperative enterprises, and contributions of cooperative to economic recovery and growth. The paper is divided into six parts. Section 2 discusses cooperative enterprise with cooperative, its principles and values. The next section presents the past economic crises in Nigeria and the contributions of cooperative. Section 4 discusses the macroeconomic impacts of COVID-19

pandemic, as well as the effects of COVID-19 pandemic from Nigerian context. Section 5 presents the pathways to economic recovery through cooperatives while the last part presents conclusion and recommendation.

2.1 Cooperative: Its Principles and Values

A cooperative is a group-based and member-owned business formed for economic and social development in any sector. The International Cooperative Alliance defines a cooperative as: *an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.*

From Roy perspectives, Cooperative as a business enterprise voluntarily organised, operating at cost, owned, capitalised, and controlled by member patrons pursuing a common goal and sharing risk and benefit proportionally to their degree of participation.

Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Cooperatives operate with the following principles

- 1. Voluntary and Open Membership:** Open to all without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.
- 2. Democratic Member Control:** One member, one vote.
- 3. Member Economic Participation:** Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of the

cooperative. Economic benefits are returned to members, reinvested in the co-op, or used to provide member services.

4. Autonomy and Independence:

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members.

5. Education, Training, and Information:

Cooperatives provide education and training so members can contribute to the development of their cooperatives and inform others about the benefits of cooperation.

6. Cooperation among Cooperatives:

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, regional, national and international structures.

7. Concern for the Community: Working together for sustainable community development through policies accepted by members.

Ownership and control by members, who usually have one vote per person, is a key aspect of cooperatives. Cooperatives differ from other forms of enterprise in that their owners invest to create a business that will benefit them through their patronage, not from appreciation in the value of, or return on, their equity. Cooperatives raise equity or savings from their members and are designed to provide services to their users as their priority. Cooperatives return surplus revenues to members proportionate to their use of the cooperative. Cooperatives are:

User-owned – users finance the cooperative; *User-controlled* – an elected Board of Directors serves as the link between the membership and the manager; and *User-benefited* – members profit when patronage refunds are returned to members based on the amount of business conducted with the cooperative.

Summarily, it is important to know that

cooperatives are not just business enterprise operated by the people for themselves, but business enterprises established and run in a special way. Below are the differences between cooperatives and other business enterprises, corporations, or non-profit organizations.

1. Cooperative is a union of persons to supply themselves with goods and services at cost while others are union of capital as an investment to earn profit or targeted goals

2. Cooperative business is organized and conducted as a mutual service for the benefit of the members and not for the benefit of the cooperative as legal entity, but business in other enterprises is done for express purposes like realising the trading profit

3. Cooperative is purposed to provide service to members on sound economic lines and avoiding losses while others are not.

4. In cooperatives shares are identified by person but in other enterprises shareholding may even be anonymous, that is, shares are freely transferable and may be held by anyone.

5. Surplus belongs to the members in cooperatives while surplus earnings are the property of the organization

6. In cooperatives, control is democratic but in other enterprises, control is equal based on the number of shares held

7. The selling price in cooperatives is a figure containing a margin of business safety above cost while the surplus constitutes an excess charge but in other enterprises, the selling price is normally the cost price and the surplus constitute a trading profit.

8. Cooperatives promote and assist community development while others may engage in selected community philanthropic activities

2.2 Cooperative Enterprises

This section provides insight into cooperative enterprises through cooperatives economic structure and performance. cooperatives are organizations that have some features in common with conventional companies, such as conducting an economic activity, but are also characterised by some special features derived by the fact that the main aim of a cooperative is to satisfy the non-economic needs of their members who jointly own and democratically control the organization (Barea and Monzón, 2006; International Labour Organisation, 2017; Borzaga, Calzaroni, Carini, and Lori, 2019).

In addition, cooperatives often produce goods and services of general interest that public organisations and profit companies are not willing to or interested in generating, or cannot generate for various reasons, including low profitability, market failures induced by information asymmetries, and positive externalities (Borzaga, 2012; Borzaga et. al, 2019).

Hannan (2014) explains that cooperatives are part of the market economy but possess a multidimensionality that enables them to perform in market economies while providing members with a range of tangible and intangible benefits that have the potential to enhance their socio-economic position and voice.

Birchall (2013) states that cooperative model may potentially be stronger than other businesses during economic recessions. In this way, cooperatives must be able to be more resilient than other types of business, since **resilience** can be defined as the ability of the system to withstand either market or environmental shocks without losing the capacity to allocate resources efficiently or to deliver essential services (Perrings, 2006). Several studies

show better social and economic performances of cooperatives than other businesses (Cheney et al., 2014; Lambru and Petrescu, 2014; Bentivogli and Viviano, 2012; Zamagni, 2012; Costa and Carini, 2016; Carini and Carpita, 2014), but there are counter examples, and the crisis effect may vary by sector and by market context (Birchall, 2013).

3. Past Economic Crises Experience in Nigeria and Contributions of Cooperatives

Literature revealed that economic crises or recessions are caused by market corrections, market failure, external trade and price shocks, political instability, and civil unrest through protests (Bermeo and Bartels, 2014; Giugni and Grasso, 2016; Ozili, 2020; Abdurashed, 2021).

Economic crises are not new in Nigeria; the country witnessed two economic crises within a decade (Ozili, 2020). Sanusi, 2010 reported that the 2009 economic crisis recession was caused by a combination of the after-effect of the 2007-8 global financial crisis, poor loan underwriting process, bad risk management practices and poor corporate governance of Nigerian banks; Banks were a major cause of the 2009 economic crisis (Ozili, 2020). On the other hand, while Adeniran and Sidiq, 2018 revealed that the 2016 economic crisis was caused by unexpected decline in oil price which led to a sharp drop in oil revenue which severely affected Nigeria's foreign reserve. This led to massive balance of payment deficits combined with an already high debt burden which plunged Nigeria into its second recession in a decade.

While in 2020, public health crisis triggered an economic crisis in Nigeria, and this is different from other economic crises in Nigeria because the economic

agents that can help to revive the economy were unable to engage in economic activities due to fear of contracting the COVID-19 disease (Abdulrasheed, 2021). All these economic crises were accompanied with notable implications among which were increased unemployment rate, increased income inequality, collapse of many small and medium scale enterprises (Soininen et al, 2012; Ozili, 2020). Others were **crashed in the Nigeria's Capital Market, collapse of oil prices**, revenue contraction, risk of fallen in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI's) and Food Insecurity among others.

Notably, during the earlier two economic crises witnessed in Nigeria, cooperatives had played some catalytic roles that led to economic growth and social advancement. The instrumental contributions of cooperatives to transformational economic recovery of these periods were through three primary pathways:

- 1) **Economic Pathway** – alleviating poverty; stimulating, economic growth; improving incomes and creating value and investment opportunity along product supply chains
- 2) **Democratic Pathway** – providing a framework for democratic participation; providing firsthand experience with democratic governance, transparency and member participation and
- 3) **Social Pathway** – building social capital and trust; bridging ethnic, religious and political divides; and providing social services

4.1 Macroeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

Theoretically, a pandemic induces a downward negative shock on the real natural interest rate. This is because investment demand decreases due to excess capital per labour unit (that is, a

scarcity of labour being utilized), while savings flows increase due to either precautionary reasons or to replace lost wealth.

Considering real business cycle (RBC) model, COVID-19 supposes to leads to year-on-year contraction of GDP which will induce uncertainty (Baker, et al.). The macroeconomic expectations of COVID-19 on households primarily due to lockdowns, should lead to drops in consumption, employment, lower inflationary expectations, increased uncertainty, and lower mortgage payments (Coibion *et al.*, 2020).

Considering the role of global supply chains; the average decline in real GDP will constitute a major contraction in economic activity, with a large share attributed to disruptions in global supply chains (Bonadio *et al.*, 2020). Fall in worker productivity and a decline in labour supply which ultimately adversely affect firm revenue. The fall in revenue and the subsequent non-repayment of debt service obligations create a wave of corporate defaults, which might bring down financial intermediaries (Elenev *et al.*, 2020)

The minimalist economic model on COVID-19 leads to loss of productivity (Céspedes *et al.*, 2020) The vicious cycle will trigger the loss of productivity causing lower collateral values, in turn limiting the amount of borrowing activity, leading to decreased employment, and then lower productivity. This is an 'unemployment and asset price deflation doom loop'

Opportunity cost model assesses the opportunity cost of shutdowns in understanding the macroeconomic impact of COVID-19. Mulligan (2020) posited that COVID-19 extrapolates the welfare loss stemming from non-working days, the fall in labour-capital ratio resulting from the absence/layoff of workers, and the

resulting idle capacity of workplace. The macroeconomic effects are dead-weight losses stemming from fiscal stimulus, the replacement of normal import and export flows with black market activities, and the effect on non-market activities.

The economic impact of shocks such as pandemics is usually measured with aggregate time series data, such as industrial production, GDP growth, unemployment rate, and others like transaction-level household data. These datasets are available only after a certain lag

4.2 Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic from Nigerian Context

Pandemics are expected to have a severe negative impact on economic activities, at least in the short run. According to Jonas (2013), the impact ranges from: avoidance reaction due to social distancing measures (for example, individuals might forgo consumption and purchases of certain goods and services); small direct costs (e.g., hospitalization and medical costs); larger indirect costs (loss of labour, production); and offsetting and cascading effects (disruption of services, travel, and others).

Several studies tried to anticipate the economic loss from COVID-19 pandemic from both demand and supply side factors, but the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have not fallen with equal severity on all shoulders. Existing vulnerabilities have been exposed, and inequalities entrenched. Many of those with more limited means and protection, such as workers in informal employment or in diverse work arrangements, have been the least able to face the consequences of the crisis (ILO, 2020)

To understand the potential of negative economic impact of COVID-19: Brodeur

et.al. (2020) posited that it is important to understand the economic transmission channels through which the shocks will adversely affect the economy. According to Carlsson-Szlezak *et al.* (2020a) and Carlsson-Szlezak *et al.* (2020b), there are three main transmission channels. The first is the direct impact, which is related to the reduced consumption of goods and services. Prolonged lengths of the pandemic and the social distancing measures might reduce consumer confidence by keeping consumers at home, wary of discretionary spending and pessimistic about the long-term economic prospects. The second one is the indirect impact working through financial market shocks and their effects on the real economy. Household wealth will likely fall, savings will increase, and consumption spending will decrease further. The third consists of supply-side disruptions; as COVID-19 keeps production halted, it will negatively impact supply chains, labour demand, and employment, leading to prolonged periods of lay-offs and rising unemployment. COVID-19 pandemic causes a breakdown in the supply chains and the circular flows which have a cascading effect on the complex web of interconnected parties of employees, firms, suppliers, consumers, and financial intermediaries (Gourinchas, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 could also be noticed on the flows of income in the economy (Baldwin, 2020). First, households do not get paid and hence reduce their consumption and savings levels. The decreases in savings reduce investment and hence ultimately diminish the capital stock. Second, households reduce their demand for imports, which in turn reduces income for the rest of the World, and hence the country's exports decrease. Third, the demand/supply shocks

cause disruption in domestic and international supply chains. Fourth, all of the previous shocks and disruptions lead to a fall in output – causing reductions in the usage of the factors of production. In this case, labour is more affected than capital through reduced working hours or layoffs and hence lower earnings.

The list below summarily highlights the effects of COVID-19 on the global economic, more particularly the Nigerian economy.

- (a) It slows down the global economic activities
- (b) Distortion of usual consumption patterns
- (c) It results in Market anomalies
- (d) Fall in households' income (either rich or poor households) and increase in household's expenditure
- (e) Loss of jobs, thereby, causing high level of unemployment
- (f) Changing of jobs, moving from formal sector into less secure work in the informal sector
- (g) Widen-income inequalities
- (h) Disruption of education at all levels
- (i) Food insecurity among the vulnerable
- (j) Steeper decline in productivity amongst firms
- (k) Greater uncertainty

5. Pathways to Economic Recovery through Cooperatives after COVID-19

Economic recovery is the cycle stage following a recession that is characterized by a sustained period of improving economic activities. During, the economy recovery, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grows, incomes rise, and unemployment falls and as the economy rebounds. At this period, the economy undergoes a process of economic adaptation and adjustment to new conditions, including the factors that triggered the recession in the first place and

the new policies and rules.

It is also important to understand the processes that generate recoveries from economic crises. Carlsson-Szlezak *et al.* (2020a) explain different types of recovery after-shocks through the concept of shock geometry. There are three broad scenarios of economic recoveries, which we mention in ascending order of their severity. First, there is the most optimistic one labelled 'V-shaped', whereby aggregate output is displaced and quickly recovers to its pre-crisis path. Second, there is the 'U-shaped' path, whereby output drops swiftly but it does not return to its pre-crisis path. The gap between the old and new output path remains large.

Third, in the case of the very grim 'L-shaped' path, output drops, and growth rates continue to decline. The gap between the old and new output path continues to widen. Notably, Carlsson-Szlezak *et al.* (2020b) state that after previous pandemics, such as the 1918 Spanish Influenza, the 1958 Asian Influenza, the 1968 Hong Kong influenza, and the 2002 SARS outbreak, economies have experienced 'V-shaped' recoveries.

However, the COVID-19 economic recovery is not expected to be straightforward. This is because the effects on employment due to social distancing measures/lockdowns are expected to be much larger. According to Gourinchas (2020), during a short period, as much as 50 percent of the working population might not be able to find work. Moreover, even if no containment measures were implemented, a recession would occur anyway, fuelled by the precautionary and/or panic behaviour of households and firms faced with the uncertainty of dealing with a pandemic as well as with an inadequate public health response (Gourinchas, 2020).

Toward the end of 2020, the effects of COVID-19 were noticeable on Nigerian economic cycle with a marked slowdown in GDP value, even economic recession set-in in early 2021. The sharp slowdown in the economy was as a result of the decrease in demand for goods from abroad, impacting negatively on the manufacturing sector. Generally, COVID-19 pandemic led to a decline in employment, a decrease in household purchasing power and stagnation of consumption in real terms. At this post COVID-19 period, Cooperatives should react differently from other enterprises to cushion the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on Nigerian economic. Due to the ability of cooperatives as organizations to promote democracy and transparent management, cooperatives have an important role to play in building a more balanced economy (Stiglitz, 2009; Birchall, 2013). The reactions of cooperatives at this post COVID-19 period in recovery the Nigerian economy should include the following:

1. Cooperatives should maintain, and even increase, their levels of production and employment, to ensure their members' needs are satisfied, even when this is to the detriment of the cooperative's operating results. Cooperatives are expected to contribute more or largely to employment growth.
2. Presently Cooperatives should involve in Innovation and digitalization to cushion the effect of COVID-19 on economy. Innovation and digitalization are important competitive elements for enterprises, especially in a global context (Borzaga, Calzaroni, Carini, and Lori, 2019). Pandemic has accelerated digitalisation at both organisational and industry levels all over the world (McKinsey & Company,

2020). However, for digital innovations and technologies to be pervasive context of the Nigerian economy, they must be accessible to economic units that are relatively simple from an organizational standpoint, small in size and with limited economic and managerial resources. Cooperative is the only enterprise that fit into this standpoint.

3. Building cooperative networks in which indigenous entities are involved. Cooperative's network will enhance the effectiveness and maximise the outcome of innovation efforts. This will lower tariffs and reduce non-tariff barriers for a common market

4. Promoting investment among members from primary to tertiary level of cooperatives will ensure an effective economic recovery. In promoting investment priorities should be given to ensuring employment, livelihood, and food security, supporting enterprises and stabilising production chains.

5. Development of logistics systems related to risk mitigation

6. Improve access to finance without altering specific governance and control patterns in enterprises

7. Cooperatives should be more resilience to the crisis and enterprise development, such as internal restructuring dynamics, the maintenance and development of jobs and skills within the enterprises, the mutualisation of business development organizations, common financial instruments, and the clustering in horizontal business groups

8. Cooperative should **move towards a growth- and job-orientated strategy.** This requires embracing the perception that job-friendly policies have a positive effect on the economy and that the voice of finance should not drive policymaking. Unemployment represents the largest

single threat to quick economic recovery; therefore, cooperatives not only need stronger growth necessary for job creation, but expanding employment is now necessary for sustaining the recovery and bolstering long-term growth.

9. Cooperatives should continue and strengthen its wealth re-generation sustainability. **Generation of wealth** practised by cooperative combines economic interests with long-term social and environmental concerns. Therefore, cooperatives should make policies towards long-term generation of wealth as this allows equal redistribution of wealth which in turn, makes wealth re-generation sustainable.

10. Strengthen the competitiveness of cooperatives. In stimulating economic recovery and building back better, it will be important to strengthen the competitiveness of cooperatives by introducing functional financing mechanisms such as partial credit guarantees.

Along with the points highlighted above, cooperatives can really be a panacea to economic recovery, particularly, in the Nigerian context through the following ways:

a) Expand food assistance through consumer cooperatives at the local level. Institutional based cooperatives can involve in bulk purchase of food stuff and distribute among members at cooperative costs.

b) Support to poor and low-middle income group. This can be achieved by cooperative providing cash for work, skill training, job creation and social assistance programmes.

c) Continue assistance to family businesses to recover. Cooperative can achieve this through cash transfer program tailored to members' business especially the producer

and marketing cooperatives, information dissemination, on-demand registration and by linking members with complementary support.

d) Equipping members with skills. Cooperatives should prioritize individual members and their households for social assistance by up-skilling and re-skilling training opportunities.

e) Promote greater understanding of government support among members by developing a user-friendly medium with up-to-date information about business support programme from government.

f) Short-run income maintenance and subsidies to members' businesses. This can be achieved by cooperatives by providing enabling environment for SMSE' participation

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident that cooperatives at all levels are working towards contributing to economic recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though, COVID-19 had severe negative impacts on economic activities ranging from exposing vulnerabilities, entrenching inequalities, lost of jobs, breakdown in supply chains domestically and internationally, and distortion of usual production patterns of firms and consumption patterns of individuals and households.

Nevertheless, cooperatives have the potential to create employment, reduce inequalities, involve in innovation and digitalization, and promoting investment; all these have mitigation effects on the social and economic crises caused by COVID-19 pandemic and in no time, the economy will recover and bounce back.

It is therefore, recommended that cooperatives should be more resilience and move towards a growth-and job- orientated

strategy by strengthen its wealth re-generation sustainability.

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EFFECT OF COOPERATIVE AGRO-SERVICES ON PROFITABILITY OF MEMBER BUSINESSES: A STUDY OF SELECTED AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES IN IMO STATE

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Abstract

This study on 'Effect of Cooperative Agro-services on Profitability of Members' Businesses in Imo State' was necessitated by the fact that most farmers in Nigeria are saddled with challenges like deficient transportation system, high perishability of agricultural products, large household size with consequent poverty, poor access to credit due to economic downturn which has become aggravated by Covid pandemic; which make it inadvertent for them to sell off their produce at give-away prices at the farm gates. These mishaps unequivocally diminish their net earnings with possibility of forceful exit from business. Attempts to engage service providers towards improving their activities and increasing their net earnings have become futile owing to high cost of the required external services. Expectation from government is not yielding the expected outcome since government has become saddled with tackling the security crisis across the nation, along with the health and economic challenges posed by Covid. This paper intends to investigate the instrumentality of Cooperative agro-service deliverables for their members in addressing these impasses, and improving their business' profitability. Well-structured questionnaire were used to collect data from 27 respondents drawn from one selected agricultural

cooperative from each of the twenty-seven LGAs across Imo State using purposive sampling technique. Data collected was analyzed using t-test and regression statistical tools. Findings revealed that cooperative agro services significantly increased profitability of members' businesses and recommendation was that government should endeavour to make it a matter of aggressive policy in revamping cooperative laws and pursue programmes that will strengthen cooperatives in providing services to members.

Keywords: Profitability, Agro-Services, Covid-19, Cooperative

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Introduction

Food crisis is a global concern, even before the menace of the covid 19 pandemic. However, the pandemic has further aggravated the challenge of food insecurity further leading to dwindling earnings for farmers across the globe. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO – 2020), the world risks a looming food crisis unless urgent measures are taken to protect vulnerable farmers, keep global food supply chains alive and mitigate the pandemic's impacts across the food chain

(Perchstone & Graeys (2021). As the rest of the world moves into a stage of economic recovery, countries unable to innovatively adapt to fast changing times and set up functional infrastructure to improve agricultural production and food supply chains will undoubtedly become more susceptible to the difficult times ahead; especially for countries like Nigeria where the Agricultural sector is a dominant force.

Even though Nigeria is popularly known as the largest oil producer in Africa, agriculture remains the base of its economy. According to Stiftung (2020), Nigeria's agricultural sector employs two-thirds of the country's labour force and accounts for about a quarter of the Gross Domestic Product. FAO (2021) further asserts that even though the Nigerian agricultural sector contributed 22.35 percent of the total Gross Domestic Product between January and March 2021, over 70 percent of Nigerians engaged in the agricultural sector mainly do so at subsistent level, using rudimentary technology while battling dilapidating or unavailable infrastructural facilities. According to Olagunju K. O., Ogunniyi A. I., Oyetunde-Usman Z., Omotayo A. O. & Awotide B. A. (2021), even though agriculture generates approximately 70% of total rural jobs, accounts for more than 85% of rural income streams, and contributes about 25% of the country's total GDP; the sector is mainly dominated by small scale farmers who face multiple marketing and productivity challenges including limited access to productive inputs, output markets, extension services, credit facilities, and unavailability of improved agricultural technologies consequently minimizing profitability for farmers' businesses nationwide which have become the source of their livelihoods.

Government made several attempts to

mitigate the effect of some of these challenges in the past. According to Nwagwu (2014), post-independence attempts made by successive governments to boost farmers' income and improve their living conditions include: 1972 National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank; 1976 Operation Feed the Nation aimed at teaching the rural farmers how to use modern farming tools; 1979 Green Revolution Programme structured to reduce food importation and increase local food production above subsistence farming; 1986 Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure [DFRRI]; 1993 Family Support Programme and the Family Economic Advancement Programme; 2001 National Poverty Eradication Programme [NAPEP], designed to boost and sustain poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria; to mention a few. Unfortunately, these programmes came and went without significantly addressing the reasons for their set up. Udegbulam and Mosheed (2020) explained that the impacts of these policies were rarely felt, as they were mostly robbed of continuity and made negligible year-on-year as leadership changed.

Between 1999- 2000 era, government continued to make attempts in boosting agricultural production and farmer's earnings. According to PTCIJ and NIRSAL report in 2017, Mr. Obasanjo the first democratic president established the National Special Programme for Food Security (NSPFS) in 2003. It was aimed at helping farmers increase their output and income, through improved extension service delivery, promotion of simple farm technologies, efficient utilization of land, water and other resources. However, some of its major setbacks were seen in the inability of most beneficiaries to repay

their loans on time, complexity and incompatibility of innovation, coupled with difficulty in integrating technology into existing production systems. President Umaru Yar'adua's **Seven-Point Agenda** established the National Food Sector Plan (NFSP) to ensure food security. His first two years in office saw agricultural growth move from 25.28 per cent in 2008 to 26.75 per cent in 2009 and 23.89 per cent in 2010. In 2011, the Agriculture Transformation Agenda (ATA) was launched by his successor, President Goodluck Jonathan. According to the PTCIJ and NIRSAL report in 2017, it was created with the hope of boosting the income of smallholder farmers' and rural entrepreneurs, who were engaged in the production, processing, storage and marketing of selected commodity value chains on a sustainable basis. About 45,300 economically active smallholder farmers' living in the rural areas, were said to have benefitted from the scheme. However, at the end of his five years in government, the agricultural sector had contributed an average of 21.09 per cent to GDP, the lowest under any democratic president. The incumbent President, Muhammadu Buhari came in 2015 and launched the Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) to consolidate on the already established ATA policy. The new policy was geared towards provision of conducive legislative and agricultural frameworks, macro policies, security enhancing physical infrastructures and institutional mechanisms, in order to enhance access to essential inputs, finances, information on innovation, as well as agricultural services and markets. So far under him, agriculture has contributed an average of 22.94 per cent to the nation's GDP – higher than that of his predecessor, Mr. Jonathan. Experts believe that the aforementioned policies had the nation's interest at heart but were

poorly executed by either the proposing administration or their successors. Even though the policies were meant to serve as a relief to farmers and promote agricultural production and earnings, they did not have significant effects on the economy.

In spite of all these attempts by successive governments in addressing challenges of the agricultural sector, farmers in Nigeria are still saddled with a long list of persistent difficulties that have consistently reduced their net earnings over the years. According to Awofe (2021), Nigerian farmers over the years have encountered major setbacks that negatively impacted on their earnings due to challenges like: poor access to credit, poor access to farm inputs, poor infrastructure, poor storage and processing facilities, lack of mechanization, unfavourable land tenure system, changing weather conditions, farmer-herders' conflict, *Boko Haram* and ISWAP menace with the attendant security crisis. Even though government and other stakeholders have made several attempts to address these challenges, the required result is still not yet felt since majority of these farmers lie in abject poverty and their net earnings have continued to deplete over the years. Unfortunately this unsavory condition has become even more aggravated by challenges brought about by the *covid* pandemic. The pandemic brought about reduced mobility of people and goods- this led to farmers desperately selling off their perishables at farm gates where they have no strong bargaining power against the middlemen. This also resulted in **limited access to farm lands resulting in labour shortages and difficulties in sourcing for farm inputs**. The hike in general prices of goods and services resulting from the pandemic also increased the prices of farm inputs and implements.

Increased inflation has grossly depleted buying power, which has resulted in rationing of food consumption leading to reduced demand for agricultural products like fish, eggs and dairy products. All these challenges have put a strain on farmers' incomes. Presently, government's effort in this direction is being diverted to the onerous task of addressing the economic and health fall outs of the pandemic, raging destruction of lives and properties by bandits across the northern part of the country, Boko Haram and insurgencies as well as self determination group uprisings across the middle belt and southern part of the nation.

The urgent need to find alternative and lasting solution to this drop in farmers' earnings which negatively impacted on food security compelled experts to project agricultural cooperatives as panacea for the urgent assistance needed by farmers in the sector.

Olagunju K. O., Ogunniyi A. I., Oyetunde-Usman Z., Omotayo A. O. & Awotide B. A. (2021) admitted that the continued challenges faced by farmers spurred several development parastatals, agribusiness companies, governments, and international development agencies in developing economies to encourage farmers to form agricultural cooperatives as a policy initiative to enhance agricultural development with the ultimately aim of increasing their business profitability and securing food security.

This paper therefore intends to highlight the instrumentality of cooperative agro services on members' business profitability.

The Concept of Cooperative

Cooperatives are business organizations owned and controlled by members for their mutual benefits. They are non-profit organizations that aim at meeting members' needs. UAA Business

Enterprise Institute (2021) view cooperatives as businesses owned by "member-owners". Cooperatives are democratically controlled by their member-owners and the services provided by the cooperative benefit and serve the member owners. Cooperatives can be large or small and can exist in a range of industries or sectors; they can also take multiple forms based on who the member-owners of the co-op are. Some major types of cooperatives include: workers cooperatives, producer cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, purchasing cooperatives, and hybrid cooperatives. According to NCBA (2021), a cooperatives business can operative in nearly any industry or sector of the economy such as; agriculture, insurance, financial services, utilities, education, healthcare, education, utilities and so on. NCBA also asserted that the cooperative business model is currently proving to be beneficial for the growth of small businesses. However, this paper intends to narrow down on cooperatives involved in the agricultural sector (agricultural cooperatives) and their effect on members' business' profitability.

Cooperative Agro-Services

Cooperative agro services are services cooperatives render to their members' businesses, where such members' businesses operate in the agricultural sector. According to Sifa (2014), such services are usually given to members to boost their production and increase their income. Examples of such services include: credit supply, input supply, marketing and processing services, extension services, land leasing services, tractor and equipment leasing services, to mention a few. Cooperatives that provide such services to members are called agricultural cooperatives because their members operate in the agricultural sector.

Agricultural Cooperatives

Agricultural Cooperatives are cooperatives formed to cater for needs arising in the agricultural sector. Ijere (1998) further explained that agricultural cooperatives are cooperatives whose members are agricultural producers or are involved in agro-related activities. Ortmann and King (2007) while citing Cropp & Ingalsbe, opined that agricultural cooperatives can be classified into three broad categories according to their major activities namely; Marketing Cooperatives (which may bargain for better prices, handle, process or manufacture, and sell farm products on behalf of members), Farm Supply Cooperatives (which may purchase in volume, manufacture, process or formulate, and distribute farm supplies and inputs such as seed, fertilizer, feed, chemicals, petroleum products, farm equipment, hardware, and building supplies), and Service Cooperatives (which provide services such as trucking, storage, ginning, grinding, drying, artificial insemination, irrigation, credit, utilities, extension and insurance).

Types of Agricultural Cooperatives and Agro Services Provided for Members

Four major types of Agricultural cooperatives according to Funaab (2017) are;

1. Agricultural Producer Cooperatives
 2. Agricultural Marketing Cooperatives
 3. Agricultural Thrift and Credit Cooperatives
 4. Agricultural Consumer Cooperatives
1. **Agricultural Producer Cooperatives**

Agricultural Producer Cooperatives are those cooperatives that are formed by producers of agricultural products with the aim of meeting mutual needs agreed upon by members to boost production. Uchendu (1998) identified two major variants of Producer Cooperatives namely; the Productive Cooperatives and the Auxiliary/Service Cooperatives. The Productive Cooperatives engage in joint production of agricultural products by members. This means that the cooperative takes over all the business functions on behalf of the members and the members become employees of the cooperative business enterprise. In Auxiliary/ Service Cooperatives, the cooperative enterprise performs certain key functions for members' businesses while leaving the rest of the functions for members' businesses. Such key functions performed include; provision of credit, supply of inputs, lease of land and machineries, and so on. These Auxiliary/ Service cooperative are popularly called Multi-Purpose Cooperatives because they usually perform more than one function for their members' businesses.

2. Agricultural Marketing Cooperatives

These are cooperatives whose primary functions are to collect and market farm produce on behalf of members who produce the goods. Siddique (2015) defined agricultural marketing cooperatives as the association of agricultural producers for marketing their products. Major services carried out on behalf of members include; grading, standardization, packaging and processing before sales. Usually members of marketing societies are paid patronage dividends depending on their contribution to total business. They could also engage in processing of members' farm produce since most agricultural cooperatives

combine marketing and processing functions together.

3. Agricultural Thrift and Credit Societies

These are cooperatives that mobilize savings from members and provide cheap credits to them for agricultural production. According to World Council of Cooperative Thrift and Credit Society (WOCCU) in Akerele, Aihonsu, Ambali, & Oshisanya (2014) Cooperative Thrift and Credit Societies are non-bank financial institutions owned and controlled by cooperative members. As 'not-for-profit' cooperative institutions, Cooperative Thrift and Credit Society use excess earnings to offer members more affordable loans, higher return on savings, lower fees or new products and services (Ayanwale and Bamire, 2000). Cooperative Thrift and Credit Society provide members the opportunity to own their own financial institution and help them create opportunities such as starting small businesses and enjoying income of their own.

4. Agricultural Consumer Cooperatives

These are cooperatives that own and operate shops where they buy one type of/ or a variety of agricultural products popularly demanded by members and sell them to members at affordable prices. Sometimes they can also sell them to non-members too. They usually pay dividends based on members' patronage. According to Zeuli and Cropp (1980), Agricultural Consumer cooperatives are specific types of cooperatives that purchase high quality consumable agricultural goods on behalf of members. Examples of such agricultural goods include; yams, rice, beans, milk, poultry, fish, eggs, tomatoes, crayfish, and so on.

Cooperative Profitability

Cooperative profitability is the ability of a cooperative business to earn a margin after all expenses have been deducted from income. Cooperatives usually refer to this margin as surplus and not profit because they are focused on member promotion and not profit-oriented organizations. Cooperative profitability can be calculated using ratios like gross surplus ratios and net surplus ratios. Where

$$\text{Gross Surplus Ratio} = \frac{\text{Gross Surplus}}{\text{Sales}}$$

$$\text{Gross Net Surplus} = \frac{\text{Gross Net Surplus}}{\text{Sales}}$$

and;

$$\text{Gross Surplus} = \text{Total Income} - (\text{Purchases} + \text{Direct costs})$$

$$\text{Net Surplus} = \text{Gross Surplus} - (\text{Operational Costs} + \text{Interest Rates} + \text{Taxes})$$

Cooperative net surplus enable cooperative businesses remain afloat and sustainable; they also enable them embark on any project of their choosing; therefore it is essential that every cooperative business optimize avenues that will ensure their profitability while promoting members' interests.

This study will focus on cooperative net surplus in determining profitability of members' businesses.

Cooperatives Agro-Services and Members' Businesses

Cooperatives have been known to provide numerous agro-services to their members that impact on their profitability. Some of such services include; access to soft loans, savings mobilization, inputs supply, provision of machinery, extension services, marketing and processing services, land leasing services, sharing of risks and bulk purchasing services.

Ortmann and King (2007) while citing Cropp & Ingalsbe mentioned a range of services agricultural cooperatives provide

for their members namely; bargaining for better prices, handling, processing or manufacturing, selling functions, bulk purchasing, transportation of farm produce, storage facilities, irrigation services, credit supply, extension services, insurance services as well as farm input supplies. This section will highlight key services agricultural cooperatives provide for members. Summarily, cooperative agro-services can be majorly classified into three groups namely; pre-production services, handling services and post-production services. Examples of pre-production services include; savings mobilization, credit provision, land leasing services, supply of inputs and machineries, irrigation services, extension services and trainings, and so on. Handling services include selling functions, storage functions, and insurance services, while post production services could include processing and after sale services. Cooperative agro-services provided for members have been known to yield tremendous results. According to USDA (1990) gains of cooperative agro-services are difficult to measure. Some are tangible or direct as in the case of net margins or savings. Others are intangible or indirect such as cooperatives' effect on market price levels, quality, and service.

Effect of Cooperative Agro-Services on Members' Business' Profitability

According to USDA (1990), cooperative agro services increase members' business profitability in the following ways:

1. Bargaining for better prices thereby raising the general price level for members' products.
2. Bulk purchasing of inputs thereby lowering the cost of inputs purchased for members.
3. Reducing per-unit handling or processing costs by assembling

large volumes, thereby providing economies of scale for members' businesses.

4. Distributing to farmers any net savings accumulated from operations in the form of patronage rebates.
5. Upgrading the quality of supplies or farm products gathered from members through processing services.
6. Developing new markets for members' products, thereby increasing members' sale.

Others include:

7. Providing access to softer credits as alternatives against harsher conventional loans to increase members' production capacities.
8. Mobilizing members' savings for production purposes rather than non-business spending that may yield no income, as well as paying members accrued interest on such savings.
9. Minimizing product wastages for especially for perishable goods through organizing for transportation, handling, processing and marketing of members' produce.
10. Developing managerial and leadership skills in members to aid them better manage their businesses.
11. Enlightening members through trainings, providing access to and encouraging members to embrace use of modern machineries and technology.
12. Accessing grants and supplies from government, non-governmental organizations and development agencies for members.

Methodology

The population of this study is made up of all agricultural cooperatives in the 27 LGAs of Imo State, totaling one hundred and forty-five (145) agricultural cooperative societies; constituting seven thousand and twelve (7,012) members.

The sample size was purposively derived by selecting one viable agricultural cooperative from each of the twenty-seven (27) LGAs of Imo State. Each financial secretary from each of the twenty-seven selected cooperatives was purposively selected for the administration of the questionnaire in order to get data from their perception and from records. Therefore the sample size was derived as 27 respondents.

Method of Data Collection and Analytical Tools

A five point Likert scale questionnaire instrument was formulated in determining agro services received by members and their effect on the net-surplus of their businesses. A decision point of 3.00 was determined by the average of: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) - $5+4+3+2+1/5 = 3.00$. Therefore, any item with mean score from 3.00 and above was considered positive and accepted while those with less than 3.00 were rejected.

The hypothesis was tested using the multiple regression statistical tool, measuring the relationship existing between a dependent variable (Y) and a group of independent variables (X1, X2, X3,.....)

The Hypothesis is given as follows:

H_0 Cooperative agro services have no significant effect on profitability of members' business.

Where: Profitability is represented by net surplus

Dependent variable = Average Annual Net Surplus

Independent Variables = credit, farm input supply, marketing, processing, extension services)

The model is implicitly specified as follows;

$$Y_i = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, \dots, X_n + e_i)$$

The models are further specified as follows;

$$Y_i = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \beta_4 X_{4i} + e_i$$

Where,

Y = Annual Net surplus

X1 = Cooperative Credit

X2 = Cooperative Farm Input Supply Services

X3 = Cooperative Marketing Services

X4 = Cooperative Processing Services

X5 = Cooperative Extension Services

e_i = Error term design to capture the effects of unspecified variables in the model.

α and β s = Parameters to be estimated.

The t-test was also used to determine whether the average annual net surplus of members' businesses increased or decreased after they joined a cooperative.

Presentation and Discussion of Results

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Cooperative Agro Services Received By Members.

Coop Agro Services Received	Mean	Std	Decision
Credit Supply	3.85	0.718	Accept
Farm Input Supply	3.89	0.892	Accept
Marketing	3.93	0.874	Accept
Processing	2.56	0.506	Reject
Extension Services	4.26	0.859	Accept

Field Survey: September, 2021

From table 1 above, members agreed that agro services such as credit, farm input supply, marketing and extension services were significantly received from their cooperatives. However, processing services was rejected because its mean value was below 3.00, thus indicating that cooperatives did not significantly provide this service for their members.

Table 2: Regression Estimates on Effect of Credit, Farm Input Supply, Marketing, Processing, & Extension Services on Profitability (Net Surplus) of Members' Businesses

Model	Estimates	Coefficient	- T Value	Significance
(CONSTANT)		2.407	3.943	.001
X ₁ – Credit Supply		-0.145	-1.265	.220
X ₂ – Farm Input Supply		0.101	1.178	.252
X ₃ – Marketing		0.137	1.560	.004
X ₄ – Processing		0.172	1.256	.223
X ₅ – Extension Services		0.349	3.933	.001
R	0.750			
R ²	0.562			
F	5.392			
P-Value	0.002 (Sig. @ 0.05)			

Dependent Variable: Net surplus of Members' Businesses. Field Survey: Sept., 2021.

From the regression result in Table 2, it is clear that the independent variables – credit supply, farm input supply, marketing, processing and extension services all have a positive and strong effect on members' business net surplus. Coefficient of 0.101 for farm input supply suggests that a one unit increase in cooperative farm input supply will yield a ₦0.101 increase in members' net surplus, the coefficient of 0.137 for marketing also indicates that for any one unit increase in cooperative marketing services, there will be a ₦0.137 yield in net surplus per farmer; coefficient of 0.172 for processing indicates that

for every one unit increase in processing service received, there will be a yield in net surplus of ₦0.172 per member and coefficient of 0.349 for extension reveals that for every one unit increase in extension services rendered to members, there will be a ₦0.349 increase in net surplus earned per member. However the negative coefficient of -0.145 for credit simply suggests that for every one unit increase in cooperative credit given, there is a ₦0.146 decrease in each member's net surplus; this implies that more efforts should be directed on securing cheaper credit with less stringent conditions for

members so that they can begin to optimize their gains from this service. Also from Table 2 above, the R-square for this model is 0.750, which means that this model can explain about 75% of the variations of members' business net surplus in real life, making the model a good one. The table also reveals that the F-ratio is highly significant at 5.392, P-value of 0.002 (sig at 0.05), thus suggesting that cooperative agro services (credit, farm input services, marketing, processing and extension services) collectively have significant effect on profitability (net surplus) of members' businesses.

Table 3: T-Test Results Comparing Net Surplus Before &After Joining Cooperative

Average Annual Net Surplus (₦)	n	mean	SD	t-test	df	prob.	Decision
Before Joining Coop	27	971296.30	576907.526				
After Joining Coop	27	2027777.78	847318.546				
T-test & p-value				5.355	45.842	0.00**	Reject
F		7.423					
Prob.		0.009**					

Note: ** p < 0.5, m = mean, SD = Standard Deviation, df = Degree of Freedom

Field Survey: September, 2021.

From the mean figures in table 3 above, it is clear that there is a significant difference between the means of the average annual net surplus of members' business before they joined cooperative and after they joined cooperative (difference of ₦1,056,481.48), implying that the services they received from their cooperatives increased their profitability and gave their net surplus a boost. The table also shows the F-test as 7.423 with a P-value of 0.009. Since the P-value of our F-test is less than the Alpha value (0.05) our variances are not assumed to

be equal.

Our Null hypothesis is given as follows:

Ho: Cooperative Agro Services have no significant effect on members' net surplus

The t-test from table 3 above is given as 5.355 with a P-value of 0.00 (where 0.00 < 0.05), therefore our null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternate accepted.

We conclude that there is significant

evidence to support our alternate hypothesis which states that cooperative agro services significantly increased members' net-surplus.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summarily, findings revealed that cooperative agro services generally have a positive influence on members' net surplus; (F = 5.392, p > 0.002); with cooperative extension services having the greatest effect, followed by marketing, and then farm input supply, however, cooperative credit had a negative effect on members' net surplus. Also from findings revealed that net surpluses for members' businesses significantly increased after they joined a cooperative (F = 7.423, p > 0.009). These findings indicate that cooperatives provide key agro services that are instrumental in boosting profitability of members' businesses.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Government and all stakeholders should sensitize farmers on the need for farmers to form or join cooperatives in order to take advantage of the services they render to members.
2. Financial institutions and development agencies should find ways of partnering with cooperatives in making cheap micro credit accessible to members of cooperatives.
3. Government agencies and parastatals should keep up-to-date records of active cooperatives and membership. This will help extend affordable varieties of farm inputs to genuine

farmers and not merchants who may be tempted to hoard inputs during scarcity.

4. Cooperatives should emphasis and partner with stakeholders in providing adequate storage and processing facilities for members to prevent urgency in selling out perishable goods at give away prices.
5. Government should endeavour to make it a matter of aggressive policy in revamping cooperative laws and pursue programmes that will strengthen cooperatives in providing services to members.

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ECONOMIC EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THRIFT AND CREDIT COOPERATIVES IN NIGERIA: EVIDENCE FROM FCC (OJI RIVER) THRIFT AND CREDIT COOPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED.

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on economic effect of covid-19 pandemic on thrift and credit cooperatives in Nigeria: Evidence from FCC (Oji River) Thrift and Credit Cooperative Society Limited. The objectives were to explore the economic effect of covid-19 on cooperative sector, to evaluate how the cooperative stakeholders' addressed threat of the pandemic, and to assess the responses by the cooperative actors. Primary and secondary data were used for the study. The study was anchored on the theory of Epidemiologic Transition and Resource Dependence. Qualitative approaches were employed in describing the emerged economic effect of covid-19 pandemic on thrift and credit cooperative societies. Results showed that cooperative principles were compromised during the pandemic, where monthly meetings and AGMs were suspended. There was limited loan recovery, decreased in members' savings and deposit, liquidity risk, impracticability of democratic member control, difficulty in loan acquisition from financial institutions, among other findings. The paper observed that the pandemic presented an opportunity for the innovation in techniques and digitalization in

operations of the cooperative sector, and recommended that ICOPRON, CFN, and Apex organizations should strive to improve connectivity to revive the cooperative sector in post pandemic era. Key words: CTCS, Covid-19, Oji River, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Micro, small medium and large enterprises all over the world were devastated by Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020. The pandemic started gradually in early late part of 2019 and suddenly overlapped economic activities globally in 2020, where many people lost their lives, businesses crashed and millions of money extinguished in business transactions worldwide. Covid-19 pandemic affected all spheres of life in Nigeria. It halted all businesses in Nigeria causing entrepreneurs to lose enormous amount of money for lack of economic activities during the period. In particular, the pandemic ruined businesses, disrupted supply chain, caused travel bans; long-term employment loss, permanently closed markets and farms, impacts on childhood loss of education and rendered some children orphaned. The corona virus pandemic has far-reaching economic effect in Nigeria.

According to the UNDP (2020), in a policy brief articulating the pathways of the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it revealed that due to the contagious nature of the virus which calls for social distancing resulting from fear of catching the virus to fear of association with others, the pandemic reduced labour force participation, disruption of transportation and restriction of entry of citizens from highly infected countries. This has paralysed commerce. Similarly, World Bank (2020) on assessing the economic impact of COVID-19 and policy responses in sub-Saharan Africa revealed that the pandemic has significant impact on the financial sector particularly the microfinance sector as most of the beneficiaries depend on daily activities to earn their living. In addition, the World Trade Organization report (2019) on the future of trade reveals that patterns of trade in various sectors of the economy will depend on future demographic changes, patterns of growth, and climatic changes and natural disasters such as diseases outbreaks.

In many years, co-operative societies have been at the centre of rural communities through their motivation to make available financial resources based on the member-owned financial enterprises know as Savings and Credit Co-operative Societies to the development of individual members and improves the well-being of the community in general (Mgema, 2019). Co-operative societies are not immune to the pandemic effects as well as other local and international businesses and activities which as a result of the

COVID-19 outbreak have suspended their business activities and this suspension has detrimentally affected various economic activities including that of cooperative societies.

In Nigeria, the current status of spread of the pandemic is still unknown. However, more cases are expected to rise from time to time due to contagious nature of the disease and lack of seriousness on the part of the citizens in adhering to the hygienic and other precautionary measures as advised by health experts. Nevertheless, the containment of COVID-19 pandemic will be impossible without understanding and paying attention to how people and their activities are affected in the various spheres of their daily life. This is specifically in the view that the pandemic has heated up the nation and hence led to various actions against it.

Co-operative Societies are among the local and international business stakeholders which we cannot overlook the immense direct or indirect effects resulting from the pandemic. These include crops and crops related products exportation as well as importation of the crop inputs. Moreover, the financial sectors where the credit cooperatives fall, despite of on-going efforts to contain the spread of the virus, experienced such effects on the members' daily savings and borrowing habit which have been tremendously changing negatively with respect to COVID-19 business effects. For example, lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 spread has led to the re-assessment of countries' credit rating and risk positions in light of the

unprecedented geo-economic challenges posed by the crisis (Weltman, 2020). The economic effects of the spread of COVID-19 on the performance of credit cooperative in Nigeria are enormous and diverse and its impact on the population are likely to be diverse. In the meantime, among others; we need to consider how COVID-19 could affect the co-operative sector currently and in the near future. This is challenging because up to this point governments are concentrating on the health and social needs of their people.

There is no doubt that COVID-19 outbreak unequally has affected people living in poverty, low income economies as well as those in better living conditions. Yet we know little on how this has affected the co-operative enterprise which was the focal point of this study, as the study intended to examine the economic effects of COVID-19 pandemic outbreak on the performance of thrift and credit co-operative societies. In so doing the study specifically focused to the following questions: What are the emerged economic effects on the co-operative sector? How do co-operative stakeholders organise themselves to address existing economic threats of the pandemic and what are possible responses by the co-operative actors?

2 . T H E O R E T I C A L UNDERPINNINGS

In providing description on emerged economic effects of COVID-19 pandemic on performance of cooperative societies, the theory of Epidemiologic Transition (ET) by Thomson (1929) and the Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) form the framework of this study. The

theories jointly provide guidance towards understanding how members of the socio-economic sphere work together based on the available resources in order to achieve desired objectives while taking into consideration all effects arising from their undertakings.

The ET theory states that there are characteristics shift in the diseases pattern of a population. In these patterns there are stages where acute infectious diseases is reduced while chronic degenerative diseases increase in prominence causing a gradual shift in the age pattern of mortality from younger to older ages. The theory consequently focuses on the complex change in patterns of health and disease and on the interactions between these patterns and their demographic, economic and sociological determinants and consequences to the populations resulting from a given phenomenon (Mayer, 1962). This study focuses on the economic consequences resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Thomson (1929) explains four stages of epidemiological transition. The first; is a stage of pestilence and famine, second; the stage of receding pandemic, third; the stage of chronic diseases and the fourth stage is that of emerged infectious diseases. This study is in line with the third and the fourth stages. The third stage states that there is elimination of infectious diseases which makes the way for chronic diseases among the elderly and the weak. This stage occurs at different rates in different nations: where in both developed and developing countries, mortality rates are driven by socially determined factors, while in the developed nations they are also driven by

medical technology (Thomson, 1929).

Additionally, ET fourth stage is the stage of emerged infectious diseases where there is emergence of new infectious diseases or the re-emergence of “old” ones which will have a significant impact on the health of the population. It is further described that, a number of factors influence this developmental effect: travel and trade, microbiological resistance, human behaviour, breakdown in health systems and increased pressure on the environment. The theory further entails that as a result of ill health, diseases lead to lower levels of economic activity, and poor countries will be caught in a downward spiral of depressed incomes and bad health. Moreover, the control of infectious diseases will be hampered by political and financial obstacles, and by inability to use existing technologies. It is therefore, important for this study to integrate the relevant theoretical assumptions on the consequences of emerged infectious diseases like COVID-19 pandemic more specifically to the co-operative societies.

Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) provides inter-firm governance as a strategic response to conditions of uncertainty and dependence between exchange partners (Pfeffer and Salanchik 1978). The theory further entails that organisational actions are primarily driven by resource considerations, and that resource complementarities among firms can, to a large extent, explain the relationships and interactions among them. The theory assumes that variations in uncertainties arising in the organisation and business environment are responsible for both internal power

distribution between organizational entities and external power distribution between market participants (Hillman *et al.*, 2009).

In co-operative performance under uncertainty condition of COVID-19 pandemic, resources mismatch creates dependencies among cooperatives and other participants in the cooperative sector. Thus, the theory provides an indication of the extent to which a firm in business environment needs to maintain information and material resources exchange with other fellow partners in business environment as the future is uncertain (Gulati and Sytch, 2020). As the COVID 19 outbreak continues to spread worldwide and crippling both internal and external business environment, thus the interdependence among participants is increasingly becoming vital for survival through sharing resources among cooperatives and other stakeholders in line with the 6th Principle which emphasizes on cooperation among co-operatives.

3 . M E T H O D O L O G I C A L APPROACH

Qualitative approaches were used in describing the emerged socio-economic effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the performance of thrift and credit co-operative societies in Nigeria. Primary data were collected using telephone interviews and discussions with key informants guided by pre-tested interview guide.

Documentary review approach was used to source secondary data from published scholarly articles, non-scholarly articles and grey literature. According to Paez,

(2017); Pappas and Williams, (2011) Grey literature normally provides data not found within commercially published literature which helped to reduce publication bias and fostered a balanced picture of available evidence. Other secondary data were obtained from websites of cooperative movement in Nigeria, and World Health Organisation (WHO) which provided daily situation report on the spread and measures taken to contain the spread of the COVID-19 viruses and the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) as a mandated body for providing accredited nation statistics on various developmental issues.

Data sourcing primarily was guided by the topical keywords which included corona virus, COVID 19 pandemic, Co-operatives societies and economic effects, to mention a few. Therefore, based on the above mentioned keywords a total of 42 published articles were reviewed after a rigorous screening in line with the pre-established objectives and theoretical underpinnings and thereafter constant comparison analysis was performed for data analysis as put forward by Onwuegbuzie *et al.* (2012).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Co-operative doctrine in covid-19 precautions

The discussion of the emerged and expected economic effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the performance of co-operative societies is nurtured in the co-operative doctrine which is built in the socialisation perspectives. Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity where solidarity and democracy are the pillars of these values.

The social interaction is a core function in democratic control of the societies. Glass, *et al.* (2006) argued that, although the implementation of social distancing strategies is challenging, the imposition of such strategies helps to contain the spread of the virus from one person to another which directly affect the socially embodied organisations such as co-operative societies. As a means to contain the virus, the Nigerian government imposed the social distancing strategy like other nations as a response to the pandemic. The findings of this study have revealed that the social interaction pattern among co-operative societies is much affected by the corona virus outbreak through the imposition of social distancing which jeopardizes the practice of democracy through Annual General Meeting (AGM) as cooperatives have failed to attain the core values.

Furthermore, findings shows that cooperative societies have failed to conduct members' General Meetings amidst the pandemic as required by the law and therefore have made it difficult to make important decisions as one of their core functions such as receiving and discussing the audited financial reports, various committee reports and discussing other issues related to their cooperative development in response to the social distancing strategy to contain the spread of the virus. Contrary to the requirement of law however, it was revealed that most of the members' decisions are currently undertaken by the board which is against the second cooperative principle which emphasis on democratic member control of their society. This therefore jeopardizes the practice of democracy and endangers

performance of cooperative societies.

4.2 Economic effects of covid-19 to the co-operative societies

Economic effects are expected to be seen in various aspects within the co-operative sector resulting from covid-19 pandemic. Thrift and credit co-operative societies are not immune such that they cannot suffer from the pandemic rather the pandemic has detrimental effects to them. The Cooperative sector provide livelihood to more than 66% of Nigerian (ESRF, 2020).

4.3 Thrift and Credit Co-operative Societies

Economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to decline from 2.4% in year 2019 to -2.1 to -5.1% in year 2020 (World Bank, 2020). The decline is expected to cause a first recession in the region in the period of 25 years. Since the confirmation of the first case in Nigeria which was followed by introduction of several orders by the government for the containment of the spread of the virus, many businesses and various services have been paralysed including the community based thrift and credit co-operative societies. As actors in the economy they are also expected to face this hit in various angles as indicated below:

4.4 Limited Loan Recovery

Shrinkage in demand for credit facilities and poor loan recovery resulting from increased Non-Performing Loans (NPLs) is expected to be seen in financial sector (ESRF, 2020). This study revealed that drop in loan recovery by borrowers' members has been experienced in various thrift and credit in Nigeria

mainland since the reported first case of COVID-19 pandemic in March, 2020. It should be remembered that among the factors that determine the loan repayment in a financial institution is household income. Factors that cause poor loan recovery in thrift and credit cooperatives are borrowers' cash flow patterns (Absanto and Aikarua, 2013).

Apart from the ineffectiveness of most of thrift and credit cooperative societies in collecting of overdue loans it is expected that most of them may face a high increase in Non-Performing Loans (NPL) in their loan portfolio during the COVID-19 outbreak and therefore affect the performance of thrift and credit cooperative societies. Organisation of co-operative credits offered to individuals depends on how loans are used and the regularity with which they are repaid (ICA, 2005). The findings revealed that in response to this unprecedented situation most of thrift and credit cooperative society members with default or delinquent loans due to closure of business and therefore want to take their voluntary savings to cover their NPL and use the remaining balance to meet their immediate needs amidst the fight to contain the virus.

This implies that the members' household income and borrowers' cash flow patterns are affected by the outbreak and therefore results into failure to repay their loans. There is a danger of people living in poverty who are severely vulnerable to shock and may face insurmountable economic insecurity (BIGD, 2020). This suggests that the pandemic therefore needs to be tackled in a holistic term, where health calamity

should be interlinked to economic and social catastrophe as suggested in the stage four of the Epidemiologic Transition Theory.

4.5 Decrease in members' savings and deposits

The decrease in members' savings and institutional working capital has been observed in sampled in thrift and credit cooperatives in Nigeria. Many members' income generating activities have been paralysed or rather ceased due to fear and measures deployed by the government to contain the spread of the virus which have consequently resulted into decrease in savings and deposits by members and thus lowering the institutional working capital. The same situation has been observed in other sectors of the economy. COVID-19 has increased spending needs on health mainly on procurement of medicine and preventive equipment more rapidly at individual, institutional and national level which results into reduced savings and deposit capabilities (ESRF, 2020).

4.6 Liquidity risk

The liquidity position of most of thrift and credit cooperative societies is expected to shrink due to drop in savings and deposits made by members as observed in other sectors of the economy.. The findings from the visited thrift and credit cooperatives indicated that during the months of April, May and June, 2020 deposits by members dropped by 6 percent compared to deposits made in the same period year 2019 and hence threatening the liquidity position of thrift and credit cooperatives. It is also argued that the fiscal pressure is expected to worsen due to unprecedented members'

COVID-19 health problems transforming into socio-economic problems of reduced production, mass unemployment, and disruption of value chains and vast loss of incomes which actually results into reduced savings and deposits capacity. This therefore leads to liquidity problems and insolvency which results into failure to meet member short term requirements and expectations. Thrift and credit cooperatives depend on member savings and deposits as reliable internal source of funds to accumulate funds for lending as loans to their members which is contrary to that suffer from liquidity position and even insolvency (Mgema, 2019).

4.7 Drop in revenue collections

COVID-19 pandemic have caused drop in revenue collections in the cooperative societies. The current increased pressure on acquisition of health facilities among individuals has detrimentally affected cash flows in cooperative revenues which are consequently declining (ESRF, 2020). Findings revealed that multiple effects of COVID-19 on the performance of cooperative societies are currently observed in on-going compression in business margins, closure of income generating avenues, slowdown in business activities and salary losses, to mention a few have jeopardized cash flows to most of cooperative societies. Business and financial sectors revenues are dropping and expected to drop by more than 5% (World Bank, 2020). Revenues from various sources flowing to cooperative societies are likely to face a sharp decline which leading to a significant revenue gap.

4.8 Technology inequality among Cooperative Societies

During this COVID-19 pandemic various organisations and societies have put emphasis on the use of technology in their daily undertakings as a mechanism to handle the spread of the COVID-19 and implementation of social distancing strategy. Findings show that technological status of most of the cooperative societies in Nigeria is worse and hence non-supportive to connectivity among members in terms of services delivery. Most of the cooperatives visited still use manual system in proving services to their members. The current practice encourage members to visit their cooperative offices to get services, which in return enhances the spread of the COVID-19 as it is said to be an airborne disease and also transmitted through touching surfaces which have been touched by the infected person or coming into contact with droplets of an infected person. Unequal technological status pause a challenge to the vulnerable groups (Ngwacho, 2020). Many cooperative societies are not technologically advanced and hence the social distance might be a challenge and therefore may be vulnerable to the virus.

4.9 Impracticability of Democratic Member Control

Since the emergency of COVID-19 pandemic, the social distancing and fears has compromised most of conducts in the running of cooperative societies. The 2nd Cooperative principle of Democratic member control which requires that all decisions to be made by members through annual general meeting was impractical. Collective decision by

members through AGM enhances social interaction and collective responsibilities on matters pertaining to their cooperative society (Mgema (2019).

Findings revealed that most of the important and final decisions are currently made by board members in response to the restriction put by the government to forbid gatherings as a measure to control the spread of the virus which is against the cooperative principles. This practice gives opportunity to unethical leaders to misappropriate funds and misuse their office oaths, manipulation or failure to observe and follow internal procedures at the expense of members. These weaknesses in governance may create inefficiency and lack of effectiveness in providing services to members (Rwekaza and Anania, 2020). In some cooperatives even the board members meetings and other committee meetings have been affected due to the fear of getting exposed to the virus.

4.10 Membership withdrawal

Social interaction is a pillar and core function in democratic controlled societies such as cooperatives. The process of maintaining a socially embodies and originated organisations without collectivism is critical. Findings revealed that the savings and credit cooperative societies have started experiencing a significant number of members withdrawing their membership amidst the COVID-19 outbreak arguing that they are uncertain of the future due to high spread rate of the virus and continuously increasing reported death toll. The membership dropout rate is expected to increase with respect to

increase in number of new reported cases.

4.11 Difficulties in loans acquisition from financial institutions

The COVID-19 pandemic effects on the performance of cooperatives have threatened the possibility of cooperatives to obtain loan from financial institutions as their repayment capacity have decreased. This study revealed that some cooperative societies have even withdrawn their loan applications from commercial banks due to reduced repayment capacity and cessation/stoppage of internal loan applications launched by members. These are direct effects in the economic spheres that impair the co-operative enterprise as well as their members' socio-economic status (Smith, *at al.*, 2019).

4.12 Staff retrenchment and joblessness in co-operative societies

The Corona pandemic has affected co-operative societies' performance particularly the employment segment where cooperatives are paying for labour which is not generating return due to 'stay at home' strategy in the effort to contain the virus. Findings discovered that co-operative societies have reduced number of workers as they are no longer able to afford to pay salaries. This is due to decreased organisational incomes followed by delinquent and default loans resulting from business closure among members. Part time workers have already lost their livelihoods in most of the cooperative societies and other sectors in the economy. Increased unemployment among youth has adverse impact on the

country's security. Unemployed youth may be easily recruited by violence extremist and engagement into youth radicalization (Delivorias and Scholz, 2020). Implementation of social distancing is challenging despite of its effectiveness in containing the spread of the virus (Glass, *et al.* (2020).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is obvious that the performance of thrift and credit cooperative societies has been and will be economically and socially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Cooperative societies have lost or are at risk of losing the incomes and if the pandemic is prolonged and becomes more severe it would be disastrous in the sector particularly in the leading cooperative societies (AMCOS and SACCOS). Cooperative societies serving most of vulnerable groups in the society are expected to face a huge burden socially and economically resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is need for establishment of Co-operative COVID-19 Response Committee (CCRC) to collect information and maintain statistics of the COVID-19 effects in the cooperative sector which will ensure monitoring, evaluation and sectoral measure are undertaken to disseminate information to the co-operators on the status of social, economic, technological and cultural consequences of the outbreak of covid-19 on cooperative sector.

COVID-19 has opened opportunities for cooperative to promote co-operative innovation, strengthening value addition and marketing of cooperative products.

Producer Co-operatives should use this opportunity to produce masks and sanitizers or buy from other suppliers at an affordable price and distribute to their members and the community at large.

The implementation of Co-operative Model is of great importance at this moment. All stakeholders such as ICOPRON, CFN Apex Organizations should strive to improve connectivity to revive the cooperative sector during and post-pandemic. Through co-operative platforms, education and awareness should be provided on the COVID-19 preventive measures through introduction of bulk messages on access to market and friendly repayment methods.

Introduction of online supervision and emphasis on self-regulation is of greater importance during this period. Cooperative Audit and Supervision should opt to use off-site audit under hygienic environment to contain the spread of the virus. There is need for government and cooperative stakeholders' economic intervention to sustain co-operative societies businesses and empowering co-operative members through a proper economic recovery programme. Co-operative members who are living in poverty cannot afford to stockpile food during this time of the outbreak, therefore hunger and food insecurity are expected to expose them to the pandemic and henceforth to the continuation of the vicious cycle of poverty shaded with diseases, destitution and death. In this regard, government should act proactively to ensure protective equipment such as masks and gloves are supplied to the farmers

through co-operatives (primary, unions and apex) for safer contact between them and other persons.

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ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of entrepreneurial ecosystem on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study was conducted among members of selected cooperative societies in Ado-Odo/Ota, Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South, Ijebu-Ode, Sagamu, and Ikenne Ogun State, Nigeria. The study adopted cross-sectional survey design 327 members were selected using Yamane's sampling technique. Questionnaire was employed as instrument for data collection. Data were analysed using multiple regression analysis. Results revealed that accessibility of finance has a positive significant effect on organizational performance of selected cooperative

societies. This study concluded that the friendlier entrepreneurial ecosystem is the more improved performance recorded in the selected firms. It recommended that cooperative societies in Ogun State should strategically consider their accessible finance as it affects their performance in terms of profitability, revenue growth and market size.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial ecosystem; organizational performance; accessibility; cooperative societies

Introduction

The success and failure of a business can be explained both by individual/organizational (internal) and environmental (external) factors (Nuray, 2016). Internal causes are those decisions/actions that are under

management's control while external causes are events that are outside of management's control. In most cases, a complex mixture of causes contributes to business failure. These factors are usually captured in the six domains of the entrepreneurial ecosystem popularized by Isenberg (2011) as accessible markets, availability of finance, conducive culture, quality human capital, progressive policy framework and a range of institutional support. These are all traceable to internal factors of the business organization.

The most widely read literature on entrepreneurship date back to Schumpeter (1934). This literature has comprehensively dealt with the importance of entrepreneurship for economic development, and which individual characteristics of entrepreneurs play important roles for successful entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, contextual factors have also been evaluated, but to a lesser extent (Zahra, Wright & Abdelgawad, 2014). Attention has shifted from formulating policies and designing programs for individual organizations, regions, and countries to collaborations among entrepreneurs, organizations, regions, and countries. Open innovation has become a concept that has opened doors for several ideas including entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE), which is the concern of this study.

The term ecosystem was first coined by Moore (1993) when he stated that business ecosystem condense out of the original swirl of capital, customer's interest, and talent generated by innovation, just as successful species spring from the natural resources of sunlight, water, and soil nutrients. This link to biological ecosystem denotes the complex interactions and interdependencies which shape

entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE). Drawing on work undertaken on biological ecosystem, these evolving organisms can be viewed as 'prototypical examples of complex adaptive systems' where ecosystem properties constantly change and evolve, often in non-linear ways (Levin, 1998). As Moore states 'innovative businesses can't evolve in a vacuum' (Moore, 1993).

Although the concept of the entrepreneurial ecosystem is novel, it has recently gained prominence in academically-oriented entrepreneurship research, practice, policy-oriented research, and entrepreneurial practice (Alvedalen & Boschma, 2017; Genome, 2018; Kuckertz, 2019). This idea is also described as regional agglomerations of entrepreneurial activity (Audretsch & Belitski, 2017) or entrepreneurship or start-up ecosystem. However, an entrepreneurship start-up connotes setting up an entity from the collaboration of entrepreneurial organizations. Furthermore, the concept of the entrepreneurial ecosystem has attracted the attention of many scholars such as Isenberg (2010, 2011); Malecki (2011); World Economic Forum (2013); Stam (2015); Stamand Spigel (2017) and Alvedalenand Boschma (2017). These scholars have argued that the entrepreneurship literature is mostly preoccupied with the characteristics and behaviours of individuals or firms (Auerswald, 2015; Stam, 2015; Alvedalen & Boschma, 2017) whereas more dimensions are expected.

A favourable combination of EE components and relationships allows individual entrepreneurs to move smoothly and successfully through their entrepreneurial processes. This is not only due to formal support that might, for

instance, be provided by regional development agencies, which can of course be a key component of EE as well. A specific EE that allows entrepreneurs to explore the “knowledge frontier” (Acs *et al.*, 2017) is more effective than a competing EE that could be considered successful. The concept further provides an opportunity that suggests that spill-over effects from early entrants will flow toward later entrants (Overholm, 2015). For an EE, this means that the more entrepreneurial they are, the more new entrepreneurs would follow up on what their predecessors did, for instance, by spinning off their companies from successful earlier start-ups or by developing complimentary offers to the market. Entrepreneurial ecosystem provides entrepreneurs with relationships (Hwang & Horowitz, 2012), which draw potential entrepreneurs into the system as they naturally help to reduce transaction costs and failures (Coase & Wang, 2011). The concept of entrepreneurial ecosystem is not strange in the Nigerian business environment. Although the practice may slightly differ from those of the developed countries, business organizations in Nigeria operate under the umbrella of state, zonal, regional, or national associations or unions which can engender entrepreneurship growth across the territories. However, it is not clear whether there exist networking, interconnectedness, or collaborations among these bodies in form of open innovation or knowledge sharing relationships. But the entire country, no doubt, faces slow entrepreneurial growth. The broad objective of the study is to investigate the effect of entrepreneurial ecosystem on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies in Ogun State, Nigeria while the specific objective

is to determine the effect of availability of finance on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies.

In relation with the above objectives, this research study intends to answer the research question which is: what effect would the availability of finance have on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies?

Also the research hypothesis was highlighted to validate the stated objective and research question stated above.

H₀: Availability of finance has no significant effect on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies

Concept of Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

The fundamental ideas behind entrepreneurial ecosystem became clearer in the 1980s and 1990s as part of a shift in entrepreneurship studies away from individualistic, personality-based research towards a broader community perspective that incorporates the role of social, cultural, and economic forces in the entrepreneurship process (Aldrich 1990; Nijkamp 2003; Steyaert & Katz, 2004). Van de Ven (1993), for example, argued that individual entrepreneurs cannot command all the resources, institutions, markets, and business functions that are required to develop and commercialize their entrepreneurial ventures. Popular folklore notwithstanding, entrepreneurship is a collective achievement that resides not only in the behaviours of individual entrepreneurs, but requires key roles from numerous entrepreneurs in both the public and private sectors to develop an industrial infrastructure that facilitates

and constrains innovation (Stam & van de Ven, 2019). But according to Kuckertz (2019), the concept of entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) was introduced into the academic literature by Cohen (2006), with the awareness rising from the practice-oriented suggestions of Isenberg (2010). Subsequently, the EE metaphor has shifted the discussion away from the well-established research stream around the concept of clusters (Porter, 2000) to a more biological perspective that is now prevalent. The idea deals with the inherent attractiveness of the EE impression that it has enthusiastically been embraced by researchers, policy-makers, economic development agencies (Kuckertz, 2019). The concept of entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) appears to have attracted the attention of many scholars who in their perceptions have defined, described, and interpreted it differently. But according to Mason and Brown (2014), the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach offers a new and distinctive perspective on the geographical clustering of economic activity, albeit incorporating many of the themes from earlier literature. Tracing and understanding the emergence of the entrepreneurial ecosystem concept would guide its description or definition. The idea of “entrepreneurial ecosystem” is a term derived from a combination of the business vocabulary “entrepreneurial” denoting “a quality associated with creation and development of economic ventures or relating to, or characteristic of an entrepreneur” and biology/ecology terminology “ecosystem,” which refers to “a community or a group of living organisms that live in and interact with each other in a specific environment” (Tsujiimoto, Kajikawa, Tomita & Matsumoto, 2018).

Ecosystem are best known in the

ecological sense; yet, in the professional world ecosystem are increasingly recognised as a way of explaining complex and integrated phenomenon (Davey & Galan-Muros, 2020). Recently, usage of the term 'ecosystem' has apparently found its way into the entrepreneurship vocabulary. As more is being understood about the nature of entrepreneurship in the modern world, as well as the sort of environments that support it, the term 'entrepreneurial-ecosystem' has become a new terminology. Although there might have been similar thoughts in time past but through the work of Isenberg (2009, 2010 and 2011), in his seminal publication 'Leading an Entrepreneurial Revolution', the famed work of Babson College and UC Berkeley and their work on the entrepreneurial ecosystem and, increasingly practitioners of entrepreneurship the world over, the construct has been recognised as relevant for describing entrepreneurial environments.

Financial accessibility

The importance of finance to the growth of firms has been well documented in the literature and the firm-financing gap has become common terminology, depicting the inadequate access to finance faced particularly by firms (IFC, 2010; Fowowe, 2018). Finance is an important aspect of business operation and survival. According to Gitman (2003), **finance** can be defined as the art and science of managing money. It is concerned with the process, institutions, markets, and instruments involved in the transfer of money among individuals, businesses and governments.

Corporate Finance Institute (2012) sees finance as the management of money and includes activities such as investing,

borrowing, lending, budgeting, saving, and forecasting. There are three main types of finance such as personal, corporate, and public finance (Corporate Finance Institute, 2021). Corporate finance deals with the capital structure of a business organization, including its funding and actions that management takes to increase the value of the firm. It includes the tools and analysis utilized to prioritize and distribute financial resources. The ultimate purpose of corporate finance is to maximize the profit or value of a business through planning and implementation of resources while balancing risk and profitability. Finance is made available to the organization for day-to-day operation, capital investments, capital financing, and dividends and return of capital.

The availability of money for the firm can enhance its success and survival while the absence of it would mean the end of the business. A business that is well-financed in alignment with the economic development goal of the country would have more chances of survival compared to one that lacked finance. Organizations need finance for profit-making, meet operational expenses, asset creation, pursue new products and markets, cash flow management, financial goals, and management of unavoidable risk. Entrepreneurial ecosystem financial capital looks at the availability of micro-loans, angel investors (friends and family), zero-stage venture capital, venture capital funds, private equity, public capital markets, and debt access. For all types of businesses, it is very effective and advantageous to have financial reserves as they can maintain growth by obtaining more resources. A key aspect of any business is the financial resources as it provides support to appoint

people and to purchase as well as lease properties, tools and make investments in marketing and sales, and keep track of customers. The financial alternatives that are available with the start-up of businesses also began with kin and kith, investors, venture capital, private equity, and also debt access. There is a positive relationship between the flow of finance and business growth (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance is a relevant construct, in strategic management research, across the globe and is frequently used as a dependent variable. Despite its relevance, there was hardly any consensus about its definition, dimensionality, and measurement, which brings about research gaps (Murugesan, Jayapal, Vinayagamoorthi, Kasilingam & Sigo, 2016). Agwu (2018) states that organizational performance has markers indicating firm robustness in terms of results alignment to resources in achieving goals or objectives. Performance is the outcomes achieved in meeting up with the internal and external goals of a firm (Zwingina & Opusunju, 2017).

According to Ahmed, Opusunju and Akyuz (2020), performance is described as concepts that consider the success of a firm and its activities, while also referring to actual results/outputs of certain activities, and could be divided into operational, financial, behavioural, and attitudinal performance. More so, financial performance is related to the actual results (such as profitability) and operational performance to the determinants of the results (productivity, quality).

Furthermore, organizational performance

is the capability of a business to assess the degree of its success within a particular period (Eniola&Ektebang, 2014). An idea collaborated further by Al-Matari, Al-Swidi and Fadzil (2014) who pointed out that a firm's success is explained by its performance over a certain period. This idea is further highlighted by Ates, Garengo, Cocca and Bititci (2013) who described performance as a process that shapes how things are managed and sustained. This is because the key reason for innovation is the desire of firms to obtain business performance.

Increasing organizational performance is a goal every organization is pursuing. Organizational performance can be most simply defined as company performance compared to goals and objectives. Measuring organizational performance was in the past limited more or less on financial measures in the form of revenue, profit, net operating income, ROA (Return on Assets), ROE (Return on Equity), ROS (Return on Sales), and other mostly revenue and profit related measures. According to Kanwal, Nawaz, Nisar and Azeem (2017), organizational performance is used to measure how an organization achieves its firm goals. Equally, Samuel (2013) defined organizational performance as how effectively an organization work to achieve its goals. Moreover, the effectiveness of an organization can be measured in many ways and this involves different criteria such as stability and cohesion, turnover, growth, productivity, profits. Additionally, the firm effectiveness also can be measured by three different dimensions such as employee performance, operational performance and financial performance (Ketkar& Sett, 2010).

Theory of innovation

Schumpeter's innovation theory was propounded by Joseph Schumpeter (1949). The theory postulates that the cyclical process is almost exclusively the result of innovation in an organization. By innovation, it is meant, the changes in the methods of production and transportation, production of a new product, change in the industrial organization, and the opening up of a new market. Innovation does not mean invention rather it refers to the commercial applications of new technology, new material, new methods, and new sources of energy. Schumpeter believed that entrepreneur helps the process of development in an economy. Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship is a pioneering work of economic development. Development in his sense implies that carrying out new combinations of entrepreneurship is a creative activity. According to Schumpeter, an entrepreneur perceives the opportunities to innovate, i.e., to carry out new combinations of enterprises. He argued that an entrepreneur is innovative, creative, and has foresight.

According to Schumpeter (1949), innovation occurs when the entrepreneur introduces a new product, introduces a new method of production, opens a new market, conquers a new source of supply of raw material, or carrying out a new organization. This theory supports the interaction, networking, and interconnectedness among entrepreneurial organizations sited in a particular geographic location that supports the development, growth, and sustainability of the economy of the host country. These interactions will promote innovation, create new markets, and share crucial knowledge necessary

for entrepreneurship growth. However, scholars (Mudiwa, 2017; Block, Fisch & Van Praag, 2016; Calvino & Virgillito, 2018) have criticized the assumptions of Schumpeter's theory. For instance, Arilson (2017) argued that Schumpeter claimed that there were three preliminary conditions for new cycles of innovation: new, more advantageous economic possibilities (products, markets, services); limited access to such possibilities (for opportunities to be available exclusively to some people, producing profit); an economic situation allowing cost calculation and fairly reliable planning (minimum stability). However, Arilson (2017) opined that one question had yet to be answered: how to transform these necessary conditions into actual innovation? Allison further asserts that some of Schumpeter's followers sought to deepen their knowledge of the impact of innovations and technological progress on economic development (Abramovitz, 1956; Romer, 1990), while others (Nelson, 1995; Freeman, 1974) focused on understanding the processes of innovation production and diffusion. Arilson (2017) argued that while, in the Schumpeterian conception, the individual entrepreneur is the primary vector for innovation, in reality the focus is the connection between the production system and the scientific and technological production system. Innovation is no longer cast as belonging exclusively to the inner sphere of companies but is considered dependent on the interaction between the sphere of business and the sphere of science. Arilson (2017) further postulated that expected windfall profits would directly depend on the possibility of innovations becoming profitable, which occurs when the product of economic activity reaches

the market. This is not just a question of the supply of new products or services; expectations depend on whether a social demand materializes from those innovations. Critics further argued that Schumpeter did not analyze the social conditioning of economic phenomena and that he does not consider institutions.

Methodology

The cross-sectional survey research design was adopted and it was intended to capture the perception, perspectives and position of the respondents at a categorical timeframe. It further permits a scientific examination of entrepreneurial ecosystem on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies in Ogun State. A cross-sectional survey research design was chosen for this study because of its robust scientific approaches that can enable the researcher to reach the intended population.

The population of this study comprised 1,794 members of selected cooperative societies in Ogun State as reported by Ogun State Cooperative Federation Limited (OGSCOFED, 2020). Cooperative society was chosen because they play an important role in the economic growth of both the country and the State. These cooperative societies are located across all the Local Government Areas in Ogun State. However, only six Local Government Areas were selected namely: Ado-Odo/Ota, Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South, Ijebu-Ode, Sagamu, and Ikenne.

Therefore, from 1,794 employees of the study area, a sample size of 327 respondents was selected for this research work using Taro Yamane's (1967) sampling technique. According to Yamane (1967), sample size can be determined using the formula below:

$$n = \frac{S}{1 + S(\alpha)^2}$$

Where: *n* = sample size

S = population size

α = margin of error

i.e $S = 1,794; \alpha = 5\% (0.05)$.

The study used primary data sourced from the respondents by the researcher. An instrument (questionnaire) designed by the researcher or adopted from previous studies was used to elicit data for the study. Furthermore, the questionnaire surveying was expected to provide a direct response, feedback, and demographic data of the respondents. It was on five Likert scales. These instruments enabled the researcher to obtain necessary information from the

respondents. The self-designed questionnaire was expected to be cost-effective and highly flexible. It enabled the data obtained from the respondents to be analyzed scientifically and objectively by the researcher through the use of SPSS software.

Results and discussion

The demographic data of the respondents was analyzed through the frequency counts and simple percentage method of analysis. While the hypothesis for the study was analyzed with the aid of linear regression analysis method. The descriptive statistics of the data is shown below:

Table I: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Measure	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	86.8
	Female	13.2
Age	21-30 years	6.6
	31-40 years	26.3
	41-50 years	39.5
	51-60 years	19.7
	60 years and above	7.9
Marital Status	Single	6.6
	Married	93.4
Level of Education	BSc/BA/HND	48.7
	MSc/MA/MPhil	39.5
	PhD/DBA	11.8
Respondent's Years of Service	1-10	6.6
	11-20	22.4
	21-30	34.2
	31-40	23.7
	40 and above	13.2
Firms' Year of Operation	1-10	13.2
	11-20	26.3
	21-30	19.7
	31-40	27.6
	41 and above	13.2

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Table I shows the summary of the demographic profile of the respondents. In terms of gender, 86.8% of the respondents were males whereas 13.2% were females. This indicates that there were more males respondents than females in the selected cooperative societies. Further, respondents within the ages of 21-30 years were 6.6%, those between ages 31-40 years were 26.3%, those within the ages of 41-50 years were 39.5%, those with the ages of 51-60 years were 19.7% while those between 61 years and above were 7.9%. This shows that most of the respondents were between the ages of 41-50. On the aspect of marital status, the table reveals that 6.6% of the respondents were single whereas 93.4% were married. This implies that most of the respondents were married. With regards to the level of education, respondents with BSc/BA/HND were 48.7%, those with MSc/MA/MPhil were 39.5% whereas those with Ph.D./DBA were 11.8%. This implies that those with BSc/BA/HND were more, followed by those with MSc/MA/MPhil. In terms of years of service, the table indicates that 6.6% of the respondents had served between 1 and 10 years, 22.4% had served between 11 and 20 years, 34.2% had served between 21 and 30 years, 23.7% had served between 31 and 40 years while 13.2% had served between 40 years and above. This means that more respondents had served between 21 and 30 years. Concerning years of existence of the selected cooperative societies, the table indicates that 13.2% of the selected cooperative societies had existed between 1-10 years, 26.3% had existed between 11-20 years, 19.7% had existed between 21 and 30 years, 27.6% had existed between 31 and 40 years, while 13.2% had existed for 41 years and above.

Hypotheses testing

H0₁: Availability of finance has no significant effect on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies

Table II: Summary of linear regression on the effect of accessibility of finance and organizational performance of selected cooperative societies

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
1				
(Constant)	3.938	0.563	6.994	0.000
Accessibility of Finance	0.964	0.027	35.779	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance
 b. Independent Variable: Accessibility of Finance
 c. R=0.972^a; R²=0.945; Adj. R²=0.945

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Table II above shows that accessibility of finance has a positive significant effect on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies (Beta=0.972, t=35.779, p<0.05). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected while the alternative hypothesis is upheld. From the model summary, the correlation coefficient (R=0.972) implies that accessibility of finance has a positive relationship with organizational performance.

Moreover, the value of the adjusted R²=0.945 denotes that 94.5% of organizational performance was brought about by accessibility of finance. The remaining 5.5% are attributed to other factors not captured in this model. Further, from the regression model above, it can be observed that when accessibility of finance is at a constant zero, organizational performance will be at 3.938. Hence, without the accessibility of finance, organizational performance will still have a positive value of 3.938. Consequently, an increase in accessibility of finance will lead to an increase in the organizational performance of selected cooperative societies in Ogun State, Nigeria. The overall fitness of the model shows a high statistical significant result which led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Hence, accessibility of finance has a statistically significant effect on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Discussion and implications for management

The study examined the effect of entrepreneurial ecosystem on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies in Ogun State, Nigeria. **The general objective of the study was to investigate the effect of entrepreneurial ecosystem on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies in Ogun State, Nigeria, while the specific objectives was to determine the effect of availability of finance on organizational performance of selected cooperative societies.** This study, therefore, concluded that the entrepreneurial ecosystem has a positive and significant effect on the organizational performance of the

selected cooperative societies in Ogun state, Nigeria. The result generally implies that the more friendly the entrepreneurial ecosystem is the better improved performance recorded in the selected firms.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made: first, cooperative societies in Ogun State should strategically consider their accessible finance as it affects their performance in terms of profitability, revenue growth and market size. Additionally, cooperative societies *should adopt such beliefs, values, norms, and practices that will attract customers to them. Good customer relation practices and strategy of aggressive marketing should be adopted; bonuses, sales discounts and other sales promotion strategies should be adopted to increase both financial and non-financial profitability of the firms.* Lastly, the institutional support strategies such as active motivations in form of policies, welfare packages, monetary and non-monetary assistance which propel employees to perform their duties efficiently should be put in place by the cooperative societies. Similarly, such supports should be extended to the host communities in form of corporate social responsibility.

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CO-OPERATIVE: A POSITIVE GROWTH DRIVER IN A PANDEMIC ECONOMY

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Abstract

Research Purpose: The study examined co-operative as a positive growth driver in a pandemic economy. Specifically, determined the extent co-operative is addressing poverty in a pandemic economy and the extent co-operative is addressing unemployment in a pandemic economy.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Survey research design was adopted and both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized. 60 persons were randomly selected and sampled. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. Data from the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively with a 5-point Likert scale.

Findings: Co-operative as an instrumental tool is addressing both poverty and unemployment in the phase of the COVID-19 pandemic to very big extents.

Implication: The study concluded that co-operative indeed is a positive growth driver in a pandemic economy taking into cognizance its role in addressing poverty, unemployment among others.

Originality/Value Added: The study provided a detailed analysis on co-operative as a positive growth driver in a pandemic economy. It has relevance for

creating more awareness for the government, development experts, and other stakeholders about the several benefits of co-operative.

Keywords: Co-operative, Growth Driver, Pandemic, Economy 2

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Historically, infectious diseases have wreaked havoc among countries. The continuous and emerging global convergence is also influencing the speed of the spread of these infectious diseases. As attributed to the World Health Organization (WHO), the world has witnessed the emergence of several disease outbreaks and epidemics caused by more than 20 and more infectious diseases agents over the past decades. The emergence of coronavirus-associated diseases (SARS & MERS) inflicted global challenges to public health systems. SARS-CoV-2 (the causative agent for coronavirus disease COVID-19) is the latest addition to this expanding list of novel agents. WHO declared COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern on 30th January, 2020 and a pandemic on 11th March, 2020 (Ozigi & Umar, 2021).

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic brought about changes worldwide including Nigeria. The changes are

summarized as: increased sickness, death, poverty, effect on health, food production, security, money supply, reduced inflow of foreign exchange resulting from lack of export and import of goods and services except for essential products, lack of patronage resulting from restrictions in movement and access, changes in mode of business operation from physical contact to online among others (Ozigi & Umar, 2021)).

Pandemic, generally, has accompanying features, which include wide geographic extension, disease movement, severity, high attack rates and explosiveness, minimal population immunity, infectiousness and contagiousness, which help us to understand the concept better, if we examine similarities and differences among them. The pandemic related crises have been associated with enormous negative impacts on health, economy, society and security of national and global communities. As well, they have caused significant political and social disruption (Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017).

Although the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in China in December 2019, Nigeria recorded its first index case specifically on the 27th of February, 2020 (Ohia, Bakarey, & Ahmad, 2020). Since then, the disease has spread to invariably to almost all the 36 states of the federation with the confirmed cases and death toll increasing on daily basis, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC, 2020). There is no denying that the pandemic has brought untold hardships on 3

Nigerians. Many people have lost their jobs, lives and businesses. The pandemic has affected negatively various sectors of the economy such as education, banking, manufacturing, sports, agricultural, aviation, transportation and hospitality,

among others. For example, in the aviation sector, the pandemic led to massive cancellation of flights in 2020. The ban on international travels also prevented people from travelling abroad for business and personal purposes. The hospitality industry also received its own fair share of the effects of the pandemic. Many hotels were closed down due to the lockdown policy and, definitely, their operations, sales and profits were affected negatively. Needless to say, many hotel reservations were cancelled (Otache, 2020).

The socio-economic growth and development of any nation is determined by certain socio-economic factors, which serve as instrumental tools towards to recovery and sustenance of such nation's growth. Co-operative is an instrumental tool through which members get their socio-economic needs solves. As credited to Birchall (2005), co-operatives are designed as a means by which groups of people could gain economic advantages that individually they could gain not. Also in the words of Develtere, Pollet and Wanyama, (2014), in an era, such as that of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people feel powerless to advance their lives, economically, co-operatives represent a strong, vibrant and viable economic alternative. The role co-operatives play as well in the socio-economic growth of nations, evident in tackling of poverty, unemployment, inequality, gender and marginalization issues cannot be emphasized.

In view of the importance of co-operative, embarking on the study, co-operative: a positive growth driver in a pandemic became sacrosanct and inevitable.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Prior to the emergence of the COVID-19

pandemic, there have been many recorded cases of infectious diseases in the history of the world, but the COVID-19 has proven to be highly infectious, viral and contagious. The effect of this infection on human life is highly unprecedented. This led to many sectors of economies such as education, banking, manufacturing, sports, agricultural, aviation, transportation and hospitality among others shutting down from time to time and also due to total compliance to lockdown directives by the Government of such economies.

Co-operative without prejudice is an instrumental tool through which socioeconomic advantages are gained by the members directly or indirectly as a result of their membership towards enhancing their living conditions. Co-operatives can directly and indirectly intervene in the economic hardship bedeviling nations. The monumental roles played by them in addressing issues of poverty, unemployment among others occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be overemphasized.

It is against the foregoing, that examining co-operative as a positive growth driver in a pandemic economy became necessary.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective was to examine co-operative as a positive growth driver in a pandemic economy. Specifically, the study:

- i. Determined the extent co-operative is addressing poverty in a pandemic economy
- ii. Determined the extent co-operative is addressing unemployment in a pandemic economy

1.4 Research Questions

- I. To what extent is co-operative

addressing poverty in a pandemic economy?

- ii. To what extent is co-operative addressing unemployment in a pandemic economy?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study will be of great significance to the following sets of people:

- i. To the Government: the major onus of the government is to ensure the welfare of her citizens, most especially in addressing socio-economic issues of her nation such as poverty, unemployment, inequality among others. In the case of Nigeria, it will provide a template and create further awareness to the federal government, on the need to invest in the development and continuous sustenance of co-operative, bearing in mind the roles co-operatives play in addressing some key national issues as mentioned above.

- ii. To the Policy Makers, it would provide the basis for effective policies for the growth and development of co-operative in Nigeria.

- iii. To the General Public: the public will appreciate the need to belong to a particular type of co-operative. So doing, most of the socio-economic needs can be solves.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

2.1 Co-operative

The International Co-operative Alliance, define a cooperative as "An autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise" (ICA, 1995). International Labour Organization (2003) define cooperative societies as an autonomous association of individuals

who voluntarily comes together as united force in order to meet their mutual social, cultural and economic needs and wants through the help of a jointly owned and democratically managed enterprise. This type of group mostly of interested persons characterized by limited means of livelihood usually make equitable contribution to the resources required and thereby accepts fair or equal share of the benefits and risks that may come with the undertaking in which the members participate. Ezekiel (2014) thus indicates that cooperative societies remain most important catalyst for individual and community entrepreneurial growth; "because it retains within the communities in which they operate the capital that they mobilize themselves, as well as surplus derived from outside transactions, both accumulating for further entrepreneurial development.

2.1.2 Pandemic

The word "Pandemic" comes from the Greek word meaning "all" and demos "the people", and the word is commonly taken to refer to a widespread epidemic of contagious disease throughout the whole of a country or one or more continents at the same time (Honigsbaum, 2009). Nevertheless in over the past two decades, the term has not been failed to be defined by many modern medical texts. Even authoritative texts about concerning pandemics do not list it in their indexes, including such resources as comprehensive histories of medicine, classic epidemiology 6

textbooks, and the Institute of Medicine's influential 1992 report on emerging infections (Morens, Folkers & Fauci, 2009).

The internationally accepted definition of

a pandemic as it appears in the dictionary of Epidemiology is straightforward and well-known: "an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people" (Harris, 2000). The classical definition, however, includes nothing about population immunity, virology or disease severity. On the basis of this dictionary definition, pandemics can be said to occur annually in each of the temperate southern and northern hemispheres, given that the definition of the term is so wide. Seasonal epidemics cross international boundaries and affect a large number of people. However this is said, seasonal epidemics are not considered pandemics. Modern definitions include "extensive epidemic", "epidemic over a very wide area and usually affecting a large proportion of the population" and "distributed or occurring widely throughout a region, country, continent or globally", among others (Morens et al., 2009). In the case of influenza, biologists also require that pandemic strains undergo key genomic mutations, known as antigenic shift. For WHO to pronounce a level six pandemic alert there has to be sustained transmission in at least two regions at the same time. WHO's standard definition of pandemic influenza refers to a situation in which a new and highly pathogenic viral subtype, one to which no one (or few) in the human population has immunological resistance and which is easily transmissible between humans, establishes a foothold in the human population, at which point it rapidly spreads worldwide (WHO, 2011).

2.1.3 Co-operative: Addressing Poverty, Unemployment among others

The Nigerian society is bedeviled with

problems of poverty, unemployment and a widening gap between the rich and the poor. This income inequality is evident in the living standard of these classes of people, whether in the rural or urban communities (Dauda, 2016). The poor live below \$1.25 per day with fettered access to life basic needs and lack access to important amenities like potable water, improved sanitation, qualitative health care and education. The possibility of reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has undoubtedly remained a myth. To overcome these challenges and lead a meaningful life, many Nigerians, both in the rural and urban centres have engaged in cooperative societies over the years (Dauda, 2016).

Employment has been high on the social, economic and political agenda in the world (National Bureau of Statistics ((NBS), 2015). Youth unemployment continues to be a development challenge globally and in several African countries including Tanzania and Nigeria, among others despite the positive economic growth rates experienced over the past decade (Katebalirwe, 2014). The term "employment" as provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO) refers to the any work, be it for wage or salary, profit or family gain, and includes both paid employment and self-employment. The definition is also extending to the "cooperative employment" which refers to all employment performed both in and within the scope of cooperatives, consisting of both employees and worker-members working in co-operatives, and self-employed producer-members producing within the scope of cooperatives (in terms of processing, commercialization and/or inputs), as well

as the employees of these self-employed producer members (Roelants, Hyungsik & Terrasi, 2014).

The study by Lam (2014) indicated that many poor countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, continue to have high growth rates of the youth population and the such high youth growth rates are projected to continue in sub-Saharan Africa for several more decades, rising by 3.9 million a year and reaching 5.2 million a year over 2025-2030. Unemployment has become among the key challenges to young people worldwide. For instance in 2012, (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2012; Schuppler, 2012) indicated that nearly 75 million youth are unemployed around the world which was an increase of more than 4 million since 2007. And it is estimated that over 200 Million young people today live with less than 2 USD per day and the young people are almost three times more likely not to be employed than adults. Roelants et al. (2014) added that the world is suffering from unprecedented unemployment (over 200 million persons), dramatic youth unemployment, an historic level of migration as well as a very substantial presence of informal and precarious employment.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Prospect Theory

Tversky & Kahneman (1992) opined that prospect theory becomes relevant and useful for decision making during uncertainty. It is often an advantage to present situation positively than on a negative term (Craighead, Ketchen Jr & Darby, 2020), which leads to the selection of riskier 8

options. Prospect theory facilitates prediction into the near future about how a

manager will react under a pandemic situation.

2.2.2 Game Theory

This is also a prediction theory (Von Neumann & Morgenstern, 2007) posited that games theory uses a set of rules and guidelines on how stakeholders respond to situation and information while relating or interacting with one another. Games theory assumes selfish choices are made during one-time interaction. But Bo in 2005, submitted that, continuous relationship among stakeholders will lead to cooperation, knowing fully well that selfish act will lead to future retaliation. Games theory has been applied to the adoption of new technology (Zhu & Weyant, 2003). Based on the assumptions of Game theory, firms with the objectives of competing are likely to cooperate during Pandemic because of the implication of the high cost of defection (Craighead et al., 2020).

3.0 Methodology

The researcher adopted survey research design as the study has to do with issues of

4.0 Analysis of Data and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 4.1 Extent Co-operative is Addressing Poverty in a Pandemic Economy

Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
Very Big Extent	30 (50.00%)	15 (25.00%)	3 (5.00%)	7 (11.67%)	5 (8.33%)	4.06
Big Extent	15 (25.00%)	20 (33.33%)	2 (3.33%)	10 (16.67%)	13 (21.67%)	3.47
Small Extent	10 (16.67%)	12 (20.00%)	6 (10.00%)	18 (30.00%)	14 (23.33%)	2.60
Very Small Extent	6 (10.00%)	10 (16.67%)	8 (13.33%)	24 (40.00%)	12 (20.00%)	2.90
No Idea	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

the economy and contemporary events attributable to co-operative as alternative instrumental tool to the promotion of citizens, especially during an era of economic downturn, such as that of post COVID-19. The study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources of were the respondents while the secondary sources comprised of textbooks, journals among others. It was carried out in Enugu Metropolis as 60 persons were randomly selected and sampled. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. Data from the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively with a 5-point Likert scale.

Interpretation of the 5-point Likert Scale

Strongly Agree (SA) 5

Agree (A) 4

Undecided (UD) 1

Disagree (D) 3

Strongly Disagree (SD) 2

Decision Rule

If mean > 3.0, the respondents agree

If mean < 3.0, the respondents disagree

Table 4.1 shows the extent co-operative is addressing poverty in a pandemic economy. 45(75.00%) of the respondents agree; 12(20.00%) of the respondents disagree while 3(5.00%) were undecided that it is to a very big extent. 35(58.33%) of the respondents agree; 23(38.34%) of the respondents disagree while 2(3.33%) were undecided that it is to a big extent. 22(36.67%) of the respondents agree; 32(60.00%) of the respondents disagree while 6(10.00%) were undecided that it is to a small extent. 16(26.67%) of the respondents agree; 36(60.00%) of the respondents disagree while 8(13.33%) were undecided that it is to a very small extent.

Table 4.2 Extent Co-operative is Addressing Unemployment in a Pandemic Economy

Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
Very Big Extent	34 (56.67%)	14 (23.33%)	-	7 (11.67%)	5 (8.33%)	4.28
Big Extent	30 (50.00%)	16 (26.67%)	2 (3.33%)	8 (13.33%)	4 (6.67%)	4.13
Small Extent	33 (55.00%)	17 (28.33%)	-	7 (11.67%)	3 (5.00%)	2.67
Very Small Extent	32 (53.33)	16 (26.67%)	1 (1.67%)	6 (10.00%)	5 (8.33%)	2.78
No Idea	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

Table 4.2 shows the extent co-operative is addressing unemployment in a pandemic economy. 48(80.00%) of the respondents agree while 12(20.00%) of the respondents disagree that it is to a 10

very big extent. 46(76.67%) of the respondents agree; 12(20.00%) of the respondents disagree while 2(3.33%) were undecided that it is to a big extent. 10(16.67%) of the respondents agree while 50(83.33%) of the respondents disagree that it is to a small extent. 11(18.33%) of the respondents agree; 48(80.00%) of the respondents disagree while 1(1.67%) were undecided that it is to a very small extent.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

From the analysis of data as it relates to the

objective of the study, based on data gotten directly from the field, the following findings were made:

On the issue of poverty alleviation, it was found out directly from the respondents that co-operative as an instrumental tool plays pivotal role in addressing poverty, most especially during the post COVID-19 pandemic. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that poverty is being addressed by co-operative in this era to a very big extent. This is evident in the fact that the pandemic brought about untold hardship on citizens of developed and developing economies, as many citizens became poorer. Most citizens that lost their jobs depended on their co-operatives for survival through credits, disposable income generation, mobilization of savings and better welfare among others.

On the issue of unemployment, the COVID-19 pandemic led to job retrenchment. A large number of citizens lost their jobs, most especially in Nigeria. It was found out from the respondents that co-operative is also a catalyst in addressing unemployment. The respondents were of the opinion that co-operative is addressing unemployment issue, occasioned by the pandemic to a very big extent. This is evident in the fact that most citizens that lost their jobs are members of one form of co-operative or the other. The effect of job losses and unemployment is not felt by these members as they are directly employed in their respective co-operatives as owners and patrons or as owners and employees in the case of a productive co-operative.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study provided a detailed analysis on co-operative as a positive growth driver in a pandemic economy. It has relevance for creating more awareness for the government, development experts, and other stakeholders about the several benefits of co-operative. The study concluded that co-

operative indeed is a positive growth driver in a pandemic economy taking into cognizance its roles in addressing poverty, unemployment among others, Consequent to the above, the study recommended the following:

- i. There is need for government of developing economies for instance Nigeria, to invest tremendously in the development of co-operative since it is development driven.
- ii. There is need for co-operative study to be included in the academic curricular of tertiary institutions of e.g. Nigeria. So

doing, the menace of unemployment as a result of graduands waiting for government jobs upon graduation would have been defeated.

- iii. There is also apparent need for a review of co-operative legislation in Nigeria and other climes. So doing, the development of co-operative can be enhanced.

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POSITIONING COOPERATIVE EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This research deals on the contributions of cooperative education towards rural development in Nkanu West Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are, to ascertain the peculiar problems facing cooperative societies in Nkanu West, determine the level of poverty in Nkanu West, evaluate the efficiency of cooperative education towards economic growth and rural development, and Proffer solutions to the problems discovered through findings. A sample of 348 was obtained from the population of 1626 using the Taro Yamani rule. Data were collected using the primary and secondary sources. Tables, percentages, pie charts, etc. were used in the statistical data analysis. Chi square was used in testing the hypothesis. The research findings showed that management of cooperative society was very poor prior to cooperative education in Nkanu West LGA, Enugu State, Nigeria, also, Nkanu West LGA, Enugu State, Nigeria had a registered improvement in rural development after cooperative education, it was also found that the economic activities is near stagnant without the cooperative education in Nkanu West LGA, Enugu State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the researcher

recommended that since economic activities are almost stagnant and also the management of cooperative society very poor, cooperative education should be encouraged to aid economic growth and rural development, also cooperative education should be consistently effective to ensure efficiency, productivity, accuracy and accountability of cooperative societies. Also Cooperative societies should through awareness schemes and cooperative education, advice the government against officializing cooperative society so as to grant utter freedom to them for more effective and efficient activities and also better informed decisions as they are fully aware that they will bear the brunt of their decisions, whether good or bad. Conclusively, cooperatives society in Nkanu West LGA, Enugu State, Nigeria should and must brace up to consistent and proper cooperative education for proper management and attainment of rural development.

Keywords: Co-operative Education, Positioning, Tools, Rural Development.

Introduction

Background of the Study

Cooperative society with a peculiar type of enterprise requires a well

knowledgeable and experienced members, management and personnel to be able to attain success. Positioning On this note, the study is aimed towards unraveling the benefits and needs of cooperative education, amongst those benefits are economic growth and rural development.

S.C Chukwu (2012), opined that the progress of cooperatives depends to a great extent not only in the finance as was popularly believed, but largely on management which is a function of education and training thereby emphasizing the positive correlation between education and productivity.

On the whole therefore, it is an unmistakable fact that proper education and training is an essential factor for economic and business success generally. Thus, using cooperative education as a tool for economic growth and rural development is not a misplacement of idea or instrument.

According to S.C Chukwu, (2012), the tool for preserving cooperatives business enterprise is education, training and technicalities, etc. Cooperative education is said to be the technicality of cooperative, business and commercial matters. Cooperative education gears the society in a positive direction of overhaul change in views, behavior, ideology, attitude, values, etc.

Nature and History of Cooperatives:

ICA (1995), defined cooperatives as an autonomous and private association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.

According to Williamson(2010), cooperatives are state-chartered "business

voluntary organized, operating at cost owned, capitalized and controlled by member patrons as users, sharing risks and benefits proportionally to their participation".

Rhodes (2010) views cooperative as a special type of business firm owned and operated for mutual benefit by the users (members/patrons).

Cooperatives came into Nigeria in early 1930s. The cocoa farmers were organized into miniature cooperative society in Western Nigeria. According to Okonkwo (1992), the Initiative was taken by the department of agriculture. In 1933, a cooperative expert Mr. C.F. Strickland was appointed to study and report on the desirability of establishing cooperative societies in Nigeria. After investigation, he issued a report in April 1934. The report contains the following facts: The nature, objectives and types of cooperative societies which were most suitable in Nigeria were outlined on the footnote of this favorable report and recommendations were made for formation of cooperative society in Nigeria.

Therefore in 1935, the Nigerian cooperative society ordinance was enacted, and in 1936, regulations were drawn up to guide the running of cooperative societies in Nigeria.

Nucleus cooperative societies started in the then Eastern and Western Nigeria. By the end of 1944, there were 181 cooperative societies in Nigeria and cooperative Federation of Nigeria was formed in the same year. By 1951, Nigeria was divided into three regions; Eastern, Western and Northern regions. The role of cooperative society in economic growth and rural development cannot be over emphasized and that is why cooperative education has to be encouraged by both

the government and cooperatives society to sensitize individuals on the need for cooperative education and also to help the already existing cooperatives in the judicious and efficient management of their society. Economic growth can be accelerated if the government adopts cooperatives as one of the program for poverty reduction.

Poverty according to Umebali (2002), is a situation where people are poor, having no savings, own very little and often have low living standard. Since the creation of Nkanu West L.G.A, several efforts have been made to eradicate poverty, yet poverty still rears its ugly head. Poverty no doubt militates against economic development and its one of the accuses of the suffering of the masses and other social problems such as prostitution, bribery, armed robbery, adulteration of goods and services, drug addiction, corrupt practices, etc.

Cooperative education through cooperative societies in no doubt seeks to address the issue of poverty in Nkanu West and beyond because as the saying goes, "knowledge is power". S.C. Chukwu(2012), Vibrant cooperatives cannot be formed except on the foundation of sound cooperative education. Thus, economic growth using cooperative education and society as a veritable tool can be achieved.

Economic growth is the sustained increase in the total amount of goods and services (output) overtime. Kuznet (1973) defined a country's economic growth as a long term rise in the capacity to supply increasingly diverse economic goods to its population, these growing capacities on advancing technology and the institutional and ideological adjustments that it demands. Therefore, for an economy to achieve growth there must be

advancement in technology accompanied by institutional adjustment and this can be achieved only through a concerted group effort under a vibrant cooperative society. Sensitization of Nkanu West dwellers through cooperative education is a good tool for development of that area. A rural area is said to be developed if there is significant increase in the rural income as well as employment opportunities.

All sound and viable institutions are built with perfect ideas pulled together to work and sustain it, therefore, for a cooperative society to thrive, there must be a well-grounded and sound cooperative education and training.

Statement of the Problems

Poverty to a great extent has hindered both human and infrastructural development. Poverty is the major carcass that has eaten deep into our society and could be barely controlled by the various programs adopted by the government. This has been as a result of ignorance, illiteracy and lack of awareness of the rural dwellers. Cooperative education in no doubt can contribute to poverty reduction. We all know how our rural areas are faced with so many challenges especially that of lack of governmental interest which has aided the rural-urban migration to the disadvantage of the rural dwellers. There's lack of social amenities in almost all the 9 communities in Nkanu West Local Government Area.

Majority of the dwellers in Nkanu West are farmers and traders but the but the economic activities of these people have been slow or rather stagnant due to so many problems like, lack of adequate capital, un-regularized pricing policy system, bad roads, amongst other problems.

The researcher therefore has the intention

of reviewing various ways by which cooperative education can address the issues.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to evaluate the role of cooperative education towards economic growth and rural development in Nkanu West Local Government Area.

While the specific objectives are to:

1. determine the level of poverty in Nkanu West.
2. ascertain the relationship between cooperatives education and economic development in Nkanu West.
3. evaluate the efficiency of cooperative education towards economic growth and rural development.
4. examine the extent of involvement of cooperative society in implementing government programme on economic growth.
5. identify the peculiar problems facing cooperative societies in educating their members in Nkanu West.
6. proffer solutions to the problems discovered through findings.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of awareness of the importance of co-operatives in Nkanu West?
2. What is the relationship between cooperative education and economic development in Nkanu West?
3. How can cooperative education efficiently help in rural development?
4. What ways can cooperatives help in implementation of government

programmes on economic growth?

5. What are the peculiar problems facing cooperatives in educating their members in Nkanu West?
6. How can cooperative education be a solution to the problems discovered through findings?

Statement of the Hypotheses

HYPOTHESIS I

Ho: Cooperative education cannot positively and significantly affect economic growth of the respondents in Nkanu West.

H₁: Cooperative education has positively and significantly affected the economic growth of the respondents in Nkanu West.

HYPOTHESIS II

HO: Cooperative education does not significantly aid in rural development in Nkanu West.

H₁: Cooperative education has positively and significantly helped in developing Nkanu West.

Significance of the Study

The following are the significance of the study;

1. Policy makers: It is immensely beneficial to policy makers who may be interested in formulating policies on economic growth and rural development.
2. Government: This study will help the government know how to reach out to the rural population.
3. Students: Students and other researchers will highly benefit from this study because it provides them with information of what is on ground in Nkanu West Local Government Area and cooperative education as a veritable tool for economic growth and rural

development.

4. Cooperative society: It is helpful to the cooperative movement because it brings out the advantage, benefits, importance and aims of cooperative education.
5. Public: This study will definitely be of help to the general public through enlightening them on what cooperatives is all about and the need to join the movement.

Scope of the Study

The researcher will focus on how cooperative education can be used as a veritable tool for economic growth and rural development in Nkanu West.

Review of Related Literature

Literature review is the evaluation of the major concepts of the study and also past works which are relative to the study. It gives in detail the major foundation of your work before research methodology and subsequent processes of the study.

This chapter shall essentially discuss the review of various literatures related to the study delving into, conceptual clarification, theoretical framework and literature on the subject matter.

Concept of Cooperative Education

Cooperative education is an academic engaged learning program designed to provide the student with the opportunity to learn under a mentor in his/her field of study. It is also a structured method of combining class room based education with practical work experience which provides academic credit for structured job experience.

S.C Chukwu (2012), opines that cooperative education is the heart of cooperative for efficient utilization,

productivity and commitment for work motivation and growth and helps to improve the cooperative job performance and ensure higher job satisfaction among workers in the cooperative.

Also S.A Chukwu (2012), in his words said that cooperative education is the only key to facilitate and quicken the learning and acquisition of skills and knowledge process of the cooperative members. He believes that the lack of good performance and the inability of the cooperatives members can be corrected through proper education, training and motivation.

From the above explanations of what cooperatives is all about, I say in my own point of view that for cooperative members to avoid being unproductive, and wither away, the society must not see cooperative as a wasteful expenditure but something of higher benefits and value to them because an untrained staff is more than a liability to the society.

Concept of Rural Development

Okonkwo (2010) opines in one of his books, "Community and Rural Development Strategies, Principles and Practices", the meaning of rural development has been the subject of much debate and little agreement. The definition of rural development varies from one standpoint to the other. Rural development maybe centered on income criterion in which the concept is made to address the problem of rural development. It may also be seen as the improvement of livelihood of the rural dwellers by engaging them in productive agricultural activities. Rural development may also imply a broad based re-organization and mobilization of rural masses in order to enhance their capacity to cope effectively with the daily task of their lives and with changes consequent upon them.

Rural development ensures the modernization of the rural society and the transition from its traditional isolation to integration with the national economy. It is concerned with the increased agricultural production for the urban and international market.

According to cooperatives and rural development scholars, rural development is the process whereby concerted efforts are made in order to facilitate significant increase in the rural income and employment opportunities. It is a process that seeks not only to ensure an increase in the level of per capita income of the rural areas but also the standard of living of the rural population.

Nature and Dimension of Poverty

With poverty and global development as the agenda, Benjamin Hennig (2001) maps out where in the world poverty still persists.

As a successor to the millennium development goals (MDG), The United Nations announced a set of 17 new sustainable development goals (SDG) relating to international development still on top of the agenda remains the issue of poverty. Here the new goal is to end poverty for all people everywhere, currently measures as people living in less than €1.90 a day and to reduce at least by half the proportion of men and women and children of all ages living in abject poverty in all its dimensions.

In relative terms, the original MDG goal of halving extreme poverty between 1990-2015 has been met. In developing regions, people in extreme poverty now make up to 14% of the population there, while most recent figures and estimates suggests that still over 2 billion people globally live on less than 2 pounds a day, a measure used for "moderate poverty".

According to Oladuni E.B. (1999), poverty is a multi-dimensional issue which cannot be measured by moderator indications but also by deprivations in education, health, standard of living, etc.

Poverty still affects large proportions of the world's population. Looking at the figures from the 2015 MPI report, it can be seen that of the 1.6 billion living in multi-dimensional poverty, 54% live in South Asia and 34% live in sub-Saharan Africa. It also finds that most poor people (70%) live in middle income countries.

Ending poverty by 2030 despite all efforts that have been made could prove a challenge but not an impossible task.

Definitions and Measurement of Poverty

Poverty in a broader conception according to Amartya Sen. (1999) is described as lack of capabilities that enable a person to live a life him/her values, encompassing such domains as income, health, education, empowerment, and human rights.

Nnamani Chimaroke (2005), poverty, which is the lot of greater number, can pose an effective challenge to an enterprise, either by its way of limiting the potentials or in confusing the decimals which ought to enunciate growth and development.

It is quite pathetic that more than 70% in this part of the world cannot afford a balanced three square meals nor afford the exorbitant bills of the medical practitioners cannot even cloth themselves or live in decent apartments.

Umebali (2002), discussing poverty in rural areas, explained that it is a situation where people are poor, having no savings, own very little and often have low living standard.

Berko S.Y. (1992) argued that since

government is interested in the development of cooperatives, they must ensure that cooperatives actually developed to enable them carry out certain functions for their members and the community which will improve the economic well-being of the people, thus reduce poverty.

Sound cooperation based on cooperative principles as enunciated in S.A Chukwu (1990) seems an innovation which should be embraced so as to have cooperative that would help their members escape poverty as their economic status are improved.

In measuring poverty, the World Bank (1990), began using the measure of 1% days as an official "international poverty line" meant to approximate the poverty lines of low income countries.

Concept of Economic Growth

Economic growth has been defined in two ways. In the first perspective, economic growth is defined as a sustained annual increase in an economy's real income over a long period of time.

In Kuznet(1973), economic growth is a long term increase in the capacity to supply increasingly based on advancing technology and the institutions and ideological adjustment that it demands. This particular definition was termed inadequate and unsatisfactory by some economists with the view that the national income is increasing and yet the standard of living of the people decreasing.

Therefore, the second and better way of defining economic growth is to do so in terms of per capita income. The second view according to Professor Arthur Lewis: economic growth means the growth of output per head of the population. For an increase in per capita income be termed as economic growth, it must be a sustained increase.

Now almost universally, rates of economic growth are measured both in terms of increase in overall Gross National Product GDP or Net National Product NNP and increase in per capita income. While the GNP measures the total output of goods and services which the economy is capable of producing, per capita income measures how much of real goods and services which an average person of the community will have for consumption and investment.

Major Characteristics of Economic Growth

Simon Kuznet (1971) identified six characteristics of growth. They are;

- ❖ High rates of growth per capita output and population.
- ❖ High rates of increase in the total factor of productivity TFP i.e. the output per unit of the inputs.
- ❖ High rates of structural transformation of the economy.
- ❖ High rates of social, political and ideological transformation.
- ❖ Propensity to trade.
- ❖ Limited spread of economic growth.

Five Measures of Economic Growth

GDP is like a speedometer which tells you whether your economy is going faster or slower but fail to tell you whether the economy is going on the right direction. The right direction for a modern economy means that the people are healthy and happy with life and avoids stirring up potential sources of long term trouble, such as extreme inequality and environmental collapse. The new economics foundation NEF proposed five indicators of economic growth in an October 2015 report;

- ❖ Good Jobs: Employment statistics

tells us what proportion of people have jobs but don't tell us what proportion of those with jobs are paid too little to afford a decent standard of living, or worry about whether they'll still have work next month.

- ❖ Well-Being: A growing economy is not an end in itself but also a means for improving people's lives. The validity of research into measuring well-being is by asking people about their life satisfaction.
- ❖ Environment: The NEF proposed a national indicator of lifestyle-related carbon emissions relative to an allocation calculated from the global targets for avoiding dangerous levels of climate change. The indicator is effectively a measure of responsible global citizenship.
- ❖ Fairness: Research increasingly shows that income inequality has negative social consequences while casting doubt that it incentivizes hard work.
- ❖ Health: NEF proposes "avoidable health" as a simple, easily understandable measure that captures the quality of health interventions, not only treatments but also prevention.

Theoretical Framework: Theory of Social Interdependence

This theory was first introduced by Harold Kelly and John Thibalt (1959) in their book, "The Social Psychology of Groups". The theory was completely formalized (1978) in their second book, "interpersonal Relations". Theory of social interdependence is focused on cooperative learning. This theory shows how personal and group learning is

increased through placing students on small groups to work together. The slogan of this theory is "we will sink or swim together". This theory is best exhibited through Emile Durheim concept; we can be no stronger than the weakest member of the group. The key underlying concept of this theory is that no single group member has all the answers to every question and solution to every problem. Success depends on both the individual and group efforts. The definition of social interdependence in education can be summarized as 'students' efforts to achieve and develop positive relationships, adjust psychologically and show social competence,(Johnson et al., 1998,P.318).

Lewin (1948) found that common goal shared by group members created the dynamic whole that changed the attitudes of other members or sub-groups. Piaget (1950) also supported this theory in his words, "working together in cooperative groups would include discussions which definitely conflict will arise as a natural part of the discussions and solutions achieved. This theory is based on togetherness and knowledge as a social thing which problems can be understood and solve only through groups.

The research of this theory has proven that higher productivity, motivation, critical thinking and time-on-task can be achieved through this theory.

Empirical Review

The evidence offered by this review as carried out by Nora Lustig on poverty reduction and economic growth runs in the opposite direction. This review was carried out using the ANOVAs method. During the review, the findings were;

- ❖ Poverty and Growth: Poverty can dampen growth when market

imperfections combine with investment indivisibilities, fixed costs, and strategic.

- ❖ Investment Capacity Environment: Investment is critical for growth and to escape from poverty. The poor may run into problems when they want to invest because they are unable to come up with enough cash savings of their own, and they usually find themselves shut out of the lending markets.
- ❖ Constraints for Human Capital Development: Human Capital Development consists of educational attainment, health and nutrition with higher income and enhanced productivity.
- ❖ Poverty, Social Instability and Social ills: Another channel through which poverty can stall growth is by its relationship with social and political equilibrium. Where social injustice is pervasive and people have no say in the political process, poverty can trigger social upheaval and ultimately, the kind of sustained violence that puts brakes on growth. The frustration that poverty breeds can trigger dysfunctional behavior and social ills that trap the poor and the exact high income costs as well. This study therefore states that economic growth is good for the poor and in turn, reducing poverty is good for economic growth.

Ebong (1972) carried out a research on the challenges and prospects of cooperative society. His objectives were; to ascertain the benefits entitled to members of the cooperative society and their impact on rural development. Questionnaire was

used to elicit response from the respondents during this study. His findings were; the standard of living of the cooperative members are far more higher than that of the non-members, that members were given the rare opportunity of large scale production, that most rural areas where cooperatives is practiced were placed on the pedestal of development because of increased economic activities. He concluded that men and women can be equipped with technical knowledge of both the business, commercial and cooperative matters for the betterment of their lives.

The study on poor management of the cooperative society as carried out by Obumneme (2012) using the Questionnaire method established this findings; the sole cause of poor management is low literacy levels and poor managerial skills. The singular problem can bring about inefficiency of the cooperative business enterprise and group and problems can be created by members ignorantly because of their illiteracy. He therefore proposed that for a cooperative society to thrive, proper management should be inculcated into the system through the employment of knowledgeable staff and sensitization of the already existing ones.

Rowland A. Effison (2005) studied the impact of cooperative in poverty alleviation and economic development schemes. His objectives were; to determine the already established strategies for poverty alleviation and economic development and also the impact of cooperatives in implementing those strategies, review the problems facing cooperatives and proffer solutions to those problems. At the course of the research, Anova method was employed and these were the findings; cooperatives

are very beneficial for implementing economic development and poverty alleviation strategies.

However, major problems facing cooperatives in their effort to increase economic development are; lack of cooperation, lack of commitment and responsibilities, insincerity and dishonesty, overdue loans and wrong planning. He proposed that for cooperatives to efficiently aid in the implementation of poverty alleviation and economic development strategies, experienced, educated and qualified personnel should be employed, checks and balances should be placed on leaders and management of the society, solicit commitment from members through giving them direct roles and responsibilities, strict supervision of loan takers and guarantors, training, retraining of leaders and members should be encouraged.

Obia, David (1989) carried out a study on the role of cooperatives in promotion of agricultural activities in the rural areas. His objectives were to examine the benefits of large scale production and proper finance. Questionnaire method was used for this study and this were the findings; benefits associated with large scale production cannot be overemphasized, some of its benefits are; efficiency, division of labor and specialization, lower cost of production, more goods and services put up for sales, higher income, increased employment opportunities, amongst others.

Also proper financing of the agricultural sector will facilitate rapid increase in economic growth and rural development. He proposed the use of cooperative society to help in proper financing and rapid increase of agricultural activities in urban and rural areas.

Maduagwu (2000) carried out a research on entrepreneurship development as the key for human development. His objectives were to evaluate the major roles of entrepreneurship towards human development. Anova method was used for this study and this was the findings; entrepreneurship development means not just human development but all round development, and also, economic growth can be attained through entrepreneurship development. Also social vices can be controlled using entrepreneurship as a tool.

Eze (2004) carried out a research on several policies aimed at poverty reduction and economic development. Questionnaire method was used for this study and this were the findings; Poverty still rears its ugly head regardless of all that have been done, policies keep erupting every day to alleviate poverty but are not properly implemented and this have brought about failure of the established policies. He encouraged proper implementation process to help put poverty in check.

Ebong (1972) carried out a research on improving agricultural activities as a key for economic growth using the Anova method to elicit the following findings; Most developing countries still practice agriculture with obsolete and echoic farming implements, labor intensive system is employed more than capital intensive system unlike the developed countries and this have been the major source of the problem with the agricultural sector, thus more is used to achieve very little. He advised on the use of sophisticated technology as a way of improving agricultural activities for attainment of economic growth.

Gap in Literature

Maduagwu (2000) carried out a research on entrepreneurship development as the key for human development but failed to discuss the key role of cooperatives in entrepreneurship development. This study therefore wants to bridge the gap, in other words, wants to show how cooperative education can help in rural development.

Eze (2004) carried out a research on several policies aimed at poverty reduction but failed to highlight the impact of cooperatives in implementing these policies of government for poverty reduction and also the impact of cooperative society in implementation.

Ebong (1976) carried out a research on improving agricultural activities as a key for economic growth but failed to analyze the role of cooperatives society in increasing agricultural activities. This study is therefore designed to circumvent the gap.

Research Methods and Design

This chapter deals with the methods and design that will be employed to examine the impact of cooperative education towards poverty reduction, economic growth and rural development. The quasi-experimental method was adopted in carrying out this study. It involved the collection of data through various research instruments such as; questionnaire, oral interviews, discussions, extraction of data from official files.

Area of Study

The area of study is Nkanu West Local Government Area. Nkanu West Local Government Area is made up of nine (9) communities. Nkanu West people live continually within the Enugu East

senatorial zone of the present-day Enugu state of South-East Nigeria. They are predominantly farmers. Nkanu, like every other Igbo clan, falls within the Savannah region of the former Eastern Nigeria, usually characterized by tall trees and grasses. There is a cross-cross of streams and rivulets; among which notably are; Nyama, Atavu, Idodo, Asu, Ojorowo, Ufam, to mention but these few.

Nkanu land shares borders in the East with Oha-ozara and Ivo local governments of Ebonyi state; on the west with udi local government, the north with Nkalagu (Ebonyi state) and isi-uzo local government and in the south with Aninri and Agwu local government area. Its' population between 1932-1934 was put at about 19,500. But by 1963 census, the population tripled to 32,263 by 2006 census. At present, it is presumed to be nearing almost 2million because of the presence of the State University in the local government.

Population of the Study

The study is made up of 130 registered cooperative societies in Nkanu West L.G.A which is made up of 2750 members. Using the simple random method, 45 societies made up of 1125 members were picked. The population for the study includes;

- I. 45 selected cooperative societies in Nkanu West L.G.A made up of 1125 members
- II. Members of the communities in Nkanu West L.G.A (500) randomly selected.
- III. Local government official charged with cooperative responsibility 1 (Mrs. Deborah Egbo)

Total population of the study = 1626

Sampling and Sample Size Determination

Considering the population of the study, it is very large, thus, for the population of the study to be reduced to a workable sample without losing the essential value of any component of the population, the Yaro Yamani rule was used to determine the sample size.

$$\text{Thus stated; } n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where: n= sample size

N=population size

e=error limit (0.05)

I=constant

$$n = \frac{1626}{1+1626(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1626}{1627 \cdot 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{1626}{4.0675}$$

$$n = 348 \quad \text{Thus sample size} = 348 \text{ persons}$$

TABLE 1
Summary of respondents' response rate

Survey category	Distribution	Response	%
Questionnaires	128	124	96.9
Interviews	113	104	92.0
Others	107	103	96.3
Total	348	331	95.1

Source: Field survey 2021

The table represents the distribution of all the elements and categories of survey used and their response rate. Out of 128 questionnaires distributed, 2 were mutilated beyond use during the process and 2 were not returned at all leaving us with the response rate of 96.9%. 113 were billed for interview whereas 104 were interviewed because 9 could not be reached leaving us with the success rate of 92.0%. For others, 103 were available out of 107 originally scheduled, leaving us with the success rate of 96.3%. The total response rate of 331 out of 348 is 95.1%.

TABLE 2
Distribution of age of the respondents

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
20-29	46	13.9
30-39	104	31.4
40-49	97	29.3
50 and above	84	25.4
Total	331	100

Source: Field survey 2020

Table 2 presents the age brackets of respondents. Majority of the respondents were between the ages of 30-39 followed by the category of 40-49 and the 50 and above category while those below 30 years age bracket are just 46 which indicates that the younger members of the society migrates to the cities(rural-urban drift is more common among the younger generation.

TABLE 3
Sex distribution of respondents

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
MALE	213	64.4
FEMALE	118	35.6
TOTAL	331	100

Source: Field survey 2020

It is observed above that most of the respondents are male with the percentage rate of 64.4% and the female 35.6%.

TABLE 4
Occupational distribution of respondents

OCCUPATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Civil Public Servant	90	27.2
Trader	80	24.1
Agricultural Entrepreneur	130	39.3
Others	31	9.4
Total	331	100

Source: Field Survey 2020

Table 4 shows that most of the respondents are farmers, 130 in number, 90 civil/ public servants, 80 traders and 31 other non-identified occupations.

TABLE 5
Educational Level of Respondents

LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Primary school	95	28.7
Secondary school	160	48.3
Tertiary Education	76	23.0
Total	331	100

Source: Field Survey 2020

The table shows that 76 respondents acquired tertiary education, while majority are with school certification (secondary school) and 95 acquired secondary education.

Findings of the Study

The hypothesis for this study was necessary to discover through the questionnaires, interview and personal observations, the impact of cooperative education on cooperative societies in Nkanu West.

With the null and alternate hypothesis stated respectively;

Ho: Cooperative education does not positively and significantly affect the economic growth and rural development of the respondents in Nkanu West.

H₁: Cooperative education has positively and significantly increased economic growth and rural development in Nkanu West.

TABLE 6

IMPROVED STANDARD OF LIVING * COOPERATIVE EDUCATION Crosstabulation

Count		COOPERATIVE EDUCATION		Total
		AFTER TRAINING	PRIOR TO TRAINING	
IMPROVED STANDARD OF LIVING	YES	39	2	41
	NO	14	276	290
Total		53	278	331

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	331.000 ^a	1	.005		
Continuity Correction ^b	321.850	1	.009		
Likelihood Ratio	247.959	1	.005		
Fisher's Exact Test				.009	.004
N of Valid Cases	331				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.08.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	1.000
	Cramer's V	1.000
N of Valid Cases	331	

TABLE 7

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION * RURAL DWELLERS Crosstabulation

Count		RURAL DEVELOPMENT		Total
		POSITIVELY	NEGATIVELY	
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION	PRESENT	195	65	260
	ABSENT	25	46	71
Total		220	111	331

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	38.304 ^a	1	.006		
Continuity Correction ^b	36.556	1	.005		
Likelihood Ratio	36.439	1	.005		
Fisher's Exact Test				.005	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	38.188	1	.004		
N of Valid Cases	331				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 23.33.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.341
	Cramer's V	.341
N of Valid Cases	331	

TABLE 8

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION * ECONOMIC GROWTH Crosstabulation

Count		ECONOMIC GROWTH		Total
		YES	NO	
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION	PRESENT	201	1	202
	ABSENT	41	88	129
Total		242	89	331

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	183.664 ^a	1	.001		
Continuity Correction ^b	180.235	1	.001		
Likelihood Ratio	211.460	1	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				.001	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	183.109	1	.002		
N of Valid Cases	331				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 34.69.
 b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by	Phi	.745	.001
Nominal	Cramer's V	.745	.001
N of Valid Cases		331	

TABLE 9
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION * POVERTY RATE Crosstabulation

Count		POVERTY RATE		Total
		REDUCED	INCREASED	
COOPERATIVE	PRESNT	234	13	247
EDUCATION	ABSENT	10	74	84
Total		244	87	331

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	331.000 ^a	1	.002		
Continuity Correction ^b	325.859	1	.003		
Likelihood Ratio	381.316	1	.002		
Fisher's Exact Test				.003	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	330.000	1	.002		
N of Valid Cases		331			

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.87.
 b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by	Phi	1.000	.002
Nominal	Cramer's V	1.000	.002
N of Valid Cases		331	

TABLE 10
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION * RURAL DEVELOPMENT Crosstabulation

Count		RURAL DEVELOPMENT		Total
		HELPED	NOT HELPED	
COOPERATIVE_EDU	PRESNT	190	18	208
CATION	ABSENT	31	92	123
Total		221	110	331

Chi Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	331.000 ^a	1	.001		
Continuity Correction ^b	326.731	1	.002		
Likelihood Ratio	436.789	1	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				.002	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	330.000	1	.001		
N of Valid Cases		331			

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 45.71.
 b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by	Phi	1.000	.001
Nominal	Cramer's V	1.000	.001
N of Valid Cases		331	

Discussion of the Findings

The various questions raised in the questionnaires which are needed to prove the significance of this study was tested and results gotten.

In question 6; the standard of living before and after cooperative education was analyzed and test carried out. It was gotten that the alpha value is 0.01 which is less than the decision value.

Also the other test carried out on the effect of cooperative education on rural development, rural dwellers, on poverty rate and on rural development. All proved that the test is significant because the alpha values are less than 0.05.

Thus, it is proven that cooperative education works to improve the economic growth and rural development of the respondents in Nkanu West.

To this end, a remarkable number of respondents uphold the fact that

cooperative education have been beneficial to them as indicated in the test carried out.

Impact of Cooperative Education in Nkanu West Local Government Area

From the studies carried out and the findings obtained through questionnaires, interviews, observations and others, it has become a registered fact that cooperative societies in Nkanu West Local Government Area are Beneficial's of the wonders of cooperative education.

The respondents are of the view that cooperative education has put their societies on the right track for maximum benefit. They observed that their cooperative groups have come up with laudable ideas and views that will push them to the next level after acquiring cooperative education.

The chats below further show the success

rate of cooperative education in Nkanu West through compares of before and after the education.

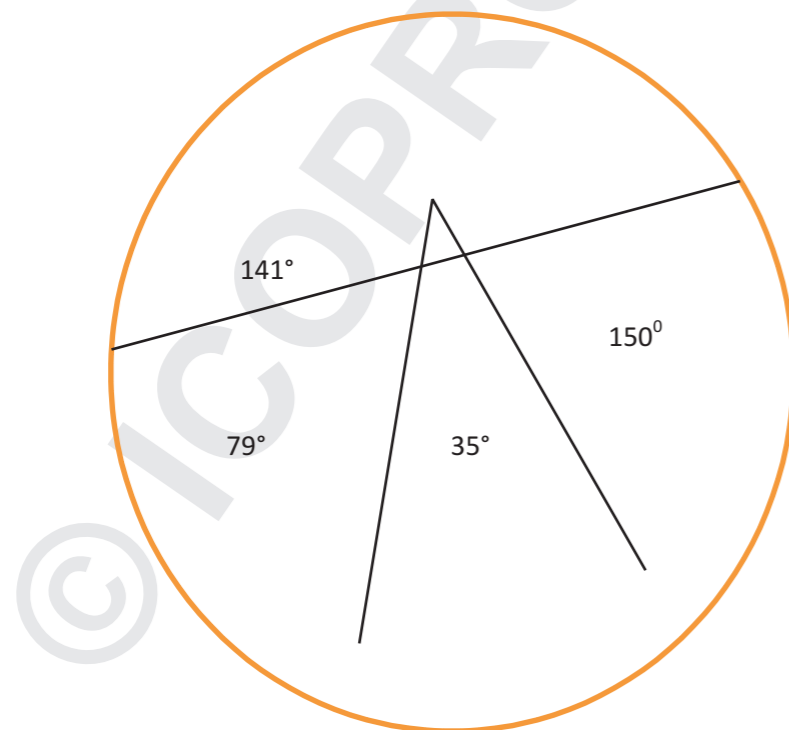
TABLE 11

Management of cooperative society before cooperative education

SYMBOL	STATUS	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE %	DEGREE°
+++++	Laudable	31	9.4	35
*****	Average	73	22.1	79
Xxxxx	Poor	97	29.2	105
Ooooo	Very poor	130	39.3	141
Total		331	100	360

Source: Field survey 2020

Table 11 shows the management of cooperative prior to cooperative education. This shows that the management was very poor before the introduction of proper education and training for the management, members and general public at large.



130

Fig. 1

The pie chart above shows that the management of majority of the cooperative societies in Nkanu West was extremely poor before the cooperative education.

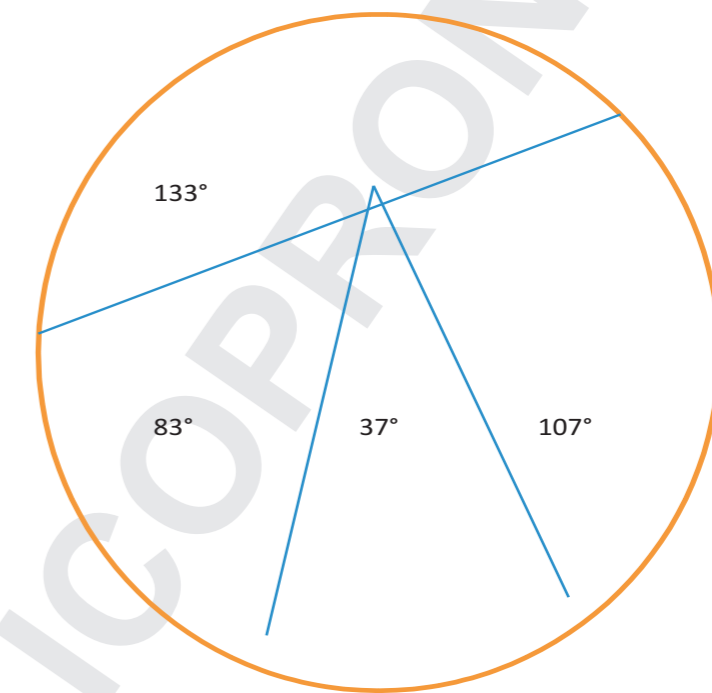
TABLE 12

Management of cooperative society after cooperative education.

SYMBOL	STATUS	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE %	DEGREE°
+++++	Laudable	98	29.6	107
*****	Average	122	36.8	133
XXXXX	Poor	76	23.0	83
Ooooo	Very poor	35	10.6	37
TOTAL		331	100	360

Source: Field Survey 2020

The table above shows the aggregate status of respondents after acquiring cooperative education. From that we can clearly see that the management status changed after cooperative education.



The pie chart shows that the management of cooperative societies in Nkanu West changed in the positive direction after acquiring cooperative education.

Summary of Findings

The analysis carried out in this study gave rise to the following findings;

1. Over the years, activities of the cooperative society have been nearly stagnant and insignificant because of lack of knowledgeable personnel and members who knows what to do and how to do in order to steer their boat of activities towards attainment of success.
2. But in recent years, after realizing that no cooperative society can exist without proper cooperative training and education which is the true foundation of a

successful cooperative, have become more efficient and effective. In S.A Chukwu's words (2012), pre-membership cooperative education is a primary aspect of a potential successful cooperative. And for cooperatives to meet all other obligations, cooperative education becomes an obligation itself.

3. Cooperative activities have accelerated and a number of achievements recorded not just because they understood the need for cooperative education but because they fully engaged in proper cooperative education and training which propelled them on the right track of success. The hypothesis tests revealed also that cooperative education have to a large extent affected positively the economic growth and rural development of respondents in Nkanu West.
4. That poverty which is the absence of resources to meet felt needs was reduced through cooperative education thereby accelerating the economic activities of the respondents in Nkanu West Local Government Area.
5. More than half of the respondents believe that cooperative education has a major role to play in cooperative societies and have contributed to the rural development in Nkanu West Local Government Area.
6. Also majority of the cooperative members accepted that cooperative education have aided their efficiency and effectiveness in managing their society and have contributed to the economic

growth in Nkanu West Local Government Area.

7. Nearly all the respondents affirmed that proper cooperative education and training did enhance their standard of living and social status, thus getting the "promotion plus" which was a driving factor of joining the cooperative society.

Conclusions

This research work dabbled into various benefits associated with cooperative education and the extreme but amenable consequences which arise in cooperative society void of cooperative education and training.

The study had its concentration on the activities of cooperative society in Nkanu West over the years and recent. It also employed the use of scientific procedure in which a randomly selected population was reduced to a more portable sample for accurate computations and analysis.

Recommendations

Due to the findings, analysis and discussions raised in this study, there are still enormous rooms to improve on for a more successful cooperative society which is a cooperative society that delivers on their promise as desired by its members at the right time. Thus, the researcher recommends that;

- a) More enabling environment should be provided by the government to aid cooperative activities in Nkanu West so as to bring about increase in economic growth and rural development.

- b) Cooperative societies should through awareness schemes and cooperative education, advice the government against officializing cooperative society so as to grant utter freedom to them for more effective and efficient activities and also better informed decisions as they are fully aware that they will bear the brunt of their decisions, whether good or bad.
- c) More researches should be carried out so as to know the new techniques and methods and adapt to the revolving world and move with the new trends so as to deliver the best to its members.
- d) Government should grant cooperative societies free access to funds and financial institutions so as to meet up with the growing demands of their activities and projects and be able to deliver on their promise of promotion plus to their members.
- e) Constant and proper cooperative education and training should be an on-going activity in cooperative societies for a better growing cooperative society.

Suggestions for Further Research

Constant research is what keeps an idea or a method evergreen and classical and as we all know, economy grows and develop through incessant research. Also medical line and others are acknowledged for moving with the trend simply because of constant studies and researches.

On this end, further studies and research need not be neglected if cooperative societies are of the view of delivering the best to their

members and the society at large at every given point in time. A country void of proper utilization of their natural resources can never compete with other countries who emphasizes on proper utilization of their resources.

Thus, constant researches and further studies should be carried out to ensure proper and efficient utilization of cooperative education as a tool for economic growth and rural development.

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COOPERATIVE INTERVENTION FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY THROUGH AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE POST COVID-19 PERIOD IN NIGERIA -19 PERIOD IN NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT:

The paper gave an overview of the agricultural situation and food shortage problem in Nigeria vis-à-vis the position of cooperatives development and potentials in Nigeria. Having briefly exposed the history of the birth of cooperative movement in the country, it examined the ways and capabilities of cooperative societies of solving food shortage problems in the country. It also identified some efforts of government in the past to address this problem which have not yielded the desirable result. Drawing from the experiences of some developed countries therefore, and the submission of some other scholars, it concluded and suggested that cooperative development and support is a sine-qua-non step to address food shortage problem and further enhance economic recovery and development in the post Covid-19 period in Nigeria.

The paper thus concluded with an advocacy for public-private partnership in developing cooperative activities for the good of all and sundry.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Development is one of the main goals that all farming communities try to

achieve in order to improve their living standards. Cooperatives globally, play major role in the rural society.

Despite the significance of the agricultural sector, its performance over some decades has been rather disappointing in view of its low productivity. However, if the country has to feed, reduce abject poverty and attain a satisfactory level of sustainable economic growth, the poor performance in agriculture should be addressed.

Agriculture remains the main stay as of rural economy in Nigeria as it provides employment directly or indirectly for about 70% of the work force.

The small-holder farmers are constrained by many problems including those of poor access to modern inputs, inadequate credit facilities, poor infrastructure and inadequate access to markets, environmental degradation and inadequate agricultural extension services (Veerakumaran, 2005).

In an effort to overcome some of these issues, donor agencies and governments have emphasized cooperatives as a strategy to promote collective action to strengthen small-holders livelihoods by linking them to national and international markets.

Small-holder farmers remain the bedrock of agricultural production especially in the developing countries including Nigeria. It accounted for over 90% of all agricultural output in Nigeria. (World Fact book, 2011).

The farmers are burdened with high cost of farm inputs, inefficient farming techniques, inadequate infrastructure, poor producer prices and heavy constraints in obtaining credits and insurance. The situation is further compounded by the general economic down turn and governments' drive to remove all subsidies on inputs such as fertilizers, vaccines and foundation stock. Consequently, the cooperative option comes into focus as a viable way to effectively mobilize farmers to form groups and pool resources so as to become more effective in agricultural production. In addition to the values and principles of cooperatives, Veerakumaran (2005) explained that cooperative serves as fundamental tool for achieving food security at household level. Cooperatives are the institutional intervention for attaining food security in any country.

The developed nations like United States of America, Australia, almost all European Countries, Canada and Socialist Countries like China have attained food self-sufficiency through cooperatives (Chambo, 2009)

It is therefore useful to draw some lessons from these and adopt some of the approaches.

2. Some of The Challenges:

It was opined that the Nigerian economy slipped into recession in 2016 when it contracted by 2.06 percent between April and June 2016 after declining for two consecutive quarters. This was manifested in unemployment slowing

gross domestic product (GDP) and high inflation (Okuneye, 2018).

Despite the fact that the Nigerian economy is still considered agrarian (agriculture based) with respect to the percentage of the population engaged, and contribution to GDP by single sector, the economy is still dominated by the oil sector in terms of foreign exchange reserves and total revenue earnings.

The Nigerian agricultural sector still faces more challenges including high cost of farm inputs; poor access to credit; limited access to improved technology thus limiting the farm sizes and productivity; inadequate storage facilities and poor access to produce markets among others. This scenario leads to low productivity and output as well as high post harvest wastes and losses in the sector. Thus increases in food crops production have not kept pace with population growth, resulting in rising food imports and declining levels of national food self sufficiency (FMARD, 2008).

The Covid-19 pandemic, which warranted the lock-down of the economy in 2020, thus heightened the problem of food insufficiency brought about by inability of farmers to freely work on farms. As if this was not enough, the problem of insecurity further constrained the farmers from normal operations on the farms.

To date, Nigeria is Africa's leading consumer of rice and simultaneously the largest rice importer in the world despite the large quantity of rice being produced locally. This is an indication that the demand is outstripping the local supply. Despite the fact that Nigeria is the world leading producer of cassava she still cannot feed her population adequately from home production of food crops and

thus has to result to importing food because the rate of increase of food production is far lower than the rate of increase in population.

There is therefore the need for intervention to salvage the economy from total recession and to bring it back to focus among the committee of developing/developed nations.

3. The Need For Cooperative Intervention

In realization for the need for policy redirection to solve the food shortage problem in Nigeria, the government over the years made several attempts to raise food production through various programs and schemes identified with different administrations. Some of these as observed by Adesimi (1995) and Aihonsu (2015) include the Kware Irrigation Scheme, the Farm Settlement Scheme, National Accelerated Food Production Project, Agricultural Development Projects, Operation Feed the Nation Program, River Basin Development Authorities and National Fadama Development Programme, just to mention a few. These however have not brought the needed respite.

It is an indisputable fact that cooperative is an age long strategy in communities and work places to advance socio-economic development (Aihonsu, 2017). Cooperative societies form a body of an important financial institution in the developing countries where high levels of poverty constrain people from having sufficient saving to make investments because of their low income vis-à-vis high cost of living. Anosike (2014) thus concluded that cooperative societies provide means to meet demand for business funding. To date, it's still the relatively safest approach to pool

resources together for common benefit of members and the society at large.

The cooperative movement was started in Nigeria by farmers either as a popular organ to press for improvement of members conditions by government or to improve their crop production techniques for greater yields.

Also the movement at inception had the objective of educating its members on measures of improving the quality of their produce; providing credit facilities to members; regulating labour migration from one area to another, and to arrange for the direct sale of their produce abroad among many others.

Similarly the colonial government in Nigeria had long appreciated the importance of cooperative to include possibility of producers to unite and borrow money on their joint liability. They would also be able to secure, through joint selection of crops a fair price from the merchants than what the small farmer could obtain in isolation. This was in addition to using cooperative organisations as agents of extension to introduce some farm inputs such as improved seeds, fertilisers, ploughs and tractors to other parts of the country especially the

Northern farmers at that time. The foundation for cooperatives to serve as agents of economic transformation and social change has thus been laid before the independence in 1960.

Anosike (2014) observed that the emergence of modern cooperative societies in Nigeria has led to the growth in the number of indigenous entrepreneurs. Not only this, cooperative societies also became the pivotal centres for training and led to the establishment of cooperative training institutions and

departments. In summary therefore, it can be concluded from the submissions of scholars that cooperatives have stood the test of time in playing enormous roles in the economic and political transformation and development in Nigeria.

Efforts to improve and develop cooperatives will therefore be seen not only to be in the right direction, but should be enhanced. This is because all over the world cooperatives have gone beyond traditional or local but have become big organisations recognised for positive change in the economy of their countries in support of government activities and thus become recognised partners in progress with governments of developed nations such as Canada, Britain, Sri-Lanka and China among others. It is therefore beneficial and plausible for the Nigerian government to support and promote the development of the cooperative organisations because of the short and long term benefits it portends.

4. Role of Cooperatives:

The role and potentials of cooperatives in economic recovery cannot be over emphasised. Cooperative by its development is operated on “one man one vote” of equality of membership. The main thrust of cooperatives according to Okuneye (2018), is that they have always endeavoured to enable people to have access to goods and services without exploitation which consequently enables members to pursue a convergence between economic, social, and environmental interest to ensure sustainability. Nearly all types of cooperatives engage in one form of developmental activities or the other, such as agriculture, transportation, commerce, and credit creation. By these, they act as catalysts for poverty reduction through

the economic and social progress of their members and societies.

Given the spread of cooperative societies nationwide and worldwide, they are identified as a readymade change agent for social and economic transformation.

Following this, Aihonsu (2018) in a position paper titled “Cooperative support for Nigerian Agriculture: A self-help project for cooperative development” concluded that

cooperatives have potentials for promoting agriculture in Nigeria which can be summarised thus:

- a. Providing funds to transform to modern agriculture through provision of operational capital (real and money);
- b. Creating avenue for value addition to agricultural produce through processing and branding;
- c. Marketing of products through marketing associations or marketing cooperatives, thus making ways for adequate transportations, storage and preservations;
- d. Distribution of agricultural products through consumer cooperatives for bulk purchase and guaranteed market for farmers; and
- e. Exports of commodities through commodity export cooperatives.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion:

Cooperatives remain a veritable organ capable of economically and politically redeeming the country Nigeria from the predicament of economic depression occasioned by lack of adequate attention to agricultural potentials of the nation

which was again heightened by the Covid-19 pandemic. A good attention should therefore be paid to promoting cooperative development in all sectors of the economy especially agricultural sector where Nigeria has comparative advantage to perform or operate. This calls for sincere and genuine government assistance for the development of cooperatives as it is done in some developed economies/countries of repute in the world. In essence, it is a call for public-private partnership initiative to plan and work on the strengths and weaknesses of the societies for the good of all.

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ENSURING PEACE AND STABILITY OF CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES: THE ROLE OF LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS:

by

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INTRODUCTION

State Directors of Co-operatives in Nigeria are carrying in their Registers of Co-operative Societies thousands of registered co-operatives but when it comes to functionality, you will be marveled by the percentage of that number that are actually functional and productive. The Federal Director of Co-operatives is also not spared of such dilemma when it comes to national societies and apexes. When you inquire into the causes of such degree of moribundness in our societies, you will realize that majority of them are caused by avoidable conflicts anchored on poor leadership and followership virus. This is a virus that could easily be destroyed by giving proper co-operative education to both sides, putting in place effective intra society communication, well articulated byelaws, effective supervision and monitoring through regular inspections and auditing by the regulating authorities. In this discuss, therefore, we shall be looking at the role of leaders and followers in ensuring peace and stability in their societies to guarantee successful achievement of the objectives that brought them together.

1. WHAT IS A CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

Let us spare our selves the pains of trying to go with literature and international definitions of co-operative and come

down to the lay-man's idea, the village man's conception of what co-operative is. He sees co-operative as a rallying point with some of his village people and or friends to mobilize resources both human and material in discussing and tackling some problems or issues common to them but beyond their handling on individual basis. In coming together they have made up their minds to shoulder together possible risks arising from the union as well as enjoy the juicy fallouts of the relationship. One principal thing that often confronts this union has always been how to improve their livelihood through this relationship and the next thing is to thinker out an enterprise or business they can all be involved so as to add few Naira to their disposable income either weekly, monthly or annually. To achieve this they need some peace and tranquility among themselves, some near perfect understanding of one another's character and temperament. This is probably why some societies insist on membership being drawn either from people of the same village or community, the same workplace or the same profession. To achieve this desire of theirs they require a good leader, an understanding leader that will carry all of them along, a devoted and honest person.

2. WHAT CONSTITUTES A CONFLICT IN CO-OPERATIVES

It is not necessarily every

misunderstanding or misgivings in a co-operative society that is regarded as dispute or conflict after all it is not uncommon for people, groups or even nations to disagree among themselves in course of their dealings with one another. In co-operatives conflicts and misunderstanding are regarded as dispute only when such misunderstandings and misgivings touch on the business of the registered society and tends to disrupt proper functioning of the co-operative business. Section 49 (1) of the Nigerian Co-operative Act captures it as such. Such disagreements may arise from any or a combination of the following: i) among present or past members and/or persons claiming through them and deceased members; ii) between a present, past or deceased member and the society, its committee, or any officer, agent or savant of the society; iii) between the society and any committee; officer, agent or servant of the society; iv) between the society and any other registered society; and v) personality and ego difference between officers. At times there could also be a claim by a registered society for any debt or demand due to it from a member or nominee, heir or estate of a deceased member. Such claim is equally regarded as dispute touching the business of the society (Okechukwu, 2017).

3.1 Co-operatives Should Not Go To Court

Litigation, mediation and arbitration are all legitimate means of resolving disputes and each one has its costs. In majority of cases, the resolution mechanism determines the degree of relationship beyond the cessation of hostilities. What is important is not necessarily the differences or their cause(s) but the end result—was the disputed issue resolved in

such a manner that the disputants can still correlate thereafter or have they been pushed further apart as a result of the settlement. The best adjudication is the one that leaves the disputants friendlier than they were before the dispute. If we go back to the definition of co-operative and what co-operative stands for, it becomes clear that going to court will simply defeat the aims of friends and relatives coming together to chart a better course for themselves. This is why arbitration is often advocated for co-operative societies in dispute because arbitration is an extra-judicial mechanism through which conflicts between two or more parties are resolved by impartial individual(s), called arbitrator(s) in order to avoid costly and lengthy litigation thereby minimizing bad-blood generation within otherwise friends and relations. In addition to this, arbitration is advocated because

- i) when the subject matter of the dispute is highly technical, arbitrators with an appropriate degree of expertise can be appointed. In co-operatives, co-operative officers who are vast in co-operative laws and practice and can read and understand co-operative societies byelaws are appointed.
- ii) arbitration is often faster than litigation in court because frequent adjournments are not allowed;
- iii) arbitration can be cheaper and more flexible for businesses because you don't require the services of any legal practitioner arbitral proceedings and an arbitral award are generally non-public.
- iv) They are highly confidential open only to the disputants and a representative of the Director of Co-operatives if need be. There

- should be no publications.
- v) Disputants agree on the venue for the arbitration and arbitration awards are generally easier to enforce than court judgments; and
- vi) in most legal systems, there are very limited avenues for an appeal against an arbitral award. Here in Nigeria you can appeal to the Commissioner or Minister in-charge of co-operative matters and his decision shall be final.

3. LEADERSHIP

Leadership simply put is all about one person trying to influence the activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal achievements. Leadership is initiation of new structures or procedures for the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives. If one cannot initiate new structures of process for goal setting, goal achievement and for general problem solving, he is not an effective leader (Arnold & Fieldman, 1986). Okechukwu (2008) defined leadership as a process of influencing a group of individuals so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of desirable goals.

The essence of leadership is followership and it is the willingness of people to follow that makes a person a leader. Hollander (1978) outlined various functions of leadership to include organizing, directing and coordinating efforts. There are also such functions as maintaining the group, defining the situation and setting goals. Leadership also involves internal and external relationship including conflict resolution. This means negotiating and settling disputes with other social units in organizations and with other agencies and stakeholders in government and public at

large. Any good leader capable of achieving goals within a very peaceful and harmonious environment should be seen to exhibit such characteristics/qualities as:

- i) Capability *ie* must be intelligent, capable of expressing himself very well, be confident and alert;
- ii) Reliability and dependable *ie* ability to keep his/her words and keep any trust reposed on him/her without any letdown;
- iii) Initiative and knowledgeable with a good listening ear at the same time, be a good judge at any given situation;
- iv) Accommodating and appreciative of people for what they are not what they have;
- v) Fair and firm *ie* sticking to the rule but at the same time display concern and responsiveness; and
- vi) Accountability *ie* be ready to account for his actions and conduct at the shortest demand

In addition to the above characteristics, the extent to which a leader is able to achieve the functions of his office or set out goals determines his effectiveness and the following are important:

- i. Cordial Relationship: There should be a very cordial relationship existing between the leader and the followers else in the course of execution not many people will be carried along.
- ii. Open Door Policy: This simply means that the leader has to be very free with his followers. This includes being free to discuss with them and allowing them to air their views. There should be free information

- flow and proper accountability of fund spent.
- iii. Equity and Fairness: Effective leadership should give people their due rights and/ or entitlements. People should not be denied of their opportunities. Official matters should follow due process. For example, appointments have to be based on certain laid down principles.
 - iv. Emotional Control: The degree of emotional control is measured not necessarily by how strong a leader feels on any issue, not even by the justness and soundness of his feelings but the way he acts, the extent to which his feelings are so restrained and directed. It is also measured by the extent to which he prevents his personal likes and dislikes of people or his spersonal prejudice from influencing his decisions.

In summary, a good leader must display very strong personality traits—integrity, honesty, loyalty, respectfulness, responsibility, humility, compassion and fairness. This is why in co-operatives emphasis is on person not investment or position in the society.

4. FOLLOWERSHIP

As earlier stated, there can never be a good leadership without good followership. Followers provide valuable supports to leaders. They listen and contribute good ideas during deliberations which come either as suggestions or positive criticism of the leader's action or idea. They make the rules with which the leader leads them and make amends when and where necessary. For the leader to function very

well there must be effective participation by the led in all activities of the organization including attendance to meetings and all functions of the society as well as being current with their financial obligations.

Like is obtainable in co-operatives, the followers through their general meetings are the leaders while Management Committee/Board of Directors become the followers while in the conduct of meetings and in work places, the Management Committee becomes the leader while the members of the society become the follower. The general meeting of every co-operative society is the supreme authority in that society. This is why it is said that the management structure in co-operatives takes the shape of an inverted cone, flowing from bottom to top. What is being said here is that in a reciprocal **relationship situation**, a leader becomes a follower in certain situations and in another, followers become leaders. The following according to Wikipedia are the qualities of good followers: judgment, good **work ethic**, competence, honesty, **courage**, discretion, loyalty, and ego management.

5. SEGREGATION/DELEGATING OF DUTIES

Experience has shown that in organisations, one major source or cause of misunderstanding organisations is non-delegation or skewed delegation of responsibilities. It breeds suspicion, rumours and apathy. The co-operative movement recognizes the importance of segregation or delegation of duties in both business growth process and organizational harmony. This is why provisions are made in the byelaws for sub-committee in co-operatives. It helps to minimize fraud and guarantees greater

participation and commitment. All the sub-committees will be responsible to the Management Committee headed by the Chairman or President as the case may be. You will have such sub-committees, depending on the co-operative type, works sub-committees, finance, procurement, entertainment, etc. Such segregations will help in prompt identification of problem areas and nib them on bud. One vital point about power segregation is, if it must succeed, that the sub-committees be given free hand to execute an assigned responsibility

6. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE LEADER AND THE LED

One major source of misunderstanding in organisations, even in families, is poor intra communication between the members. There must be proper and effective communication between the led and the leader. As earlier said the essence of leadership is followership and it is the willingness of people to follow that makes a person a leader. A major ingredient that makes this relationship possible is adequate communication between the leadership and the led. Constant and effective communication based on trustworthy behaviour is essential in developing the understanding and support between them. This will result in the led contributing to the success of the leader. It is also paramount that the leader understands and relates to the interests and needs of his followers to draw them closer and effectively influence them. The leader must get to know them, establish mutually beneficial working relationships and communicate in ways most likely to resonate favourably with them.

In co-operatives here in Nigeria, given the level of education and exposure of our co-

operators especially the rural co-operators, the most effective communication method is face-to-face interaction between the leader and the members. This face-to-face interaction may be supported by other forms of communication like memos, newsletters, text messages, WhatsApp chats as could be applicable. The language of communication is another important factor which any leader must pay attention to. The language must be such that every member understands and contributes in.

7. SOCIETY'S BYELAWS

In trying to register a new co-operative society, most proposed societies see the byelaws as mere formality, just a condition for registration without knowing their importance. The bye laws spell out the policy and modus operandi of the society. Most importantly, it defines the relationship between the management and the members, between the members and the society as well as between members themselves. The byelaws define the rights, privileges and liabilities of the members. Both the authorities of the Management Committee and the general meeting are clearly defined to minimize clash of responsibilities thereby reduce possible conflict zones. Given the above enormous functions of a society's byelaws, it then becomes very imperative that it is a document that requires thorough and well articulated preparation process. It might best be prepared when the intending members of the proposed society might have received sufficient co-operative education and as much as possible be aided in the preparation by somebody very vast in co-operative laws and practice.

8. THE ROLE OF THE REGULATING AUTHORITY

Every regulating authority should do much in ensuring peaceful relationship within the societies and in between societies within their domain. This can be achieved through regular inspections, auditing, education, advises and inquiries where necessary. The Co-operative Act permits the Directors of co-operatives to take over the management of any society riddled with crisis and bad management after an inquiry, manage it for two years and hand back to the team it took it from.

9. CONCLUSION

In co-operatives conflicts and misunderstanding can only be regarded as dispute when such misunderstandings and misgivings touch on the business of the registered society and tends to disrupt proper functioning of the co-operative business. When real issues come up in co-operatives, arbitration is often recommended because going to court will simply defeat the aims of friends and relatives coming together to chart a better course for themselves. It will also help to avoid costly and lengthy litigation thereby minimizing bad-blood generation within otherwise friends and relations.

Any good leader capable of achieving goals within a very peaceful and harmonious environment should be seen to be capable, reliable and dependable, initiative and knowledgeable,

accommodating and appreciative, fair and firm and very accountable at all times. For the leader to function very well there must be effective participation by the led in all activities of the organization including attendance to meetings and all functions of the society as well as being current with their financial obligations. Organisations should try to minimize non-delegation or skewed delegation of responsibilities so as to carry everybody along because such practices breed suspicion, rumours and apathy. There must be proper and effective communication between the led and the leader. Constant and effective communication based on trustworthy behaviour is essential in developing the understanding and support between them. Byelaws of societies must be meticulously prepared to address possible conflict zones and the regulating body should guarantee regular inspection, auditing and inquiries where necessary as a way to nib conflicts on bud.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN COOPERATIVES AFTER THE PANDEMIC: ISSUES AND PROCESSES

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1. Introduction

The covid-19 era signifies the period of the outbreak of the corona virus pandemic which led to millions of deaths worldwide and resulted in forced lockdowns and shutting down of businesses. This affected the world economy, including those of cooperatives. Rebuilding the world economy after the pandemic, particularly that of Nigeria, requires, among others, the introduction of policies and programmes that will increase productivity and business harmony and reduce costs. In the cooperative sector, one of the areas of concern is that of conflict resolution.

Whenever people stay together or interact with each other, there are bound to be disagreements as no two individuals have exactly the same expectations and desires. Conflict, therefore, is a natural part of our interactions with each other. Cooperative societies, as sociological groups, are not spared this problem associated with the larger societies. Thus, the theory of conflict resolution recognizes these facts, and that small or big, if not quickly or properly handled, disagreements may snow-ball into conflicts (Okoreaffia, 2016). Thomas and Kilmann (1974) describe conflicts as the condition in which people's concerns are incomparable. If the things which two people care about are opposed, then there

is conflict.

Therefore, when a group of individuals come together in a business setting, it is important to put in place an effective mechanism towards the resolution of conflicts which we are almost certain will arise. These stem from pre-emptive action to situation management to post resolution surveillance.

2. Likely Parties in a Cooperative Conflict

There are different stakeholders in a cooperative who may disagree in the course of the cooperative business. They include members, the committee and committee members, past members, former committee members, employees, suppliers and financiers, debtors and customers, etc. Where any disagreement between or among them, touching on the business of the cooperative, persists, it can be declared a dispute in the cooperative and its handling is provided for in the cooperative laws. Specifically, section 49 of the Nigerian Cooperative Societies' Act (2004) states that:

if a dispute touching the business of a registered society arises:

- a. among present or past members and persons claiming through past

and present members and deceased members; or

- b. between a past, present or deceased members and the society, its committee or any officer, agent or servant of the society; or
- c. between the society and any other committee and any officer, agent or servant of the society; or
- d. between the society and any other registered society;

the dispute SHALL be referred to the Director for settlement.

A claim by a cooperative society for any debt or demand due to it from a member or nominee, heir or estate of a deceased member, shall be deemed to be a dispute touching the business of the society within the meaning of this law. So also a claim by a member of a housing cooperative that he has completed payment for the house allocated to him but that deductions have continued thereafter; or an allegation by a member of a transport cooperative that he was not allocated a vehicle when it was his turn; or a claim by an agricultural cooperative that a member refused to market his produce through the cooperative when their byelaw binds him to either do so or pay associated liquidated damages; or allegations against the committee for preferential treatment to some members in loan approvals; or against a member of the committee for overstaying his mandate in the committee; etc. These must be taken to the Director for settlement, through arbitration.

3. Procedure for the Resolution of Conflicts in Cooperatives

The process of arbitration employs the

constitutional obligation of fair hearing which insists that every party must be given an opportunity to be heard. The Director shall, on receipt of a dispute referred to him, either settle it himself or refer it to an arbitrator or arbitrators for settlement in accordance with the cooperative laws. The arbitrator identifies the problems and the underlying issues (many of which are hidden) and looks for evidences in support like witnesses, who are cross-examined and documents which are verified and confirmed. Whatever material facts presented in the process of conflict resolution must be documented by the arbitrator so that he does not rely on memory. The arbitrator finally attempts to proffer the best solution, which may not necessarily be the option without implications, but the one with the highest gains and benefits and the least consequences, within the context of the enabling legislation. The decision of the arbitrator is called an Award.

Arbitrators are expected to be honest persons with a high level of integrity; and a good knowledge of the cooperative law and of accounting. They are usually friendly in order to create an atmosphere of cordiality for the parties to open up and air their views. They are patient enough to listen to each party, pain-staking enough to dig out the real issues and articulate enough to reach a fair decision. They are also transparent enough in their procedures to ensure that the confidence reposed on them is not subjected to suspicion. In order to make them very effective, arbitrators are given the powers of a magistrate in respect of summoning parties, enforcing the attendance of witnesses and compelling the production of documents.

Where a party is dissatisfied with the decision of the arbitrator, he may appeal to the Commissioner (or Minister, as the case may be) responsible for cooperative matters within 30 days. The Commissioner's (or Minister's) decision thereafter shall be final and conclusive.

The decision (award) of the arbitrator (or the decision of the Commissioner/Minister on the appeal) is enforceable by any court which has jurisdiction in a civil suit between the parties to the dispute in the same manner as if the decision has been a judgement of the court itself (see section 49(7) of the NCSA of 2004).

4. Advantages of Arbitration for Cooperative Conflict Resolution Instead of Litigation

Litigation is the process of going to court to resolve disputes that arise among persons or parties. Such court processes are usually time consuming, expensive, technical, may stall the joint business and brings bitterness at the end. These are why the cooperative law excludes the courts from cooperative dispute resolution processes and prescribing arbitration.

Arbitration, on the other hand, ensures that the issue/s is/are resolved very quickly. This is because the arbitration panel is a single case court. It concentrates on only the case before it, hears the matter throughout the day, adjourns to the next available day for continuation and winds up as soon as it concludes. Regulation 55(10) of the SECR even provides that such matters must be resolved within 90 days from the beginning to the end of appeal, believing that prolonged disputes can invalidate the justice sought. Since lawyers are not usually involved, the cost implication of arbitration is on the low

side and the speedy resolution will not allow costs to pile up too. There are no technicalities involved in the dispute resolution process and for one party to win, the other party's needs and goals are usually considered within the context of the joint business, with the net result that both parties maximize their outcomes. This removes the bitterness associated with litigation where the winner takes it all. More so, when the arbitration process involves more than one arbitrator, which this author strongly recommends, and each party is required to nominate an arbitrator, the psychological feeling of being represented where the decision is taken makes parties to embrace the arbitration decision (award) as mutual gains.

5. Non-adherence to the Legal Provisions on Cooperative Arbitration.

Despite this provision and its advantages, some persons have taken cases bothering on their cooperative businesses to court for settlement. The court would naturally listen to the matter as entertaining cases is their establishment mandate. However, it behoves on the party that understands and believes in the cooperative way of resolving disputes to raise an objection based on jurisdiction.

Lessons from a recently decided case in point is instructive. An aggrieved member of an institution-based cooperative approached a High Court seeking to enforce a pre-determined panel report of the institution on issues concerning the business of their staff cooperative. The defendants raised objection on grounds of incompetence and jurisdiction based on the said section 49 of the cooperative Act. The court in its ruling recognized the provisions of section 49 as fundamental in dispute resolution in cooperatives. It re-

iterated that where a special procedure is prescribed for enforcement of a particular right or remedy, non-compliance with or departure from such a procedure is incurably fatal to the enforcement of the remedy or right. It held that anything different from that procedure renders the application incompetent and therefore deprives the court of jurisdiction. He therefore struck out the matter. This reinforces the significance of arbitration in the settlement of disputes in cooperatives. Earlier in his argument, the plaintiff had submitted that the issues in question were well over the limits, jurisdiction and competence of the Director of cooperatives. This argument was rejected by the court when it clarified that the cooperative law did not provide for the level or category of cases that should be referred to the Director of cooperatives and those that should not; or that when the persons involved are all staff of the same organisation, that the cooperative is exempted from the application of the law. However, the argument concerning the competence of the Director of cooperatives raises two fundamental questions in Nigerian cooperative administration. The first is the issue of capacity: it questions the qualification of the Director, and his assistants, concerning cooperative sector administration. Does it mean that matters referred to the Director for settlement may not be properly handled? The Director is supposed to be an all-knowing cooperative expert, as envisioned by the Classical British Indian Pattern of Cooperation - the introductory policy of cooperation in developing countries like Nigeria. Who monitors the Director's competence today on behalf of the cooperative sector? The cooperative law gives the Directors the opportunity to

appoint arbitrators and they are expected to leverage on this to appoint competent persons, not necessarily their staff, for that purpose. The Institute of Cooperative Professionals of Nigeria (ICOPRON) should, through its programmes and trainings, provide a data bank of professionals that are qualified for arbitration and other such assignments for the reference of the Directors during such appointments.

The second question is that of the role of sponsor organisations. It is becoming a daily occurrence to hear of sponsor organisations dabbling into cooperative issues with impunity. The relationship between a cooperative and any promoter is already clearly defined in section 6 of the cooperative Act which declares registered cooperatives as bodies corporate with independent and distinctive powers, rights and privileges. Situations where the sponsor institutions or promoter begin to treat the cooperative as one of their departments or units has brought more crises in the cooperative than whatever goodwill it meant. Cases of appointing committee members and posting managers to the cooperative without recourse to the owners, appointing or becoming signatories to the cooperative bank accounts, investigating allegations using institutional authorities and processes without fair hearing, non-remitting of deductions, influencing cooperative investment options outside members' interests, using the cooperative to achieve institutional objectives instead of members' objectives, etc are some of the abnormalities that bedevil many cooperatives today.

The ruling of the court in the case under reference to the effect that the fact that all the members of the cooperative are also members of the same institution does not

exempt them from applying the cooperative law religiously nor does it empower the management of the sponsor institution to take over the running of the cooperative in any way different from the stipulations of the relevant cooperative laws.

For no other thing, this ruling is a big challenge to the cooperative sector to build the capacities of their members to be able to take up the management of their cooperative businesses.

6. Additional Actions the Co-operative Movement Should Take Towards Conflict Resolution.

- a. Moving forward, each member of a cooperative should be given a copy of their cooperative byelaw and should have access to the Cooperative Act and Regulations at all reasonable times. This should be supported with continuous cooperative education where the Director of cooperatives, his staff and/or other cooperative promoters will facilitate deeper knowledge in cooperative legislation and practices in order to reduce areas of conflict. More intensive cooperative education can lead to conflict prevention as members become aware of other members' rights, their own rights and also their limitations. In addition, the cooperative ethical values will inculcate the spirit of self-restraint in members which will positively affect conflict resolution.
- b. Members of cooperative societies should endeavour to attend their cooperative meetings knowing fully well that decisions concerning the affairs of the cooperative are reached after due discussions in the general

meeting. Those who do not attend meetings regularly are usually people who misunderstand their cooperative and start raising unjustified criticisms.

- c. Members of cooperatives who attend meetings should speak up on issues they have contrary opinion. They should also be given the opportunity to air their views no matter how contrary or opposing such views are. The democratic process of allowing the minority to have their say while the majority should have their way is demonstrated better when cooperative meetings are held transparently.
- d. Members of cooperative societies are strongly advised to complete the nominee form in their cooperative in line with section 18 of the Cooperative Act and South East States' Cooperative Regulation 10, such that when the need arises, the exact beneficiary of the interest of the deceased member will not be a subject of arbitration or even litigation as is seen at times.
- e. Also, Directors of Cooperative should rather approve a panel of 3 arbitrators in dispute cases referred to him and always have a list of cooperative professionals of proven character, integrity and qualification which shall form a pool from where aggrieved members routing for arbitration can nominate arbitrators. This they can achieve working with ICOPRON. If co-operators see them as persons who will not allow injustice to be perpetrated no matter who is involved, they will have confidence in them and in their awards.
- f. The cooperative movement at the

federation and union levels can also establish a pool of conciliators made up of cooperative elders, directors, unbiased officers of apexes, etc who would attempt to resolve members' disagreements inhouse before they mature into disputes.

7. Conclusion

There is no denying that the covid -19 has changed the way people live. The sudden shift in lifestyle has consequently affected our ideals and reenforced our values. As Burayag (2021) puts it, leadership and service will be different in the post pandemic era. Resourceful processes intentionally put in place to make cooperative administration easier but which were being ignored have to be bolstered. Knowing that there are bound to be disagreements in cooperatives just like every other human grouping where they have different backgrounds, sustainable conflict resolution should be the concern of every stakeholder.

Conflict resolution during, and after the pandemic, therefore, should be a process of putting in place strategies to identify conflicts early; to bring the parties together; and to use the relevant regulations to address their grievances in a more sustainable manner. The strict adoption of arbitration over litigation as the cooperative conflict resolution mechanism should be the sectors preferred option to ensure a win-win situation for everybody during and, especially, after the pandemic.

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POST COVID-19 CO-OPERATIVE BUSINESS DIGITALIZATION: AN ADAPTATION OF DIGITAL DIAGNOSIS TOOL FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract

This research work seeks to explore the level digitalization of co-operative businesses for sustainability post COVID-19 through the adaptation of digital diagnosis tool. Digitization is using digital technologies to either create new or enhance existing digitized processes, digital channels, digital products, and digital engagement for cooperative societies. The specific objectives of the study is to review the main digital technologies, to appraise various digital innovation processes in cooperatives that facilitates decision-making, and to apply an adapted digital diagnosis tool for measuring cooperatives' digital innovation. The exploratory research design was used in this study. In order to apply the Agri-Cooperative Digital Diagnosis Tool and test it, one (1) agricultural cooperative society was chosen from two (2) south east states to complete the auto diagnosis tool adapted. Research findings revealed that Agri-Cooperatives in the study area adopted limited digitalization channels as evidenced in the absence of emailing, non-involvement in the use of cloud computing, limited access to the internet and digital business development analysis. Therefore, it was recommended

that cooperative managers, members, practitioners as well as partners use the digital diagnosis tool to analyze cooperative business processes in order to ascertain the levels of digitalization as well as promote sustainability of cooperative post COVID-19.

Keywords: Post COVID_19, Co-operative, Digitalization, Digital Diagnosis Tool, Sustainability.

Introduction

Changing business environment as well as market requirements is pushing the boundaries for the Post-COVID 19 business organisations. Changes have been observed in mode of transactions such as sales, purchases, business processes and so on, prompting the recourse to working alternatives like digitalization. Digitization is the process of converting information into a digital format. The result is the representation of an object, image, sound, document or signal in a form that can be processed by a computer. Digitization or digital transformation as posited by Leticia, Francisco, Jacob and Gabriela (2020) is the process of using digital technologies to create or modify products, business processes, and customer experiences. It is further described as concerning the

cooperative sector as the process of using digital technologies to either create new or enhance existing digitized processes, digital channels, digital products, and digital engagement.

Panos (2020) describes digitalization as the collection of resources that illustrate how digital technologies can address issues of farmers and value chain actors, such as agribusinesses and cooperatives. In other words, it is the use of digital technologies for digital procurement by enabling the transition from paper to digital for a range of systems and processes for agribusinesses and cooperatives.

Across the world digitalization has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic which as a result of its mode of transmission has resulted in restriction of movement and limiting inter-person interactions. These restrictions have affected business organisations, of which cooperative is a key player. For cooperative business to maintain their competitive advantages in these turbulent times; generation, processing and interpretation of information as well as modification and managing information with the aid of Information Technology (IT) is very important to survival. Cooperative digitalization is based on the adoption and use of Information Technology (IT) in its processes, channels, engagements, products and analytics.

In Nigeria, cooperatives businesses are run the traditional way where the social as well as economic dimensions are of high regard. Most cooperatives seeking to innovate and expand can no longer do business the traditional way; membership demographic has to incorporate the younger generation born into the digital world. Among the issues surrounding this

possibility are; issue of convenience and easy access to cooperative facilities, customized engagements with members/consumers, issues of producing more with less resources, need for efficient and sustainable economic activity and so on.

Therefore, this study focuses on digitalization of agricultural cooperatives with the aid of digital diagnosis tool.

Objective of the study

1. To review the main digital technologies.
2. To appraise various digital innovation processes in cooperatives that facilitates decision-making, and
3. To apply an adapted digital diagnosis tool for measuring cooperatives' digital innovation.

Conceptual Reviews

Definition of Cooperatives

USAID (2016) defines cooperative society as a member-owned-and governed business whose primary function is to provide goods and/or services, frequently financed by member loans and equity, to its member owners, leveraging the combined buying, selling, and servicing power of its members to achieve economic betterment through either the distribution or reinvestment of profits, or the increasing value of its members' equity based upon its members' usage.

While International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) statement on Cooperative Identity (ICA, 1995) describes a cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and

democratically-controlled enterprise". The purpose of the cooperative is to provide greater benefits to the members such as increasing individual income or enhancing a members' way of living by providing important needed services.

There are various types of cooperatives; Agricultural Co-operatives Societies, Consumer Co-operatives Societies, Co-operatives Multipurpose Societies, Co-operatives Thrift and Credit Societies, Marketing Co-operatives Societies, Co-operatives Investment and Credit Societies, Workers Cooperative Society, Fisherman Co-operatives Societies, Building and Housing Co-operatives Societies, Transport Co-operatives Societies, Artisan Co-operatives Societies and so on.

Sustainability of Cooperative Business.

Cooperative as a value-based and principle driven organizations, are by nature a sustainable and participatory form of business (Wayama, 2014). It places emphasis on job security and improved working conditions, pay competitive wages, promote additional income through profit-sharing and distribution of dividends, and support community facilities and service, which is in line with it's principle of concern for community, providing services such as health clinics and schools, town hall and so on. Cooperatives foster democratic knowledge and practices and social inclusion, making them well-placed to support the achievement of sustainable development. Cooperatives have also shown resilience in the face of the economic crises. Hence, cooperatives are well-placed to contribute to sustainable development's triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental factors.

Researchers considers these variables as strong indicators in cooperatives sustainability; profitability, cooperative resilience, age of cooperative, business volume, competitive strategy, size of firm/cooperative and access to credit.

Review of Business Digitalization Technology and Processes Digitalization

Digitalization is the process of using digital technologies to create or modify products, business processes, and customer experiences (Leticia, Francisco, Jacob and Gabriela, 2020).

Panos (2020) describes digitalization as the collection of resources that illustrate how digital technologies can address issues of farmers and value chain actors, such as agribusinesses and cooperatives.

There are several digital solutions to address the various processes agri-cooperative stakeholders (crop buyers and producers) face. These solutions include;

1. Information delivered via mobile to support better agricultural practices,
2. Mobile money payments for the procurement of crops (banks and fintech),
3. Tools to create digital profiles for farmers,
4. Track-and-trace and farm management systems,
5. Internet of Things (IoT) applications,
6. Precision agriculture and predictive analytics tools.

Holistic digital agriculture tools integrate multiple solutions to address the challenges commodity buyers face when procuring crops from farmers (Panos, 2020).

Business Digitalization Process

In a broad sense, digitalization is the process through which an organisation uses various digital tools, technology and ecosystems to provide greater value from its existing as well as new products and services for customers and clients usually through new customer experiences, solutions and business models.

Digitalization relies on the ever faster adoption of digital technologies (DTs), fundamentally changing societal conventions and organizational routiness (Gimpel, et. al 2018; Legner, et. al 2017). Classifications of DT used in digitalization abound, for example Distributed ledger, Artificial intelligence, Extended reality, and Quantum computing technologies (DARQ) and Social, Mobile, Analytics, and Cloud technologies (SMAC). Also, there is the "Internet of Things" which has billions of connected devices working per time. Regardless of the classification of DT or name ascribed to it, they are meant to transform and improve the business ecosystem. Davenport and Westermann (2018) posits that, organisations have to

align social and technical processes in order to succeed which ultimately will require an in-depth understanding and alignment of different elements within the organisation, such as; people, skills, business processes, machines, infrastructure, and transformation projects.

According to Marie-Sophie(2020) citing Braun et al. (2005) and Vanwersch et al. (2016), submitted that the method for exploiting the digitalization potential of business processes consists of five elements (E), namely: Activities, (i.e., E.1 – tasks with the goal of creating outputs), techniques (i.e., E.2 – instructions for the execution of an activity), tools (i.e., E.3 – to support the execution of a related activity), roles (i.e., E.4 – actors involved in the execution of an activity), and a distinct output (i.e., E.5 – output such as the documentation of an activity). Besides additional attributes such as goal orientation, systematic approach, principles orientation, and repeatability, methods in general must feature the mentioned elements (E) in order to fulfill the requirements of a method's definition.

Table 1: Method for Exploiting the Digitalization Potential of Business Processes

Activity (E.1)	Technique (E.2)	Tool (E.3)	Role (E.4)	Output (E.5)
Activity 1: Selection and Modeling of Business Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Select and model business process of interest ✓ Focus on behavioral process perspective and include end-to-end perspective Determine relative importance of sub-processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Established business process modelling language (e.g., BPMN) ✓ Evaluation matrix for pairwise comparison of sub-processes based on a rating scale (i.e., AHP scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Process owner ✓ Selected participants ✓ BPM expert (if available and necessary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Process model structured into weighted sub-processes
Activity 2: Pre-selection of Suitable Digital Technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Select digital technologies appropriate for process in focus (medium list) ✓ Determine extent to which these technologies can support sub-processes ✓ Choose digital technologies with highest potential for the process in focus (shortlist) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evaluation matrix for assessment of digital technologies based on a rating scale (i.e., AHP scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Process owner Selected participants Technology experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Shortlist of digital technologies suitable to support the process from a behavioral perspective

<p>Activity 3: Inclusion of Further Evaluation Perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider further evaluation perspectives (i.e., other process perspectives, goals, risks) and related criteria Determine the relative importance of criteria for the organization in focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hierarchical decomposition of further evaluation perspectives - Evaluation matrix for pairwise comparison of perspectives and criteria based on a rating scale (i.e., AHP scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process owner (Senior) Management Business Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of further evaluation perspectives that complement the behavioral process perspective
<p>Activity 4: Final Assessment of Digital Technologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider shortlisted digital technologies in detail Assess how these technologies influence the defined criteria Identify digital technologies that perform best across all evaluation perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation matrix for assessment of preselected digital technologies based on a rating scale (i.e., AHP scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process owner Selected process participants (Senior) Management Business Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final ranking that represents the prioritized shortlist of preselected digital technologies

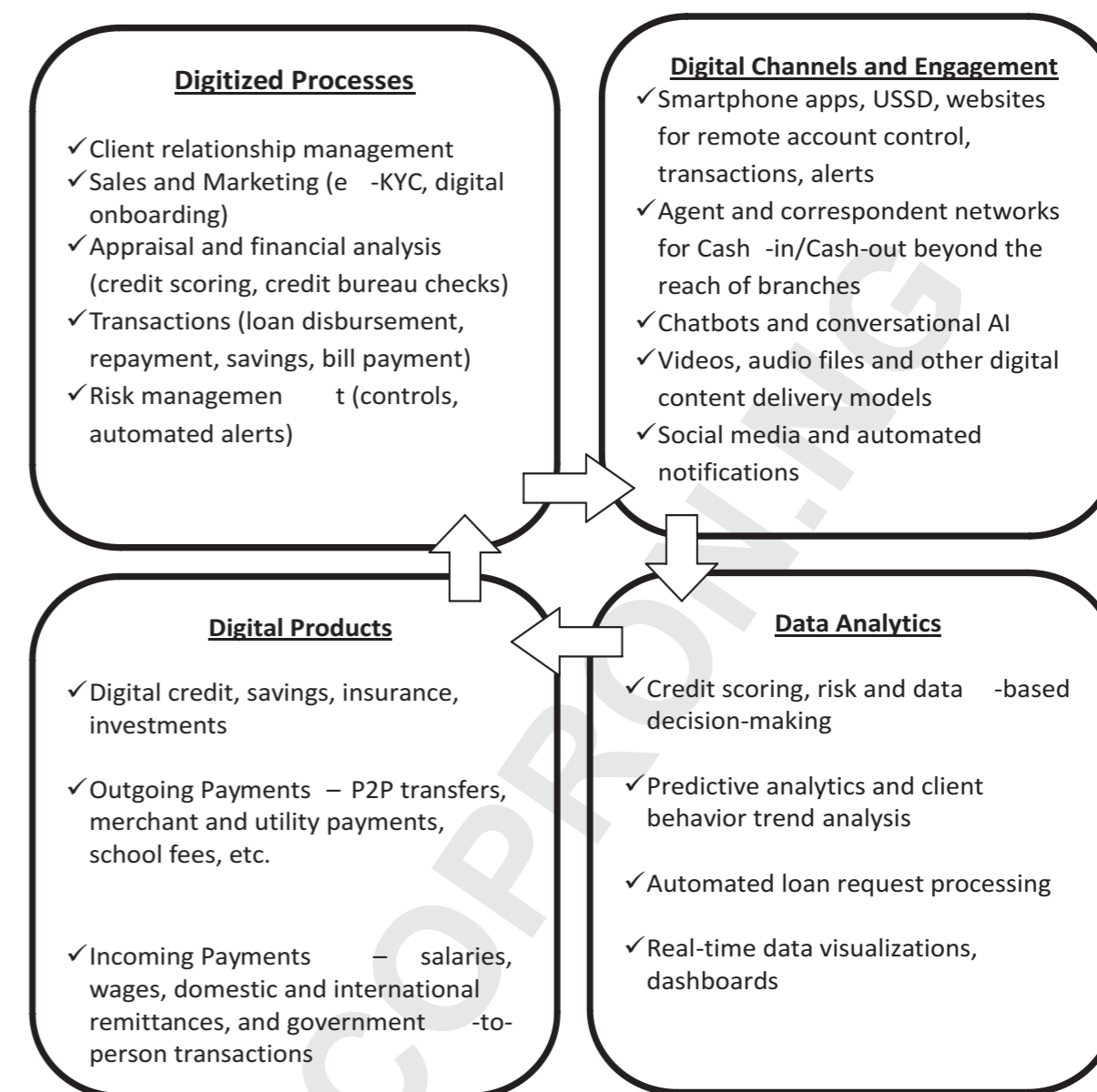
Method for exploiting the digitalization potential of business processes as tabulated above, first highlights Activity 1 which is the selection and modeling of the business processes, the techniques uses for example the BPML (business Process Modeling Language) considering roles within the organisation to achieve an output (Process model structured into weighted sub-processes).Activity 2 targets to preselect suitable digital technologies, which after due consideration (methodically), a shortlist of digital technologies suitable to support the process from a behavioral perspective is drawn. Activity 3 assesses further evaluation perspectives that complement the behavioral

process perspective while activity 4 comes out with a final ranking that represents the prioritized shortlist of preselected digital technologies.

Agricultural Cooperatives: The Processes

Agricultural cooperatives are cooperative societies formed by farmers or those into agricultural allied activities. According to Antonio (2020), the process of digitalization is hinged on technologies such as cloud computing, robots, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data (BD), and Blockchain, are innovations that are changing people's behavior and business processes in public and private entities.

Financial Cooperatives: The processes



Source: Leticia Jáuregui, Francisco Mier, Jacob Winiecki and Gabriela Zapata (2020)

Digitalization of Financial Cooperatives: We digitize?

Leticia et. al (2020) observes that digital financial institutions and fintechs are gradually reaching into the market share of cooperative societies. As such, cooperatives have to look inwards in order to increase it competitiveness in terms of offering convenient and customized digitalized services.

The traditional socio-economic interactions of cooperative members encourage strong relationship between members in terms of suretyship, loan administration, in-person attendance in meetings as well as localization of cooperative membership. However, the changing times of COVID 19, urgently demands that cooperatives begin to embrace digitalization.

Demographic characteristics of cooperative membership has it that increasing percentage of younger generation born into the digital age, has to be carried along therefore the need to digitalize cooperative business processes otherwise they may not be attracted to the trust and relationships of the legacy cooperative model (Leticia et. al., 2020).

While there are many reasons to pursue digital transformation, the two most compelling benefits fall into two main categories: added value for customers and expanded customer base and improved bottom line.

Leticia et. al (2020) submits that the main improvements provided by digitization are:

1. Convenient access: Through digital channels, cooperatives can offer members access to products and services at the most convenient times and locations.
2. Reduced decision-making burden: The mental energy required to navigate financial issues and stay on top of obligations can be difficult. Digital transformation makes it possible to automate transactions that would otherwise require significant mental energy.
3. Safer finances: Travelling to branches can be expensive, time-consuming, and even risky, particularly when carrying large bundles of cash. Digital products offer members the ability to both transact and move with a store of value that's safe and secure.
4. Faster turnaround times: Equipping field staff with digital devices and setting up digital processes within field operations reduces the time it takes to respond. Whether it's a

quick loan application decision or replying to a transaction query, members don't wait as long to hear back.

5. Customized engagement and better-targeted communication: Digital communication and channels enable customization of the customer experience that's too expensive to deliver via an analog model.
6. Profitability and sustainability: Digital transformation can decrease costs across acquisition, distribution, and services for cooperatives.
7. Simpler data management - data can be collected, stored, retrieved, and used much more easily than paper data.
8. Channels for faster loan deployment.
9. Expanded financial inclusion and financial health: Digital acquisition and distribution opens up opportunities with new customers.
10. Reduction of fraud and loss from cash handling: Digital disbursement and collections can reduce what is typically a risky and human resource-intensive process.
11. Data-driven decision making: Digitized financial institutions sit on a mountain of data that can be mined for deep insights into customer behavior and portfolio characteristics, both forensically and in real-time.
12. Enhanced brand reputation and customer retention.

Agri-Cooperatives Digital Diagnosis Tool according to Antonio et. al (2020).

Antonio et. al. (2020) suggests that, for the Agri-Cooperatives digital diagnosis tool to

be implemented, the digitisation strategy has to be clear, and clearly understood. A synopsis of the strategy is presented in the follow stages.

Stage 1 - Low digital strategy (agri-cooperative uses the Internet, but not as interactive tools)

Stage 2 - External oriented digital strategy (agri-cooperative is looking for external opportunities, begins to use the Internet as an interactive tool. However, the purchase and sale of products or services is still generally carried out through traditional channels

Stage 3 - Internal oriented digital strategy (agri-cooperative is looking for internal efficiency, begins to carry out economic transactions - buying and selling - with customers and suppliers through the Internet. Higher possibility of use of fintech companies or its own Apps. Additionally, other technologies are possible, such as web positioning strategy through either specialized personnel or external professionals, digital certificate or electronic signature and electronic

invoicing.

Stage 4 - Smart digital strategy (now there is an integration of all the operations of the value chain, from the purchase to the after-sales service, and, what is more important, data generated is managed and used. The cooperative is also linked to external agents (customer-suppliers), with real-time responses, which is able to understand and anticipate the needs of its customers, personalizing its products and services, as well as the needs of the cooperative. In addition, all activities and tasks that may be subject to it are automated, and the technology necessary for business development (BD) implementation is introduced. The agri-cooperative are involved in projects related with IoT, Blockchain, AI, and the automation of activities (using robots or drones).

Agri-cooperative digital diagnosis tool (Agri-CoopDDT) is a survey tool used to assess level of digitalization. Agri-cooperatives basically use them to verify their degree of digitalization and to make decisions in order to increase it, if needed.

Table 2: Agri-Cooperative Digital Diagnosis Tool (Agri-CoopDDT).

Human Capital And Management Dimension	
The agri-cooperative employs digital technologies specialists	Digital technologies specialists are employees for whom digital technologies is the main job)
The agri -cooperative provides training to develop digital technologies related skills of the personnel	The agri-cooperative recruits or try to recruit digital technologies specialists
The agri-cooperative employs specialists to perform digital technologies functions (for example, maintenance of digital technologies infrastructure; security and data protection)	1. Agri-cooperative own employees
	2. External suppliers
Access and use of the Internet dimension	
1. The agri -cooperative uses a fixed line connection to the Internet (fiber optics technology, cable, etc.)	2. The agri -cooperative provides portable devices to the workforce, which allows a mobile connection to the Internet using mobile telephone networks (portable computers, tablets or smartphones)
Web site and social network dimension	

The agri-cooperative uses the web site for:

1. Description of goods or services or price information
2. Online ordering or reservation or booking, for example: shopping cart
3. Possibility for visitors to customize or design online goods or services
4. Tracking or status of orders placed
5. Personalized content on the website for regular/recurrent visitors
6. Links or references to the enterprise's social media profiles

The agri-cooperative has the following chat service for customer contacts:

7. A chat service where a person replies to customers
8. A chatbot or virtual agent replying to customers

The agri-cooperative uses any of the following social media:

9. Social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)
10. Cooperative's blog or microblogs (Twitter, etc.)
11. Multimedia content sharing websites (Instagram, YouTube, etc.)
12. Wiki-based knowledge sharing tools

The agri-cooperative uses any of the above mentioned social media to:

13. Develop the enterprise's image or market products
14. Obtain or respond to customer opinions, reviews, questions
15. Involve customers in development or innovation of goods or services
16. Collaborate with business partners (suppliers) or other organizations (public authorities, non-governmental organizations, etc.)
17. Recruit employees
18. Exchange views, opinions or knowledge within the enterprise

Electronic commerce dimension

The agri-cooperative sales goods or services via:

1. Agri-cooperative's websites or apps? (including extranets)
2. E-commerce marketplace websites or apps used by several enterprises for trading goods or services? (Amazon, Alibaba, etc.)

Cloud computing dimension

The agri-cooperative buys any of the following cloud computing services used over the Internet:

1. Email
2. Office software (word processors, spreadsheets, etc.)
3. Storage of files (as a cloud computing service)
4. Hosting the enterprise's database(s)
5. Finance or accounting software applications
6. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software application for managing information about customers
7. Computing power to run the software used by the enterprise

BD dimension

The agri-cooperative performs BD analysis on any of the following data sources: (excluding external service providers)

1. Data from smart devices or sensors (Machine to Machine M2M- communications, digital sensors, RFID, etc.)
2. Geolocation data from the use of portable devices (portable devices using mobile telephone networks, wireless connections or GPS)
3. Data generated from social media (social networks, blogs, etc.)

The agri-cooperative has another enterprise or organization to perform BD analysis

Source: Antonio et. al. (2020) (Sustainability 2020, 12, 1325)

Empirical Studies

Antonio, Ana, Antonio and Juan José (2020) studied Digitalization of Agri-Cooperatives in the Smart Agriculture Context. Proposal of a Digital Diagnosis Tool. The study established that the use of digital technologies has been recognized as one of the great challenges for businesses of the 21st century. This digitalization is characterized by the intensive use of information technologies in the different stages of the value chain of a sector. In this context, smart agriculture is transforming the agricultural sector in terms of economic, social, and environmental sustainability. In some countries, cooperatives, as the most common legal form of the incumbent companies, in this rather traditional low-intensive technology sector, are going to develop a relevant role in the process of adoption of these technologies. In this context, this paper provides, first, a review of the evolution of the main digital technologies, such as Internet of Things, robots, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and Blockchain, among others. Second, a description of the digital innovation process in agri-cooperatives in order to help them in the decision making process, and third, a digital diagnosis tool for measuring cooperatives' digital innovation. This tool is initially applied to two cases of agri-cooperatives in Spain. All of this contributes to a better understanding of digitalization of agri-cooperatives in the context of smart agriculture.

Panos (2020) explored the GSMAAgricTech toolkit for digitalisation of Agricultural Value Chains, highlighting the business case for MNOs and mobile money providers to invest, business case for agribusinesses to invest in last mile

digitisation, prerequisites to digitising the agricultural last mile, GSMAAgriTech Value Chain Assessment Tool (VCAT) and digital footprints and economic identities for farmers. Some key findings and recommendations; digital agriculture tools that enable access to markets have significant potential to generate data for the creation of economic identities for farmers. Digital procurement solutions and e-commerce services make it possible to collect valuable data on the economic activities of farmers. These tools also capture critical transactional data on income from the sale of crops, especially when they are integrated with mobile money. The rich data that agritech companies generate is already helping to extend short-term working capital to farmers. The most impactful and transformational step, however, is using technology to enable long-term working capital for farmers. This shift requires partnerships between agritech companies and FSPs. When FSPs do not have the capacity to invest in credit scoring solutions, there is an opportunity for agritech companies to expand their value proposition from data collection, aggregation and analysis to risk modelling.

There is a market need and business opportunity to rethink credit product design for the rural sector and to design agricultural credit products around the demands of smallholder farmers at different stages of the farming cycle; take into account the cash inflows and outflows of farmers when structuring the stages of the loan cycle; and shift focus to enabling products that support the climate resilience of farmers, including agricultural insurance.

Oladejo and Yinus (2014) worked on an influential analysis of the impact of information technology (IT) on cooperative services in Nigeria. This paper investigated the impact of information technology on cooperative services as a basis for attainment of MDG objective relating to E-commerce. Data collected from the stakeholders in cooperative organizations in Nigeria were analyzed using frequency, percentage and non-parametric statistical test, ANOVA was used to test the formulated hypothesis using STATA 10 data analysis package/software. The result of the finding shows that information technology was positively significant to cooperative service in Nigeria and that investment in IT by Cooperative organisations will improve their performance through high level of patronage by members.

Keah (2014) concluded from the effect of ICT adoption on the financial performance of savings and credit cooperative societies in Nairobi County that,

an increase in ICT adoption leads to an increase in SACCOs' financial performance. Adoption of ICT results to the improvement in payments, processing or reduction in service time due to the new ways to deliver financial services electronically to customers.

Methodology

The exploratory research design was used in this study. This approach was adopted due the preliminary nature of the subject in context (digitalization in cooperative societies)so as to put in context the exact nature of the problem to be solved.

In order to apply the Agri-Cooperative Digital Diagnosis Tool and test it, one (1) agricultural cooperative society was chosen from two(2) south east states to complete the auto diagnosis presented in a questionnaire form. The president and a member of the society were involved to obtain the information. Data from the two(2) agricultural cooperatives are shown below.

Table 3: Agri-Cooperative Digital Diagnosis Tool application to Agricultural Cooperatives in South East, Nigeria.

	Agric-Cooperative 1	Agric-Cooperative 2
Activity	Maize cultivation, thrift and loan	Savings, Credit mobilization, thrift and loan
Foundation year	2005	2007
Interviewee	President	Member
Human capital and management dimension	Employ digital technologies specialists, provide training, digital technologies managed by external suppliers	Use digital technology for communication, Employ digital technologies specialists, provide training, digital technologies managed by external suppliers
Access and use of the internet dimension	1**, 2**,	1*, 2**,
Website and social network dimension	2*,6*	2*,4*,6*,8*,9*,14*
Electronic commerce dimension	None	5*
Cloud computing dimension digital strategy	None None	3* None

(*) Yes, (**) No, see codes in Table 2. One (1) asterisks show accepted by respondents, two (2) asterisks show not accepted.

Source: field survey 2021

From the analysis of table 3 shows Agri-Cooperative 1 and 2 employ digital technologies specialists, provides training for members related to IT through external digital technology specialists and have their technologies managed by external suppliers. Agri-Cooperative I does not use digital technology for communication while Agri-Cooperative II use digital technology for communication.

It was observed that Agri-Cooperative 1 does not use a fixed line connection to the Internet (fiber optics technology, cable, etc.) while Agri-Cooperative 2 does. However, Agri-Cooperative 1 and 2 do not provide portable devices to the workforce, which allows a mobile connection to the Internet using mobile telephone networks (portable computers, tablets or smartphones).

Agri-Cooperative 1 uses the access to the internet for online ordering or reservation or booking and accessing links or references to the enterprise's social media profile. Agri-Cooperative 2 on the other hand, used their access to the internet for online ordering or reservation or booking, tracking or checking status of order placed and accessing links or references to the enterprise's social media profile. They also, use chatbot or virtual agent replying to customers, facebook, linkedin and so on, as well as obtain and respond to customer opinions, reviews and questions.

Concerning electronic commerce dimension, Agri-Cooperative 1 and 2 sells goods or services through their website or apps while only Agri-Cooperative 2 sells goods or services through e-commerce marketplace

websites or apps of several enterprises for trading goods or services.

It was observed that Agri-Cooperative 1 was not involved in or use cloud computing while Agri-Cooperative 2 uses finance/accounting software application for cloud computing.

Table 3 shows that Agri-Cooperative 1 was not involved in business development analysis while Agri-Cooperative 2 used data generated from social media (social networks, blogs and so on for business development analysis.

Summary of Findings

This research investigation reveals that Agri-Cooperatives in the study area explored adopted limited digitalization channels as evidenced in the absence of emailing, non-involvement in the use of cloud computing, limited access to the internet and digital business development analysis.

Conclusion

From the review of concepts related to digitalization, to the main digital technologies as well as an appraisal of various digital innovation processes in cooperatives that facilitates decision-making, an in dept application of an adapted digital diagnosis tool for measuring cooperatives' level of digital transformation revealed the extent to which Agri-Cooperatives studied have embraced smart digitalization.

Reviews show that, cooperatives can offer members access to products and services at the most convenient times and locations, conveniently reducing decision-making burden by making it possible to automate transactions that

would otherwise require significant mental energy. In fact Agri-Cooperatives can experience faster turnaround times in its processes by equipping field staff with digital devices and setting up digital processes within field operations which reduces the time it takes to respond; be it a quick loan application decision or replying to a transaction query, members don't wait long for feedback. Digitalization make for simpler data management - data can be collected, stored, retrieved, and used much more easily than paper data.

Therefore, digitalization is the way to go for sustainability post COVID-19.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that cooperative managers, members, practitioners as well as partners use the digital diagnosis tool to analyze cooperative business processes in order to ascertain the levels of digitalization as well as promote sustainability of cooperative post COVID-19.

Limitations of the Study

This paper provides an exploratory approximation to the phenomenon, and more data are needed to advance in the adaption of digital diagnosis tool for different types of cooperatives considering their unique peculiarities. Therefore, more extensive research and studies should be done to standardize an acceptable diagnosis tool for all types of cooperatives.

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COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISE: A PANACEA FOR POST COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN IMO STATE

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ABSTRACT

The micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise have not been adequately investigated and as such much is not known for post covid-19 economic recovery. There have been economic challenges and business failures which does not promote economic recovery in both the private and public sectors of the economy as a result of covid-19. This study seeks to extend the existing literature by investigating the extent of micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise for post covid-19 economic recovery in Imo State. Data were drawn through questionnaire from 110 cooperative members of 9 L.G.As in Imo State. The sample for the study was selected through the use of the simple random sampling technique. Hypothesis was tested using one sample t-test statistics. The study found that micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise are effective for post covid-19 economic recovery (PCER). Therefore, the study concludes that, if Imo State adopts cooperative as an alternative enterprise for job creation, she will

achieve accelerated economic recovery, and recommends amongst others that government should design survival fund tailored effectively towards cooperative enterprise that will engender more micro economic jobs for post covid-19 economic recovery.

Keywords: Cooperative enterprise, Economic recovery, Entrepreneurship, Job creation, Covid-19 pandemic

Introduction

There is where per capita income in the industrial market economics significantly dropped irrespective of developed or developing economies. The whole world economy came under attack by covid-19 virus. There was new normal as meager incomes provide only the basic necessities. The great majority of the population was reduced by death due to covid-19 outbreak. Productivity (output per worker) is cut short because every business was shut down for safety reasons. Low productivity means output per person is barely sufficient to feed someone's own family, let only sell to

others. The negative impact of covid-19 was enormous that many employees were furloughed, many worked from home and effect of the pandemic on costs.

According to Mizen (2021) the questions have changed over time and so have the responses. In late March, 2020 to early April, 80% of firms said covid-19 was their biggest source of uncertainty nevertheless by September that had dropped to under 50%. In many countries of the world life is still a continual struggle against the circumstances of poverty, food insecurity and lack of jobs which prospects for dramatic improvements in living standards for most people are badly lit. But recently there is economic recovery as such changes are coming as a result of some economies are picking up. Economic recovery is a diverse function of industrial activities including creating jobs for the population, food production to feed the growing population and in no small measure reducing the poor state of the populace following a recession. This is characterized by a sustained period of improving business activity, rising incomes and unemployment reduction as the economy rebounds.

However, cooperative enterprise becomes a rallying business for both groups and individuals for post covid-19 economic recovery (PCER). The former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghahi (Karlyle, 2005) argued that cooperative enterprise provides the organizational means whereby a significant proportion of humanity is able to take into its own hands the tasks of creating productive employment, overcoming poverty and achieving social integration. That was what prompted Jose

Maria of Arizmendiarieta, a Catholic priest, inspired several of his graduate students to establish a small industrial cooperative. It quickly grows to produce domestic alliances and machine tools. From the beginning, the Basque people wholeheartedly supported this initiative for economic recovery. For number of years, entrepreneurship and cooperative enterprises have operated across the world and based on their great influence and tolerability for job and wealth creation, both have continued to grow in most sectors, including consumer, banking, agriculture and service provisions.

Hueth, Roger & Philippe (2005) developed a model explaining cooperative formation in economic recovery due to improved farmer or processor incentives outweighing deadweight governance costs, thereby facilitating financing not otherwise available. They observe that cooperatives are often formed in declining industries or alternatively, that cooperatives seem to be sustainable in relatively low-return environments. This is an apparent advantage of the cooperative. Thus cooperative formation, being a mechanism for relaxing economic constraints, is predicted to be an efficient response when there is otherwise insufficient manageable income, arising for example when market returns are low or lending rates are high.

Cooperative enterprise include farmers cooperative, producers cooperative, workers cooperative, financial cooperatives and other cooperatives that provide a range of other services especially in this post covid-19 era. This study therefore suggests that people

would have the right to make economic decisions within the cooperative enterprises in which they work and within their local communities. This portrayed a expected economic recovery by which local economic problems can resolve more easily than other forms of businesses because they are closer to the source of the problem.

Statement of the Problem

The studies in Imo state have shown that cooperative enterprises are structurally and organizationally disposed to assisting in economic recovery although have not touched the areas of micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise for PCER. Cooperative enterprise is a superior business because: it provides a much wider and equitable distribution of capital within the community; cooperative governance is more open and democratic; it pursues both economic and social objectives (NCBA, 2006). Despite its importance the cooperative enterprise has been largely ignored within mainstream economic management (Mazzarol, 2009). In farmer cooperatives Staatz (2009) argued that the business model employed by the cooperative has two limitations. The first is the way in which individual cooperative members are able to enjoy incentives for membership. The second is lack of common interest among what is often a highly heterogeneous membership. It is for this reason that many cooperatives find it hard to reach consensus amongst members.

Cooperatives are more likely to suffer from risk aversion in decision making, under financing or under investment. Cooperative only returns value to the member while they maintain patronage of

the cooperative (Hardesty, 2005). However, Okoli (2008) acknowledged that inadequate capital investment and inability to get loans from banks are key problems confronting people. In addition, covid-19 brought fast-moving and unexpected impacts for which existing crises plans and teams were unprepared (Naveen & Anders, 2020). Many business enterprises were plunged into recession. There was this unconventional issue of the modern day business environment, such as health emergency situations that have inherent commercial risks that they face from the covid-19 outbreak. The masses especially the less privileged including average government and private workers noting the risks posed by the coronavirus to global economic growth was a big threat to humanity. Many economic units were demobilized and destabilized as a result of the pandemic. The conduce of this work is to investigate the micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise for post covid-19 pandemic as to tackle the challenges enumerated above for economic recovery in Imo State.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to investigate cooperative enterprise as a panacea for post covid-19 economic recovery (PCER) in Imo State. Specific objective is to:

- Assess extent of micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise for post covid-19 economic recovery in Imo State.

Hypothesis

- Extent of micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise does not effectively assist members for post covid-19 economic recovery.

Review of Related Literature and Conceptual Framework

This study fit together related literature in cooperative enterprise as in the area of study. This study investigates micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise as panacea for post covid-19 economic recovery in Imo State. To assess micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise was captured as it collectively meet for post covid-19 economic recovery.

Cooperative Enterprise: Component Types Design Analysis

A cooperative enterprise can take many forms. They can include agricultural producer supply chains, consumer retail buying groups, financial credit societies and mutual's, housing or building societies, workers cooperatives and cooperatives focusing on health and social care. Cooperative enterprise is a unique form of business entity (Mazzarol, 2009). Cooperative enterprise can be designed to benefit members directly by providing goods as seen in a consumer's cooperative. Many businesses could be established like grocery stores, credit unions, insurance and health care organizations. An umbrella of public services can be provided by a consumer's cooperative as long as those who are consuming the benefits of the organization also participate in creating it (NCBA, 2019). The business operations of cooperative; buys and sells products and services just like any other business. The difference is that a cooperative is owned and governed by its members, the people who use it, rather than by stockholders.

Meanwhile, cooperatives are business owned by member-owners as democratically controlled by them, unlike a transitional business each member gets a voice in how the business is run. Contrary to popular belief cooperatives are not non-profit organizations but do make earn profits. Earnings generated by the cooperative benefit the member-owners as this testify to her veracity of economic activities of cooperative enterprise leading to new generation cooperatives like the coconut farmers. The coconut cooperative across the world connects organic coconut farmers to fair trade ingredient market across the world. Both in tropical and subtropical countries, coconut oil and ingredients play a major economic role. This spike in global demand of organic coconut oil and coconut ingredients has driven production. This becomes imperative to ensure the long-term sustainability and fair trade of one of Southeast Asia's most precious resources.

Again, the snail cooperative farming model arose in Ireland from two hundred and fifty people who attended a two-day snail farming conference organized by the National Organic Training Skillnet (NOTS). This level of interest is significant and there appears to be an export market available, due to the shortfall in supply in Italy and France in particular. This settles how a cooperative would benefit farmers interested in this new market opportunity. Hence, in this initiative several farmers came together with a shared need and formed a cooperative to do specific tasks for their collective benefits. This is an indication as Gertler (2001) expressed that cooperatives are flexible and have participatory involvement which makes

them well suited for economic recovery.

Also, the Hamusavi Mushroom farmers' cooperative society in Manyatta Kakamega, Kenya began with choosing a substrate (a substance on which mushroom grow). The processing, or adding value, puts good money in the cooperative bank account. The cooperative dry the good mushrooms using a solar drier for two days but also sell to individual and in supermarket at a good price. Hamusavi cooperative members mainly process mushroom powder, which they use to make soup and blend in pawpaw jaw, milk, tea, coffee, cake and porridge. The crop takes only 23 days to mature. The cooperative mushroom powder is certified by Kanya Bureau of Standard.

Besides, there is this Organic Food Blue Maintains Cooperative in Australia though community-owned and managed. It began when a small group of local people joined together to purchase and share quality organic food at affordable prices. Originally, there were around 20 households involved but the directions and visions of this initial buying group still influence who they are and what they do. There are currently more than 2,000 members, 26 paid staff and an annual turnover of \$3.6 million which is about N1.8 billion. The above confirms Gibson (2005) that cooperative is a process of developing, sustaining and promoting community spirit, identity and social organization as cooperative play an increasingly important role worldwide in facilitating job creation, economic growth, poverty reduction and social development.

Imperative of Covid-19 Leading to Economic Recovery

The covid-19 outbreak is a sharp reminder that pandemic like other rarely occurring catastrophes, have happened in the past and will continue to happen in the future. Naveen & Anders (2020) argued that even if we cannot prevent dangerous virus from emerging, we should prepare to dampen their effects on society. There is an indication that the current outbreak has had severe economic consequence across the globe and it does not look like any country will be unaffected. The hard core is not only has consequences for the economy; all of the society is affected which has led to dramatic changes in low business act performance and consumers behaviour.

To meet the challenges posed by the pandemic, businesses around the world had to react in agile and decisive ways. There is this time for businesses to seek out and seize the opportunities emerging in the recovery. This involves in addition to Naveen & Anders (2020) conducting an "after-action review" to collect data and insights on lessons learned from the pandemic and then using these to prioritize actions to enhance business value today and build strategic resilience for tomorrow. Succinctly put, businesses that take these steps now will be well-placed to capitalize more effectively on the opportunities rising.

The strategic resilience which cooperative enterprise is known for in a depressed or recessed economy like in the post covid-19 economic recovery cannot be overemphasized. The economic mandate of cooperative enterprise as in agricultural cum farmers' cooperatives, producers' cooperatives, entrepreneurship

cooperatives, cooperative thrift and credit societies (CTCS), cooperative thrift, loan societies (CTLS) and others have brought about a remarkable and tremendous revitalization of many economic units which may challenge what the so called microfinance banks are doing to change the narrative of average Nigerian. Based on the above, some of the cooperative enterprise as mentioned will be dissected to bring out its leading economic mandate roles for post covid-19 economic recovery.

Enhancing Economic Recovery through Agricultural cum Farmers Cooperatives

There is no consensus on the best criteria for economic recovery, hence, through economic activities of agricultural cum farmers' cooperatives. Any of the criteria is not equally important. This is because of the varied objectives which agricultural cooperatives are expected to serve to the farmers or the members of the cooperative. The farmers or members of cooperative and their management contribute to the gross domestic product (GDP) of a country by the quantity of agricultural produce from their farms and of which they can handle in the distribution chain. According to Ezeji, Okoro & C-Okoro (2019) a level of income is a function of reduced cost of production, processing, marketing and stable prices as seen in agricultural cooperatives are economic activities. Thus, efficient and effective agricultural cooperative can increase income by reducing cost of production and conveniently ensure poverty reduction for economic recovery.

Agricultural cooperatives are therefore enterprises where farmers pool their

resources for mutual economic benefit. They provide services involving in moving produce from the point of production to the point of consumption (Ridley-Duff, 2009). This type of cooperative started as a result of seeking for solution to challenges confronting farmers. As a catalyst enhancing economic recovery the rural dwellers in Africa make up more than 75% of the workforce are in agriculture and 80% food producers (Maigida, 2001). On the impact of savings and credit (Sebhatu, 2012) noted that savings and credit cum agricultural cooperatives on rural farmers, rural entrepreneurs, market women and other grassroots is imperative for agricultural businesses. The study addressed the impact of savings and credit in agricultural cooperatives on the income and family living conditions of members in Ofla Wereda Tigrany Region, Ethiopia. The result shown that years of stay in cooperatives, savings trends, size of loan and number of time loan availed had significant positive correction with post income of respondents.

Ship (2000) in agreement with Sebhatu (2012) on worker-owner firms in inner-city neighborhood review of international agricultural cooperation, the study asserted that the poor farmers often left out of main stream of economic recovery, can through joint action raise the needed capital to improve production thereby increasing their income, nutrition, health and general standard of living of the rural entrepreneur which is the main objective of economic recovery.

Essentials of Producer cum Entrepreneurship Cooperatives Leading to Economic Recovery

Entrepreneurship cum producer

cooperatives helps to provide opportunities in the market place and arrange resources required, exploiting the opportunities therein for possible gains. Entrepreneurship is a pivot for industrial development which is evident on the production and marketing activities of producer cooperatives in various field of entrepreneurship across the country. Global attention has changed from direct government intervention to group, community, and cooperative initiative leading to fast tracking economic recovery (Ezeji & Okoro, 2019). As a productive venture, entrepreneurship cooperative is a decision by individuals desirous of establishing commercial venture for economic survival by pooling their meager resources to enable them has a considerable or accumulated capital to see through their enterprise (Onugu, 2007). A more accurate explanation to the above is the establishment of a cooperative enterprise which is the target by which the meager resources are harnessed for business.

Golver (2009) defined entrepreneurship cooperative as a form of organization that can help private sector business, professionals or public bodies to improve their effectiveness through enhancing access to goods and services that otherwise would not have been available. Entrepreneurship is about identifying a particular problem in your environment and doing it differently for others views. Bolton & Thompson (2000) defined an entrepreneur as a person who habitually creates and innovates to build something of recognized value around perceived opportunities. It is imperative to note that an entrepreneur emerge from exploiting market opportunities through technical and organizational cohesion. The

producer or entrepreneurship cooperatives according to Ahmadpour (2006) have proven to be highly effective over the course of nearly 150 years in several Western Europe and North America increasingly making use of entrepreneurship cooperatives in recent times. The role of cooperative entrepreneur and presence of entrepreneurial individuals can be determining and perhaps because of this reason economists of the entrepreneurial have interpreted as industrial growth engine.

Some of the features of producers or entrepreneurship cooperatives including supplies of raw materials or commodities (food and non-food products; market analysis and strategic planning; purchase of machinery and equipment; shared technology; publicity and promotion; creating brand names; education and training then risk cover are undiluted efforts leading to economic recovery. As Couture (2003) rightly opined that having an income means the standard of living improves and the region's economy is boosted. Employment creation and stabilization both in the formal and informal economies is among the best ways people and nations get to develop themselves and to reduce poverty.

Importance of Cooperative Thrift and Credit Societies (CTCS) in Economic Recovery

The ultimate goal is to encourage thrift (contribution of money) for particular purpose among the members and to meet credit needs of people within and outside the organization in protection against predators. Traditional or the indigenous cooperatives have it in different categories of cooperatives which indicate

importance of thrift and credit in economic recovery. First type is in which each member pays in some usually specific amount into a common purse at a specific pre-agreed but regular periods. The total collected at each occasion is handed over to one member and this practice is however repeated until each and every member has received such a payment. Second type is a special purpose one in resemblance of the type above except that its aim and duration are tied to the acquisition of a specific durable asset by an individual member. Third type takes the form of a member collecting the pre-agreed contributions at the regular intervals but instead of paying out the draw (money contributed) to any member rather is kept at the custody of a trusted member. The total amount is then shared at the end of the year or any other pre-agreed time by the contributor members.

In fourth type, there is this regular contribution and loans are made to members and non-members (if a member guarantees repayment). The contributor is liable to interest payments and a member guarantees repayment of the non-member who would pay higher rates from which interest is also paid on the contributions. Here, draws are not made as such and distribution does not take place either at the year-end or at other times. In the fifth type, regular collections are made, no payment are made to member-neither after the regular collections nor at the end of the year or other time. Here, loans are not made in the usual sense of part of the money being advanced to member or non-member, rather the money collected is invested after specific periods for example one year on behalf of a given member (Uchendu, 1998).

The activities of these traditional cooperatives to a large extent, one would conclude on the basis of its potentials and success recorded estimated huge financial support it has rendered to members, non-members and organizational environment in which it operate. CTCS support members' business expansion because they have certain characteristics that aid free enterprise. These characteristics include discretionary power of members, open communication, management suggests rather than instructs, risk and uncertainty are shared and there is motivational potential (Ezeji, Okoro & C-Okoro, 2019). This further explains CTCS as organizations of people who voluntarily came together by saving at intervals for the purpose of making loans available to themselves for economic recovery with or without interest or may be agreed at a fixed time of repayment.

CTCS extend credits and other services to many rural enterprises and hence generating employment in rural areas by promoting entrepreneurship. Ketu (2008) acknowledged that the rural setting is an arena of many industries, which could be developed to contribute significantly to the national economy, just as rural people are more frequently self-employed. The promotion of employment in rural areas by CTCS covers the following areas; cloth weaving, dyeing, food vendor, barbing, carpentry, bicycle repairing, watch repairing, palm wine tapping, brick-laying, leather works, drum making and tailoring. In all cooperative enterprise navigate the economy to enviable height especially the rural economy through the instrument of credit, thrift (savings) and loans.

Empirical Studies

The compass of this study pointed to literature in the related area. The researchers put some of them into perspective for example, Ezeji & Okoro (2019) focused on cooperative enterprise as platform for industrial development in Nigeria, which their model stipulated benefits derived from entrepreneurship cooperatives with (increased income 61.3%, technical education 34.2%, and technology share 4.6% respectively). The study examined the ability of entrepreneurship cooperatives to create employment opportunities which was confirmed by 75% of respondents. On the ability of cooperative enterprise to improve the standard of living 61.7% of respondents agreed, besides over 80% of the respondents confirmed the ability of entrepreneurship cooperatives to enhance production and distribution in their domain. The study further established contributions of cooperative enterprise to industrial development within their domain through industry, food provision and infrastructure respectively.

On the job creation by cooperative enterprise, Schwettmann (2001) in his study stated that apart from their potential to create and safeguard employment, the democratic, voluntary and community-based nature of cooperatives emphasizes their commitment towards quality employment, increased incomes and satisfactory conditions of work. Similarly, Couture (2003) the study which was drawn upon establishment of cooperative enterprise (agro base and non-agro base industries (is important strategy for transforming economies). Such industries generated demand for industrial related products in many ways. They encourage urbanization and increased dependence

on industrial production by the urban and rural workers who are generally characterized by a high income elasticity of demand for food. The study maintained that they generate increased demand for specialists, processors, transporter, food, drinks distributors in the economy.

Ezeji & C-Okoro (2015) focused on many cooperative enterprises that have not only continue to exist, but seems for more success in comparison with its rivals and could continue to offer goods and services for their members. In their account, cautionary observations have shown that cooperative entrepreneur and new method of entrepreneurship and management has the major role in such cooperatives. Soyibo (2006) in his work on entrepreneurship in a group business has it that, it engages the energy of everyone in the domain; involve many people inside and outside the organization in the pursuit of an opportunity. It creates and sustains networks of relationship rather than going alone, making the most of intellectual and the other resources people offer and helping those people achieve their goals too.

In the same vein, Majid (2014) the study which was on entrepreneurship cooperative development strategies in Arab, captured that the context for activities and success of the entrepreneur and considering this fact that entrepreneur has features and specific capabilities they have a role in development and success of cooperative enterprises that this leads to the expansion of cooperatives and economic recovery of the country.

Gap in Literature

This study has sought to provide cooperative enterprise as a panacea for

post covid-19 economic recovery (PCER) in Imo State. While many studies above focused on industrial development, safeguard employment, strategy for transforming economies, offer goods and services, pursuit of opportunity, development strategies, none have previously focused on the micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise and extent these micro economic jobs act as panacea for PCER in Imo State. A study of this nature not only touches on PCER by cooperative enterprise through job creation to the micro economy and creation of employment opportunities of the model to cushion effect of recession but as well concentrated on specific jobs leading to food security in transforming the agricultural sector by effecting positive changes in the micro economy. This will help to have informed opinion on the capability of cooperative enterprise in the country as regards to whether one is satisfied or not as a panacea for post covid-19 economic recovery. The above statements therefore appear to suggest that cooperative enterprise act as panacea for PCER in Imo State which the present study aims to assist fills this gap.

Theoretical Framework: Rational System

This research work takes its direction from the rational systems perspective of organizational analysis. Rational system means that organizations are deliberately created to pursue certain specific goals. The term rationality in the context is used in the narrow sense of "technical" or "functional" rationality. This refers to the extent to which a series of action is organized on such a way as to lead to predetermined goals with maximum efficiency. Thus, rationality refers not

only to the selection of goals but to the implementation. According to Barnard (1938) cited in Ezeji & Okoro (2019) defined an organization as that kind of cooperation among men that is conscious, deliberate and purposeful.

Etzioni (1964) & Scott (1981) as cited in Onwuchekwe (1992) stated that organizations are social units (or human grouping) deliberately constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals and organization as a collectivity oriented to the pursuit of relatively specific goals and exhibiting a relatively highly formalized structure respectively. To this end as a venture; cooperative enterprise is a panacea for post covid-19 economic recovery through creation of micro economic jobs in Imo State. Finally, the obligation of cooperative enterprise from a rational system perspective is to achieve the specific goals of creating micro economic jobs, ensure member's technical and economic unit is operational for the robust post covid-19 economic recovery. Therefore, it appears to suggest that cooperative enterprise is based on the theoretical concept of the rational system perspective of organizational design.

Methodology

This study adopted both descriptive and inferential statistics in analyzing the work. This study was carried out in nine local government areas of the twenty-seven in Imo State. Three local government areas were drawn from each senatorial districts of the State. A survey research method was used. A set of well structured questionnaire was administered to three categories of respondents which were in agriculture cum farmers' cooperatives, producers cum entrepreneurship cooperatives and

CTCS. One hundred and thirty-five (135) questionnaires were administered within the study area, forty-five in each of the three senatorial districts. Out of which one hundred and ten was filled and returned, twenty-five were not returned thereby leaving the study with the sample of one hundred and ten respondents. The instrument used for data collection is questionnaire designed by the researchers and validated by experts. The questionnaire was administered directly to respondents in their meetings. Field assistants were IT students with ND and HND qualifications that have

considerable experience in cooperative were used in the distribution and retrieval.

Model Specification

The above specific objective; micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise for PCER in Imo State was assessed using mean, standard deviation of 5-point Likert Scale analysis. A theoretical mean value of 3.0 was taken as a criterion to judge (≥ 3.0 effective and < 3.0 ineffective) of micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise. Hypothesis was tested using one sample T-test of inferential statistics.

Respondents' Mean Rating of Micro Economic Jobs Created by Cooperative Enterprise Effectiveness on Post Covid-19 Economic Recovery N = 110

S/N	Micro Economic Jobs Created Cooperative Enterprise	Mean (\bar{X})	Decision
1	Soap Making	3.19	Effective
2	Perfume Making	2.51	Ineffective
3	Hair Dressing	2.79	Ineffective
4	Bead Making	3.69	Effective
5	Watermelon Farming	2.65	Ineffective
6	Yam Farming	3.29	Effective
7	Cucumber Farming	3.21	Effective
8	Cassava Farming	3.35	Effective
9	Garden Egg Farming	2.50	Ineffective
10	Direct Sales/Financial Agents for CTCS	3.55	Effective
11	Palm Oil Processing	3.37	Effective
12	Plantain Chips Processing	3.33	Effective
13	Cashew Nut Processing	3.51	Effective
14	Vegetable Farming	3.41	Effective
15	Restaurant Business	2.74	Ineffective
16	Recharge Card Business	3.52	Effective
17	Point of Sales (POS) Business	2.52	Ineffective
18	Garri Processing	3.55	Effective
19	Transport Business	3.19	Effective
	Grand Mean	3.15	Effective

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

The above table assessed specific objective which showed the descriptive statistics extent of micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise for post covid-19 economic recovery where 3.0 threshold from 5-point Likert Scale was used for decision criterion as to whether the extent of micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise are effective or ineffective. Though, 6 measuring variables perfume making, hair making, watermelon farming, garden egg farming, restaurant business and point of sales (POS) are ineffective but the grand mean of 3.15 which was greater than ($>$) 3.0 indicated that extent of micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise are effective for PCER in Imo State.

Summary of Findings

Soap making was 3.19, Bead making 3.69, Yam farming 3.29, Cucumber farming 3.21, Cassava farming 3.35, Direct sales/Financial agents for CTCS 3.55, Palm oil processing 3.37, Plantain chips processing 3.33, Cashew nut processing 3.51, Vegetable farming 3.41, Recharge card business 3.52, Garri processing 3.55 and Transport business which was 3.19. From the One-sample t-test statistics all the 18 variables measuring micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise were significant at 0.01 levels. Therefore, extent of micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise does effectively assist members for PCER in Imo State.

The dimensions takes on a wide perspective, looking at both Southeast and Nigerian cooperatives. The new role of cooperatives in developing economies is explored owing to micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise. Carlo & Roger (2004) in Ezeji, Okoroji &

Orame (2021) acknowledged that as a result of the gradual withdrawal of public entities, owing to state budget constraints cooperatives are increasingly turning into new welfare services providers in a number of countries. This study confirms (Zeul & Cropp, 2004) on the main goal of a cooperative enterprise is to provide satisfactory reward to members by engaging in economic activities or intervening in the market environment to close the demand gap. Members benefit in economic, social and psychological context by food produce at low cost, support social initiatives and growing number of renewable energy.

This study further conforms with Vieta, Quarter, Spear & Moskovskaya (2016) that affirmed cooperative enterprise in Germany provide stability and security in tough times; expanding into new fields within the SMEs sector. In USA, some of the largest health providers are consumer cooperative enterprises; in the Pacific Northwest one cooperative enterprise provides health care for 570,000 members; in UK consumer cooperative enterprises are fifth in market share and are pre-eminent in the small supermarket sector; countries in Africa, there is significant cooperative enterprise advantage in supply of farm inputs, credit extension, processing and marketing of farm produce. Cooperative enterprise is therefore a convincing and undeniable economic unit creating micro economic jobs for PCER in Imo State.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

This study provides a snapshot of the way in which number of micro economic jobs created by cooperative enterprise working for PCER. Cooperative enterprise is a unique kind of business entity working for

the benefits of their members by creating value and providing opportunities. Cooperative enterprise has helped in transforming many economies in the world both the developed and developing economies. Although, the challenges posed by the covid-19 pandemic where economies around the world had a dramatic changes in low business act performance was a shock to cooperative business as well.

Be that as it may, cooperative enterprise reacted in agile and decisive ways created micro economic jobs including soap making, yam farming, cucumber farming, palm oil processing, cassava farming, cashew nut processing, garri processing, and vegetable farming. Other jobs created are transport business, financial agents, plantain chips processing, bead making and recharge card business all are effective for PCER in Imo State. Cooperative enterprise prioritized actions enhancing business value which capitalize more effectively on the opportunities rising from PCER. Based on the above, if Imo State adopts cooperative as an alternative enterprise for job creation, she will achieve accelerated economic recovery. This study therefore recommends that for post covid-19 economic recovery cooperative enterprise should:

- Provide more jobs opportunities such as perfume making, hair dressing, watermelon farming, garden egg farming, restaurant business and point of sale business that will be effective for economic recovery.
- Build more strategic resilience to create more jobs they cannot handle on their own for effectiveness.

- In pursuance of post covid-19 economic recovery in Imo State, cooperative enterprise required focusing on businesses seeking out and seizing opportunities emerging in the recovery for diversifications.
- Ask members to strictly observe covid-19 protocol to be alive to do the business of the enterprise.
- Ask government to provide survival funds specifically tailored for cooperative as this will go a long way to enhance their business act performance.
- Cooperative enterprise should collect data and insights on lessons learned from the pandemic and then using these to prioritize actions to enhance business value.

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SKILL DEVELOPMENT AMONGST YOUTHS AND WOMEN: THE CO-OPERATIVES' STRATEGY FOR SURVIVAL IN THE POST COVID ERA IN ORLU ZONE, IMO STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined skill development amongst youths and women: The co-operatives' strategy for survival in the post Covid era in Orlu zone, Imo State. It aimed to assess the influence of technical skills on members' income, as well as evaluate the extent to which soft skills affect co-operatives' productivity in the post Covid era. Descriptive design was used, and the population consisted of six (6) registered producers' co-operatives with a total membership of 423 youths and women. Simple random and purposive techniques were adopted for a sample size of 127 members. Percentage and mean rating were used in the analysis. Findings revealed that technical skills encouraged technological change in the society as well as foster innovation, which improved co-operative performances and, as a result, increased wealth. Conversely, soft skills improved the performances and competitiveness of youths and women for the overall productivity of co-operatives. Beyond government assistance, the study recommended that co-operative management should prioritize skill

training for their youth and women members in order to digitize their productive business activities in the post Covid era.

Key Words: Skill Development, Technical Skills, Soft Skills, Co-operatives, Strategy.

Introduction

Nigeria, with an estimated population of about 206 million in 2020 was the seventh most populous country in the world (Fayehum & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2020). According to World Bank (2020), the percentage population of women in Nigeria is 49.32% and about 38.5% of the population are youth. As the population of women and youths grows in Nigeria, so does the unemployment rate among them grows (Akande, 2014). Youths have a harder time finding job than adults, with at least two-thirds of the unemployed being between the ages of 15 and 24. In terms of gender, the majority of the unemployed youths are female (Akande, 2014). ILO (2019) posits that youths' unemployment rate is 17.69% and it's majorly among the age group of 15-24 years. The foregoing is

premised on the lack of skills development among the youths and women.

The coming together of technological improvement, globalization, and economic liberalization in recent years has incited businesses in developed and developing countries to prioritize skills development as a key strategy for economic effectiveness and growth (OECD, World Bank, ETF, ILO & UNESCO, 2013). Skill development and digitization of businesses are widely seen as the two main drivers of recent economic growth in the Covid and post-Covid era (Jaumotte, Lall & Papageorgiou, 2013). One can think of skill development as a collection of new ideas, knowledge, and methods that enhance efficiency, productivity, and financial performance of individuals and organizations and digitization of business as a process through which businesses are done virtually and/or on the internet across the globe, to keep society and businesses afloat during the pandemic.

Although most of the technological innovations occur in a handful of advanced economies (World Bank, 2008), developing countries can benefit from these technological advancements. Nigeria as a developing country saw the need to foster the culture of innovation and created a variety of technology and ICT-driven business activities amidst the Covid Pandemic. Accordingly, youths and women were encouraged to engage in technical and soft training; more technology hubs, call centers for business outsourcing, and digital outfits were established both in government and the private sectors (Nigeria Economic Sustainability Plan, 2020) to see that

businesses survived the harsh effect of the Covid 19 crisis.

Covid-19 outbreak and its lockdown witnessed a critical drain and recession on the economy, which affected businesses across the nation. However, not all businesses were adversely affected while some were victims. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals, businesses, and governments increasingly relied on technologies, especially digital platforms, for a variety of activities including financial transactions, commerce, logistics, education, and health care. In 2019, mobile internet traffic per user was growing at a quarterly rate of 12 percent in high-income countries and 10 percent in middle-income countries (Bagchi, 2020). The first few months of 2020, however, witnessed increased usage of technologies. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, mobile internet usage grew faster in the first quarter of 2020 than it did in the first quarter of 2019, as consumers, governments, and companies witnessed drastic changes in how they interacted. Businesses quickly set up new ways to keep delivering from home, maintain relationships with suppliers, and continue serving clients, with minimal physical contact (Economist, 2020a).

Consequently, a review of how technologies were employed during the crisis both in Nigeria and other countries reveals a broad set of responses. Hospitals provided online health care with technology, virtual-care technologies were embraced by physicians in countries like China (Webster, 2020). Rwanda temporarily removed charges on transfers to encourage mobile money transfers, which resulted in significant growth in

peer-to-peer transfers, both in value and volume (Carboni & Bester, 2020). As efforts developed to build resilience, education institutions all across the world changed to online instruction, employing diverse media such as the internet, television, radio, text messages, and other social platforms (World Bank, 2020a). Businesses arranged home-based work, leveraging on telecommuting applications like Zoom, Skype, Microsoft, Team viewer etc. (Afrique, 2020a). Production companies depended on advanced technologies like robotics to manage social distancing (Fannin, 2020). Governments partnered with private sectors to introduce technologies such as digital platforms, big data analytics, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to provide social welfare programmes to the poor (Rutkowski, Michal, Alfonso, Greta, Boutheina, & Caren, 2020). In the retail sector, e-commerce platforms that specialize in serving businesses broadened their product line to essential goods and services and partnered with Jumia, Jiji, Konga to reach end consumers (Citizen-Digital, 2020). All these couldn't have been possible if the organizations' employees are not been digitally developed proficiently.

However, co-operative societies, especially producer co-operatives are evident of the effect of the pandemic. They can draw a leap from the new inherent technological adoption in the economy to keep their businesses afloat, for effective performance, high productivity, and increased income. Amid the rapid technological changes and increasing automation in the economy today, however, skill development among co-operatives' youths and women members become eminent as it is a

veritable tool for survival in the pandemic era (Goos, Manning, & Salomons, 2014; Autor, 2015). Park & Marie (2020) posit that skill development especially in technology advances increase both income and productivity.

Skill development is imperative to business survival in a post-Covid era. Co-operative organizations that do not align with the ethos of digitization may encounter unbalanced risks to livelihoods of members, income, and business productivity, if not planned for.

Women and youths in co-operatives face many barriers with men counterparts, who perceive them as young people, rivals, and/or lacking commitment. The majority of them do not have technical and soft skills and are less likely to use digitalization to mitigate the economic impact of the Covid pandemic. Although women and youths are very active in economic activities, they are mostly engaged in SMSE informal business spectrum, struggling with crude technology, underemployment, low productivity, and low-income returns that can hardly attain their basic needs (Akpan, 2015). Despite the efforts to ensure continuity in education and training services as outlined by the co-operative principles, 65% of youth and women are reported to have learned less since the onset of the pandemic (Karunakaran & Gebru, 2015).

Scholars believe that productivity and income can be boosted through effective skill development amongst youths and

women members of producers' co-operatives. However, the extent to which skill development help boost income and productivity in co-operatives are still not fully determined, and empirical studies into the day-to-day practice of skill development, and technical training in producers' co-operatives are limited and the gap created as a result of paucity of near related works is filled by this study.

The objective of this study is to assess the influence of technical skills on members' income, as well as evaluate the extent to which soft skills affect co-operatives' productivity in the post-Covid era.

Review of Related Literature **Concept of Skill Development**

Fundamentally, skill development is about the empowerment and capacity building of members or employees of an organization, including co-operative society. If cooperation requires autonomy, it proves crucial for a co-operative to empower its members, and work based on power-with rather than power-over its members (Johnson, 2012). Skill development is a broader term than training, and it focuses on 'workplace learning and skill acquisition' (Morel, 2004). The term is increasingly substituting Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC] (2016) posits that skills development encompasses all organized learning processes for the development of technical, social, and personal skills and qualifications, which contribute to viable long-term incorporation of trained persons into a formal or informal economy, either as employed or self-employed.

Equally, Palmer (2005a) acclaims that skills development is not associated with formal technical, vocational, and agricultural education and training alone, but it's generally used to refer to the productive capacities acquired by employees through all levels of education and training, occurring in formal, non-formal and on-the-job settings, which enable individuals in all areas of the economy to become fully and productively engaged economically and adapt to these capacities to meet the competitive nature and opportunities of the market economy. However, the defining feature of skill development is that it serves the industry, focusing on enabling people of working age to acquire skills, which are needed by businesses currently and in the future (Department for International Development [DFID], 2014). The fulfillment outcomes of skill development amongst youth and women represent a major contribution to wealth creation and productivity for individuals and organizations, because the training has a corporate goal of producing well-trained workers who will fill positions critical to the economic success of the businesses, and diminish the skills shortage in the organization (DFID, 2014).

King & Palmer (2007) adjudge that skills development was just one of a series of instruments for increasing productive capacity, economic growth, and employability but to World Bank (2004a) it refers to the outcomes of the learning process without reference to the source of skills acquisition. It is a process of identifying skill gaps, developing and enhancing them. It is important because skills determine the ability to execute

plans with success and organizations cannot flourish when there is not a skilled workforce to sustain it. Where there are no skilled workers, productivity reduces and this limits economic investment, and hampers growth.

Covid and Digitalization of Businesses: The role of Technical and Soft Skills

Digital technologies were flourishing before the pandemic struck. During the lockdowns, entire economies around the world switched to digital platforms. In the first half of 2020, teleworking, remote learning, teleconferencing, online health services, e-commerce, and digital payments helped the world go round in many places. (International Trade Centre, 2020). Information and communication technology (ICT) is veritable means of fostering the growth of co-operatives business and any other businesses by easing the process of reaching out to people amidst Covid. Technological innovation and automation have rapidly changed the nature of work for women and youths of the world. United Nations (2015b) posits that youths are particularly well-positioned to benefit from these developments in ICT and innovations, due to their quick acquaintance with digital technologies and their openness to harnessing their application in different range of both existing and new contexts. The world today has become digital. A digital world needs digital or technology-savvy people to help steer the copious challenges and opportunities offered by digitization (Ebuka, Nzewi, Gerald, & Ezinne, 2020). For this purpose, technical training becomes eminent to instill digital skills. In today's digital age, digital technologies are quite essential (Kaeophanuek, Na-Songkhla & Nilsook, 2018). Hence, organizations are not just

looking for employees who are only competent in their areas of specialties, but those who can spice up their competencies with technological savviness.

ITC (2020) avers that the move towards digitization must go together with technical assistance, skill-building, and skill development to ensure that it is even and equitable. Conversely, UN (2015b) posits that as the demand for skilled labour rises owing to globalization, technological advancements and the changing organization of work, quality, and appropriate skill training will be key to addressing employment challenges and organization inefficiency. Meanwhile, Verma (2021) reveals that training the workforce in new technology skills is a key strategy, which requires the upgrade of skills with extensive use of digital tools for a more resilient and viable business revitalization. Tinio (2002) argues that the illiterates of the twenty-first century are not people who are unable to read and write, but those who are unable to learn, unlearn, and relearn digital skills, such one could be said to be digitally literate in that aspect because being literate has to do with the ability to do something well with little difficulty.

Nevertheless, there are some business owners, co-operative societies, and managers who for lack of such communication skills and/or lack of funds cannot finance the cost of digital installations, thus, not participating in the gains of digital business operations. Deursen & Dijk, (2010) opines that skills can add to the maturity, success, and satisfaction of an individual and that many people strengthen their development skills throughout their lives to better themselves and reach their goals in career

and business. Accordingly, Ebuka et al., (2020) posit that digital skills are learnable if one is open to be taught. They further posit that some people who are making waves in the technology space today are not necessarily those who read or studied it, but those who learned it one way or another, hence, the ability to learn is a critical asset to people.

In a workplace, there are two kinds of skills: Technical skills and Soft skills. According to Boyaci & Atalay (2016), technical skill is the ability to do specific work well. Technical skills are skills relating to any specific task; they are usually easily quantifiable and tend to be knowledge-based, such as proficiency in a subject, certification, digital training, cooking, computer programming, building a cabinet, operating equipment, writing computer code, investigate a scientific question, sell products to customers, writing an article, and teaching. These skills are specific to a job and are frequently listed in job descriptions to explain the key responsibilities of a position. These skills are necessary for an organization's survival in the post-Covid era.

Soft skills on the other hand are the mix of skills such as attitude, behaviour, personal quality, and mindset that individuals use to be successful across different situations in work and life. Soft skills refer to personal skills that impact how well an employee work or interact with other people, build relationships, create trust and dependability, communicate well, have good leadership, time management, stress management, decision making, adaptability, ability to deal with adversity, networking skill and ability to become a more effective leader in a workplace

(Akpan, 2015).

Employees' capabilities play a key role in the response to the covid-19 crisis (United Nations Development Programme, 2019). Given the tremendous digitally-enabled socio-economic activities in the economy today, Covid-19 raised the stakes around digital usage, and reinforced the fact that connectivity and the use of digital technologies are vigorous goals (OECD, 2020). Individuals with a well-informed skill-set in terms of literacy, proficiency, and problem-solving in a technology-rich environment can be expected to use digital tools more proficiently, carry out more sophisticated activities online, and better adapt to digital transformations (OECD, 2020). As a fundamental driver of digital transformation, digital innovation gives rise to new goods and services, creates opportunities for new business models and markets, and can drive efficiencies in the public sector and beyond. Again, for co-operative societies to succeed in the 21st-century market economy, the youths and women members need comprehensive skill - technical skills, cognitive skills, digital skills, socio-emotional skills, foundational literacy and numeracy as well as creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Boyaci & Atalay, 2016).

Producers Co-operatives' Strategies for Survival in the Post Covid Era

Youths' participation in producer co-operatives brings a much-needed boost of energy and dynamism into the enterprise's economic activities. It brings opportunities such as new skills, enriched creativity, innovation, and problem-solving abilities, high entrepreneurial thinking, new working patterns, and a different attitude to risk (Hartley, 2011 &

European Youth Forum, 2016). However, youths and women can undoubtedly bring the above-listed benefits to co-operatives, as well as bring a positive impact on co-operative governance, through increased participation and involvement. Roelants, Eum, Esim, Novkovic & Katajamäki (2019) contend that in a technologically innovative field of co-operative enterprise, which is usually advanced by young entrepreneurs if we accept the ideas of restructuring work as organizational innovation, youths and women have an exceptionally significant role to play in driving progressive transformation at different levels of the enterprise structure.

ICA (1995) defines co-operative as an autonomous association of persons, united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. Co-operatives are steered by a set of values, which include honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others. Co-operatives have many types but the study emphasizes producers' co-operatives. Okoli (2018) opines that producer co-operative societies are formed to protect the interest of small producers by making available needed items (raw materials, tools, and equipment, machinery, etc.) for production. According to Olesin (2007), a producer's co-operative society is the association of producers of related products who have come together to promote the production and sale of their products. Members of this society contribute money to buy or hire equipment, machinery, and raw materials at reduced rates to undertake production activities (Okoli, 2018).

Nevertheless, if there were any persistent

doubts about the essence of digital transformation to cooperative business durability, the Covid 19 has silenced them. During the crisis, the vast widely held interactions with customers and employees took place virtually. With mandated shutdowns and restriction of activities, to stay in business, one must operate digital or go dark. As labour productivity is closely tied to wages, the adoption of technology in SMEs is critical for their survival, job-enhancing, and economic growth in the post-pandemic period (Verma, 2021). Co-operatives can become more competitive by enhancing productivity and income through the development of the skills of their youths and women members.

According to history, co-operatives emerge in communities that are going through major changes and they are good at surviving crises through effective strategies (Esim, 2013). Co-operatives develop strategies through their values and principles. Cicopa (2017) adjudges that no other type of organization can provide employment to so many people, and also show resilience to crises. Co-operatives are recognized as a socioeconomic enterprise that can bring specific added value to local socio-economic development during and after the Covid-19 crisis (European Commission, 2014). Again, ILO (2013) opines that co-operatives are excellent agents for addressing the socio-economic consequence of the Covid crisis and that the member-ownership of the business and democratic control at the center of the business model makes it more durable and resilient for them to face the crisis more squarely.

More so, co-operatives in many countries

offer co-operative entrepreneurship training and education in line with the co-operative principle of education and training. Co-operative movements maintain their co-operative colleges and training centers to strengthen continuous education and training, while others support or partner with academic institutions for their training needs. This commitment to education and training builds competence for members and employees allowing for job mobility and advancement both within and outside the co-operative (OECD, 2020). However, the survival and resilience of co-operative societies amidst Covid depend on the adoption of digital technology, and the training of women and youth members in new technological skills.

Scholtz (2016) opines that in relation to the world of work, the Covid-19 pandemic revealed the existing global digital divide, pushing citizens in less digitally equipped even further behind. Co-operative sector encounters challenges on digitalization, and them being domiciled in their communities, and having the knowledge of local needs, could assist the digital transformation of local economies, to ensure a fair share for workers and members in Nigeria.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study, this involved collecting and analyzing data from the respondents in the study area of Orlu Zone Imo State, Nigeria. The study derived data from both primary and secondary sources.

All Producers' Co-operative Societies in Orlu zone qualified as population. There are nine (9) functional Producers' Co-operatives with a total membership size of 423 persons. 30% of the population were purposively selected from three (3) economically viable co-operatives. Therefore, the sample size is 127 respondents, but only 97 questionnaires were properly filled and returned. The response format adopted was a modified five-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). They were weighted 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The data collected through the structured questionnaires were analyzed with descriptive statistics such as simple percentage, mean rating (), standard deviation and five-point Likert scale with a threshold of 3.0 (i.e. 3.0 is positive while < 3.0 is negative).

Data Analysis

Socio-economic Characteristics of Producers' Co-operatives Members

Socio-economic Profile	Frequency	Percentage	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Sex					
Male	54	56	-	-	-
Female	43	44	-	-	-
Age (Years)	-	-	18years	>60years	41years
Marital Status					
Single	32	33	-	-	-
Married	65	67	-	-	-
Occupation					
Civil Servant	10	10.3	-	-	-
Artisan	15	15.5	-	-	-
Farmer	27	27.8	-	-	-
Trader/Business	45	46.4	-	-	-
Years of formal education	-	-	10 year	>19 years	14.5 years

Source: Field survey, May 2021

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-economics characteristics

Table 1 shows the socio-economic profile of the respondents. Male (56%) are more than female (44%), which implies that productive activities in the co-operative are male-dominated. There is an average age of 41 years, which indicates that they are still active within the labour force of the economy. Majority of members (46.4%) are traders and have business as their primary occupation. Also, a majority of the members are married (67%), while (33%) are single. Members have a high literacy level, with an average of 14.5 years of formal education, but they do not have any technologically proficient and digital-savvy members due to a lack of skill development among them.

Influence of Technical Skills on Members' Income

Table 2: Distribution on Influence of Technical Skills on Members' Income

S/N	Items	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	-- X	STD	Decision
6.	ICT fosters growth and capital of co-operative business during pandemic	37 (185)	28 (112)	12 (36)	8 (16)	12 (12)	3.7	3.464	Accept
7.	Our co-operative have digital savvy people to drive wealth in the digital world brought about by Covid.	10 (50)	18 (72)	4 (12)	25 (50)	40 (40)	2.3	2.248	Reject
8.	The need towards digital technologies goes with technical building.	42 (210)	23 (92)	21 (63)	5 (10)	6 (6)	3.9	3.593	Accept
9.	Digital innovations in co-operatives give rise to new goods and services, and drive income.	35 (175)	27 (108)	16 (42)	14 (28)	5 (7)	3.8	3.44	Accept
	Grand Mean						3.4		Accept

Source: Field survey, May 2021.

Table 2 shows that four questionnaire statements were used to address research question one. Responses regarding the influence of technical skills on members' income were analyzed. Results from the respondents on the analysis indicated mean scores and standard deviations of 3.7(3.464), 2.3 (2.248), 3.9 (3.593) and, 3.8 (3.44) respectively. The mean score of 3.7, 3.9, and 3.8 were accepted whereas that of 2.3 was rejected. The accept decision is based on the fact that the mean score is greater than or equal to () 3.0, which is the point scale of measurement for positive, while the reject decision was based on the fact that the mean score is <3.0. The grand mean of 3.4, which aligns with the decision rule for 'Accept' implies that technical skills encourage technological change in the society as well as foster innovation, which improve co-operative performances and, as a result, increase wealth. Except that producers' co-operatives do not have digital-savvy members to drive wealth in the digital world brought about by Covid.

Extent to which Soft Skills affect Co-operatives' Productivity

Table 3: Extent to which soft skills affect co-operatives' productivity

S/N	Items	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	-- X	STD	Decision
10.	Personal skills help members better themselves and reach their business goals.	27 (135)	30 (120)	22 (66)	10 (20)	8 (8)	3.6	3.293	Accept
11.	Soft skills add to maturity, success and satisfaction of an individual and business.	30 (150)	20 (80)	10 (30)	29 (58)	8 (8)	3.4	3.143	Accept
12.	Members with well-informed problem-solving skills achieve more productivity in business.	33 (165)	30 (120)	21 (63)	4 (8)	9 (9)	3.8	3.449	Accept
13.	Co-operative needs members with creative and critical thinking skills to survive in the 21 st century market economy.	34 (170)	22 (88)	31 (93)	5 (10)	5 (5)	3.8	3.428	Accept
	Grand Mean						3.6		Accept

Source: Field survey, May 2021.

Table 3 displays responses regarding the extent to which soft skills affect co-operatives' productivity. Results from the respondents on the four questionnaire statements indicated mean scores and standard deviations of 3.6 (3.293), 3.4 (3.143), 3.8 (3.449), and 3.8 (3.428) respectively. All the mean scores were accepted. The accept decision is based on the fact that the mean score is greater than or equal to () 3.0, which is the point scale of measurement for positive decision. The grand mean of 3.6, which aligns with the decision rule for 'Accept' shows that *soft skills improve the performances and competitiveness of youths and women for the overall productivity of co-operatives.*

Summary of Findings

The following findings were revealed:

1. Technical skills encourage technological change in the society as well as foster innovation, which improve co-operative performances and, as a result, increase wealth. Except that producers' co-operatives do not

have digital-savvy members to drive wealth in the digital world brought about by Covid.

2. Soft skills improve the performances and competitiveness of youths and women for the overall productivity of co-operatives.

Conclusion

Nigeria's population is predominantly youth-dominated, and the female population accounts for about half of the total population. Women have some virtuous characteristics of being more affective of the household members' welfare and being more responsive to organizations' needs than men. The youths are generally known for their zeal and energy, which can be employed to increase economic production and engender growth in co-operative societies. Nevertheless, both the women and youths have a common problem of being disregarded and underprivileged. They need to be empowered to enable them to contribute adequately to

economic wealth creation, and productivity of co-operative society in the post-Covid era.

From the foregoing, it is now pertinent to say that skill development is a tool for the survival of co-operatives in the post-Covid era. Skill development has been adjudged to be a great driving force for the survival and attainment of co-operative economic goals in the recent market economy, brought about by Covid 19.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Producers co-operative should embrace new technological adoption, leveraging on the untapped potentials of their youths and women members. Also, technical and soft skills training should be their optimum goal to increase members' income and overall co-operatives' productivity in the post-Covid era.
2. Beyond government assistance, the co-operative management should prioritize skill training for their youth and women members in order to digitize their productive business activities in the post-Covid era.

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC REVAMP POST COVID-19 IN NIGERIA: THE COOPERATIVE STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

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Abstract

This exploratory study sought to review options to revamping Nigeria socio-economic system through cooperative stakeholders, post covid-19. COVID 19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability associated with societies, individuals and economies in Nigeria. This situation and its attendant ripple effects have sunk the Nigerian economy into a second recession. This study, took a brief overview of recent insights in stakeholder theory, inspiring the way co-operatives' stakeholders can be conceived. A scholarly review of individual stakeholders, their responsibilities and critiques was methodological analyzed. In conclusion, adapting Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997) classification of stakeholder entities and claims, it was settled that cooperative members, professional bodies, practitioner as stakeholders can be considered as dominant stakeholders as well as ultimate stakeholders in the nations revamping dynamics, therefore should be part of the decision making structure and should be given adequate attention. Also the government as stakeholders is powerful and their claims are legitimate and urgent, therefore should be given adequate attention. It was

recommended that government create an enabling environment for the Cooperative Sector to thrive by creating innovative schemes to channel the welfare package and soft loans or interest free loans of the citizenry through cooperative. Also, cooperative stakeholders should be mobilized to ensure that all the aspects of the economy that was affected by covid19 pandemic returns to normalcy within the shortest possible time.

Keywords: Covid-19, Revamping Nigeria Economy, Cooperatives, Stakeholders.

Introduction

The COVID 19 epidemic has shown the vulnerability of Nigerian societies, individuals, and economy. The Nigerian economy has entered a second recession as a result of this scenario and its ramifications. Aside from the economic implications, the COVID-19 epidemic has harmed the country's health infrastructure, posing a serious threat to the country's growth. COVID-19 has shocked the Nigerian and African economies in three waves: first, lower trade and investment from China in the short term; second, a demand slump associated with the European Union and

OECD countries' lockdowns; and third, a continental supply shock affecting domestic and intra-African trade (OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (2020)). As a result of these exposures, the economy has suffered from income and employment losses, diminished commodity-driven growth, recessions, and an overall increase in poverty.

These economic setbacks necessitate a thorough rethinking of how to revamp the socio-economic system. Re-jigging, adapting, and empowering social and economic partners to take action is important at this time. Consequently, the unique ability and characteristics of these social economic organizations (cooperative societies, foundations, mutual organizations, and social enterprises) to address primary societal needs such as mobilization of multiple resources, inclusive and democratic governance, facilitation of social innovations, and adoption of sustainable practices at the local level, microeconomic ecosystems and macroeconomic ecosystems can naturally kick start.

Essentially, the social economy is centered on the person and social objectives taking precedence over capital. The basic goal of social economy enterprises and entities is to generate money and improve living conditions for their members and stakeholders, whether by creating jobs or ensuring access to services (health, insurance, education, etc.). In a way, the social economy enterprises can be viewed as the product of collective dynamics involving members of a community or group who share a common need or goal.

Key among social economic organisations is the Cooperative society. Cooperative societies can be described as

a union of persons as a group with common interests and an enterprise. International Labour Organization (ILO) has defined a cooperative as: an association of persons who have voluntarily joined together to achieve a common end through the formation of a democratically controlled organization making equitable contributions to the capital required and accepting a fair share of the risks and benefit of the undertaking in which the members actively participate. In the same light, Lawal, & Oludmu, (2012) describes cooperatives as a voluntary association of individual human beings with common socio-economic felt needs and with the conviction that such needs can be best attained by pooling resources and efforts in a controlling and ensuring business organization, sharing the recursion investment equitably. From the foregoing, for cooperative societies operate successfully, the social and economic aspects of members must be catered for. According to Saïssset, Riviere-Giordano and Amadiou (2016), Cooperatives represent a specific way of organization rooted in Industrial Revolution historically and they often emerge in crisis period and so appear as defensive structures. This structure comprises of groups or individuals without whose support the cooperative would not exist. Freeman (1984) defines stakeholders as any group or individual without whose support the organisation would not exist. Cooperative stakeholders include members, employees, facilitators, administrators, professionals, practitioners, local community and government. These stakeholders influences or are influenced by cooperative activities. The challenges of capacity of these stakeholders to

mobilize, function and produce result for the benefits of both public, direct individual benefits and indirect benefits is another question. Therefore this exploratory study seeks to investigate cooperative stakeholder approaches to revamp the Nigerian socio-economic system post Covid-19.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this exploratory study is to investigate the cooperative stakeholder approaches to revamp the Nigerian socio-economic system post Covid-19.

Research Questions

Can cooperative stakeholder's approach revamp the Nigerian socio-economic system post Covid-19?

Conceptual Review

Concept of Covid-19 Pandemic and the Nigerian Economy

The concept of COVID-19 was derived from the coronavirus disease detected in 2019 (COVID-19), it is a communicable respiratory disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes illness in humans. The spreads from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when coughing, sneezing, speaking, singing or through the breathe. These particles range from larger respiratory droplets to smaller aerosols. The virus spreads more easily indoors and in crowded settings. As result personal interactions, travels as well as congregating are discouraged.

Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the Nigerian economy in no small measure. According to Human Rights Watch (2021), prolonged economic downturn as a result of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria has worsened the plight of informal

workers, slum dwellers, families living in poverty and left many people struggling to afford food and meet other basic needs. They observed that the absence of a functioning social security system meant that government assistance, including cash transfers and food handouts, reached only a fraction of people going hungry. The pandemic also affected trade, investment, income, job security, economic growth and increased vulnerability to recession of the economy. As a result of the foregoing, Nigerians have experienced severe food shortages. Evidenced in Agri-food system GDP falling by 11%, primarily due to restrictions on food services (Andam, et. al. (2020)). According to Human Rights Watch (2021), half of households surveyed nationwide in May, August, and November 2020 had run out of food in the preceding 30 days, compared with a quarter of households surveyed in 2018 and 2019. This was corroborated data from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS), indicating that nearly one third of people surveyed in August 2020 had taken on debt during the Covid-19 crisis and more than half of these households used the loans to purchase food.

Also, Nigeria GDP took a hit negatively as indicated in the total GDP of Nigeria falling by 23% during the lockdown (Andam, et. al. 2020).

In same light, Covid-19 increased national poverty rates. Andam, et. al. (2020) posits that household incomes also fell by a quarter, leading to a 9% points increase in the national poverty rate. Plunging households further into poverty. In summary, the economic impact of the pandemic brings to the fore the importance of the right to social security, which requires states to use a range of measures, such as unemployment

benefits, cash transfers, and food assistance, to ensure people can obtain an adequate standard of living (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

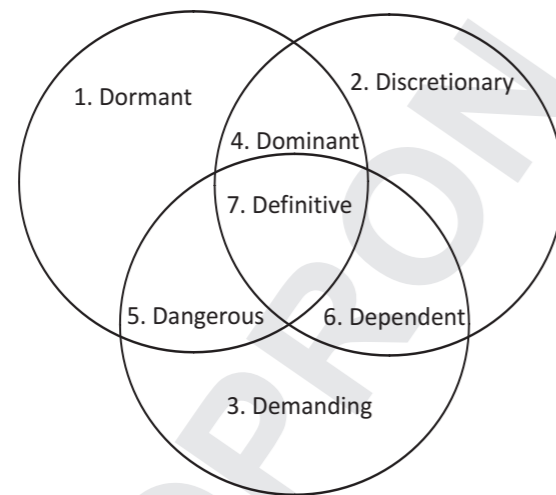
Cooperative Stakeholders

Stakeholders are often defined to be those individuals and/or groups who have influence or are influenced by the activities of an organization, sector, division or establishment. Cooperative stakeholders generally refers to cooperative members, clients, employees,

facilitators (administrators), professionals, practitioners, local community in which the cooperative is based and government.

Classification of Stakeholders

Mitchell, Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997) classify stakeholder entities according to the power they have on the one hand and the legitimacy and urgency of their claims on the other hand.



Source: Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997)

- **Dormant stakeholders** do not exercise power because their claims are not or not sufficiently urgent and legitimate. However, they have potency to increase in urgency and legitimacy.
- The claim of **discretionary stakeholders** is legitimate but not urgent and discretionary stakeholders lack power to exercise an influence on the organization.
- **Demanding stakeholders** do have urgent claims, however they lack legitimacy. They can be demanding towards the management of an organization, but they have no power.
- **Dominant stakeholders** do have

power and their claims are legitimate, albeit not urgent. They should be involved in the decision making process of an organization.

- **Dangerous stakeholders** also have power and their claims are urgent. However, their claims are not legitimate. They might use illegal means to extort their claims from managers. An organization should keep a weather eye open for dangerous stakeholders.
- **Dependent stakeholders** lack power, although their claims are legitimate and urgent. They depend on others, such as dominant stakeholders, to use power to force their will on managers.

- **Ultimate/definitive stakeholders** are powerful and their claims are legitimate and urgent. Along with the dominant stakeholders they should be part of the decision making structure of an organization (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997).

Generally, Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997) classification has been critiqued by scholars; notable among these critiques is Gijssels (2009). Gijssels (2009) points out the ambiguity as well as difficulty in deciding what the legitimacy, urgency and power of stakeholders behooves.

Power: Power is defined as the ability to exercise an influence on the organization, even against the will of the organization. Although it is easy to decide and identify powerful stakeholders from their influences upon the organisation, Gijssels (2009) posits that the resources and institutional theory can be used to explain organisation's level of response to certain types of stakeholders bearing more or less power. Resource dependency and institutional theory valuable explanations for economic and legal pressure, however power explanation of political power.

Legitimacy and Urgency: Freeman used the term legitimacy to refer to the rational appropriateness of spending time with stakeholders, measured in terms of the cost of allocating scarce resources. Legitimacy and urgency are difficult to decide upon and identify. They are attributes of the claims of stakeholders. Legitimacy of stakeholder claims has to be more or less deduced from the existing values and norms in society. These attributes are social constructs. They cannot be found in the structural relationship between stakeholders and the

organization, but are discursive in kind. Some claims are said to be legitimate or urgent whilst others are not (Gijssels, 2009). Gijssels (2009) citing Foster & Jonker; propose to use the term 'criticality' instead of urgency. 'Critical' here refers to a significant, serious issue or a 'defining moment' which is subjective being time and context dependent. What is critical to one may not be critical to another.

Cooperative Stakeholders and the Nigerian Economy

Members as Stakeholders: Cooperative societies are member driven organizations. Okonkwo (2018) members of cooperatives refer to all persons who can make use of its services and are willing to accept the responsibilities of membership. Compulsory membership and artificial restriction to membership is highly condemned. Artificial restrictions to membership which are based on; place of birth, citizenship, religion, sex, political affiliation, social class and so on, are condemned. However, artificial restriction that helps foster proper operations and management are encouraged, such as; occupation, age, residence, ownership of land, profession, bankruptcy, and so on is encouraged.

Every member of a society has certain legal obligations (responsibilities) towards his/her society. These can be found in cooperative societies' law and the societies' bye-law. These are some of them:

- Making payments: Every member of a society has the responsibility of making necessary payments to the society as stipulated in the bye laws of the society.
- Attending meetings
- Acceptance of Majority decision

and that of authority: It is the duty of every member of the society to accept the decision of the majority of members and those of the Director and the Commissioner/Minister.

- b. Acceptance of liability of liquidation: Every member shall be liable to a certain amount on the liquidation as determined by the bye laws. Also, members are liable directly to a cooperative bank or a statutory corporation from where the society has obtained loans on behalf of the members (Okonkwo, 2018).

Responsibility of Members as stakeholders are first directed to the sustainability of the cooperative society on one hand and the growth of the industry on the other hand. The growth of the cooperative industry in Nigeria invariably affects the economy.

Cooperative Managers as Stakeholders

Cooperative managers are in some cases referred to as management committee. They are the governing body of a registered cooperative society to whom the management of its affairs is entrusted unto is known as the management committee. This is a very important organ or body of a registered cooperative society. The cooperative law gives very wide powers to the committee and imposes heavy responsibilities on these cooperative managers.

The management committee has the following functions;

- a. To represent the registered cooperative society before all public authorities and in dealings and transactions with third persons, with power to institute

and defend suits brought in the name of or against the society except those reserved for the general meeting and subject to restrictions duly laid down by the bye law.

- b. The committee has to ensure that a true and accurate account of the society is maintained.
- c. The committee is to ensure that the provision of the laws, rules and bye laws are complied with.
- d. The committee is responsible for laying before the annual general meeting, an annual report and account approved by the registrar.
- e. The committee in a society with credit functions, approves loans and supervises their applications.
- f. The committee in a society into marketing, ensures that the produce marketed is of highest quality.
- g. The committee opens and maintains a bank account on behalf of the society.
- h. Haven been empowered by the bye law, the committee is allowed to appoint employees, subject to approval of by the general meeting. The committee also fixes the terms of employment of such employees.

The management committee may have other important functions varying according to the types and degree of activities of the society. Therefore, in the conduct of the affairs of the society, the management committee shall exercise the prudence and diligence of business. Members of the committee will be held responsible for any loss sustained through their failure to exercise such prudence and diligence or through acts which are contrary to the law, rules or bye laws or

any other authority given to them (Okonkwo, 2018).

Cooperative Employees or Hired Managers

The cooperative rules and regulations recognize the need for assistance of hired employees as such empowers the management committee of a cooperative society to appoint employees such as secretary, receptionists, and so on. For example the secretary carries out the secretarial functions required by the cooperative business enterprise (CBE). Also in some cooperative societies, by the nature of their business activities they may require the services of various personnel. These groups of person hired to assist in the daily running of the cooperative business, are referred to hired Management or employed staff (Okonkwo, 2018).

Government as Stakeholders

Government plays a key role as stakeholders in cooperative business advancements. According to Okonkwo (2018) citing Ebunu (2006), government has a wide range of power in intervening in cooperative activities, notable among them are as follows;

1. *Creation of Co-operative department:* Both at the States and federal Government levels to supervise Cooperative development.
2. *Assignment Cooperatives roles in National Development plans:* Co-operatives were assigned roles in the national development plans and development projects, such as the various projects for agriculture and poverty alleviation.
3. *Legislative Role:* The most important role of government plays in Co-operative affairs is to legislate to direct them and

give legal personality to the Co-operative. That is why in Nigeria, we have legislations passed to fit the Co-operative situation. The current co-operative law is the Co-operative Decree of 1993, which include the following provisions:

- a) A definition of Co-operative, bringing out its essential characteristics
 - b) A Description of the object of a Co-operative, and procedure for establishment and registration, the amendments of statues, and its dissolution.
 - c) The condition of membership, such as the maximum amount of each share, the rights and duties of members which will be laid in greater details in the bye – laws of Co-operatives Societies.
 - d) The method of administration, management and internal audit, and the procedure for the establishment and functioning of management.
 - e) The protection of the name "Cooperative".
 - f) The machinery for the external audit and guidance of Cooperatives and for the enforcement of the laws and regulations. Consequently the Co-operative law as presently existing in Nigeria covers all co-operatives. At the state level, the contents of each state co-operative law are not substantially different from that of the federal one. The States Co-operatives laws exist to take into consideration the peculiarities of each state.
4. *Giving out loans to co-operatives*
 Government also gives out loans to Co-operative with which Cooperatives are expected to use and execute viable projects. It is the responsibilities of beneficiaries of such loans to think of good business ventures that they can use the money for, so that the loan repayment can be hitch free.

5. Staff Secondment

In recent times Co-operatives have been plagued with incompetent management. Meaning, there is shortage of skilled personnel's with the right management skills. As a result, government while taking account of the need to secure the resources of Co-operative and ensure they are used judiciously, post staff to Co-operative to assist where there is lack of personnel. Staff secondment is, however, done without violating the independent nature of Co-operatives.

Institutions as Stakeholders

Cooperative studies have been accredited for studies in various academic institutions in Nigerian, such as universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, college of education and professional bodies for the awards of Diplomas, Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees (M.sc) as well as Doctor of philosophy (PhD). There are other institutions involved in cooperative matters, such as the Cooperative Federation of Nigeria, Institute of Cooperative Professionals (ICOPRON) and others.

Observations by Okonkwo (2018) indicate that there are weak institutional linkage between cooperative groups, which are supposed to synergize for great impact and development. For example, the Cooperative Federation of Nigeria is an apex cooperative and is supposed to be linked to state Federations. This linkage is weak where it exists and in some cases there are no linkages at all. This is because primary societies which have various obligations to their unions have failed to deliver. As such, the unions in turn have failed to fulfill their responsibilities to the apexes. The problem of weak linkages within the cooperative movement is as a result of

mistrust and poor accountability, leading to primary societies not feeling that their needs are being taken into consideration by their unions.

The Cooperative Federation of Nigeria has a weak link with Institute of Cooperative Professionals (ICOPRON) in most states, impacting synergy for greater impact and development. On the other hand, some states do not have of Cooperative Professionals (ICOPRON), while in some states where the professional body exists there is a weak link with the national body. This as well is as a result of mistrust and poor accountability.

Revamping Nigeria Socio-Economic System through Cooperative Stakeholders.

Stakeholders as highlighted by scholars have immediate benefits and responsibilities which affects their local economy as well as the Nigerian economy at large. With proper synergy and adequate linkages of individuals and/or groups who have influence or are influenced by cooperative activities at the divisional/local government level, state level and national level, with innovative schemes in order to boast economic practices that are sustainable and inclusive in addressing: (i) societal social as well as environmental needs, (ii) building on local contents so as to encourage participation, and (iii) through a comprehensive economic stakeholders synergy, the Nigerian economy will be impacted positively.

Cooperative stakeholders generally have been affected directly or indirectly by the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore a purposive approach to galvanize the social economy by empowering cooperative social practices of identifying

and implementing social innovations and alternative ways to pre-COVID-19 business activities so as to mitigate the various forms of social exclusions experienced by vulnerable group post COVID-19. Innovations like digitalization of financial transactions, farming methods, savings mobilization styles, which often times are mainstreamed and adopted by the rest of the economy (OECD, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Stakeholder

In 1984, Edward Freeman propounded the stakeholder theory. Edward Freeman's stakeholder theory holds that a company's stakeholders include just about anyone affected by the company and its workings. Stakeholder Theory is an idea about how business really works. It says that for any business to be successful it has to create value for customers, suppliers, employees, communities and financiers, shareholders, banks and others people with the money. It says that you can't look at any one of their stakes or stakeholders if you like, in isolation. Their interest has to go together, and the job of a manager or entrepreneur is to work out how the interest of customers, suppliers, communities, employees and financiers go in the same direction (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholder theory looks at the relationships between an organization and others in its internal and external environments. It also looks at how these connections influence how the business conducts its activities. Think of a stakeholder as a person or group that can affect or be affected by an organization. Stakeholders can come from inside or outside of the business. Examples include customers, employees, stockholders, suppliers, non-profit groups, government,

and the local community, among many others (What is Stakeholder Theory? - Definition & Ethics, 2015).

The core idea of stakeholder theory is that organizations that manage their stakeholder relationships effectively will survive longer and perform better than organizations that don't. Freeman suggests that organizations should develop certain stakeholder competencies. These include:

- Making a commitment to monitor stakeholder interests
- Developing strategies to effectively deal with stakeholders and their concerns
- Dividing and categorizing interests into manageable segments
- Ensuring that organizational functions address the needs of stakeholders, (What is Stakeholder Theory? - Definition & Ethics, 2015)

Conclusions

This study sought to explore stakeholders' position in their local business ecosystem primarily so as to draw a link to revamping the Nigerian economy, post Covid-19. A clear review has brought to the fore the critical nature of all stakeholders and their potential impact. Scholarly submission puts cooperative stakeholders' role, capacities and contributions as a positive variable in revamping the economy through enhancing sustainable and innovative economic practices as well as social/environmental need at the local level. Adapting Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997) classification of stakeholder entities, it was concluded that the government as stakeholders is powerful and their claims are legitimate and urgent, therefore

should be given adequate attention. Also the cooperative members, professional bodies, practitioner as stakeholders can be considered as dominant stakeholders as well as ultimate stakeholders in the nations revamping dynamics, therefore should be part of the decision making structure and should be given adequate attention. The questions yet unanswered remains; how effective are cooperative members, professional bodies, practitioner and government in performance of statutory responsibilities?

Recommendation

1. Government needs to create an enabling environment for the Cooperative Sector to thrive by creating innovative schemes to channel the welfare package of the citizenry through cooperative.
2. Cooperative stakeholders should be mobilized to ensure that all the aspects of the economy that was affected by covid19 pandemic returns to normalcy within the shortest possible time.
3. Government needs to provide the sector with soft loans or interest free loans to boost their performance in Job creation to absorb our teeming Youth.

Suggestion for Further Studies

1. An in-depth empirical study should be carried on the linkage between cooperative institutional bodies for impact and development in all states of the federation.
2. A study to assess the performance of selected cooperative stakeholders post COVID-19 in all states of the federation.

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ECONOMIC RE-ENGINEERING AND AGRO-FOOD TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS IN NIGERIA: LESSONS FROM MALAYSIA.

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Abstract

The paper explored the various aspects of the agro-food economic diversification in Malaysia, in order to draw lessons for Nigeria's agricultural economic growth and development. Descriptive statistical method was employed in the presentation. With a total population of 31.6 million people, Malaysia has been able to harness the factor endowments for its people such that its GDP per capita (USD, PPP) grew from 18,577 in 2005 to 25,669 in 2016, whereas Nigeria's GDP per capita (USD, PPP) grew from 4,149 in 2005 to 5,435 in 2016. Nigeria failed in its capacity utilization of the available factor endowments. In 2016, the percentage of prevalence of undernourishment of Malaysian people was 2.9, while Nigeria's data was 11.5%. Furthermore, there was no prevalence of severe food insecurity in Malaysia, but Nigeria recorded 24.8% in its prevalence of severe food insecurity, within the period under consideration. The paper concluded that Nigeria's economic performances are dwindling. It was recommended that in order to enhance stable and viable sustainable and economic growth for its people, Nigeria's mono-economy must give way to productive development of all sectors of the economy, particularly the agro-technology.

Keywords: Diversification, resources, agro-technology, Malaysia, Nigeria.

Introduction

A diversified economy is an economy that has a number of different revenue streams and provides the nation with the capacity for sustainable growth because there is non-reliance on one particular type of stream of revenue. Economic diversification is imbedded in what is known as economic complexity, which is the idea that countries should not be dependent upon a small number of products for their economic livelihoods. Diversification thus provides nations with the security and reliability that they need so that, should one economic revenue stream fails, they have several other options for revenue. Economic diversification demands active participation in wide range of sectors, and firmly integrated into different regions, and nations with such growth and great potential to increase resilience and contribute to achieving and sustaining long economic growth and development (Uzonwanne, 2015). But this is not the case with Nigeria, which has depended on oil revenue since 1970 till date.

The structure of the economy of Nigeria remains highly import dependent, consumption driven and undiversified. Nigeria has a large expanse of agricultural land. This constitutes 77.7 per cent of Nigeria's total land area which is 910.8 thousand square kilometers. Of this total, 37.3 per cent is arable land, 7.4 per cent is under permanent crop and 9.0 per cent is

under forest (World Bank, 2016). It includes four sub-sectors, namely; crop, livestock, fishery and forestry. The crop sub-sector accounts for about 90% of agricultural production in Nigeria, followed by the livestock sub-sector which contributes about 7%. Fishing activities contribute 2% and forestry activities account for 1% (NBS, 2015). Most importantly, Nigeria's agriculture presents various opportunities, which are yet to be exploited, unlike the Malaysian agriculture. Malaysian economy is diversified along the real sector including agriculture.

The agricultural sector had been the mainstay of the Malaysian economy for many years since the country gained its independence from England in 1957. Malaysia is well-endowed with natural resources in areas such as agriculture, forestry and minerals. It is an exporter of natural and agricultural resources. In the agricultural sector, Malaysia is one of the top exporters of natural rubber, palm oil, which together with timber and timber products, cocoa, pepper, pineapple and tobacco dominate the growth of the sector (ANZ Business, 2015). As at 2011, in Malaysia, croplands consists of 17.49% while other land uses consists of 77.07% irrigated land covers 3,800 km² and total renewable water resources make up 580 cubic km. in 2013, agricultural sector contributed more than 23% of the total export earnings and adds about 7.2% of Malaysia's GDP. Agriculture is now a minor sector of the Malaysian economy contrasting with the 1960s when agriculture accounted for 37% of Malaysia's GDP and employed 66.2% of the labour force. The crops grown by the agricultural sector has also significantly shifted to industrial crops like palm oil and rubber.

Despite its minor contribution to Malaysia's GDP, Malaysia has a significant foothold in the world's agricultural sector, being the world's second largest producer of palm oil in 2012 producing 18.79 million tonnes of crude palm oil on 19,000 square meters of land. The economy has diversified beyond agriculture and primary commodities, so that manufactured goods now account for a much larger share of GDP and total exports. Diversification efforts in agriculture saw the successful establishments of oil palm and cocoa. It is through these primary agricultural commodities that Malaysia accumulated its early wealth to finance the development of the other sectors of the economy, namely the industrial and service sectors (Ahmad and Suntharalingam, 2009).

Review of Related Literature

Managerial Theories of Firm: Marris' and Williamsons Theory

In recent years, new theories of the firm have been developed which emphasize the role of managers and their behavioural patterns in establishing price and output under oligopolistic market conditions. Generally, the managers do not try to maximize profits but they pursue other goals. Whether, the firm try to maximize profits also depend upon who controls the business conducted by them. In case of sole trader and partnership, it is the owners themselves who take price and output decisions and perform other entrepreneurial functions. In the case of joint stock companies or corporations, there is a separation between ownership and management. It is the shareholders who are the owners of a joint stock company and bear the risks of business. But price and output decisions are taken

by the hired managers who are not the owners of the business. Under these conditions, profits of the business go to the shareholders.

The owner-entrepreneurs of sole trader and partnership are trying to maximize their profits since it is in their interest to do so. But hired managers of joint stock companies cannot be expected to try to maximize profits since these profits do not go to them. It may be true that when managers are able to earn more profits for shareholders, they may be rewarded by them in some form or the other.

The important managerial theories of the firm which have been developed in recent years are managerial theories of Marris and O.E. Williamson. Like the sales maximization theory of Baumol, managerial theories also do not admit the validity of profit maximization hypothesis regarding the working of the business firms. According to Baumol, the managers of the firms are aiming to maximize sales revenue subject to a minimum profit level.

All these managerial theories are emphasizing the role of manager and his seeking self-interest while making decisions regarding price, output, sales, etc. of the corporate firms. Since the managers of corporate firms are motivated by considerations other than the maximization of profits, their decisions regarding price, output, sales, etc. are likely to be different from those of the profit-maximizing firm.

1. Marris' Managerial Theory of Firm:

R. Marris has put forward an important theory of the firm according to which managers do not maximize profits but instead, according to him, they seek to maximize balanced rate of growth of the

firm. Maximization of balanced rate of growth of the firm means maximization of the rate of growth of demand for the products of the firm and rate of growth of capital supply.

If G stands for balanced growth, G_d for the growth rate of demand for the product, G_c for the rate of growth of the capital supply, then the goal of the manager is to maximize G , Thus –

$$G = G_d = G_c$$

In seeking to maximize the balanced growth rate, a manager faces the following two constraints:

1. Managerial Constraint
2. Financial Constraint

Managerial constraint refers to the strength of the managerial team and their skills.

Financial constraint refers to the following three financial ratios:

1. Ratio of debt (D) to total assets (A) which is simply called debt ratio (D/A).
2. Liquidity ratio which is the ratio of liquid assets of the firm to the total assets (L/A).
3. Retention ratio (π/π) which refers to the ratio of retained profits to the total profits.

It is important to note that these financial variables determine the job security of the managers, if these financial ratios set by the manager crosses prudent limits, they expose the firm to the risk of being taken over by others or the managers can be dismissed which can endanger their job security. Therefore, financial constraints are associated with job security. Managers take into account job security while making business decisions.

On the other hand, utility of owners depends on the growth of capital supply which is positively correlated with the growth of profits. Thus, owner's utility function can be written as –

$$U_{\text{owners}} = f(G_c).$$

Under the Marris model, a manager works under two constraints:

(i) Managerial constraint set by the decision making capacity of the managerial team and

(ii) Financial constraint determined by three financial ratios which are reflected in the job security of the managers.

It is usually argued by managerial theorists that the division of ownership and management allows the managers to set goals which do not necessarily coincide with those of owners. The utility function of managers includes variables such as salaries, status, power and job security, while the utility function of owners includes variables such as profits, size of output, size of capital, share of the market and public image. Thus, managers want to maximize their own utility.

$$U_m = f^*(\text{salaries, power, status, job security})$$

While the owners seek the maximization of their utility

$$U_o = f^*(\text{profits, capital, output, market share, public esteem}).$$

Marris argues that the difference between the goals of managers and the goals of the owners is not as wide as other managerial theories claim, because most of the variables appearing in both functions are strongly correlated with a single variable – i.e., size of the firm. There are various other measures (indicators) of size-capital, output, revenue, market share and there is no consensus about which of these measures is the best. Furthermore, Marris argues that the managers do not maximize the absolute size of the firm (however measured), but the rate of growth (= change of the size) of the firm. The size and the rate of growth are not necessarily

equivalent from the point of view of managerial utility.

If they were equivalent we would observe a high mobility of managers between firms – the managers would be indifferent in choosing between being employed and promoted within the same growing firm (enjoying higher salaries, power and prestige), and moving from a smaller firm to a larger firm where they would eventually have the same earnings and status. In the real world the mobility of managers is low.

Hence, managers aim at the maximization of the rate of growth rather than the absolute size of the firm.

The utility function of owners can be written as follows –

$$U_{\text{owners}} = f(G_c)$$

where G_c = rate of growth of capital.

It is not clear why owners should prefer growth to profits, unless G_c and profits are positively related.

The Managerial Constraint:

Marris adopts Penrose's thesis of the existence of a definite limit on the rate of efficient managerial expansion. At any one time period the capacity of the top management is given – there is a ceiling to the growth of the firm set by the capacity of its managerial team. The managerial capacity can be increased by hiring new managers, but there is a definite limit to the rate at which management can expand and are main competent (efficient). Penrose's theory is that decision-making and the planning of the operations of the firm are the result of teamwork requiring the co-operation of all managers. Co-ordination and co-operation require experience. A new manager requires time before he is fully ready to join the teamwork necessary for the efficient functioning of the organization. Thus,

although the 'managerial ceiling' is receding gradually, the process cannot be speeded up. Similarly, the 'research and development' (R&D) department sets a limit to the rate of growth of the firm. This department is the source of new ideas and new products which affect the growth of demand for the products of the firm. The work in the R&D department is 'teamwork' and as such it cannot be expanded quickly, simply by hiring more personnel for this section – new scientists and designers require time before they can efficiently contribute to the team work of R&D department.

The managerial constraint and the R&D capacity of the firm set limits both to the rate of growth of demand (G_D) and the rate of growth of capital supply (G_C).

The Job Security Constraint:

The desire of managers for security is reflected in their preference for service contracts, generous pension schemes, and their dislike for policies which endanger their position by increasing the risk of their dismissal by the owners (that is, the shareholders or the directors they appoint). Marris suggests that job security is attained by adopting a prudent financial policy.

The risk of dismissal of managers arises if their policies lead the firm towards financial failure (bankruptcy) or render the firm attractive to take-over raiders. In the first case, the shareholders may decide to replace the old management in the hope that by appointing a new management the firm will be run more successfully. In the second case, if the take-over raid is successful, the new owners may well decide to replace the old management.

Williamson's Managerial Theory of the Firm:

A full-fledged managerial theory of the firm has been put forward by O.E. Williamson who emphasizes that managers are motivated by their self-interest and they maximize their own utility function. Again, the objective of utility maximization by the managers is subject to the constraint that after-tax profits are large enough to pay acceptable dividends to the shareholders and also to pay for economically necessary investments.

It may, however, be pointed out that utility maximization by the self-interest seeking managers, like sales maximization model of William Baumol is possible only in a corporate form of business organization where there exists separation between ownership and management.

Import substitution versus Export-oriented Growth

The early manufacturing industries—primary processing ones—that grew were those that had some natural protection because of high transportation costs and location advantages. Peninsular Malaysia had developed a comparative advantage in resource-based manufacturing industries, and its imports were more capital-intensive and exports more labor-intensive in the latter period (Hoffman and Tan 1980).

Industrialization was fuelled by a combination of state intervention in the economy and the growth of public enterprise, the use of fiscal policy and incentives to attract foreign direct investment (FOI), and the provision of industrial infrastructure and low cost labor. The early import substitution phase gave way to an explicit export-oriented industrialization strategy. Within 20 years the economy had to adapt to a labor shortage economy, and the new phase of

industrialization relied much less on labor-intensive manufacturing industries.

Diversification has reduced the importance of agriculture in the economy and has raised the manufacturing and services sectors. Services also expanded as the economy became increasingly industrialized and accounted for the largest share of GDP. Excluding government services, financial services and wholesale and retail trade are the two largest subsectors in services. While growing, exports of services still account for a small share of total exports. Diversification of services is ongoing as more high value-added services like information and communications technology, education and tourism have expanded. Manufacturing-related services have also expanded with the rise of the manufacturing sector.

Industrial Policies for Export-Led Growth

The government played a key part in the diversification of the economy either directly or indirectly by channeling resources for diversification. Since the 1970s public investment and intervention were also used for distributive purposes (i.e. correcting ethnic imbalances in income, ownership, employment and entrepreneurship). Public investment increased to the early 1980s. Public investment (capital formation) was about 14 percent of GDP in 1985 and 12.3 percent in 1991; it then rose slightly from 1992 to 1993, but fell to about 11.3 percent by 2000.

Private investment's share of GDP was about 15.8 percent in 1985, 31.8 percent in 1997 and 11 percent in 2000. Private investment after that has been sluggish following the impact of the Asian

financial crisis.

The government created a fiscal stimulus through public investment to counteract the economic slowdown after 2000, and public investment's share of GDP increased to about 18.6 percent in 2002 and fell to an estimated 15.6 percent in 2007. Private investment performance was dismal as its share of GDP was 10.6 percent of GDP in 2002; it rose to 12.9 percent in 2007, but that was less than half of its share in the peak years between 1995 and 1997.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) has played a central role in the diversification of the economy. Overall Malaysia has kept its economy relatively open. FDI was instrumental in the growth of agriculture and mining, and it also helped diversify the economy away from the cultivation of rubber into palm oil. British investment in rubber plantations started in the late nineteenth century, and diversification into palm oil was encouraged through replanting grants and utilizing a cess tax on rubber. Indigenous rubber smallholders also had access to the replanting grants.

Malaysia adopted an industrial policy approach for its export-led growth for manufacturing industries. It supported exporters by providing tax holidays and creating export processing zones. The government also used tariffs, import restrictions and government procurement of locally produced goods. These policies helped promote exports and protect domestic manufacturers. Early in this approach, the government promoted industries that could replace or reduce the amount of manufactured products that were imported and also to support resource-based manufacturing industries.

Rubber Replanting

From 1948 to 1952, rubber accounted for almost 70 percent of the total output value of the major agricultural commodities. From 1963 to 1967 its share declined to about 65 percent of total agricultural output while as a share of GNP it fell from 38 percent to 15 percent (Lim, 1973). The successful diversification strategy comprised a number of elements, especially through research and development, and the role of the Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia (RRIM) was crucial in this regard. Replanting schemes for rubber essentially were programs for the reinvestment of profits of rubber estates and smallholdings.

Palm oil - Diversification and Investment

Before Malaysia became the world's leading producer of palm oil, West Africa was the most important producing region (Lim, 1967). A new phase commenced in 1957 when the government became more active in investing in palm oil through FELDA. Before World War Two, oil palm was entirely an estate crop. In the first half of the 1970s FELDA planted oil palms on about 288,000 acres. Almost 90 percent (3.6 million hectares) of the total planted acreage in 2005 was matured acreage compared with 86 percent in 1990 and 75 percent in 1970.

Manufacturing Export-Led Growth

Financial resources were used for infrastructure development promoting industrial estates and warehouses). Fiscal incentives (mostly tax incentives and larger ownership shares) were utilized to attract FDI, especially those involved in manufactured exports. Such exports became a major contributor to economic growth, accounting for more than 70

percent of total exports, by the late 1980s and with the non-resourced-based industries dominating exports.

Diversification through the reform clusters approach illustrates policymaking, leadership and learning within the specific industrial contexts. Four manufacturing industries provide insights into the continuing push for diversification: rubber and palm oil products (both resource-based); electronics/electrical and transport/automobile industries (both of which are not resource-based). The two resource-based industries are important because they raise questions about the potential for further developing resource-based manufacturing industries. A natural resource-based industrialization strategy, it has been argued, can bring benefits to economies that produce primary commodities, and several developing countries have tried to go down this route (Yeats, 1991). Markets for processed commodities may be more stable than those for raw commodities, and could in the long run yield more stable and larger secular price increases. The electronics/electrical products industry is the single most important manufacturing sector, making a considerable contribution to the industrialization of the economy. The automobile industry, an example of a heavy industry-is included because important policy changes have recently resulted from a fundamental reevaluation of the big push strategy introduced in the late 1980s.

Electrical and Electronics Products

The increasing importance of industrial electronics has been due to the expanding manufacture of high value-added products such as computers, computer peripherals and telecommunications

equipment (Ministry of International Trade and Industry 2006). New high-end products include fabricated wafers, mobile phones, telecommunications equipment, computer notebooks and servers. New services, including the design of integrated circuits, prototyping, and testing and failure analysis have also grown and expanded.

The oil palm industry has evolved from a mere producer and exporter of crude palm oil (CPO) into a more diversified entity, creating new downstream and supporting industries. Over the years, it has remained resilient in the face of many challenges and has continued to contribute significantly to the national economy. Its contribution to GDP amounted to RM6.8 billion in 1995 or 5.7 percent, up from RM3.6 billion in 1985. Among the primary commodities, palm oil is the country's largest export earner, totaling RM13 billion (US\$3.4 billion). About 250,000 families in Government land schemes and independent smallholdings as well as 80,000 workers in the private estates of Peninsular Malaysia are dependent on this industry for their livelihood. Concurrent with the rapid expansion in oil palm planted areas, the number of oil palm mills also increased. At the end of 1995, there were 281 oil palm mills with an annual operating capacity of 50.8 million tonnes of fresh fruit bunches (FFB), 41 refineries and 13 oleochemical manufacturers with an annual operating capacity of 10.15 million tonnes and 0.82 million tonnes, respectively. Processed palm oil exports grew from 3.4 million tonnes to 6.5 million tonnes during the period 1985-95. Over the 1985-95 periods, the country recorded an increase in average yield and total rice production. National yield

recorded an increase from 2.7 tonnes per hectare to 3.2 tonnes per hectare during the period. Peninsular Malaysia recorded an average yield of 3.7 tonnes per hectare in 1995, while Sarawak and Sabah averaged 1.2 and 2.7 tonnes per hectare, respectively. Total rice production increased from 1.7 million tonnes in 1985 to 2.1 million tonnes in 1995. The eight main granary areas, which accounted for more than 70 percent of rice production, recorded an increased yield from 3.3 tonnes per hectare in 1985 to 4 tonnes per hectare in 1995. Over the 1985-95 period, domestic production accounted for about 77 percent of the total domestic consumption. In 1995 importation of rice amounted to 427,570 tonnes valued at RM356.1 million (US\$94 million).

Cocoa production increased from 108,000 tonnes in 1985 to 247,000 tonnes in 1990 but subsequently declined to 132,000 tonnes in 1995. Cocoa remains an important agro-based industry for the country. During the 1990-1995 period, exports of these products have increased by about 48 percent, from RM307 million (US\$81 million) to about RM453 million (US\$119 million). The cocoa industry is a source of livelihood for about 120,000 smallholder families and provides employment for about 36,000 workers in the estate sector. Additionally, a substantial number is employed in supporting industries such as in processing, grinding and manufacturing. Currently, Malaysia has 10 grinding factories with a production capacity of 125,000 tonnes per year.

The fruit industry is a smallholder-based industry involving 270,000 farmers. In 1995, the area under fruits was 260,600 hectares, and in the year 2010 it is forecasted to increase to 375,000 hectares. For the 1985-95 periods, the

production of fresh fruits increased at the rate of 4.8 percent per annum from 638,100 tonnes to 1,019,900 tonnes. The total value of fresh fruits exported increased from RM72.3 million (US\$19 million) in 1985 to RM170.2 million (US\$45 million) in 1995 (Table 10). The major fruits exported were melons, durians, papaya, banana and starfruit. The exports of processed fruits increased from RM110 million (US\$29 million) in 1985 to RM165 million (US\$43 million) in 1995. However, Malaysia is still a net importer of fruits and fruit products.

The production of vegetables has increased from 540,700 tonnes in 1985 to 718,100 tonnes in 1995 at an average annual growth rate of about 2.9 percent (Table 11). In the year 2010, it is forecasted that the planted acreage will increase to 86,000 hectares with a production of 1.6 million tonnes (Table 12). The export of vegetables has increased at the rate of 15.2 percent per annum from RM39 million (US\$10 million) in 1985 to RM160 million (US\$42 million) in 1995. The value of import has increased from RM276 million (US\$73 million) in 1985 to RM683 million (US\$180 million) in 1995.

Empirical Review

Samuelson (1968) in describing economic diversification as an act of investing in a variety of assets mentioned its benefit as that which reduces risk especially in the time of recession, inflation, deflation etc. Economic diversification strives to smooth out unsystematic risk events in a portfolio so that the positive performance of some investments will neutralize the negative performance of others.

An empirical example relating economic diversification to risk reduction and

economic growth was a research carried out by Elton and Gruber (1977). They worked out an empirical example of the gains from economic diversification. Their approach was to consider a population of 3,290 securities available for possible inclusion in a portfolio, and to consider the average risk over all possible randomly chosen n -asset portfolios with equal amounts held in each included asset, for various values of n . Their result shows that most of the gains from diversification come for $n \leq 30$ which indicate continuous economic growth.

Oliner and Sichel (2000), Jorgenson (2000) and Whelan (2000) used endogenous growth model to study the implication of growth rebound in the US economy. Their findings support the assertion of improving economic diversification through other means like information technology which they see as the main sources of the rebound; hence the role of technological progress in agriculture cannot be underestimated.

Other researchers like Young (1995) applied the same framework and discovered that the higher growth of output in the newly industrialized countries of East Asia than the rest of the world is almost entirely due to rising in economic diversification which increases labour force participation and empowerment in labour quality (through knowledge accumulation) and not attributable to rapid technological progress.

Adebayo (1999) noted this when he said that the neglect of agriculture and the rural economy and the concentration of economic activity in the oil sector was the cause of the current scarcity of raw materials, which has led to heavy imports of raw materials and foodstuff.

Muttaka (2015) examined the effect of Nigeria's oil dependency on economic growth. He observed that Nigeria has wasted much of its opportunities to break away from underdevelopment despite its massive natural and human resources endowment due to heavy reliance on her huge crude oil resources, regrettably mismanaged, as the major source of revenue. He identified and discussed on some key drivers of economic diversification such as investment, governance and regional dimensions of economic diversification as well as human and natural resources. He maintained that of all the other drivers, good governance remains a prerequisite in building an enabling environment for such diversification.

Onucheyo (2001) earlier predicted the fall in oil prices, when he pointed out that in the 21st century nuclear, solar, and geothermal and other energy sources would be sufficiently developed to meet most of the world's energy requirements. A situation which, according to Onucheyo, raises fears for Nigeria's oil powered mono-cultural economy. Onucheyo maintained that Nigeria's position in the 21st century will not depend on its oil, but the development of its agricultural sector and related human resources.

Egunjobi (2012) assessed the impact of urban unemployment on economic growth using co-integration and the error correction mechanisms. The research was of the opinion that income, government expenditure and investment in human resources had direct impact while urban-unemployment rate had an indirect impact on economic growth. Hence, he recommended diversification in human resources.

Agricultural Policy

Agricultural policy is an official document formulated by the government as a set of strategic direction of the agricultural sector in Malaysia. Generally, an agricultural policy is formulated for a certain period of time. The agricultural policy in Malaysia was established in two periods of time; the policy before independence (1948 -1957) and after independence (1957-2020). During the pre-independence, the agricultural policies were formulated by and for the interest of the British colonial. The emphasis was on plantation crops such as rubber, oil palm and cocoa. On the other hand, the policies after independence mainly addressed the poverty issues among farmers. The policies focused on how to enhance income of farmers in order to reduce poverty in the agricultural sector, and to minimize the inter-sectoral inequality between the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. After independence, Malaysia formulated four agricultural policies namely, the National Agricultural Policy 1,2, 3 (NAPI-3) and the National Agro-food Policy (NAM).

The Malaya Economic plan (1957-2016)

After independence, the government continued the colonial's pre-independence agricultural policy. The government recognized the significant role and contribution of agriculture, and set the strategic direction under the Government Economic Development Plan. The policies on agriculture development were published in the First Malaya Plan (1956-1960), Second Malaya Plan (1961-1965), and the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970). In the early period after independence, the agricultural policy was influenced by the

colonial's policy, in which the focus was on the industrial crops for export markets. Large forest land was opened for palm oil and rubber plantations. As a result, until 1970, more than 123,000 ha of palm oil and 131,500 ha of rubber were planted in Malaysia. Throughout this period, agriculture led by rubber and palm oil was the main contributors of Malaysia's economy, providing the benefits of foreign exchange income, capital creation and employment.

Data Presentation and Discussion

Malaysia			
	1995	2005	2016
The setting			
Population, total (mill.)	20.5	25.7	31.6
Rural population, total (mill.)	9.2	8.6	7.6
Govt. expenditure on agric. (%total outlays)		3.4	2.9
Area harvested, crops (mill. ha)	5.7	6.6	7.3
Cropping intensity ratio	0.9	1.0	0.9
Total renewable water resources per cap. (m ³)	26.596	21.698	18 597
Land area equipped for irrigation (1 000 ha)	363	375	442
Agric. Area actually irrigated (% agric. Area)			5.1
Employment in agriculture (%)	20.0	14.6	11.4
Employment in agriculture, female (%)	17.0	10.1	6.8
Fertilizers use, nitrogen (1 000 t nutrients)		634.7	280.6
Fertilizers use, phosphate (1 000 t nutrients)		78.3	288.4
Fertilizers use, potash (1 000 t nutrients)		682.5	951.0
Agric. Value added per worker (constant USD)	11 199	14.632	16 735
Hunger dimensions			
Average dietary energy supply (kcal/cap/day)		2.810	2 964
Average dietary energy supply adequacy (%)		121	125
Dietary energy supply, cereals/roots/tubers (%)		47	44
Prevalence of undernourishment (%)		3.9	2.9
Prevalence of severe food insecurity (%)			
GDP per capita (USD, PPP)		18.577	25 669
Cereal import dependency ratio (%)		86.3	72.6
Stunting, children under 5(%)		17.2	20.7
Wasting children under 5(%)			11.5
Safely managed drinking water (% pop. Using)		93.2	92.1
Food supply			
Food production value, net (2004-06 mill. 1\$)	7 427	11.127	14 568
Agriculture, value added (5GDP)	13	8	9
Food (excl fish) exports (mill. USD)	6 015	7 648	16 150
Food (excl. fish) imports (mill USD)	2 821	4 456	10 700

Production indices (2004-06 = 100)			
Food	67	100	131
Crops	66	100	118
Cereals	94	103	100
Vegetable oils	53	100	131
Roots and tubers	275	101	105
Fruit and vegetables	93	100	136
Sugar	331	103	1
Livestock	87	100	145
Milk	91	100	102
Meat	89	100	136
Fish	86	96	123
Net trade (mill. USD)			
Cereals and preparations	-711	-823	-883
Fruit and vegetables	-260	-357	-1 482
Meat and meat preparations	-125	-255	-681
Dairy products (milk equivalent)	-303	-333	-419
Fish	11	112	-224
Environment			
Forest area (% total land area)	67	64	68
Agricultural area (% total land area)	21	22	26
Freshwater withdrawal (% tot. renewable)	0.9	1.9	
Terrestrial protected areas (% total land area)			19
Organic area (ha)		1	1
Wood pellet production (1 000 t)			310
Emissions in agriculture (CO ₂ eq. Gg)	11 540	14 095	12 533
Net emission in land use (CO ₂ eq. Gg)	126 794	153 534	-138 287

Source: World Development Indicator, 2018.

Nigeria			
	1995	2005	2016
The Setting			
Population, total (mill.)	108.0	138.9	190.9
Rural population, total (mill.)	73.5	85.0	98.1
Govt. expenditure on agric. (%total outlays)		4.0	1.8
Area harvested, crops (mill. ha)	38.4	45.1	51.5

Cropping intensity ratio	1.0	1.1	1.3
Total renewable water resources per cap. (m ³)	2 511	1 945	1 539
Land area equipped for irrigation (1 000 ha)	233	293	293
Agric. Area actually irrigated (% agric. Area)		0.3	
Employment in agriculture (%)	59.2	51.2	36.3
Employment in agriculture, female (%)	54.7	44.4	26.1
Fertilizers use, nitrogen (1 000 t nutrients)		213.2	86.5
Fertilizers use, phosphate (1 000 t nutrients)		20.7	61.5
Fertilizers use, potash (1 000 t nutrients)		25.2	38.0
Agric. Value added per worker (constant USD)	1 394	3 019	5 711
Hunger dimensions			
Average dietary energy supply (kcal/cap/day)		2 696	2 518
Average dietary energy supply adequacy (%)		125	117
Dietary energy supply, cereals/roots/tubers (%)		63	65
Prevalence of undernourishment (%)		6.5	11.5
Prevalence of severe food insecurity (%)			24.8
GDP per capita (USD, PPP)		4 149	5 435
Cereal import dependency ratio (%)		16.1	19.2
Stunting, children under 5(%)		42.8	43.6
Wasting children under 5(%)		13.4	10.8
Safely managed drinking water (% pop. Using)		18.5	19.4
Food supply			
Food production value, net (2004-06 mill. 1\$)	20 771	30 634	38 311
Agriculture, value added (5GDP)	24	25	21
Food (excl fish) exports (mill. USD)	196	566	1 040
Food (excl. fish) imports (mill USD)	964	2 441	4 566
Production indices (2004-06 = 100)			
Food	68	100	125
Crops	67	99	119
Cereals	84	99	97
Vegetable oils	62	99	91
Roots and tubers	65	99	126
Fruit and vegetables	70	101	129
Sugar	64	100	146
Livestock	73	101	119
Milk	93	99	118
Meat	71	101	123
Fish	64	101	181
Net trade (mill. USD)			
Cereals and preparations	-211	-1 085	-1406
Fruit and vegetables	10	-43	-107

Meat and meat preparations	-3	-4	-9
Dairy products (milk equivalent)	-272	-299	-298
Fish	-125	-557	-624
Environment			
Forest area (% total land area)	17	12	7
Agricultural area (% total land area)	75	80	78
Freshwater withdrawal (% tot. renewable)		4.0	
Terrestrial protected areas (% total land area)			14
Organic area (ha)		3	52
Wood pellet production (1 000 t)			
Emissions in agriculture (CO ₂ eq. Gg)	41 404	55 732	67 087
Net emission in land use (CO ₂ eq. Gg)	193 372	158 995	191 754

Source: World Development Indicator, 2018.

Value added of agriculture and agro-based industry, 2000 – 2010, Malaysia.

Commodity	RM Million (in 1987 prices)			% of Total			Average Annual Growth Rate (%)		
	2000	2005	2010	2000	2005	2010	8MP		9MP
							Target	Achieved	Target
Agriculture	18,662	21,585	27,517	100.0	100.0	100.0	2.0	3.0	5.0
Industrial Commodities	11,033	13,278	15,521	59.1	60.6	56.4	0.7	3.8	3.2
Oil palm	5,860	7,915	10,068	31.4	36.7	36.6	3.4	6.2	4.9
Forestry and Logging	3,055	3,016	2,761	16.4	13.0	10.0	-5.6	-0.3	-1.7
Rubber	1,868	2,264	2,554	10.0	10.5	9.3	1.1	3.9	2.4
Cocoa	250	83	138	1.3	0.4	0.5	0.1	-19.8	10.8
Food Commodities	7,629	8,308	11,996	40.9	39.4	43.6	4.0	1.7	7.6
Fisheries	2,493	2,389	3,875	13.4	12.6	14.1	4.1	-0.9	10.2
Livestock	1,520	2,089	2,483	8.1	8.1	9.0	6.0	6.6	3.5
Padi	590	632	988	3.2	3.4	3.6	2.7	1.4	9.4
Other Agriculture ⁸	3,026	3,198	4,650	16.2	15.2	16.9	3.2	1.1	7.8
Agro-Based Industry	13,584	16,928	22,221	100.0	100.0	100.0	4.0	4.5	5.6
Vegetable and Animal	2,526	3,639	5,614	18.6	21.5	25.3	6.3	7.6	9.1
Oils & Fats									
Other Food Processing, Beverages & Tobacco	4,010	4,790	6,333	29.5	28.3	28.5	2.0	3.6	5.7
Woof Products including Furniture	2,934	2,972	3,761	21.6	17.6	16.9	0.6	0.3	4.8
Paper & Paper Products, printing & Publishing	2,293	2,640	3,275	16.9	15.6	14.7	3.4	2.9	4.4

Rubber Processing & Products	1,821	2,887	3,238	13.4	17.1	14.6	4.7	9.7	2.3
Total Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry	32,246	38,513	49,738				2.7	3.6	5.2
Gross Domestic Product at Purchaser's Prices	210,558	262,029	351,297					4.5	6.0

Source: Department of Statistics and Economic Planning Unit, Malaysia, 2012.

Value added of agriculture and agro-based industry, 1990-2010, Malaysia.

Commodity	RM Million (in 1987 prices)				
	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Agriculture	17,308 (16.33)	17,114 (10.27)	18,662 (8.86)	21,585 (8.24)	27,517 (7.83)
Industrial Commodities	12,041	10,980	11,033	13,278	15,521
Oil palm	3,350	4,235	5,860	7,915	10,068
Forestry and Logging	5,194	4,139	3,055	3,016	2,761
Rubber	2,634	2,129	1,868	2,264	2,554
Cocoa	863	477	250	83	138
Food Commodities	5,267	6,135	7,629	8,308	11,996
Fisheries	1,534	1,964	2,493	2,389	3,875
Livestock	1,098	1,531	1,520	2,089	2,483
Other Agriculture ⁸	2,635	2,640	3,616	3,830	5,638
Agro-Based Industry	8,102 (7.64)	11,174 (6.71)	13,584 (6.45)	16,928 (6.46)	22,221 (6.33)
Vegetable and Animal Oils & Fats	1,036	1,203	2,526	3,639	5,614
Other Food Processing, Beverages & Tobacco	2,642	3,504	4,010	4,790	6,333
Woof Products including Furniture	1,776	3,030	2,934	2,972	3,761
Paper & Paper Products, printing & Publishing		1,888	2,293	2,640	3,275
Rubber Processing & Products	1,532	1,549	1,821	2,887	3,238
Total Agriculture and Agro -Based Industry	25,410 (23.97)	28,288 (16.98)	32,246 (15.31)	38,513 (14.70)	49,738 (14.16)
Gross Domestic Product at Purchaser's Prices	105,977	166,625	210,558	262,029	351,297

Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2012.

Agriculture and agro-based manufactured export, 2000-2010, Malaysia.

Commodity	RM Million			% of Total			Average Annual Growth Rate (%)	
	2000	2005	2010	2000	2005	2010	8MP Achieved	9MP Target
Agriculture Exports	22,892	37,421	54,992	48.1	50.0	47.5	10.3	8.0
% to Total Export	6.1	7.0	6.8					
Industrial Commodities	18,428	31,509	37,244	38.7	42.1	32.2	11.3	3.4
Palm Oil	9,948	19,036	26,735	20.9	25.4	23.1	13.9	7.0
Rubber	2,571	5,787	5,156	5.4	7.7	4.5	17.6	-2.3
Sawlogs	2,489	2,465	2,100	5.2	3.3	1.8	-0.2	-3.2
Sawtimber	3,020	4,051	2,995	6.3	5.4	2.6	6.0	-5.9
Cocoa	33	50	128	0.1	0.1	0.1	8.8	20.5
Pepper	367	120	130	0.8	0.2	0.1	-20.0	1.6
Food commodities	4,464	5,913	17,748	9.4	7.9	15.3	5.8	24.6
Agro-Based Manufactured Exports	24,686	37,442	60,660	51.9	50.0	52.5	8.7	10.0
% to Total Exports	6.6	7.0	7.6					
Food	4,509	8,627	15,803	9.5	11.5	13.7	13.9	12.9
Beverages and Tobacco	1,207	1,755	2,446	2.5	2.3	2.1	7.8	6.9
Wood Product	6,901	9,665	13,909	14.3	12.9	12.0	7.3	
Furniture and Parts	6,077	8,454	14,335	12.8	11.3	12.4	6.8	7.6
Paper and Paper Product	1,397	2,018	2,799	2.9	2.7	2.4	7.6	11.1
Rubber product	4,695	6,923	11,368	9.9	9.3	9.8	8.1	6.8
Total Agriculture and Agro-Based Exports	47,578	74,863	115,652	100.0	100.0	100.0	9.5	10.4
% to Total Exports	12.7	14.0	14.4					9.1
Total Exports	373,270	533,790	803,163				7.4	8.5

Source: Department of Statistics and Economic Planning, Malaysia, 2012.

Employment and value added worker in agriculture and agro-based industry, 2000-2010, Malaysia.

	RM Million			Average Annual Growth Rate (%)		
	2000	2005	2010	8MP		9MP Target
				Achieved	Target	
Agriculture Employment Number ('000)	1,423.0	1,405.7	1,323.8	-1.4	-0.2	-1.2
% of Total Employment	15.3	13.3	10.9			6.2
Value Added Per Worker (RM in 1987 prices)	13,115	15,752	21,299	4.5	3.7	
Agro-Based Employment Number ('000)	844.0	981.9	1,110.2		3.1	2.5
% of Total Employment	9.1	9.3	9.1			
Value Added Per Worker (RM in 1987 prices)	16,107	17,002	19,688		1.1	3.0
Total Employment in Agriculture and Agro -Based Industry	2,267.0	2,387.6	2,434.0		1.0	0.4
% of Total Employment	24.4	21.9	20.3			

Source: Department of Statistics and Economic Planning, Malaysia, 2012.

Largest Public Malaysian Companies

Malaysia has 17 companies that rank in the Forbes Global 2014 ranking.

World Rank	Company	Industry	Revenue (billion \$)	Profit (billion \$)	Assets (billion \$)	Market value (billion \$)
326	Maybank	Banking	9.7	2.1	171.1	26.3
443	Tenaga Nasional	Utilities	12	1.6	31.3	20.7
460	CIMB Group Holdings	Banking	6.8	1.4	113.2	18.1
585	Public Bank Berhad	Banking	4.6	1.3	93.3	20.6

598	Sime Darby	Conglomerates	14.4	1.1	15.2	17.1
861	Axiata Group	Telecommunications Services	5.8	0.8	13.3	17.7
915	Genting	Hotels, Restaurants & Leisure	5.6	0.6	21.8	11.4
1052	RHB Capital	Banking	3.0	0.6	58.3	6.6
1062	Petronas Chemical	Oil & Gas Operations	4.8	1	8.5	16.7
1121	AMMB Holdings	Banking	2.6	0.5	40	6.6
1246	Hong Leong Financial Group	Banking	2.5	0.5	56	5.1
1276	MISC Berhad	Transportation	2.8	0.7	12.3	9.4
1308	Petronas Gas	Oil & Gas Operations	1.2	0.7	4	14.7
1333	YTL	Utilities	6.3	0.5	18.5	4.9
1344	Maxis	Telecommunications Services	2.9	0.6	5.3	16
1481	Petronas Dagangan	Oil & Gas Operations	10.3	0.3	3.1	9.3
1567	IOI Group	Food, Drink & Tobacco	3.9	0.5	7.8	9.3

Source: Forbes Global ranking for 2014.

Discussion and Conclusion

A lot has to be learnt from Malaysia, if Nigeria's mono-economy must give way to productive development of various sectors of its economy. In Malaysia, net value of food production, fish export, food, crop, cereals, vegetable oils, root and tubers, fruits and vegetables, milk, meat, etc. showed a tremendous growth from 1995 to 2016, while Nigeria's economic performances in the same aspects are dwindling in spite of its factor endowments which may be considered better than Malaysia's factor endowments.

Nigeria economy must be diversified to enhance stable and viable sustainable and economic growth for the people of Nigeria so as to alleviate the current hardship being experienced across the nation.

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ENHANCEMENT OF SMALL-SCALE BUSINESSES IN POST-COVID ERA THROUGH COOPERATIVES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Small-scale businesses are the mainstay of Nigerian economy and the COVID-19 pandemic that is ravaging the world did not leave this sector untouched. As a result of the devastating effect of measures adopted in curbing the spread of the virus, many small businesses appear to be grappling to find their bearing. This paper examined the enhancement of small-scale businesses in post-COVID era through cooperatives in Nigeria. The ex-post factor study revealed that many small businesses in Nigeria were badly hit by the pandemic and emerging from the aftermath of the virus has not been easy for them. The paper also indicated that institutional formations like cooperative societies can only help to salvage the plight of small business owners and equally has the capacity to revamp the sector. This paper concluded that the support small businesses might need to revive their business lie within cooperatives and only active involvement can enable that. It therefore, recommended among others that small business owners should endeavour to join cooperative societies and be active in the patronage of cooperatives services. This is because cooperative societies have been proven to have the capacity to empower and revive dying businesses. The government should be made to understand the capacity of cooperatives

in economic development and adequately partner with them in incorporating small businesses into cooperatives societies.
Keywords: Cooperative, COVID-19, small-scale business, participation.

Introduction

Nigeria had in recent past been challenged by myriads of issues such as security threat, poor economic downturn, capital flight and lots more. While efforts were being made by stakeholders to bring lasting solutions to the economic and other crisis bedeviling the nation, a new but challenging twist of COVID-19 pandemic surfaced. This has compounded Nigeria's economic crisis and having adverse effects on the already fragile economy (CBN, 2020; United States Agency for International Development - USAID, 2021). It posits that the pandemic has significantly disrupted people's ability to produce, process, and distribute basic or essential needs.

World Bank (2021) reported that COVID-19 presents a serious threat to human health and disrupted global developmental or economic plans of all nations through its spillovers. In order to contain the spread and associated consequences emanating from the pandemic, countries (including Nigeria) adopted lockdown strategy, self isolation and physical distancing approach. The unanticipated restrictions in physical,

social and economic activities interrupted the ability to earn a living and affected economic sectors at various levels, thereby, threatening the livelihood sources of many people (Ibukun & Adebayo, 2021).

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO, 2021) posits that COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and on the informal sector in least developed countries. The report argues that the informal sector is being hit hard by the pandemic, even the second wave and that many small businesses are yet to recover from the impact. Arising from the pandemic, UNIDO's Index of Industrial Production (IIP) showed a dramatic drop in the early part of 2020, followed by a sharp rise in early 2021 in some countries. Mozambique and Senegal saw little impact from the pandemic whereas in Bangladesh, Rwanda and Nigeria the effects on small business were much stronger.

However, the last twelve months have witnessed enormous human and corporate efforts towards finding strategies that would help many economies bounce back. Nigeria is not left out of this discourse and there are pointers to the formulation of institutional arrangements in form of cooperatives. This is because cooperative societies are perceived of having the capacity to revamp dwindling economic misfortunes and enhance livelihood (Nurudeen, & Olumuyiwa, 2021).

Cooperative businesses are community-owned private enterprises that combine consumers with owners, and buyers with sellers in a democratic governance structure. Cooperative has proven to have the capacity to solve the general economic

problem of under or over-production, business uncertainty and excessive costs. Cooperatives help to address market failure and fill gaps that other private businesses ignore (Nembhard, 2014).

Cooperatives play an important role in the global economy and in 2016 alone, over 300 largest cooperatives and mutuals in the world had a total turnover of US\$2,164 trillion (compared to US\$2,018 trillion in 2015). It was also established that there are about 3 million cooperatives worldwide, which together provide jobs for some 280 million persons or 10% of the world's employed population (European Parliament, 2019). This informs of the enormous benefits that can be accruing from cooperative societies.

Cooperative has been adjudged a veritable tool for actualization of desired goals. In spite of the enormous and recognised advantage, available evidence has shown that cooperative participation level in Nigeria is still low and this has had adverse effects on many businesses and individuals (Agba & Ogaboh, 2017; Nwankwo, Ewuim & Asoya, 2013). Sometimes where they seem to show interest they end up not being active or committed to the cooperatives patronage (Awotide, Awoyemi & Fashogbon, 2015). The non-participation in cooperative activities may not only affect the operation of small businesses but could threaten their contribution to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP). It is against this background that this paper examines the enhancement of small-scale businesses in post-COVID era through cooperatives in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Cooperative

The concept of cooperative can be seen from different aspects. Proceeding from

economic sciences, for example, co-operation is something else than social science or politics. In terms of applied economics, co-operation can be regarded as the economic form of cooperation organised in such a manner that it helps its participants. Sociologically seen, co-operation can be described as an organisation, for example, which serves beside other things to assume (production) functions of the society. Legally, co-operation is a legal person (cooperative) with its rights and duties. Indeed, cooperative is a global phenomenon that is not well understood. Co-operatives have succeeded in being both familiar and yet little understood for the general public and the academic world alike. Shaw (2007) opines that there are many reasons for this. Often the co-operative sector has been viewed through the prism of a specific enterprise, institutional form or a single country. Thus, many studies have failed to capture the heterogeneous and diverse nature of co-operatives and downplayed their position as part of a sector with global reach and frequently operating as part of a global movement. It can be argued that it is the dual entrepreneurial and associative nature of co-operatives that has contributed to their current low profile within research and policy agenda. As member-owned businesses, they are generally not subject to stock market listing and consequently less reported on and analysed. Within the developing research agenda on the third sector, co-operatives have been specifically omitted from the Johns Hopkins research programme. This duality has been variously characterised as both a fatal flaw and a creative tension. In contrast to the single financial bottom line that has characterised investor-owned businesses

until very recently, co-operatives have always combined different interests and aims within a single enterprise. It is captured within the following internationally accepted definition of a co-operative:

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise (Hoyt, 1996). It is an entity with not less than ten persons, whose interactions or relationship is guided by strong democratic principles.

According to Davis (2000) as cited in Agba, Attah and Ebong (2015), a cooperative organization is a voluntary, democratic, autonomous association of persons, whose purpose is to encourage members to grow in community and to act collectively both for the intrinsic value of being part of a living community and to overcome their problems of economic dependency and need by providing access to and ownership of the means of subsistence and welfare. It tends to promote equal privileges, rights, and with the ultimate aim of overcoming socio-economic and cultural conditions that threatens their existence. It is, therefore, a legal entity built on the premise of mutual trust and understanding, dependence and respect for mutual benefit of all (Lawal, 2006).

Wilhoit (2005) noted that cooperatives are organizations of people who have the same needs. The global rise of cooperatives is partially due to the work of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). The ICA was formed in 1895 by E. V. Neale of Rochdale and Edward Owen Greening, a supporter of worker cooperation. Birchall (1997) writes that ICA was formed in order to end the

deplorable "warfare" between capital and labour and to organize industrial peace, based on co-partnership of the worker and to promote the formation of central institutions for helping people to establish and maintain self-governing workshops. Neale and Greening recognized that coops had the power to combat the emergent market trends by empowering workers to own a share of the business and to govern themselves. They also realized that a worldwide organization that could support the mission of employee-owned business would help promote solidarity and their continued existence. Thus, Neale and Greening founded the ICA on the principles under which the Rochdale cooperatives had been successfully operating for 50 years prior to the ICA's inception.

Over the last century, the ICA has flourished, particularly in Europe, Canada, and in some parts of Africa. In the United States, several of the major centers for cooperative business and study (which are primarily focused on agriculture) also adhere to the ICA's values. Whether or not cooperatives have an official connection with the ICA, they ascribe to essentially the same core set of principles. The ICA thus is recognized as a leader for cooperatives all over the world in terms of promoting the values of cooperative organization (Wilhoit, 2005).

Cooperative societies are predicated on mutual understanding, respect and dependence in solving one another's socio-economic needs. It is derived from the French words "Espirite de corps" which means "working together". Asaolu (2004) argued that cooperative was derived from a Latin dictum "operate" meaning to work and the prefix "co" meaning together. In this case, two major approaches have been used to describe cooperative societies.

These are economic and social aspect, and social/cultural background of the movement. However, the major emphasis in cooperative is on self-help. Thus, people cooperate because they realize that it is extremely difficult to achieve some goals by working alone. Reeves (2003) opine that the best way of pushing back the limit of economic problem of scarcity is by working together. This is because more can be achieved when people coordinate their efforts with each other and take concerns and talents of others into consideration.

Modern scientific cooperatives originated on the benchmark of the industrial revolution in Europe spanning a century (1750-1850). As such, they are formal, legal entities and undertakings as a body cooperate and adhering to the internationally acceptable principles. The modern scientific cooperative business enterprise could be established in all economic systems, be it socialist or communist, capitalist/free market, as well as mixed economic system. It could be formed by business persons, workers, rich, poor and averagely poor. The flexible peculiarities of cooperatives have provided room to accommodate diverse views from persons and group of persons on the singular definition of this popular term. In his contribution, Chukwu (1990) opines that cooperation is an economic system with a social content. Its idealism entails both economic which covers business transactions expressed mainly in monetary terms, and the social which deals with the direct link on the relationship among the people that make up the society, particularly as it affects the membership and the personal relations.

In its absolute sense, cooperative has flexible peculiarities in which it could be organized in many instances. The

cooperative business enterprise is not all comers' affairs unlike other conventional business units. This is due to its emphasis on human being much more than capital; hence cooperative is not profit-oriented but people-oriented venture (Gambo, 2016). As such, a certain due process is observed to qualify for membership namely; willingness, law-abiding character, commonly felt needs, and productivity. It is an assemblage of persons in which case it could be deliberate or coincidental, short-term or permanent group, organized or unstructured, formalized or informal, the obvious parameter being that two or more people are working hand in hand. According to Chukwu (1990), the group is referred to as sociological group. In this sense, the coming together of two or more persons can give rise to "group". Several characteristics regarding the group must exist as follows:

- i. **Common Goals:** This is vital as it could be very pivotal in binding all individual members together on the heartfelt objectives that their social and economic welfare can only be improved by team work rather than individual participation. Thus, the cooperative business enterprise is formed intentionally to achieve not only social interest, but also economic goals.
- ii. **Long-term Operations:** Cooperative being business unit should adhere to the concept of unending activity. This means that it has to carry on business even when the founders are satisfied with their commonly felt needs. This is imperative since cooperative engages in capital-intensive and long-term projects that could span a long time before maturity is attained.

iii. **Existence of Effective Communication:** This facilitates the working together of members as group. It could be highly effective when the members are educated and equally share mutual understanding among them.

iv. **Sharing Roles:** This is related to the expected participation either by individual as members or a group as a segment of the entire group. In essence, the individual can play such roles as having executive positions as officers, the President, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and General Secretary. Among the group, three segments of individual members could be collectively formed as a committee in handling special activities with their specialized skills. The entire roles are complementary to each other to achieve the common goals.

According to Lawal (2006), cooperative enterprise is a kind of business for mutual benefit of members. Cooperative enterprise satisfies the needs and interest of their members, rather than maximizing profit which may be the target of other form of business organization. The cooperative business is to afford members particularly the poor, to come together to promote their socio-economic well-being a feat which a single individual working alone cannot achieve if it is possible at all for him to do so. In relation to small business, it is through coming together that they can pull their resources to salvage one another's misfortune, especially in this post-COVID era.

Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Small-Scale Businesses

Small-scale businesses or small-scale enterprises (SSE's) are used

interchangeably with small and medium enterprises (SME's) in this paper. Globally, there is no single criterion for classifying business enterprises as small or medium scale. However, evidence from literature shows that in defining small scale business, reference is usually made to some quantifiable measures such as; number of people employed by the enterprises, investment outlay, the annual turnover (sales) and the asset value of the enterprises or a combination of these measures (Onukwuli, Akam & Onwuka, 2014). In other words, several attempts have as well been made in giving definition to what this forms of businesses mean and they are mainly on the organization or country of operation. The European Union States traditionally have their own definition of what constitutes SME's. For instance, the traditional definition in Germany limits small and medium scale enterprises to two hundred and fifty (250) employees while in Belgium, it is limited to one hundred (100) employees. Recently, the EU has standardized the concept by categorizing enterprises with less than ten (10) employees as 'micro', those with fewer than fifty (50) as 'small' and those with fewer than two hundred and fifty (250) as 'medium'. In the United States of America, any business with fewer than one hundred (100) employees is classified as 'small', while those with fewer than five hundred (500) employees as 'medium scale' (ResearchClue, 2013). From the foregoing, it can be deduced that small scale enterprises are businesses with the capacity of employing less than 500 employees at a time.

Taking cognizance of Nigeria situation, Olagunju (2004) views small scale business enterprises to include all business venture which are set up to

provide one satisfaction (utility) or the other for a defined market target and with capital and asset base as low as N5, 000 and as high as N1,000,000.

The sector is the mainstay of the Nigerian economy and has been recognised as an integral component of economic development and a crucial element in the effort to lift many out of poverty (Onukwuli, Akam & Onwuka, 2014). They are businesses with employees' capacity of less than 500 and whose impact sustains a nation's economy. They are the main instrument of growth and employment in most developing economies, especially Nigeria.

SME's employs over 60% of India's workforce after agriculture and accounts for about 39% of the manufacturing output and 33% of the total export of the country (ResearchClue, 2013; Bayineni, 2014). The sector represent about 90% of industrial production and account for over 81% of national industrial employment if the threshold is set at 10-50 employees (Ajayi, 2012; Oyewale, Adebayo & Kehinde, 2021).

By virtue of the prominent role they play in the sustenance of Nigeria economy, the operational enhancement of such enterprises is expected to be giving every necessary support bearing in mind of their great benefits. While they were yet to receive the needed support and attention that could help to revamp their fortunes, the pandemic surfaced to challenge their financial and corporate existence (NBS, 2020).

Segal and Gerstel (2020) predicted that there would be a deceleration of economic growth starting from March 2020 without a precise ending date and some countries entering into recession. Seth, Ganaie. & Zafar (2020) opined that COVID-19 pandemic will have a likely severe impact

on small and medium scale enterprise. However, the channels and to what extent it will be was not clear and the aftermath of economic hardship, rising cost of food and non-food items, inflation etc validates the predictions.

As nations were grappling on how to contain the ravaging dreaded COVID-19 pandemic, measures such as physical distancing and closure of public places were adopted. These measures, while essential, had negative ripple effects across all sectors and segments of the country (Obiakor, 2020). Micro and small businesses experienced a larger decline in business activity compared to medium and large firms (Lakuma, Sunday, Sserunjogi, Kahunde & Munyambonera, 2020). This may be because a number of the micro and small businesses in the country stopped operations for a while due to their helplessness to undertake preventive health measures like ensuring physical distancing, providing sanitizers, water, and soap for customers' use (Oyewale, Adebayo & Kehinde, 2021). With the mixture of falling oil prices in the world market, there has been economic deceleration in Nigeria which do not only led to a fall in the demand for oil products but also stopped economic activities from taking place when social distancing policies were enforced (Ozili, 2020). The most hit are the small business and so many of them are yet to recover from the pandemic shock.

Post COVID-19

Covid-19 is an infectious disease that was unknown before the 2019 outbreak in the Hubai province of Wuhan, China (World Health Organization - WHO, 2019). The alarming levels of inaction towards the virus made the World Health Organization to declare COVID-19 a

global pandemic (Oyewale, Adebayo & Kehinde, 2021). A pandemic is a simultaneous global transmission of diseases or viruses that cut across boundaries and continents (Amusan & Agunyai, 2021).

Nigeria was one of the few African countries that first recorded COVID-19 cases and hence among those countries that experienced significant economic disruptions because of the pandemic. The first COVID-19 case in the country was recorded on February 27th, 2020 and by late June; the number of confirmed cases had exceeded the 30,000 mark (NCDC, 2020). As part of the measures to contain the spread, Federal and State governments introduced physical distancing and mobility restrictions (Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning - FMBNP, 2020). This led to the closure of all schools, land and air borders to all travelers, ban on public and social gatherings, as well as suspension of passenger rail services within the country (Ogundele, 2020; NCDC, 2020).

The extreme control measure left many Nigerians; especially artisans, farmers, businesses and other economic activities frustrated. Human Right Watch (HRW, 2021) posits that Covid-19 crisis has had a devastating economic impact in Nigeria, and the World Bank (2021) predicted that the pandemic will push additional 10.9 million Nigerians into poverty by 2022. This alarming statistics informs of the danger confronting the nation, especially, as precipitated by the pandemic. Many economic activities were really dealt with. This cut across farming, SME's, artisans, and many other sectors. Emerging from the aftermath of the lockdown and other policies, many businesses have not really bounce back.

The Role of Cooperatives in Enhancing Small-Scale Business in Post-COVID

The income gap in many communities is believed to have an adverse negative effect on the productivity and sustenance of the populace. This is the case of many communities in Nigeria, especially the rural areas that are generally characterized by low level of production, poor infrastructure, lack of sufficient public goods, and undesirable livelihoods and living standards. In most developing nations, rural areas are marked by limited income generating activities with attendant effects on the general well-being of the poor. One of the suggested pathways to overcoming these challenges is the encouragement of institutional arrangement in form of cooperatives. These cooperative institutions are considered appropriate for advancing the socio-economic goals of their members (Getnet & Anullo, 2012).

Existing studies suggest that cooperatives can help reduce market failures and improve access to financial resources without stringent interest rates or harsh conditions on small businesses (Ma & Abdulai, 2016; Mojo, Fischer & Tegefa, 2017; Nurudeen & Olumuyiwa, 2021). Even in this post-COVID era, cooperatives can sustain economic activities and boost members' wellbeing. This is in view of the fact that many Nigerians were badly hit by the pandemic and their sources of livelihood were affected.

This has made it imperative for stakeholders to begin to recognise the institutional arrangement of cooperatives which could provide a more satisfactory result. Nigerian cooperatives like cooperatives in other climes have always played a key role in the promotion and development of economic activities.

Indeed, the promotion and support of business enterprise of members and jointly-owned businesses are at the core of cooperative functional activities. However, this promotional engagement is often neglected since policy makers often see cooperatives as simply a channel for poverty alleviation and rural development and relates to them as such. Thus, they are yet to come to terms with the fact that cooperatives are first, businesses and business promotion agents whose potential capabilities could be utilized to further enhance sources of livelihood (Nwankwo, Ewuim & Asoya, 2013).

Nigeria's economy is dominated by small and medium scale enterprises in agriculture, manufacturing, commerce and industry, services, etc. They have contributed greatly to employment generation, GDP and development of the nation (Amadi, 2008). Cooperatives had over the years tried in giving support to these businesses, and often provide owner-members with others services. Uzoehie (2011) noted that cooperatives are source of funding, security and succor to many people and businesses, especially in distress time. In other words, cooperatives are valid resort for all manner of needs and expectations. Non-involvement of small business owners in cooperatives is more or less a decision for self-ruing of the venture. This is because in times of misfortune or unforeseen challenges like the one presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government may not be able to do much, but cooperatives can.

Conclusion

Small scale businesses constitute a vital engine to economic growth and development of Nigerian economy. However, the COVID-19 pandemic came

with great shock that challenged the existence of many of them. This brought about staff retrenchment, loss of investments, and makes the continuity of many businesses appear difficult. This, therefore, brings the issue of active cooperative participation to the front burner. Through experts view, the survival of any small business venture or their continued sustenance of the economy is predicated on the need for cooperative participation. This is in view of the fact that since emerging from the pandemic into the new normal of living with the virus, many small business owners have not been on their fit. This paper concludes that the support small businesses might need to revive their business lie within cooperatives and only active involvement can enable that.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, this paper recommends that;

1. Small business owners should endeavour to join cooperative societies and be active in the patronage of cooperative services. This is because cooperative societies have been proven to have the capacity to empower and revive dying businesses.
2. The government should be made to understand the capacity of cooperatives in economic development and adequately partner with them in incorporating small businesses into cooperative societies.
3. Living in the post-COVID is the new normal and individuals should be made to understand that many things may not return to normal as usual and instead of endlessly

anticipating for the old ways of doing businesses, there should be innovative ideas on how to harness business opportunities posed by the pandemic in the new order.

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EFFECT OF INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS ON PRODUCE MARKETING AMONG SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of institutional factors on produce marketing in Anambra State. Smallholder farmers whose products are perishable, in most cases dispose of their products at give away prices and do not have adequate returns for their efforts because they lack the necessary storage facilities, near absence of market information, meddlesomeness of middlemen, inadequate transport system from the rural areas where they mostly reside, lack of grading and inadequate packaging and processing information. Specifically, the study determined the value and quantum of agricultural produce being marketed, the extent to which market participation of farmers was influenced by institutional factors such as market information, organizational support, legal environment and use of grades. The area of study was Anambra State and a sample of 710 members of FMCS were randomly selected from the three senatorial zones in the State. Primary data were collected using well structured and pre-tested questionnaires, scheduled interviews and panel discussions. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA and regression analysis. Findings revealed that an average of

11,112, 825 worth of farm produce were generated by each member, out of which only 40% were marketed. Apart from establishing that membership duration in a cooperative did not have significant influence on market participation (with F-value of 1.189), the study revealed that institutional factors such as cultural practices, legal environment, organizational support and use of grades influence marketing decision of farmers. It was therefore recommended that co-operative and farming education be improved and that mass grassroot campaign should be embarked upon to promote formation and joining of agricultural co-operatives.

Key words: Agriculture, Government, Institutional factors, Marketing, Produce, Smallholder farmers

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture according to Bamiduro and Gbadeyan (2011), is one of the most important sectors in a developing economy, not only because of its contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but for employing greater proportion of a country's labour force in productive activities (Adegboye, 2004; Babatunde & Oyatoye, 2005). In Nigeria, It provided food for the populace and was the nation's main source of revenue prior

to the emergence of oil in commercial quantity in the country. The entry of oil economy led to a shift from agricultural production consequently agricultural production declined with a rise in food prices in most across the country while the population growth rate increases (Babatunde & Oyatoye 2005). Hassan and Omotola (2006) noted that food crisis in Nigeria manifests in the form of quality and quantity of food intake; volume of food production; prices of food; population growth rate; and the earning power of the people.

Olukunle (2013) opined that identification of the development constraints in the agricultural sector is a necessary step in unlocking the factors inhibiting performance of the sector and designing policy strategies that would create conducive climate for promoting accelerated commercialization and growth of the sector. This is where agricultural produce marketing comes in. Agricultural marketing involves getting the agricultural products from the farmers at the farm gates to the consumers. Effective delivery of these products stimulates consumption, expansion of agro-based industries and facilitation of industrial growth and the end point is increased production and income by the farmers.

An agricultural marketing system encompasses all the participants or actors in the production, processing and marketing of an undifferentiated or unbranded farm products (such as cereals), including farm input suppliers, farmers, storage operators, processors, wholesalers and retailers involved in the flow of the commodity from initial inputs to the final consumer. The commodity marketing system also includes all the institutions and arrangements that affect

and coordinate the successive stages of a commodity flow such as the government and its parastatals, trade associations, co-operatives, financial partners, transport groups and research institutions. The commodity system framework includes the major linkages that hold the system together such as transportation, contractual coordination, vertical integration, joint ventures, tripartite marketing arrangements, and financial arrangements. The systems approach emphasizes the interdependence and interrelatedness of all aspects of agribusiness, ranging from farm input supply to the growing, assembling, storage, processing, distribution and ultimate consumption of the produce.

Akinbode (1977) discloses that for the Nigerian agricultural producer, the importance of agricultural marketing cannot be over emphasized as the country's agricultural produce are enormous. Some of them are cash crops, which need to be exported to countries beyond the shores of Nigerian to provide foreign earnings for the country. Others are staple foodstuffs, which are needed to feed the local and urban populations of the nation. Indeed, agricultural products are very critical in the sustenance of the livelihood and income of a large proportion of rural farmers and households, as well as ensuring the food needs of urban population. However, the challenges associated with the ability of the smallholder farmers to reach the markets are multiple and discouraging. Intensifying the ability of smallholder farmers to reach markets and actively participate in them is a very big challenge affecting production and marketing of agricultural products in Nigeria. However, because of the spatial differential in the locations of production

and consumption, that is, the farm and the market, the products have to be effectively distributed to reach the target markets and consumers. This reason creates the need for an organized market for the farmers and other stakeholders. Generally, the rural farmers who have surplus goods have to sell them in unregulated markets. They do not, therefore, realize fair and reasonable price for their products due to a number of factors which impede effective market participation. It is important to understand that within the socio-economic landscape, there exist places of surpluses on the one hand, and places of deficit on the other. This spatial differential generates a gap that marketing has to fill through distribution function.

Anambra State of Nigeria, which is the study area, is one of the states in the Southeastern Nigeria created in 1991. Its name is an anglicized version of the original 'Oma Mbala', the name of the river now known as Anambra which the state is named after. The Capital and the Seat of Government is Awka. Onitsha and Nnewi are the biggest commercial and industrial cities, respectively. The State is bounded in the west by Delta State, in the south by Imo and Rivers States; in the east by Enugu State and Kogi State to the north. The dominant ethnic group is Igbo (98%) followed by Igala (2%), (Canback Global, 2008). Wikipedia Organisation (2013) documented that Anambra occupies an area of 4,844 km² (1,870.3 sq mi) and ranks 10th in population in Nigeria with a population of 4,055,048 given by the 2006 census. With a population density of 837.1/km² (2,168.2/sq mi), it ranks second to Lagos State. The State has 21 Local Government Areas and politically shared equal into three senatorial zones. All the Local Government Areas in the state are

participating in the project with the exception of Onitsha South LGA.

Anambra State is predominantly occupied by the Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria, who by nature are farmers, fishermen, craftsmen and traders. It has an almost 100 percent arable soil. Among crops grown by farmers in the state are yam, palm produce, rice, cassava, cocoyam, vegetables, and different varieties of fruit trees among others. They are also involved in fishing, particularly those living in the riverine areas of the state, while their craftsmanship are nationally and internationally recognized as evident in the iron smithing works of Awka people and the bronze sculptures of Igbo Ukwu (Anambra State Ministry of Economic Development, 2010).

According to World Igbo Congress Foundation (WICF) (2012), the mineral resources of Anambra State are largely unexploited. They include clay, iron stone, natural gas, petroleum, sand stone, kaolin, pyrite, and lignite. For example, tungsten at Oba, and large deposits of lignite in Onitsha, Idemili, and Nnewi LGAs are yet to be exploited. Kaolin is mined in the Ukpor/lhembosi axis for the ceramic industry at Umuahia in Abia State; while the deposits at Aguleri and Enugu-Agidi await exploitation. Sandstones of Ameke Formation are quarried in several places, particularly at Abagana and Nsugbe for construction purposes. Natural gas has been discovered at Ebenebe Ridge, southeast of Ebenebe town. Crude oil, which was locked away as "strategic reserve", exists in commercial quantities in the state and is currently being exploited by an indigenous company

The State experiences dry season from late October to early May and has at least six dry months in the year. The

vegetation consists of rainforest. Other parts consist of wooden savannah and grasslands. The State is drained by five major rivers and their tributaries. These are the River Niger, Anambra River, Mamu/Ezu River, Idemili River and River Ulasi. In addition to these, there are smaller perennial streams like the Oyi, Nkisi, and Obizi. In-land valley ponds and lakes occur, with the Agulu Lake draining a collection of towns in the state (Ajayi and Nwalieji, 2010). This drainage makes the state very conducive for agricultural activities and its choice as the study area apt.

The problems faced by agriculturists in the sale of surplus goods in Nigeria, Anambra State in particular, are quite complex and complicated. The smallholder farmers who have surplus goods have to sell these, generally, in unregulated markets. Consequently, they do not get fair and reasonable price for their products due to a number of reasons: i) the goods produced by the farmers are generally perishable and they lack adequate storage facilities to keep them for a longer period of time; ii) there is less grading of agricultural produce; iii) complete or near absence of market information available to the farmers; iv) meddlesomeness of unscrupulous middlemen who corner much of the hard-earned income of the farmers and v) very poor transportation coupled with bad road network.

In Nigeria, marketing problems in the agricultural sector are evidenced when farmers, (who are the primary producers and who reside mostly in rural areas) fail to get their produce to the market at the right time (thereby incurring considerable post-harvest losses) and are not given better returns for their efforts. This, according to Idachaba (2004), causes

discouragement and leads to loss of interest in farming and consequently a reduction in agricultural production. Clearly, assurance of fair price is a major determinant for production pattern that guarantees effective market demand (Sharma 2012).

It is therefore, believed that rurally-based enterprises, including smallholdings, can greatly improve their earning potential by adopting a proactive market orientation (Idachaba, 2004). However, it is not always easy to get smallholder farmers to be effective participants in agricultural marketing. This is due to the various challenges that impinge on the agricultural marketing processes. Olakunle (2013) identified produce deterioration, inadequate processing equipment, poor marketing facilities, high costs of shops, inadequate packaging information etc as some of the problems of agricultural marketing confronting agricultural produce marketers in south-eastern Nigeria. Other problems associated with agricultural produce marketing as reported by Awoyinka (2009) include scarcity of agricultural marketing information, inadequacy of transport services in rural areas, poor marketing for agricultural produce, inefficient and inadequate storage system etc.

Admittedly a number of studies have been done on problems of agricultural marketing and factors that impede farmers enthusiasm in participating in the marketing process in Nigeria and elsewhere but none can be said to have been done in Anambra State. Hence the need to identify and analyze the factors which impede the ability of smallholder farmers in market participation in Anambra State of Nigeria so as to mitigate post-harvest losses and thereby improve

their livelihood.

In order to proffer policy recommendations towards ameliorating these problems, the following research questions may be relevant:

- i. is the market participation of the farmer related to his socioeconomic characteristics?
- ii. what is the quantum and value of agricultural produce marketed by him? and
- iii. to what extent is market participation of the farmer dependent on such institutional factors as market information, use of grades and standards, organizational supports, and legal environment?

SMALLHOLDER FARMING AND MARKET PARTICIPATION CONTEXT

Agwu, Anyanwu and Mendie, (2012), posited that agriculture has been identified as a very important sector in the Nigerian economy, being the second largest sector after oil. Statistics indicate that about 60% of Nigerians engaged in agriculture are predominantly smallholder farmers found mostly in the rural areas depending on traditional methods. Not only that these small holder farmers believed to producing most of the food requirements in the world are often marginalized, African Smallholder Farmers Group (2013), observed that they are also among the people that often go hungry because they do not produce enough to enable their families have sufficient food to eat all year round. The concept of smallholder farmer is predicated basically on the size and scale of operation of the farm holding. Defining smallholder farming, Oettle, Fakie, Wentzel, Giddings and Whiteside (1998)

upheld that it consists of families or households that produce farm products on relatively small plots of land. In his definition, Dent (1989), observed that small farms are usually those farms that are smaller than the average size at national or provincial level. However, Ngemntu (2010) argued that farm size is not a good measure for classifying farmers because smallholder farmers in favorable areas may reap larger quantities of produce from cultivating less than one hectare of land compared to smallholder farmers in semi-arid areas cultivating more than 10 hectares. This simply implies that definition of smallholder farmers is place specific and varies with authors depending on where he is coming from. Smallholder farmers normally engage in direct operation using household labour which is at times supplemented by casual or temporary labour. Kirsten and van Zyl, (1998) noted that their operation is labour intensive rather than capital, resulting in lower productivity when judged with large-scale farmers. The objectives of most small-scale farmers range from subsistence production to irregular production of surplus for purposes of marketing (Fraser, 1991).

Scholars believe that generally smallholder farmers, not minding that its definition is place specific, have common features such as cultivation on relatively small pieces of land, utilization of little capital for production, use of little advanced technology, inadequate access to information on technologies that can enhance production, and insufficient information on potential markets for farm produce (Kirsten & van Zyl, 1998; Oettle et al., 1998; Chomba, 2004). In Nigeria, Gani and Adeoti, (2011), see smallholder farmers as the poor rural dwellers that

constitute a larger proportion of Nigeria's population and produce over 90% of the country's food requirements in small farms scattered all over the country with limited access to markets and other infrastructural facilities like transport, information technologies, etc.

Market Participation

Commercialization of agriculture is an indispensable pathway to uplifting smallholder farmers in developing countries from the doldrums of abject poverty to accelerated growth and development (Timmer, 1997; World Bank, 2008). Market participation which has been described by Holloway and Ehui, (2002) as the inclusion of rural or subsistence farmers into both input and output markets of agricultural products, is most likely to reduce post-harvest losses and other problems faced by most small scale farmers. It plays essential role in enhancing income and welfare levels for smallholder farmers and will generally lead to increase in per capita incomes of households, Omiti, Otieno, Nyanamba and McCullough, (2009) observed.

The concept of commercialization in agriculture involves two issues: market orientation (i.e. agricultural production destined for market based on market signals), and market participation (i.e. produce offered for sale and use of purchased inputs). According to Gebremedhin and Jaleta (2010), literature on commercialization of smallholders makes little distinction between the two adding that most studies assumed that both are synonymous.

In this study, therefore, no attempt is made to differentiate between market orientation and market participation. The two concepts are treated as one and the same thing, hence it is assumed that a

farmer who has decided to participate in markets is market oriented hence his intention is to sell his surplus in the market. Adenegan et al. (2012) saw market participation behavior among smallholders as a two way decision process: the first is for the smallholder household to decide either to participate in the market or not; and secondly to decide the quantity to sell. Participating in markets or being market oriented by smallholder farmers is a critical strategy for poverty alleviation.

Among the major reasons why smallholder farmers in developing countries live below poverty line is their inability to access markets easily. This problem has reduced most farmers to subsistence level, and it is not cheering news for growth in agricultural productivity. Pingali (1997) earlier proposed that it is very necessary to initiate improvements in market participation so as to link smallholder farmers to markets. Enhanced market participation will not only ensure increased productivity, but will also create opportunities for income generation.

The Role of Institutional Factors in Market Participation by Smallholder Farmers

The main thrust of this study is to determine and analyze the factors that influence market participation decisions of smallholder farmers in Anambra State of Nigeria. Extant literature indicates that smallholder farmers in developing countries such as Nigeria are challenged by a range of institutional and technical problems that affect their ability to make effective choice of marketing channels through which to participate in lucrative agricultural markets (Jari and Fraser, 2009; Jari, 2009; Ngemntu, 2010). The

result is that smallholder farmers who are scattered, mostly, in rural areas experience huge post-harvest losses due to their inability to access markets through effective marketing channel choice. In few instances where they are able to sell their post-harvest surpluses, they do so at abysmally low prices.

Ngemntu (2010) agreed that due to lack of veritable knowledge about prices and price trends, most smallholder farmers would accept whatever prices once they are opportune to participate in formal markets. The state of the institutional and technical factors that affect marketing channel choice among smallholder farmers in Nigeria – where a large proportion of rural small-scale farmers depend on traditional and subsistence farming – has made agriculture very unattractive. Consequently, a large number of youths prefer migrating to the urban cities in search of better means of livelihoods made possible by the discovery of crude oil. Indeed, agriculture which is the mainstay of Nigeria's economy has been relegated to the background. Most smallholder farmers in Nigeria who dwell in the poverty stricken rural areas find it difficult to make effective choice of marketing channel when they have the opportunity to participate in markets. This is due to various constraints inherent in the economy. Many socio-economic factors constrain smallholder farmers in Nigeria from taking effective channel choice decisions. Such institutional factors include membership of trade or market association/cooperative society, market information, use of grades and standards, organizational support, and legal environment. The technical factors of interest consist of communication infrastructure, road infrastructure, storage

facilities, availability of market transport, and produce value adding (processing). Discovery of some socio-economic characteristics of smallholder farmers which can influence their marketing channel choice decisions will also be investigated. It is believed that unavailability of these factors, will structure smallholder farmers out of the vertical linkage in the marketing channels, and as a result leads to ineffective and inefficient use of formal markets by these farmers (Wynne & Lyne, 2003; Fenwick & Lyne, 1999). Indeed, these smallholder farmers are operating in a vicious circle as they are confined within the given market with little reward or income from their farming activities (Jari, 2009).

The Role of Co-operatives in market participation

Co-operative has long been one of the platforms in the drive to make rural areas functionally economically and socially. Most communities are today populated with various types of cooperative societies engaged in both group as well as supported individual activities. Okoli (2006), defined co-operative as an organization for promoting the economic interest of its members. Co-operative is old as man. Some forms of cooperation can be found in all areas of human endeavors activities. According to Oyeniyi (2005), cohesion of a family is based on co-operation; religious, social and traditional groups also strive on cooperation among individual members. It is according to Okoli (2006), a free and voluntary business organization jointly owned by people with identical economic needs and having equal voices in its management and deriving proportionate services and

benefits from it.

According to Ibe (2002), Cooperatives are one of the possible organizational forms for conducting legitimate business in a market economy where goods are freely bought and sold in the open market. Day after day, the word "co-operative" tries to gain more ground almost becoming a household word in all corners of the country, Nigeria similarly "the world over the word is in everybody's lip. It is however surprising that in this country, so many people have not bothered to find out what the word precisely stand for. That is its precise meaning, some still go on their wrong impression and understanding that co-operative societies are organization of who distribute scarce and essential commodities such as milk, sugar, stockfish etc. the simple fact is that any definition of co-operative which does not emphasis on the "promotion" of economic interest of their members cannot be a true definition of co-operative. Nonetheless, attempt will be made to present some definition of co-operative.

Agbo (1999), identified specific benefits that may accrue to farmers if they are members of agricultural cooperatives. These include

1. A strong bargaining power for loans and other services.
2. A favorable atmosphere for a more effective government aid scheme.
3. Improved marketing opportunities for members.
4. Provision of services to members at highly reduced cost.
5. Self -reliance and motivation for members.
6. Mobilization of funds for farm business.

Previous case studies by Huppi and Feder(1990), Nwoko(1991), Nnadi and

Akwiwu (2002) and Idi et al (2006), all point out the various contributions of cooperatives to agricultural development. Uzoigwe (2006), summarizes the reasons for forming cooperatives as follows:

1. To provide farmers, with a dependable, honest and accurate market for the products they sell and for the supplies the purchase.
2. To increase the farmers returns of farm products, supplies and services.

Because most smallholder farmers are restricted from entry into market associations, and are not members of cooperative societies, they lack collective action in markets. Hence they are placed in a disadvantaged bargaining position which often exposes them to price exploitation by unscrupulous traders and agricultural marketing agents. However, scholars agree that there is a rise in formation of trade alliance and vertical integration in agricultural marketing and channels to serve the needs of consumers in today's world of globalization (Jari, 2009). Visible types of alliances in agricultural marketing include contract farming, cooperatives and farmer organizations. Smallholder farmers are at a disadvantage in the formation of such producers' associations or similar partnership arrangements, and as such it is much more difficult for them to participate in regulated markets. Put differently, inability to have collective action among smallholder farmers makes it difficult for them to make effective marketing channel choice. Indeed, in Nigeria a good number of smallholder farmers are still reluctant to join cooperative societies and take advantage of the obvious benefits therein (Agbonifoh et al., 2007).

Challenges Faced by Smallholder Farmers in Output Markets

A range of factors determine smallholders' participation in formal agricultural market. These determinants limit their ability to participate in markets and as such most of the products of smallholder farmers are lost after harvesting, while those who sell do so at very low prices. Ehui et al. (2009, pp. 4 - 6) categorized factors that affect market participation into two major classes: those that affect market participation decision in terms of how much to sell; and those that may affect decisions on whether or not to sell. Factors in the first category according to them include such issues as transaction costs (which are influenced by such variables as distance to roads, markets and towns, transport availability, labour and population density), human capital (which includes age, education, gender, extension training), physical capital (which is broken down as number of livestock producing stock, farmland), and financial capital (as crop income, non-farm income, credit). They asserted that generally farmers first opt to participate in the market if it is lucrative enough for them to do so and secondly decide on how much to sell. The above factors are those that affect profitability directly by affecting marketing costs. The second category of factors are those that affect market participation in terms of whether to sell or otherwise, but not how much to sell. Such factors include various household characteristics which do not have influence on the productivity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Vroom's (1964) Valence-Instrumentality-Expectancy theory (VIE theory) or Expectancy theory. The theory states that

employee's motivation is an outcome of how much an individual wants a reward (Valence), the assessment that the likelihood that the effort will lead to expected performance (Expectancy) and the belief that the performance will lead to reward (Instrumentality). *Valence* is the significance associated by an individual about the expected outcome and not the actual satisfaction that he expects to receive after achieving the goals, *i.e.* the value the individual personally places on the rewards. *Expectancy* is the faith the individual has that better efforts will result in better performance. That is to say that the attainment of desired performance goals depends on level of effort put in by the individual. *Instrumentality* is the belief that if one does meet performance expectations, he will receive a greater reward. The theory postulates that the intensity of a tendency to perform in a particular manner is dependent on the intensity of an expectation that the performance will be followed by a definite outcome and the appeal of the outcome to the individual.

The VIE theory stipulates that causal relationships exist between motivational process and the levels of expended efforts, achieved performances and allocated awards. According to Lawler, Porter and Vroom (2009), individuals have different sets of goals and can be motivated if they believe that:

- Effort-performance relationship is positive: What is the likelihood that the individual's effort be recognized in his performance appraisal?
- Performance-reward relationship: It talks about the extent to which the employee believes that getting a good performance appraisal leads to organizational rewards.

- Rewards-personal goals relationship: It is all about the attractiveness or appeal of the potential reward to the individual.

The desire to satisfy the need is strong enough to make the effort worthwhile.

Thus, the theory provides an explanation of why individuals choose one behavioral option over others. "*The basic idea behind the theory is that people will be motivated because they believe that their decision will lead to their desired outcome*" (Redmond, 2009). According to Vroom (1964), people consciously chose a particular course of action, based upon perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs as a consequence of their desires to enhance pleasure and avoid pain

The rationale behind the use of expectancy theory in this study is basically to evaluate the motivation for market participation by small scale farmers. Since market participation is intended to bring about increase in farm income of the farmer, it therefore follows that availability of enabling environment as could be provided by cooperative marketing society; the farmers will be motivated sufficiently to produce for the market.

Empirical Review

Various empirical studies have been carried out in the area of smallholder market participation and marketing channel choice. In a study titled "Factors influencing the intensity of market participation by smallholder farmers: A case study of rural and semi-urban areas of Kenya" conducted by Omiti, Otieno, Nyanamba and McCullough in 2009, factors impacting on the intensity of market participation among smallholder farmers in Kenya were examined. Factors examined by this study include distance

from farm to point of sale, output price, market information, and various household characteristics. Data for the study were obtained through a rapid rural appraisal and a household survey, and a truncated regression model was utilized for the analysis. A total sample size of 224 respondents – made up of 71 milk producers, 76 maize farmers, and 77 vegetable producers – who sell various quantities of their outputs through specific channels was used. Results indicated that farmers in periurban areas showed greater market participation than those in the rural areas, and that distance from the farm to markets is a serious impediment to the intensity of market participation. Also better output price and market information are major motivators for increased sales. The findings also showed the pressing need for stronger market information dissemination systems, rehabilitation of roads in both periurban and rural areas, and improvement of market facilities, among others, in far away rural areas so as to enhance production and marketing in high value produce among smallholder farmers. The results of this study are in alignment with the assertions in extant literature which confirm that distance makes it difficult for rural farmers to participate in markets by confining them to continuous production of low-value and less perishable commodities.

Rios, Masters and Shively (2008) did an interesting cross-country study on linkages between market participation and productivity among farm households in Tanzania, Vietnam and Guatemala. The study analyzed the direction of causality between market participation and agricultural productivity using a large sample of merged cross-country household surveys. A total sample of

11209 farm household selected from cross-section and panel surveys conducted by the World Bank in Tanzania, Viet Nam, and Guatemala. The results indicate that farmers that have higher productivity are inclined to participate in agricultural markets regardless of market access factors than those whose productivity is lower. The researchers argue that contrary to most assertions in extant literature, better access to markets does not automatically lead to higher productivity. This finding of the study assumes that investments in market access infrastructure may have little or even no improvements in agricultural productivity, rather it suggests that investments aimed at facilitating farm structure and capital are more likely to enhance or increase both productivity and market participation. In contrast to literature, this study asserts that high agricultural productivity is more likely to influence market participation positively rather than market participation impacting on productivity.

Chete (2013) investigated the factors determining the volume of sales of maize by farmers in Oyo State from a gender perspective. A multistage sample of respondents was identified and a regression model were estimated. The quantity of maize produced, marital status, household size, farm experience were found to be significant determinants of volume of maize sales by male farmers, while access to non-farm income, membership of farmers' association, access to information, household size and farm experience were the significant factors determining maize sales by female farmers. He therefore suggested that the government should expose women farmers to information on potential markets and product prices while

encouraging them to embrace family planning methods to control the size of their households.

A study by Adenegan, Adekpolu and Nwauwa (2012) investigated the levels of market participation by small-scale maize farmers in Osun State, Nigeria. The main objective of this study is to identify the determinants of market participation among these smallholder farmers. Using multi-stage sampling technique, the study selected a sample of 240 farmers from which 227 respondents were used for the study analysis. A tobit model was employed to analyze the factors influencing market participation. Six socioeconomic variables (age, education, gender, marital status, household size and farming experience) and seven other variables (quantity produced, ownership of farm equipment, land size, access to non-farm income, farmers' association, transport and means of information) which affect market participation were identified. The results show that all the variables had positive coefficients significantly from zero except years of education, transport cost, marital status and household size. The study results are in line with many studies in extant literature which indicate that most of the variables used in this study affect market participation.

Another study titled "Market participation of smallholder poultry producers in Northern Vietnam" was done by Tung and Costales (2007). The study upheld that market participation among smallholder poultry farmers is essential for encouraging poultry production to contribute to increased cash incomes of small scale farmers in the rural areas. A sample of 360 households was drawn from the highlands, midlands and lowlands of two provinces in Northern

Vietnam. The results show that weak market infrastructure, poor access to livestock services and nearness to markets have critical influence on smallholder market participation and choice of main marketing channels.

A study to determine the factors influencing market participation among smallholder livestock producers in Ethiopia was conducted by Ehui, Benin, and Paulos (2009). Data were collected from a sample of 943 households between 1999 and 2001 in the highlands of Tigray and Amhara regions in northern Ethiopia. The results of the study reveal that physical capital (ownership of different species of livestock and landholding) and financial capital (crop income and non-farm income) are the key determinants that impact on market participation and sales. The result also indicated that education, has positive and significant relationship with value of sales of dairy products. Contrary to results of some similar studies elsewhere, distance to markets and towns has no significant effect on participation.

Onoja, Usoroh, Adieme and Deeddam (2012) did a study in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria titled "Determinants of Market Participation in Nigerian Small-scale Fishery Sector: Evidence from Niger Delta Region." The purpose of the study was to determine the factors influencing market participation by fish farmers in the Delta region of Nigeria. A total sample of 120 fish farmers were randomly selected to provide data for the analysis. The results of the study show that the following four variables influence fish farmers' participation significantly: household size, distance to the nearest marketing channel, price of the commodity and sex of the fish marketer/farmer.

Siziba, Nyikahadzoi, Diagne and Adekunle (2011) studied the "Determinants of Cereal Market Participation by Sub-Saharan Africa Smallholder Farmers." The paper employed a large cross-sectional sample of 6421 households across eight sub-Saharan African countries to secure data which quantified the factors that determine market participation by smallholder farmers in cereal grain markets. The survey was carried out in June and December, 2008 in sub-Saharan African countries of Nigeria, Niger, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The variables identified as having influence on market participation was classified into: transaction cost, household socioeconomic attributes, biophysical environment (production potential) and public infrastructure and services. The results of the study show that private and public assets strongly and positively influence the intensity of market participation, while household socio-economic attributes are not as important in influencing market participation.

In their study titled "Analysis of Market Participation and Rural Poverty among Farmers in Northern Part of Taraba State, Nigeria" Gani and Adeoti (2011) identified various factors that influence market participation and poverty in rural Taraba State, Nigeria. A sample of 120 rural farmers was used to gather data for this study. They employ multi-stage stratified random and purposive sampling techniques to select respondents from six local government areas that make up the northern part of the State. Indexing, Tobit and Logit models were employed to determine the level of market participation, probability of market

participation and factors of poverty respectively. The study revealed that easy access to market is impeded by a number of household socio-economic variables. It also concluded that human capital, skill, physical infrastructure, basic services and utilities and institutions and norms influence socioeconomic interaction.

Terfa, Haile, Baker and Kassie (2012) carried out a study titled "Sheep market participation of rural households in Western Ethiopia." The study analyzed the intensity of factors that influence market participation among smallholder sheep farmers in Western Ethiopia. A sample of 200 farm households was randomly selected from sheep producing districts of the zone under study. Poisson model was employed to analyze the factors that determine the level of sheep farmers' market participation. The results of the study indicate that flock size, family size, educational background, experience, access to market information and access to veterinary service are the factors which significantly influenced market participation among smallholder sheep farmers in Ethiopia.

A review of literature shows that various studies have been done by many scholars in the area of market participation by smallholder farmers in various parts of the world particularly in European, American and parts of African but no visible one within the Nigerian setting particularly Anambra State. Studies have been done on market participation among smallholder farmers and co-operative marketing worldwide but Nigeria and Anambra State in particular is yet to benefit from a similar study hence the need to fill this lacuna and contribute to knowledge in this area of study.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study, thus the relevant data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire. The population of this study is finite and consists of farmers who are members of farmers' multipurpose co-operative societies (FMCS) farming collectively or individually. The Anambra State Department of Co-operatives provided from the Register of Co-operative Societies the number of FMCS Ltd and their membership strength as at second quarter of 2017 to be 1918 and 70,123 respectively. These farmers are scattered throughout the four agricultural zones within the state namely: Anambra, Aguata, Awka and Onitsha agricultural zones. A multi-stage purposive sampling technique was adopted to derive the sample size. In the first stage, 3 Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected from each of the agricultural zones to give a total of 12 LGAs for the state; in the second stage 5 societies were taken from each LGA to give a total of 60 societies for the study; in the third stage 10 respondents made up of officers and ordinary members were selected from each society to give a total of 600 respondents. This forms the sample size for the study. However, only 520 respondents were able to return their questionnaires.

In analyzing the data collected in line with the objectives of the study, the study made use of different analytical methods. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, means and percentages, were used to achieve objectives i, ii and iii. Data for evaluation of market participation obtained from respondents were analyzed using a 5-point Likert-Scale of: strongly agree (5); agree (4); undecided (3); disagree (2); ANOVA was used to analyze objective (i) which is to examine the socio-economic

characteristics of the co-operative farmers and their effects on market participation and to test hypothesis I; multiple regression model using the ordinary least squares (OLS) approach was used to deal with objectives ii (to determine the quantum and value of agricultural produce marketed by respondents); and iii (to identify the extent to which agricultural market participation of the farmer is influenced by institutional factors) as well as tests for hypotheses ii and iii respectively.

The necessary regression models which were implicitly specified as follows:

$$MKTP_1 = f(\text{MINF, GRAD, ORGS, COMM, LEGL, COOPM}) \text{ ----- (1)}$$

$$MKTP_2 = f(\text{AGE, GEND, HSHD, EDUC, FRMSIZ, INCOME}) \text{ ----- (2)}$$

Where

MKTP = Index of participation in agricultural marketing, measured in terms of proportion of total harvested crop marketed (Naira).

MINF = Market information (Likert mean grade rating).

GRAD = Use of grades and standards (Likert mean grade rating)..

ORGS = Organizational support (Likert mean grade rating).

COMM = Communication infrastructure (Likert mean grade rating).

LEGL = Legal environment (Likert mean grade rating).

COOPM = Duration of cooperative membership (years)

AGE = Age of farmer in years

GEND = Gender of farmer (Dummy: female 1, otherwise 0)

HSHD = Size of farmer's household (no. of persons)

EDUC = Years of formal education
FRMSZ = Farm size (in hectares)
INCOM = Total income of farmer in Naira (value of total harvests is used as proxy).

The explicit specifications of models (1) and (2) are given below:

$$MPRT_1 = \alpha + \beta_1 MMAC + \beta_2 MINF + \beta_3 GRAD + \beta_4 ORGS + \beta_5 LEGL + \beta_6 LCOOPM + \epsilon_i \text{ ----- (3)}$$

$$MPRT_2 = \alpha + \beta_1 AGE + \beta_2 GEND + \beta_3 HSHD + \beta_4 EDUC + \beta_5 FRMSZ + \beta_6 INCOM + \epsilon_i \text{ ----- (4)}$$

The α s and the β s are the parameters to be estimated while the ϵ_i s are the error terms, designed to capture the effects of unspecified variables in the models.

The regression analyses were run using version 22 of the SPSS package so as to determine the order of importance of the explanatory variables in explaining the variations observed in the dependent variables. The t-tests were performed to test the significance of each of the explanatory variables at the alpha levels of 5%. Additionally, the joint effects of all the specified variables on market participation was measured through the application of analyses of variance (ANOVA) to obtain F ratios indicating the strength of these effects. Hypothesis one was tested through the application of One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

RESULTS

A. Socio-economic characteristics:

The result shows that there are more of the women in the farms (69%) than the men (31%). Most men here prefer fast income yielding ventures like trading and other forms of business to farming with all its

attendant risk. Majority of the respondents (77%) belonged to the working age bracket of 25 – 50 years. This augurs well for increased productivity and ability to take care of the aged and children that constitute the remaining (19%) and (4%) respectively.

The distribution revealed that 83% of the respondents are married leaving 17% for unmarried participants; 63.5% of the respondents have an average household size of 4 members which is a good indication that a greater percentage of the farm yield will not go into consumption to the detriment of improved living standard and investment. The remaining 20% and 8% had an average house hold size of 8 and 10 members respectively.

The education spread of the respondent revealed that about 71% of them had Senior Secondary School

B_i Market Disposition of the farmers

Table 1: Value of crops harvested and marketed

	N	Sum ₦	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yam	520	219,894,296.00	422873.6462	384513.88274
Cassava	520	243,041,064.00	467386.6615	424989.02829
Palm	520	115,733,840.00	222565.0769	202375.72776
Total Harvest (Naira) – A	520	578,669,200.00	1112825.3846	1011878.63878
Total Marketed (Naira) – B	520	192,099,644.80	369422.3938	563696.79723
B as % of A	520	20854.23	40.1043	47.77869
Marketed through Coop. – C	520	159,376,339.27	306492.9601	554973.31498
C as % of A	520	15809.79	30.4035	43.18119
C as % of B	520	38076.44	73.2239	17.96991
Valid N (listwise)	520			

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

Certificate, 6% had either National Certificate in Education (NCE) or its equivalent while 5% had either B.Sc. or its equivalent, 18% had no formal education. Since as much as 82% of them are educated, the implication is that application of new technology and market participation might not be problematic as they can easily read, understand and apply following stipulated instructions.

Half of the respondents (50%) cultivate an average of 3 hectares of land annually, 28% cultivate less than 2 hectares, while only 22% could cultivate upto 4 hectares or more in a farming year. This confirms that the respondents were mostly small-scale farmers.

B. Market Participation and Membership Duration

Table 1 shows that the total value of crop harvests was N578,669,200.00 or an average of N1,112,825.38 per member. The relative contributions of yam, cassava and palm produce to the value of the crop harvests were N422,873.65, N467,386.66, and N222565.08 respectively. Forty percent of the total harvests, valued N192,099,644.80 or a mean N369,422.40 per farmer were marketed. The value of marketed crops represented only about 40% of total harvests, thus suggesting that more than half of harvested crops were either consumed or preserved for the next planting season, meaning that the respondents were largely subsistence farmers. The cooperative societies were shown to be responsible for acting as the channel for market disposal of more than 73% of marketed crops or 30% of total harvests. That the co-operative was responsible for the marketing of so many crops on behalf of the members is not surprising agricultural marketing is an integral function of agricultural cooperative. Indeed, farmers when they joined cooperative pledge or agree to deliver at least a portion of harvested crops for cooperatives to dispose in the local or outside markets.

B₂ Relating market participation by co-operative membership duration

Table 2: Total crops marketed by Membership duration.

Table 2: Total crops marketed by Membership duration.

Range of Duration (Years)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
< 3	68	628,331.02	1224673.610	39315.81	3.17E+006
3-5	205	332,719.33	172429.731	37325.82	3.17E+006
6-8	233	378,270.465	130077.370	30594.18	3.17E+006
9-11	4	340147.4551	208634.216	187200.00	648000.00
>12	10	247348.7543	207100.337	125755.63	820800.00
Total	520	369422.3938	563696.797	30594.18	3.17E+006

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

The study reveals that co-operative experience of members as indicated by their membership durations in agricultural co-operatives has an effect on the market participation of the members as can be seen in Table 2. Those farmers who have been members for over 12 years in co-operative have the highest mean value of N1, 661,266; while the mean value of others who have been members for between 9 to 12 years, 6 to 9 years and 3 to 6 years N1,401,103.57, N1,059,797.59 and N1,180,810.37 respectively. Respondents who have been members for less than 3 years have mean farm output of N1.023, 540.74. This indicates that duration of membership in cooperative enhances output of members, since they have more trust and confidence in the co-operative than new members and are able to take advantage of cooperative services that promote farm production.

Test of hypothesis one

H₀: The market disposition of the co-operative farmer is not significantly related to duration of his membership in co-operative.

The total value of agricultural produce marketed is examined vis-a-vis duration of co-operative membership of farmers using a One-way ANOVA. The results are as presented in table 3.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA market produce and co-operative membership duration

Total Produce Marketed					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3764720383915.26	10	376472038391.526	1.189	.295
Within Groups	161149646722816.84	509	316600484720.662		
Total	164914367106732.10	519			

Source: Field survey, 2015.

DECISION: The results of the One-way ANOVA in Table 3 above show that the co-operative membership variable when examined with the value of produce marketed an F ratio value of 1.189 obtained was not significant at the conventional 5% level. As a result of this, the null hypothesis one as stated above is accepted and we conclude that the market disposition of the co-operative farmer is not significantly related to duration of his membership in co-operative. The implication of this is that farmer's disposition to participation in agricultural marketing may be influenced by his co-operative membership but not necessarily the number of years his membership.

B₃. Factors affecting marketing of crops

1. Influence of Institutional Factors on marketing Decisions

Table 4: Respondents perception of institutional factors affecting marketing decisions.

S/N	Items	Sum	Mean(x)	Std Dev.	Decision
1	Availability of market information	1761.00	3.3865	0.80138	Agree
2	Organizational supports from the government	1779.00	3.4212	0.59988	Agree
3	Use of grades and standards in agricultural marketing	1665.00	3.2019	0.81152	Agree
4	Legal environment relating to laws governing sale of agricultural products, land tenure system, etc.	1843.00	3.5442	0.50998	Agree
5	Influence of tradition and cultural practices	1874.00	3.6038	0.56622	Agree
	Grand mean	1784.40	3.4315	0.59068	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2015.

On the perceptions of the respondents on the influence of institutional factors on marketing decisions, the mean responses to the five items in table 4 shows that there is a commonality of agreement that the indicated factors have influence on the farmers decision to market or not to market harvested farm crops. All the responses had mean ratings of at least 3.2. The grand mean of the responses was also found to be greater than 3.0. The relative importance of the items could also be assessed from the magnitude of their individual mean scores. Thus, the most important item of influence was “influence of tradition and cultural practices”. This was followed by legal environment relating to laws governing sale of agricultural products, land tenure system, etc.; **organizational supports from the government; availability of market information; and use of grades and standards in agricultural marketing;** in that order. The implication of this is that institutional factors within the marketing the marketing environment domain could have substantial influence on rural agricultural marketing.

2. Effects of Institutional Factors (Regression Analysis)

Table 5: Regression estimates (Influence of institutional factors on market participation).

Model	Coefficient Estimates	t-Value	Significance
(CONSTANT)	0.256	2.749	0.006
<i>X₁</i> (Market information)	0.042	1.536	0.125
<i>X₂</i> (Organizational support)	0.080	2.323	0.021
<i>X₃</i> (Grades & standards)	0.006	.242	0.809
<i>X₄</i> (Legal environment)	0.349	7.010	0.000
<i>X₅</i> (Tradition and culture)	0.407	12.537	0.000
<i>X₅</i> (Coop. Experience)	0.032	1.382	0.167
<i>R</i> ²	0.726		
Adj <i>R</i> ²	0.723		
<i>F</i>	226.500 (Sig. @ 0.001)		

Dependent Variable: Marketed crops

The estimates of *R*² and Adj. *R*² suggest that all the variables in the model collectively accounted for more than 72% of the variations in marketed crops by the respondents. The F-ratio value of 226.500 was significant at 1% level. All the variables had expected positive signs suggesting direct relationships with marketed crops. However, only coefficients of organizational support, legal environment and tradition and culture were significant at the expected levels. This, therefore suggest that three variables were the most important factors that influence marketing decisions among the farmers.

Test of hypothesis two

H₀: Market participation of the farmer is not significantly influenced by institutional

factors such as institutional factors such as **market information**, use of grades and standards, **organizational supports**, and legal environment.

The test of hypothesis two was accomplished through the application of the regression result in Table .6.

DECISION: The result shows that all the socio-economic variables jointly explain more than 72 1% of the variations in marketed produce. The F-ratio associated with this was only 226.5 which were significant at 1% level. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternate, “market participation by the farmer is significantly influenced by institutional factors such as **market information**, use of grades and standards, **organizational supports**, and legal environment”, was accepted.

The above finding is a confirmation of similar studies by Jari (2009), Terfa, Haile, Baker and Kassie (2012) in Ethiopia which found access to market information, organizational factors, etc as being significant to market participation.

3. Influence of Farmers' Socio-economic Factors on Market Participation.

As a follow up to the above findings on market participation determinants, a multiple regression analysis was also carried out to measure the effect of socio-economic characteristics of the farmers on marketed crops (Table6).

Table 6: Regression Estimates (socio-economic determinants of market participation).

Model	Coefficient Estimates	t-Value	Significance
(CONSTANT)	2.941	28.134	0.000
X_1 (Age)	0.000	0.243	0.808
X_2 (Gender)	0.037	0.881	0.379
X_3 (Household size)	0.006	0.875	0.382
X_4 (Education)	0.004	0.826	0.409
X_5 (Farm size)	0.015	0.961	0.337
R^2	0.006		
Adj R^2	0.003		
F	0.647 (Sig. @ 0.664)		

Dependent Variable: Marketed crops

The estimates of R^2 and Adj. R^2 suggest that all the variables in the model collectively accounted for less than 1% of the variations in market crops by the respondents. The F ratio was not significant at the conventional level. Indeed none of the socio-economic characteristics such as age, gender, household size, education and farm size were significant at the conventional 5% level. Clearly, these findings show that decision to market agricultural produce is often not dictated by ones socio-economic background.

Test of hypothesis three

H_0 : Marketing participation of the farmer is not significantly influenced by socio-economic characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, household size, education, farm size and income.

The test of hypothesis three was accomplished through the application of the regression result in Table 6.

DECISION: The result showed that all the socio-economic variables jointly explain less than 1% of the variations in market produce. The F ratio associated with this was only 3.69 which were not significant at the conventional 5% level. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted and we conclude that socio-economic characteristics of the members were not significant determinants of marketing decisions of the responding farmers.

The above finding is at variance with the ones by Chete (2013) in Oyo State and that of Adenegan, Adekpolu and Nwauwa (2012) which found such socio-economic variables such as quantity of produce, marital status, household size, farm experience etc. as significant determinants of market participation. A reasonable explanation here could be that

the members of are meant to market certain quantity of their harvests through their co-operatives, thus minimizing the effects of socio-economic factors on marketing participation.

Summary of Findings

The result shows that there are more of the women in the farms (69%) than the men (31%). Majority of the respondents (77%) belonged to the working age bracket of 25 – 50 years and most of them are married (83%). The average family size was found to be 4 and cultivating an average farm size of 3 hectares. Their educational profiles revealed that 83% had Senior Secondary School Certificate and above.

The value of total crops harvests were N578,669,200.00 or an average of N1,112,825.38 per member of which only 40% were marketed. The co-operative societies were responsible for marketing more than 73% of total marketed produce or 40% of total crop harvests.

The study also revealed that co-operative experience of members as indicated by their membership durations in agricultural co-operatives has positive influence on the market participation of the members. Farmers who have been members for over 12 years in cooperative had the highest mean value of marketed crops (N1, 661,266) while the mean value of others who have been members for between 9 to 12 years, 6 to 9 years and 3 to 6 years N1,401,103.57, N1,059,797.59 and N1,180,810.37 respectively.

Hypothesis one which stated that market disposition of the member was not related to membership duration was accepted at the 5% conventional level (F ratio=1.189; Sig. 0.295). Thereby suggesting that cooperative experience do not have substantial influence on marketing decisions.

The responding farmers affirmed

that listed institutional factors such as influence of tradition and cultural practices; legal environment relating to laws governing sale of agricultural products, land tenure system, etc.; **organizational supports from the government; availability of market information; and use of grades and standards in agricultural marketing** had influence on their marketing decisions.

Hypothesis two which stated that institutional factors had no influence on market participation was rejected at the 1% level of significance (F ratio 226.5; Sig.; 0.01). The conclusion was that institutional factors had substantial influence on marketing decisions.

Hypothesis three which stated that socio-economic characteristics of members had no influence on market participation was accepted at the 5% level of significance (F ratio 0.647; Sig.; 0.664). The conclusion here was that socio-economic factors had minimal or no influence on marketing decisions.

Conclusion

In Nigeria, marketing problems in the agricultural sector are evidenced when farmers could not get their produce to the market at the right time (thereby incurring considerable post-harvest losses) and are not given better returns for their efforts. This causes discouragement and leads to loss of interest in farming and consequently a reduction in agricultural production. One of the major functions of agricultural co-operatives is to provide the platform for members to effectively participate in agricultural produce market. This study evaluated the effect of institutional and other factors on marketing of agricultural products by co-operative farmers in Anambra State. Data

were collected with the aid of structured questionnaires from 520 respondents who were selected through random sampling technique. Results from the study show that institutional factors such as tradition and cultural practices; legal environment relating to laws governing sale of agricultural products, land tenure system, etc.; **organizational supports from the government; availability of market information; and use of grades and standards in agricultural marketing** had substantial influence on market participation by co-operative farmers.

However, farmer's co-operative experience, which was proxied by years of co-operative and socio-economic characteristics of the farmers, was not significant determinants of market participation. Clearly, many co-operative farmers were motivated (as espoused in Vroom's Valance-Instrumentality-Expectancy theory) to bring their farm produce to the market because of availability of the institutional factors as already mentioned, thereby indicating that improvement in the nature and availability of these factors will increase the willingness of the farmers to increase the proportion of their marketable farm produce.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following policy recommendations are made to enhance market participation of co-operative farmers in Anambra State:

1. The Co-operative Apexes, Co-operative Departments in government in collaboration with the Anambra State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) and State Ministry of Agriculture should step up farmers' education and training in market participation. This will not only impact on volume of agricultural

output but will also improve the farmers' knowledge on markets and the use of co-operatives as important marketing channels.

2. The government should review laws and policies that tend to impede farmers' participation in agricultural markets. This may include a review of the land tenure Act to increase access to agricultural farmlands by famers' co-operatives and individual farmers. Local Governments should streamline their levies and tolls in the rural markets while chasing internally generated revenues (IGR) to avoid double taxation as poor farmers with small quantities of harvested crops are scared away from the markets.
3. Massive grass root campaign by the government and the co-operative apexes necessary to promote formation and increased membership of existing agricultural co-operatives. It has been proved that membership of co-operatives is not only a reliable platform or channel for agricultural marketing but also a good avenue for improving their confidence in their chosen profession as farmers.

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CLUSTER COOPERATIVE FISH FARMING ENTERPRISE INCREASING FISH PRODUCTION POST COVID-19.

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Abstract

The cooperative initiative has helped various sectors of human endeavor by sustaining livelihood and human production capacity through the lofty ideals of the society. Fish farming has benefitted in no small measure from cooperative and has helped in increasing local fish production along with value chain fish processing. This has made Nigeria the highest producer of catfish in Africa, with the establishment of different cluster farms scattered throughout the

country. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on this sector, as farmers were unable to visit farm, sale of marketable size fish were hampered due to restriction on movement, inputs scarcity coupled with escalating prices lowered profitability, while some cluster cooperators had to wind up business due to loss of revenue. In Ogun State East Senatorial district, three local government areas were purposively sampled; in which Cluster Cooperatives Fish Farms (CCFF) were impacted upon during the pandemic as fish farmers 2,600 from 103 cluster cooperatives were reduced to 1,410 farmers in 75 clusters. Rejigging the activities of cluster cooperative fish farms through policy development, implementation, monitoring and control will further rekindle the interest of the unemployed, low income group and government workers to have a secondary alternative income source. A policy drive should be on the establishment of central fish markets in local government areas where cluster cooperatives are in operation, with the formation of more CCFF. This will go a long way in economic improvement, poverty alleviation, sustainable livelihood and food security for the nation. There is the need to address the challenges of cluster cooperative fish farmers in improving fish protein requirement in order to meet the per caput fish consumption for the country.

Keywords: Farm estate, Fish, Food

security, Livelihood.

Introduction

Disease outbreak leading to pandemic is no more new to the global health sector. The recent Covid-19 affected every spheres of the human race and has impacted mostly on production of agrarian products which is the basis for human sustainability. Access to fishing sites onshore or offshore was restricted due so as to contain the spread.

The fishery sector is the third agrarian production sector of Nigeria with a comparative advantage of 3.2% (PWC 2020). This sector employed millions of Nigerians both in the capture and culture fisheries sector. Olayide (1981) stated that production can be achieved by small scale producers through cooperative in order to mobilize production resources needed for optimal resource use. Cluster Cooperative Fish Farming (CCFF) has the potential of increasing fish production for subsistence, local market, value chain addition and as export. CCFF is a co-management strategy that emphasized the fisher folks to participate in resource ownership (Alamu *et al.*, 2001; Amin 2015). Olayide and Heady (1982) stated that common purpose of interest brings about the formation of cooperative through voluntary membership.

ICFO (2013) reported from its declaration the important role of fish cooperatives to include: growth of global cooperative movement, promotion of community welfare, enhancement of fisheries development, alleviation of social challenges and contribution to livelihoods, fish food safety and supply. This however follows a democratic process where farmers are part of the

planning, coordination and implementation (ICA 2021) as the participation is meant to impact on their livelihood. The CCFF works on the principles and lofty ideals of cooperatives and have been established based on Kibbutz, Moshav and Moshav Shitufi as described by Olayide and Heady (1982). Best management practices are the hallmark of CCFF in achieving production efficiency, and this has proven successful in developing countries inclusive (Kassam *et al.*, 2011).

A major impact was felt this year with World Fisheries Cooperative Day been celebrated in writing due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (Im Joon-taek 2021). PWC (2020) Covid-19 has led to increase in food prices and earnings from various farm activities due to lockdown have declined. Disruption in fish distribution and supply chain as farmers need to obtain a pass to get fish to markets; finished fish feed supply and ingredient supplies for toll milling at feedmill were also affected. Increase input cost, decrease sales and inaccessibility to markets also impacted on the fisheries sector during the pandemic (Omega *et al.*, 2020). PWC (2020) major challenges in the aquaculture sector are lack of value chain addition; supply-chain linkages and finance.

This study was carried out to know the impact of Covid-19 on Cluster Cooperative Fish Farming in the study area.

Methodology

There are nine Local Government Areas in Ogun East Senatorial district. A purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting three of the impacted LGA. Data

of the CCFF were collected from the cooperative organizations. The LGA selected are Ijebu-Ode, Odogbolu and Ijebu North-East. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Result

The number of farms and CCFF in Ijebu-Ode I and Ijebu-Ode II were highly

impacted upon (Table 1). The percent of farms in Ijebu-Ode I and Ijebu-Ode II before the pandemic was 73.08% and CCFF 85.44%. While after the pandemic despite 89.36% farms and 80.00% CCFF was observed in Ijebu-Ode I and Ijebu-Ode II.

Table 1. Impact of Covid-19 on Cluster Co-operative Fish Farms.

	Farms Before Pandemic	CCFF Before Pandemic	Farms after Pandemic	CCFF After Pandemic
Ijebu-Ode I	1300	75	810	54
Ijebu-Ode II	600	13	450	6
Ijebu North East	NA	14	100	14
Odogbolu	700	1	50	1
	2600	103	1410	75

Discussion

The location of CCFF supports Rurangwa and Kabagambe (2018) that CCFF are geographically situated to take advantage of nearness to water sources. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the restriction, the percentage of farms increased with a decrease in CCFF operations. This is due to the resilience of the farmers who have adopted improved management technique for profitability (Oyebola and Lawrence 2020). This also support the findings of Landu *et al.*, (2020) as fish farmers report mild to severe impact of the pandemic on fish business. Been self-help organization CCFF (Odetola *et al.*, 2015) members find a way of mitigating the impact of the pandemic for livelihood sustenance. This led to other forms of economic activities and this was also reported by Kiggundu (2007) of cluster cooperatives inducing other sectorial economic activities around the settlements. With the mitigation strategies CCFF were able to increase their income after joining the cooperative

(Agu-Aguiyi *et al.*, 2018).

Bondad-Reantaso *et al.*, (2020) evidence of covid-19 infections on fish is yet to be established but contamination is possible through infected patient. The thermo-labile nature of the virus is unable to withstand the cooking temperature of fish to be on the table.

CCFF have enjoyed varied benefits e.g. finance, market access, on farm feed production (Obiero *et al.*, 2019) while CCFF serves in empowering to fulfill production objectives (Nwabueze 2010) of fish farmers. Phillips *et al.*, (2011) reported CCFF has facilitated network with government, Non-Governmental and international Organization and ways of reducing the impact was the focus.

Different means of mitigating the impact has been reported as government support would minimize the problems that would be faced by production cooperatives (Olayide and Heady 1982), adoption of

improved innovations by CCFF (Aphunu and Agwu 2014), loan accessibility increased fish output and farmers profit (Akerele *et al.*, 2019) and aquaculture insurance (Sule *et al.*, 2019) in case fish loss.

Increasing fish supply through aquaculture post pandemic is development of initiatives on aquaculture programme (Landu *et al.*, 2020). Also, Policy initiatives on re-introduction of cluster farming, states with expanse water bodies and wetlands should harness the fishery resources into aquaculture by forming CCFF in all Local Government Areas.

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