

Poverty alleviation and socio-economic development of Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to examine poverty alleviation and socio-economic development of Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State. Several poverty alleviation programmes including the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI); the better life programme (BLP); the peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN); the Family Support Programme (FSP); the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) among others were introduced as measures to improve the living conditions of the poor as well as their socio-economic wellbeing. At the inception of the current democratic government, many Nigerians were made to believe that poverty alleviation was the ultimate goal of the present government. The government has tried to reduce poverty in recent time through upward reviewed of salaries and wages. However, the inflationary trends which often accompany such increase in wages need to be checked by ensuring that aggregate supply of goods and services is implemented. To achieve the purpose of this study, three null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the five council ward while quota non-probability sampling technique was adopted in selecting the two hundred respondents used for the study. A twenty-five item four point Likert type questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistical Technique was used for data analysis. The result obtained from analysis of data revealed that there is a significant relationship between vocational skills training, salary increment and poverty alleviation in the study area. Based on these findings it was recommended that, implementing partners of poverty alleviation programmes should ensure that such programmes are preceded by need assessment to identify people's areas of need and design programmes that would sufficiently address such identified felt needs among individuals.

Keywords: Poverty alleviation, development, unemployment and socio-economic wellbeing

Introduction

The reduction of poverty is the most difficult challenge facing any country in the developing world. The average majority of the population is considered poor. Evidence in Nigeria showed that the number of those in poverty has continued to increase, for example; the number of those in poverty increased from 27 percent in 1980 to 46 percent in 1985, it declined slightly to 42 percent in 1992 and increased very sharply to 67 percent in 1996. By 1999, when democracy returned to the country, estimate had it that more than 70 percent of Nigerians live in poverty (CBN, 2020). This was the reason the government declared in November 1999 that the N470 billion budget for 2000 was "to relieve poverty". Before the national assembly even passed the 2000 budget, the government got an approval to commit N10billion naira to poverty alleviation programme (Ogwunike, 2024).

In the 2001 budget, the government increased the N10billion allocation from poverty allocation programme by 150%. The idea of poverty alleviation was received with high hopes especially given the speed with which the Obasanjo administration tackled the fuel problem as soon as it came to power. Poverty alleviation was seen as a means through which the government can revamp the bartered economy and rebuild self-esteem in the majority of Nigerians who had been dehumanized through past military regime. With wide publicity that heralded its coming, poverty alleviation programmes raised the hope of many Nigerians especially, the poor who had great expectation from the programme. So far, one can say with some air of certainty that the aim of this seemingly laudable programme has failed. As usual, the poor have heard but not felt it. The target population for poverty alleviation programme in most part of the country is yet to feel its impact (Uche, 2015).

Notable poverty reduction related programmes that were put in place in Nigeria before the introduction of the structural adjustment programme, (SAP) include operation feed the nation (OFN), Free and Compulsory primary education, Green Revolution, etc. conscious policy effort by government towards poverty alleviation began in Nigeria during the era of the structural adjustment programme. The severe economic crisis in Nigeria in the early 1980s worsened the quality of life of the most Nigerians. The government made determined effort to check the crisis through the adoption of SAP. However, implementation of SAP further worsened the living condition of many Nigerians the poor who were the most vulnerable group. The national directorate of employment (NDE) was the main organ for employment creation during this period. The objective of the NDE includes: to design and implement programmes, to combat mass unemployment, and articulate policies aimed at developing work programmes with labour intensive potentials (Ogwunike & Aromolaran, 2020).

Several poverty alleviation programmes including the directorate of food, road and rural infrastructure (DFRRI); the better life programme (BLP); the peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN); the Family Support Programme (FSP); The Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) among others were introduced as measures to

improve the living conditions of the poor as well as their Socio-economic wellbeing. At the inception of the current democratic government, many Nigerians were meant to believe that poverty alleviation was the ultimate goal of the present government. The government has tried to reduce poverty recently through upward review of salaries and wages. For example, those who were pushed into temporary and transitory poverty, especially in the civil service and during SAP, are gradually moved out of poverty through this process. However, the inflationary trends which often accompany such increase in wages needs to be checked by ensuring that aggregate supply of goods and services is increased. This calls for incentive structures that can encourage adequate investment in the real sector of the economy (Archibong, 2015).

Poverty in Etung Local Government Area can be explained in terms of the situation of the political power. Those who rule are in the minority while those who are governed are in the majority. Poverty in the study area results from the proportionate distribution of opportunities, income and national wealth by the ruling few. In doing this, majority of people in the area are marginalized. This marginalization pushes deprived people further into poverty. With wide publicity that heralded its coming, poverty alleviation programmes raised the hope of many Nigerians, especially the poor who had great expectation from the programme. So far, one can say with some air of certainty that the aim of this seemingly laudable programme has almost failed. Like other intervention programmes that preceded it, the rich are getting richer (particularly PDP Stalwart) while the poor are becoming poorer and resources meant for the programmes handed into private accounts. The standard of living of those in the study area has continued to deteriorate. The consequences of these conditions have tended, to militate against the rapid development of the area. Most skills acquisitions training programme designed to promote entrepreneurship development among the youths and unemployed are haphazardly implemented. As a result, more people are pushed further into poverty, unemployment is also on the increase while agricultural development has also been given very little attention.

The government of Nigeria recognizes the central role of poverty reduction, but an effective strategy will require a strong and focused emphasis on economic growth, access to social services and infrastructures and targeting the poor. Long term growth will depend critically upon increasing the access of poor people to quality social services and essential infrastructure. Key priorities are healthy, education, water supplies and sanitation, rural roads, and urban transport. Access could be made sustainable through increased community participation in problem-solving, in the provision of services (Oyebanji, 2024).

The value of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is increasingly being recognized by governments, while countries such as Germany have over the past half century built successful industries supported by effective technical and vocational education and training programmes and others like the Republic of Korea have done the same. More recently, many developing countries are beginning to prioritize TVET in an attempt to prepare their youth for productive employment. At a recent UNESCO international meeting of high-level education policy makers in Bonn, Germany, participants concluded that since education is considered the key to effective development strategies, technical, and vocational education and training must be the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development (McOnish & Pendera, 2016).

At the end of 2015, Beadforlife (Non-governmental organization) had nearly 150 women involved in their beading activities, which in addition to providing direct support to the women through the sale of their beads and jewelry. This benefited approximately 1,270 additional people through housing improvements, sending money to family, employing others and the improvement in the lives of their children and families. To increase the impact of their programme, Beadforlife decided to increase access of more women by "graduating" each group of enrollees after two years (Yusuf, 2015).

The major objective of skills acquisition programmes is to promote income generation. The thrust of such programmes has been in the promotion, training and advisory services in income generating activities. Increased income generating activities among the people, urban or rural will help to alleviate poverty. Non formal education programmes are usually organized for the participants to acquire skills in sewing, manufacturing of mats, bafik and tie-dye fabric design, aprons, Woven sisal handicrafts, cane chairs and tables as well as production confectioneries. Skills and knowledge of artisans such as mechanics, carpenters, bricklayers, panel beaters, and auto spray painters could be improved in such workshops. Even when the people have acquired various survival skills, they must be exposed in the skills of business management. The training in business management includes how to manage bank accounts, stock-taking and general book-keeping (Enukoha, 2022).

Communication technology for easy and effective communication

Many artisans in Nigeria have very good practical skills in their various trades but often they do not have the faintest idea of the theory behind whatever they are doing. It is not being advocated that the electrician, for instance should be trained into an electrical engineer, but within the contest of the job of the electrician, he/she

should understand and appreciate the relationship between the voltage, the current and resistance. How these three electrical components influence, one another must be understood. A proper understanding of them may help the electrician to avoid some accidents that could occur in the work situation. In this context, non-formal education and training for these artisans become inevitable (Akintola, 2024).

Policy makers in many least developed countries particularly in Africa are now convinced that equipping young people with vocational skills linked with entrepreneurship development training is a promising path to empowering them to escape the trap of poverty. In the absence of wage employment, young people with vocational skills must set up their own businesses that provide services that their communities need. This is also expected to have the beneficial effect cranking up the local economy from within instead of creating a culture of dependence on external assistance. In rural communities, vocational skills training graduates have the ability to add value to agricultural products and traditional arts and crafts. In this way, they can contribute to preserving the culture and tradition of those communities and reduce migration to urban centres. Vocational skills development in sewing, weaving, fashion designing, mechanic, soap making, hat making, etc has been widely recognized as a reliable path out of poverty (McOnish & Penner, 2016).

According to Abdullhi (2023) traditionally, it was thought that skills acquisition in soap making, fashion designing, carpentry, hair dressing, tie-die, arts and crafts did not create employment. Globalization is rapidly changing this perception, as China and India, the most obvious examples, have demonstrated in recent years. If industries based on older technologies relocate to countries where labour is cheaper, African policy makers would like to see their countries positioned to take advantage of these opportunities as well. The challenge is to transform young people completing primary and lower secondary education into workers with the knowledge, skills and attitude to be adaptable, flexible and competitive. This will enable them become self-reliant by being able to generate income and subsequently come out of poverty.

Sustainable human resources development could not be developed through the classic Technical and Vocational Educational and Training (TVET) models that focused on specialized workshop skills. Rather, generic "soft" skills like working in teams, problem-solving ability and entrepreneurship are more important for today's Industries where specialized skills can be acquired on the job. In fact, prospective employers prefer employees who possess these soft skills so that they can be trained according to the specific requirements of their industry. In Germany, as many as 65 percent of all young people receive some form of vocational training. These programmes impart not only the traditional skills but also the skills that under technological innovations because developed countries need to generate new products and services as the older industries relocate in developing countries (World Bank, 2020).

Vocational skills development in bead-making, carpentry, tailoring, hair making, hat making, arts and crafts in the country reveal that people enroll because they wish to "learn for livelihood". Thus, skills in such vocations as hair dressing, laundry, soap production, clothing and textile production (bafik, gara tie and dyeing); sewing dress making; vegetable gardening; food processing and preservation; carpentry, mechanics etc. combined with literacy and numeracy skills are acquired with three to nine months. The grandaunt would then enter the job market or set up their own businesses. The curriculum might include not only literacy, numeracy and vocational skills training but also group formation management of groups, business management and other life-skills topics. Economic empowerment of the participants through adult and non-formal training programmes is an effective strategy for poverty reduction (Thompson, 2022).

To gradually reduce the number of people in poverty, growth must not only be rapid but also broad-based export enhancing and employment generating. Such growth can be achieved by emphasizing the expansion of the sources of growth away from excessive dependence on oil production into other areas that can generate increased employment and income. The government must focus its efforts on the policy aspects necessary for improving the quality of its human resources and rely more on the informal and formal private sector to increase capital investment (Akintola, 2024). Today, Nigerians who are lucky to have jobs are finding it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to survive on their monthly pay. The major reason for this is that the pay of the Nigerian worker is not only one of the lowest in the world; it has also not improved as it should in the face of changes in market conditions. Workers in the public sectors are particularly worse off as huge revenues have continued to be acquired from the sweat of workers. The pay and conditions of workers have continued to deteriorate; workers have increasingly been excluded from the wealth created by their labour (Vanguard, 2020).

According to Obadan (2017) if the United Nation's Index of poverty which is an income of less than \$1 (one dollar) per day is used to assess the situation in Nigeria, one will find that even with the present revised many Nigerian are still revised salaries for public servants, living below poverty line. The government has tried to put some poverty alleviation programmes in place but, poverty can be effectively checked if only the problems of material poverty are addressed. It becomes imperative therefore to emphasize the need for an upward review of

workers minimum wage in the country in order to boost their purchasing and help them climb out of the depths of poverty (Lawani, 2024). This is not the first time workers would be asking for an upward general review of wages and an increase in the national minimum wage. Between 1945 when workers staged the famous 45 days general strike for a cost of Living Allowance (COLA) and 2017, when the demand won by workers for a 25% general wage increase through the Ernest Shonekan consolidation committee was arbitrarily cut down to 15% by Obasanjo. Workers have struggled for 15 times to have wages improved and a national minimum wage legislated upon, but the struggle produced notable victories for workers and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC, 2018). It was usually the case that the national minimum wage was always set below the minimum Wage needed by workers to survive. Because of the inadequacy of the wage, some state governments decided on their own to pay more. Even then, there were also some state governments that pay less than the stipulated national minimum wage (Nelson, 2018).

Government workers in Nigeria are getting excited about the new minimum wage of N18,000. It is widely believed that what Nigerian Workers need is not a new statutory minimum wage. They will be better off if the government focus her attention on arresting the factors responsible for eroding the purchasing power of the workers income. If the present attitude of our leaders in maintaining the social infrastructures continue, the nearly approved statutory minimum wage will have less than the purchasing power of the old N7,500 minimum wage. Everyone would have been better off, if government has concentrated on improving the supply of electricity and repairing the roads. These two factors alone cost an average worker thousands of naira per month, so many funds is wasted from each worker's income as they struggle to provide energy using petrol generator. The cost of transportation is also high because commercial vehicle owners pay heavily for maintenance of their vehicles due to bad roads and poor networks (Nwabueze, 2021).

The National Assembly in Nigeria has passed the new national minimum wage bill into law, after the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has given his assent to the bill. The new national minimum wage is stipulated to become operational from August, 2011. It is hoped that the new minimum wage for Nigerian workers will help boost their socio-economic well-being and usher them out of poverty. The state governments are already crying foul over the federal government action. They claim they can't afford to pay the new minimum wage. This shouldn't come as a surprise to us, knowing full well that some owe their workers more than one month salary (at the old minimum wage rate). The private sector will now have to contend with disgruntled automatic increase in their disgruntled workers who will be expecting because of the pronouncement of the federal government. Unfortunately, many workers in private organizations will be disappointed (Adebasin 2021).

Poverty is particularly prevalent among non-workers. Yet, there are some poor persons who do work even some who work full time (year-round). The negative effects of minimum wages in creating unemployment are not directly present among those working full-time, who by definition are fortunate enough to avoid losing their jobs. Surely, if increases in minimum wage are effective in reducing poverty for any group of workers, it would be for this group. Not only in every case was there no statistically significant relationship between changes in the real minimum wage and the poverty rate among full-time Workers, but also every observed relationship was positive. This implies that higher poverty in the United States. The results were statistically not significant; however, the most appropriate interpretation is to simply reject the hypothesis that increased minimum wages lowers poverty among the working poor.

Education has been described as the most vital instrument and a driver of the development of any society. According to Ngurukwem (2022), education has long been identified as a tool for National Development because of its potentials in developing human resources. This explains the high premium placed on it, the huge investment in it, and the impetus to expand educational opportunities by various governments. The multiplier effect of education on the individual and society as a whole is so overwhelming that no nation toys with the education of its citizenry. The realizations of the potentials of education underline the efforts of successive governments in Nigeria to align or re-align educational policies and objectives. On 30th September, 1999, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo formally launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme. The UBE scheme aims at providing basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age thereby reducing the level of illiteracy and subsequent reduction in poverty levels.

Ugwu (2022) maintains that technical education is concerned with the body of knowledge organized in a planned sequence of classroom and laboratory experience of post-secondary school levels. Technical education combines the learning of complex skill with adequate scientific and technological work from basic research to industrial production. It prepares students for a number of job opportunities in specialized fields and fields and can individuals for that occupational area between the skilled craftsman and the professional person such as the scientist, the engineer or the doctor, it embodies the study of underlying sciences, Mathematics, some care technical subjects inherent in technology such as technical drawing, mechanics, electrical/electronics, woodworking, building and welding technology (Obumneke, 2019).

Oden (2024) asserts that education remains a key factor in social mobilization, evaluation and progress. Consequently, every society utilizes it as a means of developing the abilities of its citizens to the full in order to earn a living in a congenial way as possible. Education is also believed to enhance an individual's capacity to contribute to his society's advancement. All these have informed various educational innovations in different countries including Nigeria. Nigeria's faith in education as a tool for giving the individual a solid foundation for attainment in life is expressed in various educational programmes at different times. These include the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme, which aimed at giving citizens free and qualitative education; and the 6-3-3-4 system of education, which sought to cater for both academic oriented individuals and vocational oriented ones.

The concept of Education for All (EFA) in Nigeria, particularly at the primary school level is not a new phenomenon. The government programme ensures that its citizenry had access to free and compulsory primary education first commenced in Western Region in 1955, followed by the East in 1957 and then Federal Government in 1976. The provision of education at this level to these governments according to Ndu (2019) was an inalienable right of the child and to Omosu (2020), it is a tool for the integration of the individual into the society, so that he can achieve self-realization, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological progress. It is the only things that can help facilitate the elimination of ignorance, illiteracy, disease, unemployment and poverty among the people (Usang, 2016).

According to Ofodile (2024), literacy affords individuals in the society a chance to develop their potentials through formal and informal institutions. The ability to read, write and calculate is the foundation upon which further learning takes place or is attained. The socioeconomic development of any nation is largely dependent on the quality and productive capacity of its own human resources. Literacy is springboard upon which an individual acquire the basic knowledge and skills required to achieve set goals and aspirations in life. It equips an individual with necessary skills and expertise which serves as pre-requisite for occupying positions of authority that promotes well-being and improved living standards. Literacy empowers individuals with basic knowledge and skills that ensures self-sufficiency and reliance. It qualifies an individual for certain opportunities which requires ability to read, write and use numbers. Literacy broadens on individual's scope in life, providing various avenues and opportunities to attain greater strides, live comfortably and contribute meaningfully to the development of his family, community and nation in general.

Basic education is an investment in human capital. In whatever direction we look, we will find out that education is a powerful tool of social progress. Anyone working with it is working with probably the most powerful instrument man has yet devised for his own improvement, In terms of economic development, basic education has multiple functions to perform. The most important is that, it creates well-educated people who will bring their talent, knowledge, skills and experience to bear as they function in various capacities in the economic and social organizations of the nation (Anderson, 2023). Technical education involves the academic and practical study of materials, sources of energy and natural phenomenon with the ultimate intention of applying these to the service of man. It deals with the body and of knowledge, skills and procedures for making, using and doing things. It provides the type of knowledge and skills which, if properly harnessed, enable the society solve the problem of how to use available resources and scientific knowledge to improve the quality of life for her people. Nigeria therefore, can only join other nations of the world in the race for technological advancement by making opportunities for technological education available to all her citizenry. This is necessary because, according to Nnabuke (2019), technical education is the oil in the wheel of technological advancement of a nation. The acquisition of technical education or literacy has the potentials for empowering individuals to become self-reliant and out of poverty (Ugwu, 2022).

The promotion of literacy is part of a wider effect directed towards increasing awareness among most developing nations and it is imperative for the creation and functioning of modern society. For instance, if a substantial percentage of the people become literate new literates will help to increase production and efficiency. It is in this light that one should see basic education as a major factor in national development. In this process, literacy has been seen to be an instrument of change, knowledge, better productivity and health, greater sense of value, greater efficiency, fairness and justice, greater sense of responsibility, crucial consciousness, reflection and contemplation. Every citizen should strive hard to possess most of these qualities in order to develop themselves and the nation at large. Education help individuals attain personal well-being and living standards so as to be able to contribute meaningfully to the development of their communities and nation (Inah, 2017).

Implementations of livelihood support strategies are very important in promoting socioeconomic development (Bassey & Nkpoyen, 2022).

Education in the past years was not a National cake due to the fact that, it was not everybody who could afford it. Going by this most parents never thought it wise that education which is the bedrock of every developed society was relevant, it is in view of this that researches have been carried out and it has observed that a greater

percentage of Nigerian children who are of school going age stay back at home while their peers go to school. It is in line with this that the federal government of Nigeria saw the need to provide free and compulsory nine years education for every Nigerian child of school going age. This was done through the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020).

The success of the Universal Basic Education scheme launched by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo has been a great concern to policy makers, educationists and parents alike. Expectations are high that the programme will ensure equal educational opportunity to millions of Nigerian youths to develop their individual capacities to the highest level and climb out of poverty (Effiong, 2022).

Theoretical framework

The following theories are adopted as the framework for this study. This is to help explain the interrelationship that exists among variables in the study.

Social provisional approach

The basic assumption of the social provisional perspective is that society is complex and experiences change constantly. Its chief proponent, Thompson, B. O. (2002), believes that as an integral part of society, the personal, group or community problems could be provided for by the social system. Thus, the proponent of the social provisional approach place emphasis on the right of society members especially as it to equality of access to the resources and opportunities that society has to offer. Furthermore, the social provisional perspectives attach particular importance to responsiveness of the community and relevant social institutions to the numerous personal and social problems, especially as they affect individuals in the society generally. The implication of this theory to the present study is that individuals and social groups believe strongly that the resources and opportunities they require to overcome their poor status can be provided by the government through various poverty alleviation programme. This is the reason why poverty alleviation initiatives are usually greeted with great expectations by majority of the poor in Nigeria. Youths usually revolt against the government when they observed that, they have been grossly marginalized or deprived of their rights by the government. Government of various levels have now realized this fact and are now embarking on various poverty alleviation programmes that are aimed at improving the quality of life of the poor.

Problem solving approach

The problem solving approach views social life as a continuous problem solving process. Also it holds that given certain conditions, individuals could solve their own problems, as well as cope with different challenges of social life. Thus, for the proponent of this theory, given certain resources and opportunities, in addition to Social support: individuals could effectively tackle their own problems. The proponent of this theory is Siporin (1975). The theory emphasizes that individuals could be helped if their immediate and specific difficulties are identified from the foregoing. It is evident that the major goal of the problem solving approach as observed by Siporin is to assist individuals attain a system of goals to effect outcomes of efficient productivity, as well as self-realization. The implication of this approach to the present study is that, most people in Nigeria are poor because they lack the resources and opportunities that would enable them live a productive life and achieve their aspirations as well as cope in a world of unequal opportunities. Poverty alleviation programmes are usually designed to act as a bridge between individuals and the realization of their goals. They are obstacles to their self-realization in the society. The problems solving theory also emphasizes that most problems faced by the poor can be overcome if government at all levels initiate poverty alleviation programmes in order to provide certain resources and opportunities that would enable people solve their problems.

Research methodology

Research design

The Ex-post facto research design was considered most suitable for the study. It basically studies phenomena after they have occurred. This study examines poverty alleviation and socio-economic development in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State. The purpose of this study can be achieved using the Ex-post facto research design because the manifestations of the independent variables have already occurred.

Area of the study

The study is based in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State, which is in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State and was carved out from the former Ikom Local Government Area in 1996. The headquarters is at Effraya. It has a land mass of 833.07 square kilometers, and shares an international boundary with the Republic of Cameroon to the East. It is bounded in the North by the Ikom Local Government in the south by Obubra and Akamkpa local Government Areas. In addition, Etung has 16 clans and over 300 villages. There are ten local political wards: Abia, Abijang, Agbokim, Ajassor, Bendeghe Ekiem, Effraya, Etomi, Itaka, Mkpote and Nsofang.

The people of Etung Local Government Area speak the Etung dialect of the Ejagham Language. The rich culture heritage of the people of Etung is well known. They use Dundun drums, wooden gongs at festivals and annual traditional yam festivals. There is also title holding societies like the Mgbe to ensure that power and authority are maintained. Those who pass through Mgbe initiation can be trusted in matters of wars and political decision-making management of homes or human relations. The Etung people like most other groups in Cross River State are said to be of the Bantu race, which are believed to have migrated from Central Africa to their present abode.

Population of the study

Records from the 2006 population census of Nigeria show that there are 80,196 persons in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State. The population consists of males and females engaged in various occupations including civil service, students, trading, business, farming, fishing among others. Every adult resident in Calabar Municipality constitute the target population for this study.

Sample and sampling technique

The sample for this study comprises two hundred (200) respondents selected from five council wards in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State. Forty respondents were selected from each of the five council wards in the study area. The simple random sampling technique was considered most suitable for selecting the council wards used for the study. The researcher is conversant with the study area. She wrote the names of the eleven (11) council wards on pieces of paper and folded into ball- like shapes. The paper balls were poured into a container and properly mixed. Five persons were selected to pick a paper-ball each from the Controller. The council wards whose names appeared on the picked pieces of paper were used for the study.

In selecting the respondents used for the study, the quota non-probability sampling technique was adopted. This is a method that allows for stratification and the inclusion of the various elements of the population in the sample, making it representative of the study population. Respondents within the study population who were willing to participate in the study were selected as samples for the study.

Instrument for data collection

The instrument considered most appropriate for data collection is the questionnaire. It was tagged "Poverty Alleviation and Socio-Economic Development Questionnaire (PASDQY)". The instrument was divided into two parts; Part A contained items on respondents' personal data. Part B was designed using four points Likert scale of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD); it contains items covering the variable of the study with each variable being represented by five items in the questionnaire.

Method of data collection

Data used for the study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data refers to raw information obtained directly from respondents through the use of questionnaires, interviews or observation. The primary data used for the study was obtained directly from respondents through the use of questionnaire. The researcher visited all the Council wards selected for the study to administer the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered, retrieved, coded and scores obtained were used for data collection. The secondary data refers to processed and documented information by an author or researcher. The secondary sources of data were textbooks, journals, internet and other research sources.

Method of data analysis

Data obtained from respondents through the use of questionnaires was coded and figures obtained were presented in tables and analyzed using Pearson product Moment Correlation Statistical Technique. This statistical tool is used to determine the relationship between two variables. The formula is presented below:

$$R_{xy} = \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{(\sqrt{N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2})(\sqrt{N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2})}$$

Data presentation

The analysis of data obtained from respondents through the use of questionnaires designed for data collection was used in the study. It covers computation and presentation of data, analysis and interpretation of results and discussion of findings. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Finally, findings arising from the study were discussed according.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

VARIABLES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Occupation		
Civil servant	58	29
Trading	41	20.5
Student	61	30.5
Business	40	20
TOTAL	200	100
Marital Status		
Single	69	34.5
Married	124	62
Divorced	7	3.5
TOTAL	200	100
Age		
18-25 years	39	19.5
26-35 years	53	26.5
36-45 years	44	32
46 and above	44	22
TOTAL	200	100
Educational Level		
FSLC	29	14.5
SSCE	36	33
NCE/OND	63	31.5
B.Sc	42	21
TOTAL	200	100

Source: Field work, 2025

Data presented in table I shows the occupation of respondents used in the study, 58 or 29% of the respondents were civil servants, 41 or 20.5% were traders, 61 or 30.5% were students while 40 or 20% were business man and women. Data presented in table 2 shows that 69 or 34.5% of the respondents were singles, 124 or 62% were married while 7 or 3.5% were divorced. Data presented in table 3 shows the age distribution of respondents used for the study. it reveals 39 or 19.5% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-25 years, 53 or 26.5% were between the ages of 26-35 years 44 or 32% were between the ages of 36-45year while 44 or 22% were 46 years and above. Data presented in table 4 shows the educational qualification of respondents. It reveals that 29 or 14.5% of the respondents had first school leaving Certificate, 36 or 33% had senior secondary Certificate, 63 or 31.5% had Nigeria certificate in education and National Diploma while 42 or 21% were graduates.

Data analysis and testing of hypotheses

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between vocational skills training/development and poverty alleviation (N = 200)

Variables	Ex	Ey	Ex ²	Ey ²	Exy	Cal-r
Educational skills training	2824		7974976		5497	0.286
Poverty alleviation		2673		7144929		

Significant at 0.05, $df = 0.138$

Data presented in table 2 shows that the null hypothesis Is rejected. The result obtained from analysis of data reveals that, the calculated r- value of 0.286 is greater than the critical r- value of 0.138 at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between vocational skills training/development and poverty alleviation in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between salary increment and poverty alleviation (N = 200)

Variables	Ex	Ey	Ex ²	Ey ²	Exy	Cal-r
Salary Increment	2783		7745089		5456	0.274
Poverty alleviation		2673		7144929		

Significant at 0.05, $df = 198$; Critical $r = 0.138$

Data presented in table 3 shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. The result obtained from analysis of data reveals that, the calculated r -value of 0.274 is greater than the critical r -value of 0.138 at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between salary increment and poverty alleviation in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between education and poverty alleviation (N = 200)

Variables	Ex	Ey	Ex ²	Ey ²	Exy	Cal-r
Education	2520		6350400		5193	0.134
Poverty Alleviation		2673		7144929		

Significant at 0.05, $df = 198$; Critical $r = 0.138$

Data presented in table 4 shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. The result obtained from analysis of data reveals that, the calculated r -value of 0.134 is greater than the critical r -value of 0.138 at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between provision of education and poverty alleviation in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Discussion of findings

Finding from analysis of hypothesis one which states that, there is no significant relationship between Vocational skills training/development and poverty alleviation shows that, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result obtained from analysis of data revealed that, the calculated r -value of 0.138 at 0.05 level of significance with degree of freedom. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between vocational skills training /development and poverty alleviation in Etung Local Government Area.

They agreed with the finding of Erukoha (2022) which state that the major of objective of skill acquisition programmers is to promote income generation. The trust of such programmers has been in the promotion, training and advisory services in income generating activities among the people, urban or rural will help to alleviate poverty. Non formal education programmes are usually organized for the participants to acquire and skills in sewing, batik and tie-dye fabric design, manufacturing of mats aprons, woven sisal handicrafts, came chair and table as well as production confectioneries.

Thompson (2022) also supports that, vocational skills development in bead-marking, carpentry, tailoring, hair making, hat making, arts and crafts in the country reveals that people enroll because they wish to "learn for live hood". Thus, skills in such vocations has hair dressing, laundry, soap production, clothing and textile production combined with literacy and numeracy skills acquired within three to nine months. The graduates would then enter the job market or set up their own businesses. Economic empowerment of the participants through adult and non-formal training programmers is an effective strategy for poverty reduction.

Finding from analysis hypothesis two which states that, there is no significant relationship between salary increment and poverty alleviate shows that, the null hypothesis was rejected the result Obtained from analysis of data revealed that, the calculated r -value of 0.138 at 0.05 level of 0.274 is greater than the critical r -value of 0.138 at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. This implies that there is a significant relationship between salary increment and poverty alleviation in Calabar Municipality. This agrees with the finding of Periin (2022) which maintains that, poverty is particularly prevalent among non-workers.

Adebesin (2021) also report that, the National Assemble in Nigeria has pass the new National minimum wage bill in to law, after the president of federal republic of Nigeria has given his assents to the bill. The new National minimum wage for Nigeria workers help boosts their socio-economy well been and usher them out of poverty. They government are already crying foul over the federal government's actions. The claim they can't afford to pay the new minimum wage.

Findings from analysis of hypothesis three which states that there is no significant relationship between education and poverty alleviation shows that, the null hypothesis was upheld or accepted. The result obtained from analysis of data revealed that, the calculated r -value of 0.134 is less than the critical value of 0.138 at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. This implies that, there is no significant relationship between provision of education and poverty alleviation in Etung Local Government Area.

Summary

The main purpose of this study was to examine poverty alleviation and socio-economic development of Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State. To achieve the purpose of this study, three research questions were posed and transformed into three null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance. A detailed review of literature was carried out to assess what various relevant authors and researchers have already

documented on the variables of this study. The Ex-post facto research design was considered most suitable for the study. The simple random sampling technique was adapted in selecting the five council wards while the quota non-probability technique was adopted in selecting the two hundred respondents used for the study. A twenty-five item four point Likert scale type questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis statistical technique was used for data revealed that;

- i. There is a significant relationship between vocational skills training/development and poverty alleviation;
- ii. There is a significant relationship between salary increment and poverty alleviation;
- iii. There is significant relationship between provision of education and poverty alleviation.

Conclusion

The essence of this study was to investigate and present findings on poverty alleviation and socio-economic development of Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State. Findings from analysis of data and testing of hypotheses in the study revealed that, there is a significant relationship between vocational skills training/development: salary increment and poverty alleviation in the study area. Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world despite the fact the June 10, 2011 marked 55 years of oil exploration and production. During the period over \$400 billion occurred to the Nigerian states in terms of revenue. The question then is how much of this revenue found its way into the region where this oil is produced in the way of investment in infrastructure or the development of human capital. Such economic growth is yet to translate to economic development and an appreciation increase in the standard of living of the Nigerian masses. Poverty is a crisis that is habitual and it conveys a message of hardship difficult to deny. It speaks publicly through visible malnutrition. In response, governments at various levels have initiated various programmes with the aim of alleviating poverty among majority of Nigerians.

Recommendations

Based on findings from analysis of data and testing of hypotheses in the study, the researcher will strongly recommend that:

- i. Government and other relevant agencies should ensure that vocational skills trainings are regularly organized for the unemployed and unskilled youth in order to promote and expand existing poverty alleviation initiatives.
- ii. Salaries should be regularly increased for workers at various levels of government in order to boost their purchasing power and contribute to the eradication of poverty among various categories of workers.
- iii. Implementing partners of poverty alleviation programmes should ensure that such programmes are preceded by a need assessment to identify people's areas of need and design programmes that would sufficiently address such identified felt needs among individuals in the society.

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