

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN
COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN UDI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF
ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: *The actualization of Cooperatives development is one of the most common traits of the emerging economies. Government at all levels in different occasions has adopted one developmental strategy or the other, all aimed to successfully install cooperative development. This study had the objective of assessing the role of men and women in cooperative development in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State in Nigeria. The study employed primary sources of data. The primary data were collected through questionnaires using descriptive statistics. The results of the study indicated that the male cooperators contribute more to cooperative development than their female counterparts. The study concludes that cooperative societies in Udi should be properly and effectively managed. It was also recommended that cooperative societies should endeavour to improve their management skills, balance gender inequality and enhance the personal welfare of members so as to facilitate cooperative development in Udi Local Government Area.*

KEYWORDS: Cooperatives, Development, Descriptive, Gender-Inequality, Government, Skills

INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary 6th Edition posits that men and women are collectively referred to as gender. Gender is the socio-cultural phenomenon of the division of people into various categories such as men and women, with each having associated roles which the society considers appropriate for them to perform. Gender concept simply refers to the socially-determined and culturally specific differences between women and men as opposed to the biological determined differences. Reeves and Baden (2000) see gender as the “socially determined ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male; these ideas and practices are sanctioned and reinforced by a host of cultural, political and economic institutions including household, legal and governance structure, markets and religion. Gender which is commonly used interchangeably with ‘sex’ within the academic fields is often refers to purely social rather than biological differences, this means that ‘gender roles’ are formed through socialization. Meanwhile, the concept, gender is an important analytical tool in planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of development programs or cooperative projects which requires that women are considered in relation to men in a socio-cultural setting and not as an isolated group (Akubuilu, Ugwu & Attah, 2011).

According to ICA (1995) the “principle of democratic member control” entails that cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. Today, in an era when many people feel powerless to change their lives, the need for cooperatives development represents a strong,

vibrant, and viable economic alternative. Men and women form cooperatives societies so as to meet peoples' mutual needs. They are based on the powerful idea that together, a group of people can achieve goals that none of them could achieve alone.

For many years now, cooperatives have been an effective way for people to exert control over their economic livelihoods. They provide a unique tool for achieving one or more economic goals in an increasingly competitive global economy. As governments around the world cut services and withdraw from regulating markets, cooperatives are being considered useful mechanisms to manage risk for members in Agricultural or other similar cooperatives, help salary/wage earners save for the future through a soft-felt monthly contribution. Therefore, cooperatives generally provide an economic boost to the community.

Incidentally, cooperative despite its old age is not very popular in Nigeria. Only recently worker cooperatives started gaining ground among working class citizens, most of who find it difficult to save part of their salaries/wages for the rainy day. Hitherto, cooperative societies were thought to be associations meant only for farmers, small traders and other very low-income earners. This explains why quite a number of cooperative farmers are found, particularly in southern Nigeria.

The problem is that many people do not know much about cooperative development, its mechanisms and role in economic development, and how it is considered in the world as a *Third Force*, an alternative and countervailing power to both big business and big government (Dogarawa, 2005).

Co-operatives development in developing countries like Nigeria is generally a very difficult task. The lag in cooperative development is attributed a number of compelling reasons which calls for detail investigation for possible resolution. One of the issues is that many people do not know much about cooperative development while those that are aware faces problems of poor management, poor working condition of staff, government intervention and lack of effective national integration of the cooperative movement among others. However, according to Nicita and Razza (2002), Gender imbalance in employment, job status, poverty status and earnings over time constitute the major problems affecting the development of cooperative industries. The understanding of the nature of these disparities and acting forcefully to remove them is one of the key tasks of resolving the issue. Cooperative development could successfully be improved by supporting the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which targets to promote gender equality. Gender inequality directly or indirectly limits cooperative development in Udi LGA of Enugu State which results in the unequal distribution of the benefits of development and hinders women participation in the development process.

It has been observed that women all over the world especially in Nigeria form a significant percentage of the world today hence the need for their active involvement in cooperatives and rural development. A good number of studies have also shown that the involvement of governments and parastatals in the national economies has been harmful in many ways and as a result, they are called upon to intervene less, and to let markets work. In a number of countries, government policy has consisted of approaches that resulted in less rather than more effective operation of cooperative organizations.

From the foregoing submissions, it is clear that the task of establishing the relationship between gender and cooperative development is yet to be rested.

Hence, this study apparently tends to review the role of men and women in cooperative development in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Conceptual Issues and Review of Related Literature

The process of developing and sustaining a cooperative involves the processes of developing and promoting community spirit, identity and social organization as cooperatives play an increasingly important role worldwide in poverty reduction, facilitating job creation, economic growth and social development (Gibson,2005).

International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) (2010), defines cooperative as an autonomous association of persons unified voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs through a jointly-owned and democratically controlled enterprise. It is a business voluntarily owned and controlled by its member patrons and operates for them and by them on a non-profit basis. It is also a business enterprise that offers a framework for small-holder famers to come together to share a complete identity of the component factors of ownership control and use of services (Nweze, 2001: as cited by Ibitoye, 2009).

In Enugu State of Nigeria, government has established several institutions devoted to the study and development of cooperatives. These include the Federal Cooperative College, Oji-River, the Department of Cooperative and Rural Development of the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) and the Centre for Rural Development and Cooperatives (CRDC) in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) which maintains a strong presence in Enugu State with its Eastern zonal headquarters located in Enugu in addition to four branches of the bank in the state. With this array of cooperative institutions in the state, it is important to note that Cooperatives Societies in Nigeria like their counterparts all over the world are formed to meet people's mutual needs. Cooperatives are considered useful mechanism to manage risks for member in agriculture. Through cooperatives, farmers could pool their limited resources together to improve agricultural output and this will enhance socio-economic activities in the rural areas (Ebonyi and Jimoh, 2002).

Cooperatives are viewed as important tools for improving the living and working conditions of both women and men. Since the users of the services they provide owned them, cooperatives make decisions that balance the need for profitability with the welfare of their members and the community, which they serve. As cooperatives foster economies of scope and scale, they increase the bargaining power of their members providing them, among others benefits, higher income and social protection. Hence, cooperatives accord members opportunity, protection and empowerment - essential elements in uplifting them from degradation and poverty (Somavia, 2002:12). As governments around the world cut services and withdraw from regulating markets, cooperatives are being considered useful mechanisms to manage risk for members and keep markets efficient (Henehan, 1997). In a number of ways, cooperatives play important role in global and national economic and social development. With regard to economic and social development, cooperatives promote the "fullest participation of all people" and facilitate a more equitable distribution of the benefits of globalization. They contribute to sustainable human development and have an important role to play in combating social exclusion. Thus the promotion of cooperatives should be considered as one of the pillars of national and international economic and social development (Levin, 2002). In addition to the direct benefits they provide to members, cooperatives strengthen the communities in which they operate. According to Somavia (2002) cooperatives are specifically seen as significant tools for the

creation of decent jobs and for the mobilization of resources for income generation. Many cooperatives provide jobs and pay local taxes because they operate in specific geographical regions. According to Wikipedia (2006) and Levin (2002) it is estimated that cooperatives employ more than 100 million men and women worldwide.

Levi (2005) asserted that cooperatives employed more than 100 million men and women worldwide. In Nigeria cooperative provide locally needed services, employment and input to farmers, cooperatives also provide opportunities to farmers to organize themselves into groups for the purpose of providing services which will facilitate output of members.

According to Nweze (2002) cooperative societies serve as avenues for input distribution. Through their nation-wide structure, they have developed strong and reliable arrangements for the distribution of food crops, fertilizers, agro-chemicals, credits, seeds, and seedlings.

Hermida (2008) reported that cooperatives provide 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. They could also be trained informally through the attendance of national and international conference and seminars. The most important reasons for cooperative failure in Nigeria according to Borgens (2001) include; the shortage of trained managers, lack of understanding of the principle and approaches of cooperatives and inability of cooperative member to cope with the modern methods and tools of production. Malthus (1999) also identified some of the problems facing cooperatives in Nigeria to include; shortage of skilled personnel, inadequate financing, excessive government control and lack of trust among members. Onje (2003) added that the problem of dishonesty among cooperative leaders is another factors retarding the growth of cooperative in Nigeria. According to Borgens (2001), the participation of cooperatives in marketing of agricultural produce is low as result of poor organizational structure, inadequate infrastructural facilities and administrative bottlenecks.

The Theoretical Framework guiding this study is the theory of structural functionalism and its perspective on women and development. Structural functionalism refers to the analysis of the various parts of society, family, government, education etc, in terms of the way they function to promote social order and harmony. This orientation, which originated in the work of Spencer and Durkheim, became the dominant perspective in sociology of the twentieth century. Both Spencer and Durkheim used the organic analogy in which they compared a society to a living organism. A society as a structure has specialized parts that function and inter relate for the operation of the whole, just as specialized organs function to create equilibrium in the physical organism. In extension services delivery today, there is a new drive for infusion of a better relationship among farmers, extension agents and researchers known as REFILS-Research-Extension-Farmers-Input-Linkage-System.

In this regard, structural functionalism will mean the participation of women in agriculture (WIA). All these players can be likened to specialized parts of a structure that function and inter-relate for operations of the whole. Thus, they all function to promote social order and harmony in terms of increased knowledge, increased yield and improved standard of living, not only for the women farmers but also for the entire nation. However, Ekong, (2003) asserted that structural functionalism, a school of thought adopted for this study sees the role of women in the family as expressive providing warmth, security, emotional support and stabilization of male adult perspectives. The need to take care of children and generally care for members of the family they hold, locate the place of women in the home. According to Otite (1994) in

the Structural Functionalist perspective, casual analysis revolves around how changes in parts or a combination of parts affect the state of the whole system. However, to Talcott Parsons, gender differences rather help to integrate the society. This is accomplished through complementary roles played in the family units. Distinctive socialization is therefore required for the two sexes to stamp appropriate gender identity and impact skills needed for adult life. According to Helen Ciaos in Ekong (2003), differences such as consideration of the male sex as normal and female as deviation from the normal is seen as a male dominated language. She maintains that women must rise up to assert themselves in learning and discoveries so as to unlock in society a sexuality that is just as much feminine as masculine.

Factors Hindering Women Fair Participation in Cooperative Development

1. Women in Udi local government area traditionally do not own or inherit land from the parents. Since membership to divers societies and obtaining of loans from banks has included land as a condition for being a member, this has automatically put women aside.
2. Illiteracy, inadequate knowledge and education, lack of confidence in women themselves have led to low participation among women of the SACCOS.
3. The issue of time and traditional sex based division of labour. From the individual interview and focus group discussion, it was commented by both men and women that women have the role of taking care of the family members, producing for food, caring from the sick and old people, they don't have time to go out to participate in cooperative matters. For example out of the 26 individual women members interviewees, all of them revealed that they are too busy throughout the day particularly those of the reproduction age (Data collected from societies, Maleko, 2013)
4. Inadequate/lack of cooperative education and training. Many rural farmers are not aware of the benefits of becoming cooperative members since they have not been reached through seminars or meetings. Cooperatives have not being given the status they deserve in the community in reducing poverty among the poor.
5. Bad image of cooperatives portrayed by the mass media also cause some women and men not to join cooperatives. For instance in Kilimanjaro during focus group discussions, members always refer to cases of money embezzlement which have been taken to court but no judgment reached and in some places they get defeated and their money get lost. In such a situation no motivation at all to become members of these cooperative societies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Research design is the structure and strategy for investigating the relationship between the variables of the study. This study was adopted to examine the role of men and women in cooperative development in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State. To achieve the above, the researcher adopted survey research method in order to get more precise information. The choice of this method was to ensure comprehensive, acceptable and reliable information.

Sources of Data

Data collection was from primary and secondary sources.

(a) Primary Sources

The primary data was collected by means of research questionnaire. The questions were uniformly designed with the aim of utilizing the data after careful analysis in arriving at the research findings.

(b) Secondary Sources

Data were also collected from the secondary source. Most of the secondary data employed were collected from libraries, accounting, managements and auditing unit of firms, newspapers, journals, Internet and textbooks.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of the following cooperative societies operating in Udi Local government area of Enugu State, Nigeria. They are:

- (a) Ikedioramma Okpatu Mixed Cocoyam Producers Cooperative Society.
- (b) Udi Women Community Association Cooperative Society Limited.
- (c) Oganiru Women Savings and Credit Cooperative Society Ltd.

The population also consists of members of the above cooperative societies. These members are grouped as follow: Ikedioramma Mixed Cooperators = 55, Udi Women Community Association Cooperators = 100 and Oganiru Women Savings and Credit cooperators =70. The population when sum up is made up of 225 members and since the number is still large, the *Taro Yamane's formular sampling techniques* would be used to determine the sample size.

Determination of Sample Sizes

The formula below was used in determining the sample size.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- N = the population
- n = Sample size
- e = Level of significance

(a) Ikedioramma Okpatu Mixed Cocoyam Producers Cooperative Society

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{55}{1+55(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{55}{1.1375}$$

$$n = 40 \text{ members}$$

(b) Udi Women Community Association Cooperative Society Limited

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{100}{1+100(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{100}{1.25}$$

$$n = 80 \text{ members}$$

(c) Oganiru Women Savings and Credit Cooperative Society Ltd

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{70}{1+70(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{70}{1.175}$$

$$n = 60$$

Hence, the sample when sum up is made up of 180 cooperators.

Summary of Questionnaire Distribution

Cooperative Societies	Number Distributed	Number Returned
<i>Ikedioramma Okpatu Mixed Cocoyam Producers Cooperative Society</i>	40	33
<i>Udi Women Community Association Cooperative Society Limited</i>	80	67
<i>Oganiru Women Savings and Credit Cooperative Society Ltd</i>	60	50
	180	150

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**Socio-economic profile of cooperator Respondents**

The following compositions were established.

Table 1: Sex of the Respondents

Characteristic	Indices	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	90	60
	Female	60	40
	Total	150	100

Source: Authors Computation, 2017

From the results in table 1, it shows that majority of the cooperators in Udi Local Government Area were males with 60% while females were 40% of the total respondents.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents in Udi LGA

Characteristic	Indices	Frequency	Percentage
Age of Members	16 – 25	15	10
	26 - 40	40	27
	41 - 60	75	50
	61 and above	20	13
	Total	150	100

Source: Authors Computation, 2017

According to table 2 results, majority of the cooperators lie between the age of 41-60 with a percentage of 50% , 26-40 with 27%, 61 and above with 13% while minority lie between 16-25 with 10%.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of Cooperators in Udi

Characteristic	Indices	Frequency	Percentage
Educational Qualification	No Formal Education	19	12.5
	Primary	51	34
	Secondary	56	37.5
	Tertiary	24	16
	Total	150	100

Source: Authors Computation, 2017

From the results in table 3, it shows that majority of the cooperatives in Udi Local Government Area had reached secondary with 37.5% and the minority had no formal education with 12.5%, 34% had reached primary while 16% had attained tertiary institutions.

Table 4: Occupational Distribution of the Cooperative Members in Udi

Occupations	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Farmers	68	45.3%
Petty Traders	37	24.7%

Transporters	28	18.7%
Civil Servants	17	11.3%
Total	150	100%

Source: Authors Computation, 2017

The above table revealed that 68 representing 45.3% of the respondents are farmers, 37 representing 24.7% of the respondents are petty traders, 28 representing 18.7% are Transporters and only 17 representing 11.3% of the respondents are civil servants. The implication is that majority of the people in Udi local government area of Enugu State are farmers, petty traders and transporters while few cooperators are civil servant.

Result on the gender's perception of cooperative development in Udi Local Government Area.

Table 5: Respondents thinking/perception of cooperative development

<i>Statement</i>	<i>No. of Respondents and Percentage</i>				
	SA	A	U	D	SD
Cooperatives are important	120 (80%)	21(14%)	3(2%)	4(3%)	2(1%)
Cooperatives have increase my income level	54 (36%)	87(58%)	2(1%)	4(3%)	3(2%)
I regret joining cooperative	5(3%)	22(15%)	3(2%)	108(72%)	12(8%)
It has made my skill to improve	69(46%)	66(44%)	3(2%)	10(7%)	2(1%)
Good management enhances cooperative development	52(35%)	82(55%)	2(1%)	8(5%)	6(4%)
Joining Cooperative has lot of benefits	81(54%)	60(40%)	2(1%)	4(3%)	3(2%)

Where, SA=strongly agree, A=Agreed, U=Undecided, D=Disagreed, SD=Strongly Disagree

Source: Author's Computation, 2017.

Table 5 above diagnosis the members perception of cooperatives development. 84% of the respondents agreed that co-operatives are important, as they have benefited in one way or another. They are also of the view that cooperatives have improved the income of over 80% of cooperators and 84% have no regret joining cooperative. Acquisition of skills and participation in development projects are all benefits of joining cooperative societies. Moreover, 90% of the respondents are strongly of the perception that good management enhances cooperative development in Udi local government area of Enugu State.

Result on the contribution of men and women towards cooperative development in Udi Local Government Area.

Table 7: Respondents on the contribution of men and women towards cooperative development

<i>Statement</i>	<i>No. of Respondents and Percentage</i>				
	SA	A	U	D	SD
Do you agree that the male contribute more towards cooperative develop compare to their female counterpart?	82(55%)	52(35%)	2(1%)	6(4%)	8(5%)

Where, SA=strongly agree, A=Agreed, U=Undecided, D=Disagreed, SD=Strongly Disagree

Source: Author's Computation, 2017.

Table 7 shows that 90% of the respondents were of the opinion that the male contribute more to cooperative development in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu. This corresponds with the earlier observation from the gender analysis that most of the cooperatives in the area (Udi) are male dominated in terms of organizational/leadership structure. The same trend of male dominance was observed in other categories with a representative percentage of about 60%. Overall, male cooperators could be seen to contribute to cooperative development more than their female counterparts.

CONCLUSIONS

This research aims at examining the role of men and women in cooperative development in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State. The study observed that the future of co-operatives depends largely on how they are formed and managed. Hence if properly and effectively managed, co-operative will succeed where other bodies failed in rural development of Nigeria. In addition, the study also observed that more males are involved in cooperative society's development than females.

RECOMMENDATION

Following the findings arising from this study, the following recommendations become imperative:

1. In cooperative sector, it is pertinent to analyze the role and position of men and women in their socio-economic environment in order to identify and address their different needs, develop their strengths and potentials and to ensure an equitable distribution of the benefits of cooperative development in Udi Local Government Area.
2. Given the fact that experience is seen to influence efficiency, extension education and service should be intensified to ensure that the capacity of the experienced cooperators are enhanced for greater productivity in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State.
3. Cooperative societies in Udi Local government Area should endeavour to improve their management skills and personnel welfare so as to facilitate cooperative development in Udi Local Government Area.

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