

**IMPACT OF AGRIBUSINESS ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION OF WOMEN IN
THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH NORTH CENTRAL GEO-POLITICAL ZONE,
NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

This research work is titled: "impact of agribusiness on poverty alleviation of women in The Apostolic Church, North Central Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to; assess the impact of agribusiness on the economic and social empowerment of women in the study area and identify the challenges faced by women in agribusiness, in the study area. The total population of the study is twelve thousand and eighty (12,080) out of which six hundred and sixty-four (664) respondents were purposively sampled. The study employed the descriptive survey design and the research instruments used for the study were structured questionnaire and interview. Mean and standard deviation were used for analyzing the research questions. The null hypothesis were tested with independent sample t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The findings from the Study reveals that: agribusiness has served as a source of consistent income, and has also created employment opportunities and food security. The findings also revealed that, women faced significant challenges in agribusiness. The study therefore recommend among others that their agribusiness can be empowered using qualified crop extension workers and other agric experts on how to store and protect crops.

Key words: Impact, economic empowerment, poverty alleviation, and agribusiness.

Introduction

Poverty alleviation has become an international challenge. The fight against poverty in Nigeria have increased over the years. The issue of poverty alleviation in the North Central geo-political zone is a complex and pressing challenge that requires comprehensive and strategic intervention. This paper focuses on impact of women movement in agribusiness on poverty alleviation of women in The Apostolic Church North Central geo-political zone Nigeria. Therefore, the paper examined the impact of the involvement of women movement of The Apostolic Church in agribusiness as a measure for poverty alleviation of women in The Apostolic Church North Central geo-political zone, Nigeria, as perceived by single and married women in the church, as well as the challenges faced by women in agribusiness as opined by women who are church officers and those who are ordinary members.

The Apostolic Church women Movement refers to the women wing of the church otherwise known as the women fellowship in the mainline churches. This comprises of Christian women who are characterized by hard work, love respect and submissiveness. Proverb 31:14-33 asserts that the Christian woman is a virtuous woman that is like a merchant's ship that brings food from afar, for her family, cloth them, she is energetic, strong and make sure her dealings are always profitable, always extending a helping hand to the poor and opens her arms to the needy thereby serving as blessing to her family and as many that come in contact with her. Christian women are supposed to be hardworking especially when it comes to the welfare of the family, they are to ensure that food and clothing are always available for their family even if it means

engaging in petty trading or doing menial work. They are to strive hard to make sure that they manage the available resources in order to get maximum result and comfort for the family.

In line with this, Okunoye (2013) asserted that poverty manifest itself in diverse ways, out of these manifestations, food security is the mother of all as the absence of food can lead to annoyance, violence, diseases, and even death. The involvement of The Apostolic Church women in Agribusiness is very important as it serves as a tool in poverty alleviation, which it gives room for income generation, job creation and economic empowerment. Women involvement in agribusiness can help to improve their economic standard and the community at large. However, the impact of women involvement in agribusiness is often overlooked. Though many initiatives had been introduced over the years to promote women empowerment in agriculture yet many women still face challenges that limit their ability to achieve financial independence. They face challenges such as gender discrimination, inadequate training, funding, and poor marketing. Consequently, this has made many of the women involved in agribusiness remained trapped in poverty thereby benefitting little from their work. Therefore, this paper examined the potential of agribusiness to empower women economically, improve their financial stability and further pointed out the challenges faced by The Apostolic Church women in agribusiness.

Statement of the Problem

Poverty in Nigeria is massive, pervasive and chronic, engulfing a large proportion of the society (Sule, Adamu, Yahaya, 2019, Akpa, 2018 & World Bank 2014). Though poverty cut across all parts of Nigeria, the rate is higher in the northern part (Aliyu & Dansabo, 2017). Nigeria like many countries in Sub-Sahara African are rural with a high population of women and these women are mostly socio-economically disadvantaged and disempowered than men (Enfield, 2019; Obayelu and Chime, 2020). Poverty as a multifaceted issue remains a significant challenge in the North Central Geo-political zone Nigeria, particularly among women who face numerous socio-economic constraints. Many of these women have been badly affected by poverty due to cultural factors that lead to negative stereotypes on women. They had been relegated to the background which has placed them in a humiliated, vulnerable and helpless state which to some extent is having negative effect on the socio-economic development of these women and the society at large. For many of these women, the impact of poverty is felt directly through their inability to minimally care for their children's needs as children are very central to women's lives. The concern of poor women, over inability to satisfy their children's needs is reflected in a feeling of insecurity, inadequacy, and anxiety (Adepoju, 2018). In the same vein, Ngoma and Mayimbo (2017), points to the fact that high rate of maternal and child mortality is as a result of poverty where women and children cannot access good healthcare services.

The problem of the study is to examine the impact of the involvement of The Apostolic Church women in agribusiness on alleviating poverty among women within the church in North Central geo-political zone, Nigeria. While poverty is a complex issue with multifaceted causes, this study seeks to examine the extent to which participation in agribusiness by women within The Apostolic Church contributes to poverty alleviation and empowerment among their fellow female members.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are:

- i. to assess the impact of agribusiness on the social and economic empowerment of women in The Apostolic Church North Central Geo-political zone, Nigeria.
- ii. Identify the challenges faced by women of The Apostolic Church in agribusiness in The Apostolic Church North Central geo-political zone, Nigeria.
- iii.

Research Questions

- i. What is the impact of agribusiness on the social and economic empowerment of women in The Apostolic Church North Central Geo-political zone, Nigeria?
- iv. What are the challenges faced by women in agribusiness in The Apostolic Church North Central geo-political zone, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the opinion of single and married women about the impact of Agribusiness on the socio and economic empowerment of women in The Apostolic Church North Central Geo-political zone, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the opinion of women who are church officers and women that are ordinary members about the challenges faced by women in agribusiness of women in the study area.

Concept of poverty alleviation

Poverty alleviation is a set of measures, both economic and humanitarian, that are intended to lift people out of poverty. Poverty alleviation is geared towards saving humanity from reproachful poverty mainly through empowerment and education thereby, enabling people to cater for their own personal and family basic needs. It aims at ‘promoting economic growth that will permanently lift as many people as possible o poverty line’ (Ejiofor, 2018 & Obiwuru, 2019). According to UNDP (2018), Poverty alleviation encompasses a spectrum of initiatives, programmes and policies designed to improve the living condition of individuals and communities living in poverty-stricken circumstance.

Another term that is often used for Poverty alleviation is poverty reduction which refers to all measures put in place to reduce the rate of poverty (Wutofeh, 2021). It is a way of enabling the poor to create wealth for themselves as a conduit of ending poverty. Poverty alleviation aims to improve the quality of life for those people currently living in poverty.

Poverty alleviation refers to technical lifting of people out of poverty. It can be achieved globally and locally through individuals, government and non-governmental organizations sincere efforts to end poverty (Obiwuru, 2019). It is also viewed as to involve the strategic use of tools such as education, economic development, and health and income redistribution to improve the livelihoods of the world poorest by governments and intentionally approved organizations (Nwabuisi, 2021). Alleviating poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice and the key to unlocking an enormous human potential. According to the survey of Nigerian’s National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in collaboration with World Bank, it was observed that as many as four in ten Nigerians live below the national poverty line. It stated further that many Nigerians especially in the north lack education and access to basic infrastructure, such as electricity, safe drinking water and improved sanitation.

Agribusiness Training: Agribusiness refers to economic activities connected with farm product. In order words, crop production, as well as crop processing, transportation and distribution. Agribusiness serve as the main source of food and income for many people living in poverty (James & Somer, 2023). Women in The Apostolic Church are trained in agribusiness such as poultry farming, fish farming, crop farming, vegetable gardens, and how to market such produce. Some of the women who had received the training afterwards, engage in one form of agribusiness or the other such as poultry farming, fish farming, crop farming, some buys farm produce and resell which has created job opportunities for some and serves as income generating venture for many thereby helping to contribute to household and community well-being and thereby reducing poverty. In Africa, about 80% of agricultural production emanate from small farmers of which women are part (Nwankpa 2017).

Women holds a vast amount of responsibility and good knowledge of sustainable agricultural system skills. They are important users and managers of natural resources in providing food security and overall family welfare, Kolawole and Omobitan (2014) opined that a country's agricultural sector is the backbone for food security and a strategic developmental objective for a nation to survive and end poverty in future. Women involvement in agribusiness also empowers them socially as this enables them to gain leadership skills, improve their decision making abilities, and participate more actively in community development.

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey design and the research instruments used for the study were structured questionnaire and interview. The total population of women movement of The Apostolic Church north central geo-political zone, Nigeria is twelve thousand and eighty (12,080) women out of which six hundred and sixty-four (664) respondents were purposively sampled. Mean and standard deviation were used for analyzing the research questions. The null hypothesis were tested with independent sample t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Below are the results of the data analysed:

Research Question 1: What is the impact of agribusiness in poverty alleviation of women in The Apostolic Church North Central geo-political zone, Nigeria?

Table 1: Opinions of respondents on the Impact of agribusiness on the social and economic empowerment of Women in The Apostolic Church North Central Nigeria.

S/NO	Items	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD
1	Agribusiness ventures such as commercial crop production and processing provides women with opportunities to generate income.	249	207	102	73	3.00	0.857
2	Training programmes in modern farming techniques, and crop management help women to become more efficient and innovative.	178	294	89	70	2.92	0.905
3	Through collective farming and co-operative initiatives,						

	women gain access to large tracts of land for cultivation.	160	308	65	98	2.84	0.971
4	Training programmes on agribusiness also enables women to access agric loans for investment.	166	278	102	85	2.83	0.979
5	Women who engage in agribusiness develop greater confidence and leadership skills.	188	275	95	73	2.92	0.929
6	Agribusiness contributes greatly to food security of the individual and the society at large.	158	296	97	80	2.84	0.954
7	It promotes improved nutrition.	195	270	88	78	2.92	0.925
8	Engagement in agribusiness can provide a consistent source of income.	210	257	87	77	2.95	0.907
Cumulative Mean						2.90	

Decision Mean = 2.50

Result in the table 2 above show respondents' view on the Impact of agribusiness on the social and economic empowerment of Women. The cumulative mean for table 2, is 2.90 which is greater than the decision mean of 2.50. This implies that agribusiness has significant impact on poverty alleviation of women.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of women movement activities on the psychological well-being and poverty alleviation of women in The Apostolic Church North Central Geopolitical zone, Nigeria?

Table 2: Opinions of respondents on Challenges faced by women in agribusiness

S/NO	Items	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD
1	Inadequate funding.	233	220	105	73	2.97	0.929
2	Sometimes it is difficult to have access to land.	200	260	84	87	2.91	0.969
3	Lack of access to modern agricultural inputs.	183	285	85	78	2.91	0.927
4	Inadequate training.	191	281	79	80	2.92	0.936
5	The programme sometimes lack competent individuals to handle it.	189	252	109	81	2.87	0.923
6	High cost of transportation.	182	289	78	82	2.90	0.929
Cumulative Mean						2.91	

Decision Mean = 2.50

Results in table 2 above shows respondents view about the challenges faced by Women in agribusiness. The cumulative mean of table 2 is 2.91 which is higher than the decision mean of 2.50. This implies that there are significant challenges women faced by women in agribusiness.

Hypothesis I : There is no significant difference in the opinions of Married and single women about impact of agribusiness on the social and economic empowerment of women in The Apostolic Church North Central Geo-political zone, Nigeria.

Table 3: Independent Sample T-test about the impact of Agribusiness on the social and economic empowerment of women in Apostolic Church North Central Geo-political zone, Nigeria.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	Df	t-cal	t-crit.	P
Married	416	3.08	0.929	0.047	629	1.585	1.96	0.113
Single	215	2.95	1.019	0.069				

Calculated P>0.05, calculated t < 1.96 at df 629

Results of the independent sample t-test statistics in table 3 revealed that, there is no significant difference in the opinions of married and single women about impact of agribusiness on the social and economic empowerment of women in The Apostolic Church North Central Geo-political zone, Nigeria. Reason is that, the calculated p value of 0.113 is higher than 0.05 alpha level of significance, while the t-calculated value 1.585 is lower than 1.96, at df 629. This means that the null hypothesis is hereby accepted and retained.

Hypothesis II: There are no significant difference in the opinions of members and church officers about the challenges faced by women in agribusiness.

Table 4: Independent Sample T-test about the challenges faced by women in agribusiness.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	Df	t-cal	t-crit.	P
Members	260	2.65	0.956	0.058	629	1.026	1.96	0.305
Church officers	371	2.57	0.98	0.05				

Calculated P>0.05, Calculated t< 1.96 at df 629

Results of the independent sample t-test statistics in table 4 showed that there is no significant difference in the opinions of members and church officers about the challenges faced by women in agribusiness in the study area. The reason is that the calculated p-value of 0.305 is higher than 0.5 alpha level of significance while the t-calculated value 1.026 is lower than 1.96 at df 629. This means that the null hypothesis is hereby accepted and retained.

Discussion of Results

From the analysis of data collected and interviews conducted, it could be said that agribusiness has significant impact on the social and economic empowerment of women in the study area, as majority of the respondents agreed in their opinions that agribusiness has significant impact on poverty alleviation of women in the study area, as Agribusiness ventures such as commercial crop production and processing provides women with opportunities to generate income and Engagement in agribusiness can provide a consistent source of income. This findings is consistent with James and Somer, (2023), which agrees with Oyama & Otu (2021) that agribusiness training programme serves as source of food and income for many people living in poverty thereby leading to poverty reduction.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the major challenges faced by women in agribusiness includes: inadequate funding and lack of competent individuals to handle the programme among others, this strengthens the assertion of Dauda (2019) that other challenges of poverty alleviation programmes includes poor funding, lack of qualified or competent persons to handle the programmes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that:

Impact of agribusiness on the social and economic empowerment of Women is high, as agribusiness ventures such as commercial crop production and processing provides women with opportunities to generate or have consistent income, have financial stability and contribute greatly to food security of the individual and the society at large.

The challenges faced by women in agribusiness include: inadequate funding, difficulty in accessing land for cultivation, lack of modern agricultural input and high cost of transportation.

Recommendations

The followings are put forward as recommendations:

1. The women agribusiness can be empowered using qualified crop extension workers and other agric experts on how to store and protect crops
2. The Apostolic Church authority should ensure that fund in form of grant or loan should be given to women who show interest in agribusiness as this will enable them to fully harness the potential of Agribusiness.

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