



The Role of Micro-Credit in Economic Empowerment of the Rural Poor: A Case Study of Iwo Town, Osun State

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Abstract

Poverty as one of the major development problems that Nigeria is faced with, is seen mostly as an unpleasant situation where poor people earn so small income, with consumption not adequate to be classified as a satisfactory living standard; addressing this situation is hence imperative for the country to progress. Microfinance is a vital development approach used in alleviating poverty as well as empowering the poor. Using Iwo Town as a case study, the research investigated the contribution of microfinance to the socio-economics of the rural people where financial exclusion is high. The study was based on the Grameen Bank concept of collateral-free micro-credit advanced to poor entrepreneurs in a bid to enhance their productivity for income generation towards reducing their level of poverty. The research employed the twin methods of qualitative (interview) and quantitative (questionnaire) means of data collection. The questionnaire was administered over 60 clients of the microfinance institutions (MFIs) purposively sampled. The ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was employed to carry out the analysis of the data collected, and the research result showed that micro-credit has the potential to effectively alleviate poverty in the society through empowering the people financially. The research investigated the effect of micro-credit on the socio-economics of the people of Iwo Town using poverty as its indicator. The role of micro-credit in poverty alleviation was assessed through change in income to beneficiaries of micro-credit from microfinance institutions (MFIs). The result showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between productive utilization of micro-credit and the poverty level of the people. This is evident in its ability to increase income.

Key words: Microfinance, Poverty, Micro-Credit, Iwo Town, Socio-economic, Nigeria, MFIs

JEL Classification: G21, R51, G28, I31, I32

Paper Classification: Research Paper

Introduction

'To give away money is an easy matter and in any man's power. But to decide to whom to give it, and how large, and when, and for what purpose and how, is neither in every man's power nor an easy matter.'

- Aristotle



Right following independence, Nigeria adopted a planned approach towards economic and social development. A number of cautious macroeconomic policies were considered with active roles in the significant sectors of the economy. The outcomes of the development approach have been varied. There was economic expansion with the growth in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita from an average 1.4 per cent in 1970 to about 30 per cent in the late 1990s. However, the incidence of poverty was still evident, with 26.1 per cent between the years 1999 and 2000, to about 70 per cent in the 2010s. Several development plans have been conceived following independence with Vision 20: 2020 the only surviving long-term plan, even though not much has been accomplished. Today, Nigeria's poverty rate stands at 70 per cent (Nigerian Insight, 2014). With little achievement from the many macro-economic plans, micro-credit may prove to be the viable strategy to alleviate poverty in the country. This research discussed issues concerning micro-credit and poverty alleviation, and investigated its efficacy in poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Taking a cue from Bangladesh where micro-credit programme pioneered, Nigeria has executed a number of related programmes to alleviate poverty and evolve socio-economic changes in rural communities. The past years have seen different efforts from a number of stakeholders, both government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) towards supporting the microfinance sector to succeed in the quest to empower people towards achieving poverty alleviation targets.

Microfinance institutions (MFIs) were brought on as option of financial inclusion services in rural areas, which can help petty traders and local farmers to easily access non-collateralised credit facilities. In Nigeria, a number of MFIs (including microfinance banks), savings and credit organisations, community banks and cooperative societies are the key providers of microfinance-related services in rural areas. In Nigeria, as in 2007, more than 700 microfinance banks (MFBs) were licensed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and this number increased to 817 in the year 2014 after the liquidation of 83 which were involved in fraudulent activities and had non-operational offices (Erunke, 2014). With the increase in the number of MFBs across the country, the interest in comprehending the nature of MFIs and their impact on the credit beneficiaries have continued to rise. The unwavering assurance of the CBN on the sanity of the MFBs and the central bank's commitment to alleviating poverty and related socio-economic situation in Nigeria led to the creation of the microfinance policy framework intended to enhance sustainable growth and development. The formulation of this policy framework became necessary taking cognisance of the indifference of the formal banking sector to the provision of socially-designed financial services to the rural areas and informal sector which constitutes around 65 per cent of the economically active population of the country (CBN, 2010).

The strong influence of microfinance as a development strategy can be alluded to a number of key factors (United Nations, 2000) as follows:

- a. Access to applicable financial services by the rural areas and informal sector for improvement of their poor condition.
- b. A large demand gap exists for credit facilities in the poor sector which cannot be filled by the existing formal sector-focussed financial service providers.
- c. Poor people have the propensity to save, make loan repayments and efficiently apply funds availed by them to generate further income as it is appropriate to them per time.

The study was primarily carried out in Iwo Town, located in Iwo local government in Osun state of Nigeria. Microfinance products are largely patronised in Iwo Town being a poverty alleviation strategy towards availing low-income and poor people of the area with funds and services to aid their economic exploits and livelihoods. Microfinance is therefore an intervention strategy used to address the situation of both the rural poor and informal sector through access to financial credit

services, and hence attain socio-economic development. There is hardly any official documented records on the impact of micro-credit on poverty reduction in Nigeria. The fact that poverty still exists (at a high level) in spite of the numerous microfinance services offered in the Iwo Town necessitated the need to assess the extent to which microfinance has benefited the people.

The above problem justified the necessity for greater research on improving the microfinance policy, on impact of MFIs on poverty alleviation. The research findings will be a great guide to policy makers on effective approach to microfinance strategy towards enhancing a sustainable rural livelihood, while also informing microfinance service providers on best service impact to the poor, and educate the rural poor and informal sector on how to access microfinance credits and maximise the impact. The research will be guided by the following question: 'does micro-credit contribute significantly to poverty alleviation and enhanced living standard of people of Iwo Town?'

Review of Previous Studies

A country's broad development depends to a large extent on the development of its rural economy. Studies over the past decades have shown that most development strides of countries global south have not been successful as a result of the vicious cycle of poverty. Poverty is a situation which many developing countries are grappling with. A huge percentage of Nigeria's rural population is below the poverty line, for whom there is no access to banking or financial services, but which when funds are available to them will be significant in the development of the country; yet financing as one of the ways to meet the basic needs of this poor sector is almost non-existent. Microfinance is considered a very important strategy for satisfying the financing requirement for socio-economic development.

During the last two decades, microfinance has however gained a lot of significance and momentum, and currently, Nigeria occupies a significant place and a niche in global microfinance through the promotion of cooperative societies and its MFI model (see Mansuri, 2010). The emphasis on the microfinance model is for inclusive growth and faster poverty reduction.

Even though a few years ago microfinance gained much popularity in Nigeria, it is not a new concept in the world. Its beginning dates back to 1976, when the Grameen Bank, as an experiment, was set up by Muhammad Yunus in the village of Jobra, Bangladesh, based on the principle of lending little funds to poor entrepreneurs. It consisted of several schemes which were experimented upon until the Self-Help Group (SHG) scheme was launched, which played a major role in the Grameen Bank accessing loan from Gramin Vikash Bank of Bangladesh for further lending to poor beneficiaries. Since then, several MFIs have been established elsewhere and have done well in reaching the poor, inventing new ground-breaking approaches. These comprised providing collateral-free credit facilities to rural poor, at market-based interest rates which are repayable in recurring instalments. Borrowers were grouped together in identical or known social and economic identities in order to reduce the default risk (Khan & Anisur, 2007). The success of credit financing of the poor in Bangladesh made it an accepted widespread poverty alleviation strategy around the world particularly in developing countries.

A 1995 World Bank estimate noted that in most developing countries, the formal financial services extend to only the top 25 per cent of the economically active population, whereas the bottom 75 per cent have no access to financial services except patronage of local moneylenders. The benefit of microfinance cannot be set aside if we consider the fact that these money lenders are more of opportunists and extortionists taking advantage of the people and their situations, and the lack of financial services platform for the rural communities.



The terms microfinance and micro-credit are related words and are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to one another. Nevertheless, there is a distinction between both terms. Sinha & Martin (1998) described micro-credit simply as a small loan assessed and repaid in small agreed instalments. Credit is seen as an important input to enhance entrepreneurial productivity as it empowers the poor to overcome their liquidity constraints, allows them to invest in their businesses which leads to sales with resulting increased income levels, and enhances employment at the household level, all resulting in the alleviation of poverty (Okurut et al, 2004). In addition, credit also helps the poor to smoothen out their consumption patterns during the difficult periods of their lives thereby ensuring adequate funds to sustain the productive capability of these poor rural households.

Otero (1999) defined micro-credit as 'the provision of financial services to low-income poor and very poor self-employed people.' These financial services comprise savings and credit facilities, but can also consist of other such services like insurance and payment services (Ledgerwood, 1999). Schreiner & Colombet (2001) explained micro-credit as an effort to enhance access to small deposits and loans for poor households. The implication of this is that micro-credit helps the poor to obtain financial services such as insurance, loans, savings, and so on, empowering them to lead decent lives in both rural and urban areas, having been excluded from the formal financial sector.

Micro-credit has become a significant development policy and a poverty alleviation tool since around 1970s, particularly as the late nineteen century, brought a new wave of microfinance. Certain suggestions have gone further to name micro-credit as a crucial instrument to achieve the millennium development goals (MDGs; see World Savings Bank Institute, 2010), described as the most unbelievable anti-poverty tool for the poor, particularly women (The Micro-credit Summit, 1997).

Microfinance is further explained in terms of product mix, as a situation where MFIs and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) complement the loans advanced to the poor with some other financial services like insurance, pension, savings and payment services. Micro-credit in this concept can therefore be stated as a component of microfinance. Microfinance is the key concept used in assessing the effect of micro-credit on the rural economy. It is the provision of a broad array of financial services like deposits, insurance, loans, money transfers, payment services and savings to low-income households and their micro-enterprises who are left out of the formal financial sector (Ledgerwood, 2002).

Poverty is defined as an intricate issue, with its triggers and feedbacks as processes are as well intricate (Ismail, 2000). The solutions to poverty in developing countries are multi-dimensional and require a mix of strategies, of which micro-financing is significant. All social, political and economic strategies of developing nations are focussed on poverty alleviation and socio-economic development, being the major challenges these countries are faced with. Nigeria too has not dropped the efforts towards achieving a sound socio-economic development. Micro-credit is considered as one of the vital tools for poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Empirical literature on the impact of microfinance

There are strong arguments in favour of microfinance, that the productive base of the poor will increase when there is access to credit, stimulating income growth (Montgomery & Weiss, 2005). Generally, micro-credit access by the poor will expand their social networks, help cushion against unanticipated events (risk management) and enhance consumption, smoothing, helping protect against lean periods. It is therefore imperative to make microfinance a big policy fulcrum of development considering the possible positive impact of MFIs on the poor. There is therefore the need to evaluate the impact of access to microfinance services on the clients' socio-economics

using varied measurement tools available. According to Brau & Woller (2004), the precise impacts of microfinance are difficult to track down and more difficult to evaluate even though the authors suggest the adoption of research methodologies which can isolate particular effects out of a complex group of causal and mediating factors.

Micro-financing and rural poverty reduction

Poverty is a situation where an individual or a group has inadequate income for obtaining basic goods and services. It is a form of human deprivation related to lack of economic opportunities, education, health, nutrition as well as absence of empowerment and security (Ukeje, 2005; World Bank, 1995).

There are three interrelated parts to poverty namely poverty of money (which refers to inadequacy in terms of access to the means of income, asset or wealth acquisition to meet the basic needs of life), poverty of access (this arises from lack of access to enjoy certain basic infrastructures or amenities) and poverty of power (which is inability to influence government decisions that affect a person) (see United Nations Economic and Social Commission, 2000). The connections of the three parts definitions of poverty above can be explained in terms of money which belies them all. That is, adequate access to money leads to a corresponding access to infrastructures and amenities, as well as power. Poverty as a development concept is all-inclusive in its impact on varied aspects of life, and includes subjects such as education, social recreation, money and involvement in decision making. These all justify the basis why micro financing is very important as it enables the poor to access more aspects of life for better fulfilment.

Poverty alleviation has continually been at the forefront of development programme of many countries. The approaches have mostly been shaped by the social and economic dimensions of each country. The provision of microfinance services to the economically active poor has remained one of the strategies for poverty alleviation. It is believed that the poor need financial empowerment to attain their dreams and unleash their capabilities.

Microfinance: The underlying challenges

There is yet a lack of firm evidence on the impact of microfinance on poverty in some cases as indication can sometimes be subjective. Microfinance has though been acclaimed as a strong approach to poverty alleviation; yet leaders have suggested that it is suitable and effective merely for the entrepreneurial and marginally poor people, while it also deters cherished resources. Argument lingers on the extent to which microfinance touches and supports the poor. While micro-credit summit movement discovered that over 68 per cent of microfinance clients were very poor when they took their first loans, others affirm that microfinance does not get to the poorest, but can be better served by grants, subsidies and other suites of safety nets making available cash transfers, employment, food aid and shelter.

Microfinance works on the basis that the poor make large proceeds, as they get a substantial enhancement from added revenue. Nevertheless the poor might have smaller avenues through which credit could be productive, like business expertise, education, or market networking, which could drain their resources and thereafter, resulting in insufficient earnings and a debt problem. Twin findings which employed randomized controlled trial methodologies in India and the Philippines discovered that microfinance does not enhance the consumption or welfare of the people. The Indian research revealed that microfinance in some cases positively affects trade outcomes and household expenditure. Other findings over the short-term evaluations from the research suggest that average consumption may not have increased due to the re-investment of

income earned back into the business. Hence, progress in education, empowerment, health and poverty alleviation might appear merely over the long run.

The non-availability of adequate and convincing evidence that microfinance positively impacts poverty should not diminish such proofs of lives improvement through making transactions easier and guiding against more adversities. Certain works stated that the capacity of microfinance to decrease susceptibility by smoothing consumption and reducing risk could overshadow its income-generation capability. Consequently, its poverty impact might not be so obvious, employing income measures rather than multidimensional analysis. This method points out the necessity to integrate microfinance with complementary interventions that further bring resolution to some aspects of poverty, such as investments in health and skills training.

As MFIs are progressively incorporated into local and global markets, they turn out to be more susceptible to the effect of economic recessions, of which some of this susceptibility may include resource mobilization, as each class of resources is distinctly impacted. Local deposit-taking entities are largely better protected than the ones that depend on international financing.

Research Methodology

Data Description

The study was primarily carried out in Iwo Town. Iwo Town has adjoining villages and towns (with some even in another local councils or states) like Telemu, Ogbagba, Olupona, Ile-Ogbo, Ejigbo and Lalupon (in Oyo state) whose residents benefit from microfinance services in Iwo Town. The people from these rural communities were thus grouped under Iwo Town. Iwo serves as the administrative head of Iwo local government comprising a number of villages and towns in Osun state of Nigeria. This implies that the respondents live in Iwo Town and the above-stated adjoining localities benefiting from the microfinance services offered by the MFIs. Those who benefit directly from the MFIs between 2010 and 2014 were qualified to be included in the research. The reason for this is that it was around this time that the MFIs were well grounded and were steadily collecting deposits and disbursing loans.

Iwo Town's economic mainstay are farming and trading. It has three dominant markets with the biggest being Odo-Ori market held every five days. The others are Oja Ale and Adeke markets. The three are spread apart and are well attended by merchants from the neighbouring towns who also deal in farm products notably palm oil and eggs. The markets are also a key transaction hubs for certain agricultural produces like cocoa, kolanuts, meat, yams and other food stuffs, not forgetting timber.

Iwo Town has also been graced by the presence of a polytechnic and the Baptist Mission University which opened up the town to more people and much more economic activities. So also have five modern commercial banks been established and two prominent microfinance banks aside some other auxiliary microfinance institutions. Other important landmarks are the meeting point of River Oba and River Osun, the state-controlled radio and television stations, Shariah College of Nigeria, a private college of education, as well as the Oloba cattle hub.

The primary data collection technique used in this research work was field survey employing the questionnaire. The study was conducted in Iwo Town, Osun State. Iwo Town as the case study was selected based on availability of MFIs and a great number of credit recipient people. All beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the micro-credit research area were adopted as the study population, without gender bias in the study.



There are a number of microfinance-offering organisations (all of them referred to as MFIs) in Iwo Town. Lapo MFB and Structural Economic & Advancement Programme (SEAP) MFB are the prominent microfinance banks having been licensed by the CBN. Economic Empowerment & Advancement Initiative (EEAI) is another notable MFI which is registered only with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). Some few others are not registered businesses but operate as individuals. The above-named three microfinance outfits will be central to the study. And for balance, clients of the above three MFI will be equally featured in this study.

A sample of respondents was selected from the study population with the make up as follows: 60 people among the beneficiaries (20 from each of the three MFIs) and 2 staff each from the three MFIs who serve as the informers (basically the loan officers), totalling 66 respondents. These particular sample sizes are chosen because it will be not be difficult to handle and will yet be adequate to produce outcomes relevant and representative of a larger population. Also, the size of the sample took note of the fact that the respondents could be benefiting from at least one of two MFIs therefore creating the possibility of double interviewing. The inclusion criteria were also fulfilled by the respondents for the study. Only interviews were conducted on the informers while questionnaires were administered on the 60 loan beneficiaries, on whom data generated is presented and analysis carried out.

The 66 respondents comprised 60 respondents who were carefully chosen from the MFIs under study as the direct beneficiaries and 6 key informers of 2 each from among the sampled respondents.

Questionnaires were distributed among the 60 customers (microfinance beneficiaries) who were taken into consideration via convenient sampling method, out of which 51 responses were received representing 85 per cent of the respondents. The questions were made simple and designed to stimulate interest. Questions format include the effect of microfinance on business performance; effect of micro-credit on income; as well as their life styles, accommodation, and general wellbeing in a post-microfinance intervention. Options (up to three) were given to respondents for filling the questionnaire.

The inclusion criteria are defined as follows. For inclusion in the sample, the respondent must be beneficiary in one MFI, or a credit officer in one of the MFIs. The respondent must also grant informed consent as a voluntary disposition towards participating in the survey as a respondent. The respondent must have also been involved in MFI activities between the years 2010 to 2014.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Poverty level in this study is defined on twin groupings namely non-poor (refer to people who are above the poverty line, and also earn USD1 a day) and poor (are people that are below the poverty line, measured as those who earn below USD1 a day). The USD letters symbol here refers to the United States Dollar and is also represented in the paper by the character \$. Of the respondents, 46 were females while 5 were males. This says a lot about the gender dimension of financial inclusion and poverty. Of these, 34 are in the highest age group 'above 40 years', while 2 are in the lowest age group 'less than 30 years'. The modal age group is '> 40 years' with 15 people in the age group '30-40 years'. All the respondents hailed from and reside in Iwo Town (being the case study). Only one person had a tertiary level education, 3 people had secondary school education, 7 respondents had primary school level education, while the remaining 40 did not have any form of formal education and so are illiterates. Furthermore, 45 of the respondents made a mean daily income of less than \$1, 5 made 1\$ while the remaining one respondent made greater than \$1 (see Figure 9).



From Figure 4, most of the respondents (including about 78 percent who did not have any level of education) did not have more than primary school level education. Likewise, most of the respondents (45) fell within the economically active class, and as shown in Figure 9 earns less than \$1; with only 5 respondents earning just \$1. The study findings indeed revealed that only one of the respondents earns less than \$1 as daily income which highlighted further the depth and level of poverty in the rural communities in Nigeria. Certainly, the standard of living will be higher and better if they can have access to small loans with which to eke out a living from, at considerate conditions.

Also, Figure 7 shows that all the respondents have a trade skillset which is economically useful towards earning a living, and ranges from artisanship (1 respondent), crafting (1) to business skills (47 were market traders), with the remaining either into peasant farming (2) or other occupation. In terms of occupation, the mode occupation for the male was peasant farming while for female was trading. It is disturbing though that a significant number of rural people lack basic level education, which infers that it will be difficult for them to learn novel and innovative methods of carrying out their economic functions outside the prevailing customarily entrenched practices. In a modern era, these practices could be restrictive and stagnating hence further embedding poverty in the rural areas.

Figure 10 points out that of the respondents, only 6.82 per cent answered in the affirmative to the question on access to microfinance bank services, while 93.18 per cent of the respondents answered in the negative on access to microfinance services. Additional feedback from interviews showed that a number of the respondents have made efforts to access microfinance services from the microfinance banks but have been frustratingly unsuccessful. The complaints attributed to this failure include proximity to the microfinance banks from their residences among others. Most of the microfinance banks are just headquarters/one branch and are mostly located at the headquarters of local government areas (Imhanlahimi & Idolor, 2010); they can sometimes be located very far away and yet serve other distanced villages. This is indeed a challenge to most rural dwellers who might not be able to afford the logistics cost.

Also, it was discovered that the respondents' feedback to the nature or types of MFI services received other than business loans, indicated they mostly had access to advisory (12 per cent) and savings (7 per cent). Other services included personal loans (8 per cent), investments (5 per cent), training (3 per cent) and insurance services (2 per cent). In total, all those who received one form of service or the other constituted 37 per cent of the respondents with the remaining 63 per cent of the respondents saying that they have not had access to any other form of microfinance bank services. The small share of respondents who had access to these primary services says a lot about the small capital base of the MFIs in Nigeria and obviously suggests that their impact upon rural livelihoods of the poor could be indeed very low.

On the issue of adequacy and regularity of services by MFIs, Figure 11 illustrates that 65 per cent of the respondents said the services provided were irregular and inadequate, while 25 per cent of the respondents pointed that the services received were irregular but adequate. Also 7 per cent said the services were very irregular and inadequate, while the remaining 3 per cent of respondents disclosed their contentment with the services. Further revelation from the field survey through personal interviews showed that majority of the respondents acquired microfinance services from the prevailing informal microfinance schemes in their rural communities. They also indicated that they had no choice but to utilize the informal systems as the conventional microfinance banks are too distant from the localities where they live. It was also discovered that the informal schemes were manipulative and often folded up at any time the

founder dies. These informal schemes are in every village or quarter or hamlet in the various local government areas and they also have meeting points where the members regularly met to review the operations and performance of the informal schemes.

The profit viability criterion appears to be what makes MFIs not to establish branches or cash centres in these distant rural areas, as they are more interested in clients with higher turnovers, who operate in the urban areas. Also, most of the rural residents depend on less than USD1 a day, and even on non-quantifiable resources and would thus have an improved standard of living if those that are entrepreneurial are able to gain access to credit facilities on a regular basis, at encouraging terms and interest rates.

The take from the research was that MFIs have failed in rendering socially and economically supportive services to the rural sector as they are located more in the more urban areas and where profit could be maximized by them, whereas they have very low presence in the rural areas. The MFIs would do well in achieving their mandate of assisting to improve the standard of living of the economically active poor by focusing their services more on the rural areas, which constitute a significant proportion of the poor people in Nigeria, than on the clients in urban areas.

Empirical Modelling

The impact of the credit programme will be assessed by examining if there is increased income after accessing micro-credit. Different statistical tests (Chi-square, F-test, t-test and related criterion) will be employed to examine the relationship and degree of influence within the variables.

The intended model for the analysis is stated below:

$$Y_p = f(L_R, LZ, O_T) \quad (1)$$

Or,

$$Y_p = \beta_0 + \beta_1 L_R + \beta_2 LZ + \beta_3 O_T + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

with the expectation that the elasticity parameters $(\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3) > 0$.

Where, Y_p indicates income change, that is, whether there is increased total income or not among respondents after accessing the microfinance services (fundamentally, the credit programme, and this will form an indicator of poverty reduction in this study as it is taken, with increased income, there is a change of income and thus, this positively impacts poverty); L_R indicates whether loan is received or accessed by the respondents or not; LZ is income through utilization (this relates to the use of funds whether for economic and income-generation or for non-economic like household consumption goods); and O_T refers to other factors like business environment, situation of the state's economy like prompt salary payment among the many factors; with β_0 being constant, while $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$, and β_4 represent regression coefficients of the corresponding independent variables and ε is random error term, which is normally and independently distributed with zero (0) mean and constant variance.

Data collected were presented in table and as well analysed using SPSS statistical software. Statistical analytical techniques such as multiple regression analysis, Chi-square test, and so on will be executed using the SPSS software.

The Poverty Situation in Nigeria

Nigeria like a number of developing countries has glaring indices which shows that rural poverty is high. William (as cited in Osuala, 2009) noted that up to 70 per cent of Nigerian population lives below poverty line, on less than universal minimum standard of USD 1 per day. At less than USD 2.00 per day, 90.8 per cent of the Nigerian population is regarded as poor.

Table 1 shows the poverty situation in Nigeria for the period 1980-2010 as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2012). The table shows increase in the rural poverty level in the country.

Table 1: Prevalence of poverty in Nigeria, 1980 - 2010

Sector	1980	1985	1992	1996	2004	2010
Rural	28.3	51.4	46.0	69.3	63.3	73.2
Urban	17.2	37.8	37.5	58.2	43.2	61.8
Total	27.2	46.3	42.7	65.6	54.4	69.0

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (Nigeria), 2012

Table 1 indicates the seriousness of poverty in Nigeria. According to Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS; 2012), about 27.2 per cent of the people lived below the poverty line in 1980 of which 28.3 per cent poverty rate was recorded in the rural sector above 17.2 per cent in the urban. This percentage increased to 69.3 and 58.2 for the rural and urban sector respectively in 1996, and 73.2 for the rural as against 61.8 for the urban in 2010. These figures have continued to demonstrate that poverty is prevalent more in the rural sector than urban sector which also underlines the reason for more efforts on poverty alleviation to be concentrated in the rural than the urban area.

Poverty has been a major issue of concern to the global society, particularly the developing countries. It is explained as a condition where a population or its section is capable of meeting just its bare existence, the essentials of food, clothing and shelter, so as to preserve a minimum standard of living (Balogun, 1999). The World Bank (1990) in its World Development Report (WDR) defines poverty as situation in which being poor is when per capita income or consumption of the individual is below USD 370, or very poor if it is below USD 275 at any time period. Further, the World Bank (1993) defines poverty line as the income worth or consumption necessary for (i) the minimum standard of nutrition and (ii) other 'necessities.' The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1996)'s Human Development Index (HDI) aimed at giving indication of poverty or prosperity level within a society and the world, considering life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate, combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment ratio and the real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita as factor indicators of interest in its definition of poverty. The definition by Englama & Bamidele (1997) sees poverty in terms of both absolute and relative terms as a situation in which a person is unable to provide sufficiently for his/her elementary needs like food, clothing and shelter, meet social and economic obligations; and s/he lacks gainful employment, skills, assets and self-esteem; and s/he has inadequate access to social and economic infrastructures. In other words, 'the poor lacks basic infrastructure such as education, health, potable water, and sanitation, and as a result has limited chance of advancing his/her welfare due to limited access to social and economic infrastructures'. That is, summarily, the poor lacks capabilities.

That poverty is a global issue is not in doubt (Oladunni, 1999). Nigeria however ranks among the poorest nations of the world, and this has gotten to a distressing phase with over

45 per cent of the population living below the poverty line, while 67 per cent of the poor are in an extreme situation of poverty. The NBS' reports for the period 1980-1996 shows that about 67 million Nigerians lived below the poverty level, while from 1980 to 1985, the percentage of rural dwellers and urban inhabitants in the core poverty bracket rose from 6.5 and 3.0 to 14.8 and 7.5 respectively. Within the same period, the percentage of moderately poor in the rural areas rose from 21.8 to 36.6 and 14.2 to 30.3 , respectively. Also the number of non-poor in both rural and urban areas dropped from 71.7 and 82.8 per cent to 48.6 and 62.2 per cent, respectively (Awoseyila, 1999; Okumadewa, 1999).

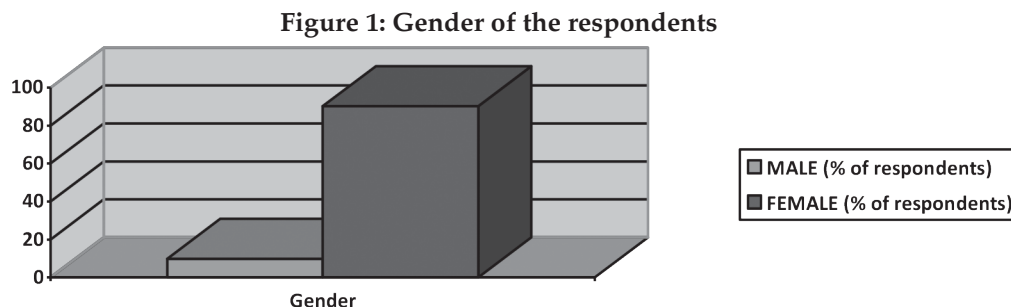
The rising poverty level in Nigeria in these periods is not unexpected considering the documentaries of Oladunni (1999) it is stated that the overall dependency ratio in Nigeria is 234 dependents per 100 gainfully employed persons; the rural areas is 286 dependants per 100 workers, while in the urban area it is 219 dependants per 100 workers. The labour force age (between 15 and 64 years) dependant ratio is 259 dependants per 100 workers nationwide. It is 302 and 222 dependants per 100 workers in the rural and urban areas respectively. The earlier situation works concertedly to further strengthen the poverty syndrome of the average Nigerian employee, as each bears heavy economic burden of over 200 non-workers. The poverty level and distribution can be seen in Table 1.

Research Analysis and Findings

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

It is imperative to know the respondents' gender, marital status, age, education levels and the number of dependants for each of them. These characteristics are factors that affect their participation in microfinance and to an extent, the use of their funds.

Gender: 90.2 per cent of the respondents are female while 9.8 per cent are male as shown in Figure 1. This was because women are crucial to rural economy and because of the concern about financial inclusion with women being central in this. Here, the study evaluated the access and utilization of the MFI services. This was also underlined by Goodland et al. (1999), where in their work they mentioned that women have a distinct role to play in the delivery of microfinance for the reason that they are frequently among the poor and they make a considerable impact on a country's development.

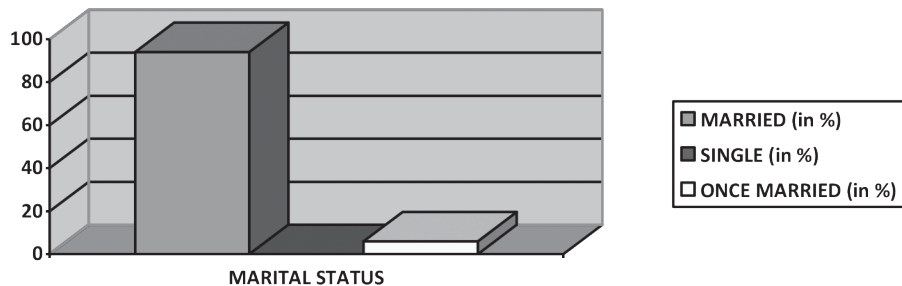


Source: Author's field data

Marital status and dependants: All respondents have been at least married once, either legally or traditionally. Iwo Town is a predominant Muslim community where polygamous marriage is highly encouraged. Also, early marriage is a norm here, male getting married by the age of 22 and the female as early as age of 16. 94 per cent are still married while 6 per cent were once married,

either now divorced or widowed (see Figure 2). All the once married respondents have children. There is no single status respondent. This tells that the patronage of microfinance products is highly related to family responsibility in this part of the world.

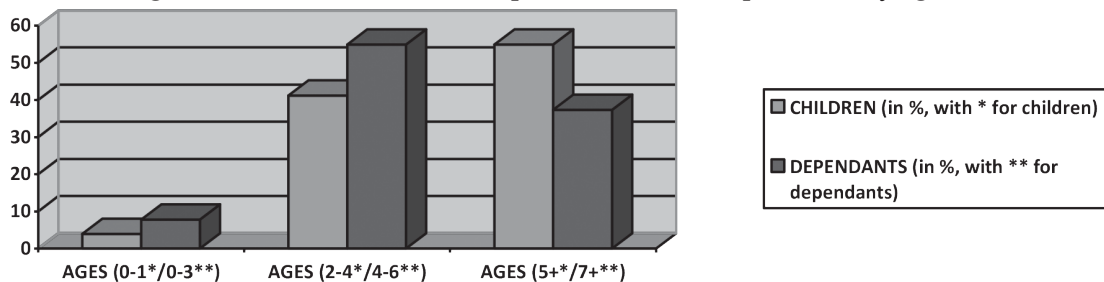
Figure 2: Marital status of the respondents



Source: Author's field data

Talking about dependants, it is not limited to children alone, but where a respondent has large responsibilities including children, spouse, and other people. Dependants could also measure the extent of socio-economic responsibilities of the respondents. For example, it was shown in Figure 3 that 96.1 per cent of respondents have more than one child and 92.2 per cent have the responsibility of dependants on them. In a way, marriage has thrust on the respondents, who are mostly women, the burden of finding livelihood for their families thus making them to get loans to start businesses, purchase household items, pay school fees or provide other supports for their families.

Figure 3: No. of children and dependants of the respondents by ages



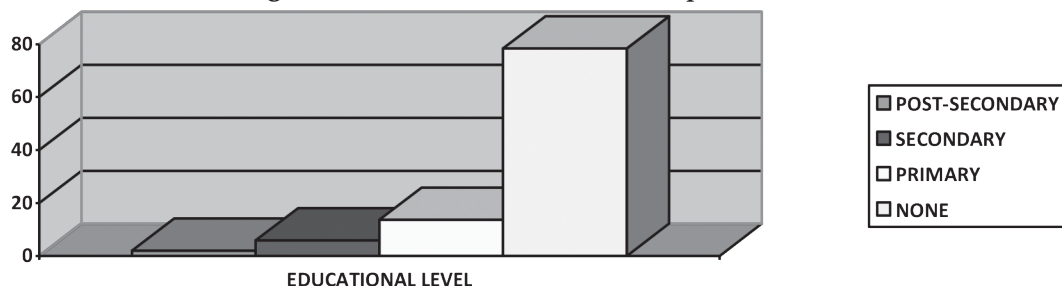
Source: Author's field data

Most of the respondents support a number of dependants as a family that included mostly children, apprentices and students who go to school. The highest number of dependants for the respondents is the group of '4-6' persons with 54.9 per cent while the group of '7+' household has its dependant ratio as 37.3 per cent. The number of dependants is modelled as an influential element on the need and utilization of the loans from the MFIs. The reason for this is because a larger family demands greater and more basic necessities of life like food, clothing, shelter and education. In the situation where demand outstrips supply of these services, then the household bread winner resorts to the option of economic engagement as well, to assist towards meeting the needs of the family.

Educational level: The educational level of the respondents indicate that those who seek microfinance services are mainly the uneducated, the poor and those that cannot access the conventional banking services. Just one person of all respondents has post-secondary school

qualification, while 40, representing 78.4 per cent have no education (see Figure 4). The fact that the educational level is low might create a difficulty to the community’s development. It could go on to affect the utilisation of loans and beneficiaries’ financial resourcefulness.

Figure 4: Educational level of the respondents

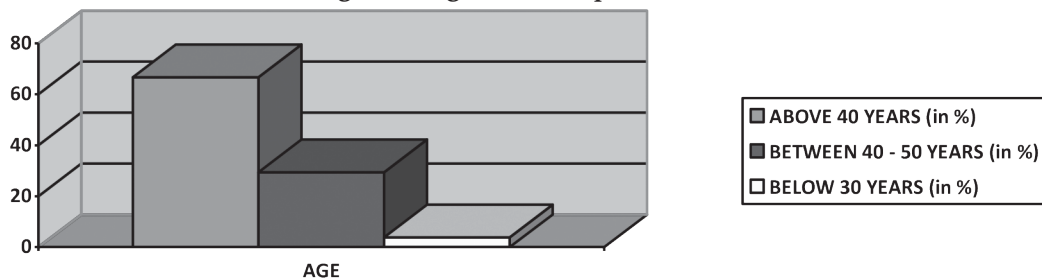


Source: Author’s field data

That there is a larger percentage of uneducated will make it difficult to sensitize and train the people on skills, business development and loans utilization and repayment. The reason is not far-fetched: the educated people are able to understand ideas better and faster than those with low or no level of education.

Age groups: As shown in Figure 5, 66.7 per cent of respondents are above 40 years. This is attributable to the fact that this age class is accountable for a lot of duties as heads of the families like payment of school fees and feeding of the family having had grown-up children. Therefore, where the funds at hand are insufficient, there is recourse to MFIs so as to be able to fulfil family obligations. The MFIs as well are not positively disposed to advancing credits to youth because of the high risk attributable to them, being very mobile and could also mis-manage the funds. The MFIs therefore focus on the established people who may have properties and stocked up stores, are permanent residents of the area, and are well established in the area.

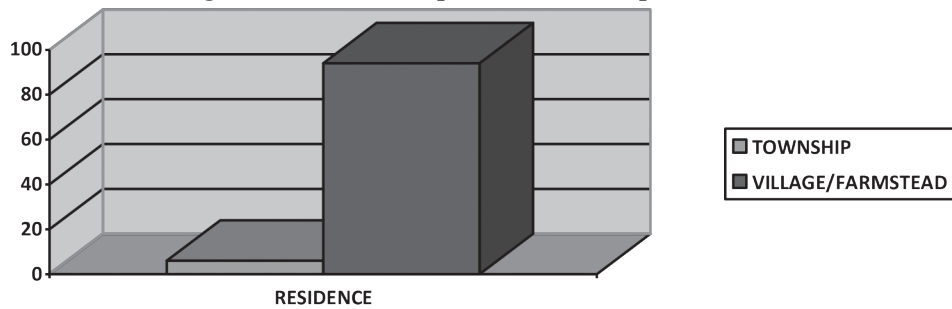
Figure 5: Age of the respondents



Source: Author’s field data

Residence: Looking at the geographical locations of the respondents, Figure 6 shows that 48 respondents or 94.1 per cent of them live in the more rural areas which are either farmsteads or hamlets while just 8.9 per cent reside in a village or town. This implies that financial services will be almost non-available to the residents of the more rural areas.

Figure 6: Residential profile of the respondents



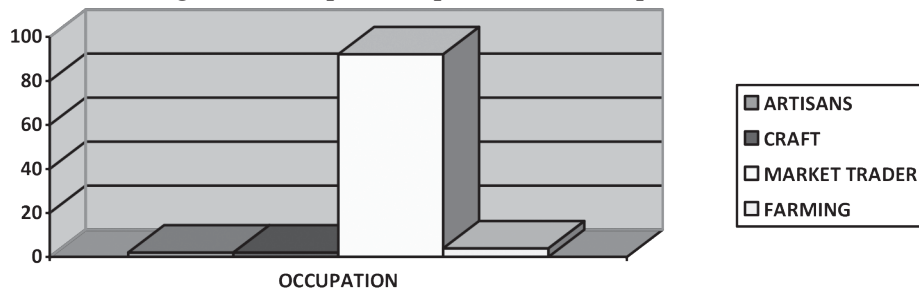
Source: Author's field data

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Here, the study looks at the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents namely occupation, income, poverty status, etc. These characteristics are important in assessing the type of persons the MFI clients are.

Occupation and its size: The majority of the respondents, which is 92.2 per cent, are market traders, farmers are 3.9 per cent and 3.91 per cent is shared between artisans and craft (see Figure 7). These occupational segments are where most of the poor people are located. These sources of income for the respondents contribute largely to determining the access, source and utilization of the MFI services. It is worthy to note that among these people are those who have more than one job especially civil servants (government workers) who get involved in trading activities. But then, it could be concluded that the majority of the respondents were self-employed. These people are attracted to microfinance services because they own no property, and require small amount of money to inject into their small businesses. This is also affirmed by Meade (2001), who explains that micro-credit is targeted to the landless or asset-less borrowers, and moderately to extremely poor.

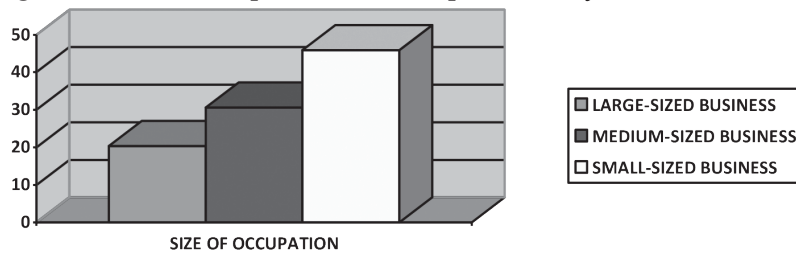
Figure 7: Occupational profile of the respondents



Source: Author's field data

And also looking at the size of respondents' occupation based on criteria of worth of total stocks, 7.8 per cent has stocks classified as 'large business' (NGN100,000.00 or more), 70.6 per cent falls in the 'medium business' category (between NGN50,000.00 and NGN100,000.00) while 21.6 per cent are 'peasant business' (less than NGN50,000.00); all these are depicted in Figure 8.

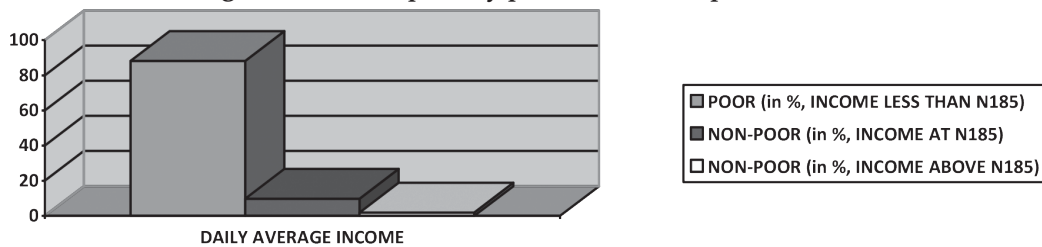
Figure 8: Size of occupation of the respondents by value of stocks



Source: Author's field data

Average income and poverty level: Here, the average income refers to excess revenue over cost which could be referred commonly to mean profit. Going by the definition of absolute poverty by the World Bank as being below \$1 a day, and assuming exchange rate of NGN185 to a dollar per day (as per current exchange rate), 88.2 per cent of the respondents earn less than NGN185 per day as income which represents the vast majority of those in poverty. As shown in Figure 9, only 11.8 per cent earn either NGN185 or above, which is the percentage of the non-poor respondents.

Figure 9: Income/poverty profile of the respondents

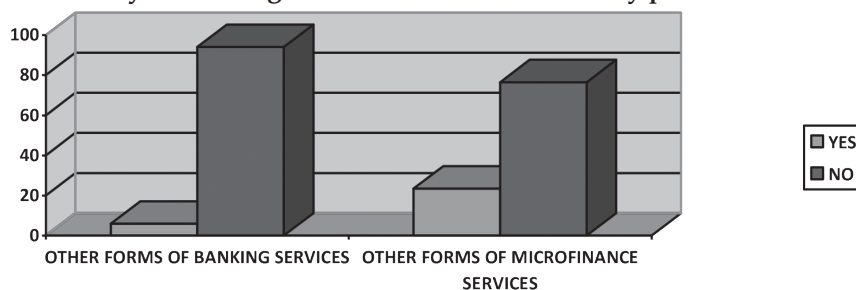


Source: Author's field data

Financial services and inclusion: Here, the study looks at the accessibility of respondents to any form of deposit banking services and micro-financial services. Deposit banking services are defined as services offered by conventional commercial or retail banks, while microfinance services are offered by either institutional or group-based organisations.

Figure 10 shows that just six per cent of respondents have access to deposit money banks (DMBs) while 94 per cent do not have access to any DMB. But then, 23.5 per cent have access to other microfinance services while 76.5 per cent do not have. These figures show that microfinance is here to solve the problem of the unbanked population.

Figure 10: Accessibility to banking and microfinance services by per cent of the respondents

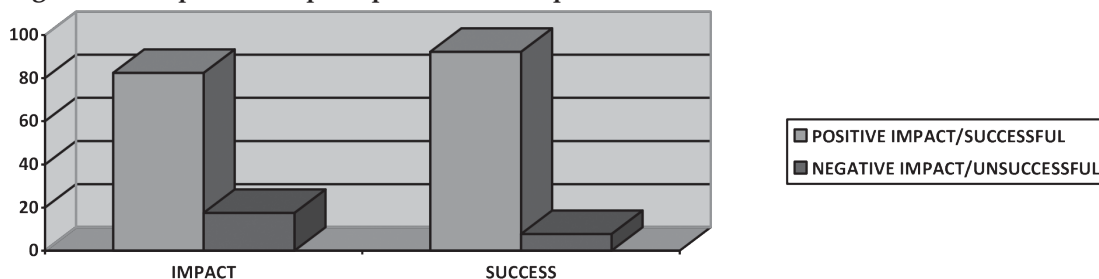


Source: Author's field data

Microfinance and its Role in the Socio-Economic Development of Iwo Town

In order to identify the role microfinance has played in the socio-economic development of the people of Iwo Town, the respondents were requested to explain what microfinance or MFIs (and this means mentioning the names of the MFIs as may be required) mean to them, including what they do, the services they have benefited from and how they used the money obtained from the MFIs, and particularly if the scheme has been successful. The key informants from the MFIs also explained the services provided by the MFIs, the target group, the process of acquiring loans, challenges faced and solutions, and how the MFIs impact on the socio-economic development of the women. While as much as 82 per cent say the impact of the microfinance scheme has been positive on them, a mere 18 percent feels otherwise. These may represent those who either made losses or who did not enjoy the services offered to them. Similarly, almost same feedback was received on the success rate of the scheme where as much as 90 per cent deemed it as successful while just 10 percent felt otherwise. The findings are presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Respondents’ perception of the impact and success of MFIs and their services



Source: Author’s field data

How the beneficiaries have utilised the funds accessed from the MFIs

The majority of the respondents who were 84.3 per cent reported that the money they got from the MFIs were injected in their retail business or income-generating activities or used to start one. 3.9 per cent equally utilised the loans to cater for the school fees of their dependants and for land or house construction, 2 per cent utilised the loans for the purchase of household items like furniture, beds, plates, cups and cutleries as well as clothes for household members (general family support) while 5.9 per cent used it to support spouses’ businesses.

As was established from the beneficiaries, they utilized the loans to pay for school fees, invest in their own or spouses’ businesses, buy household items and for landed properties and development. In most of these, women are at the forefront of the micro-credit movement; using small loans to jumpstart a long chain of economic activities (see Menon, 2005).

Empirical Results

The results of the study are based on assessing the influence of marital status, age, education level, services received and microfinance on income generated to the clients of the MFIs from their businesses into which the loans availed by them were invested. Table 2 shows the results of the OLS regression analysis based on the model formulated.

Table 2: Results of regression analysis of micro-credit and poverty

Explanatory variables	Model*			
	Coefficients	Standard error	T- test	p-value
Intercept	0.2800	0.4800	0.0000	1.0000
Lz	0.7370	0.0790	9.2780	0.0000
R2	0.7980			
Adj. R2	0.6300			
F-value	86.0860			
DW	0.4190			

Source: Author. *Dependent variable is Y_p .

Table 2 shows the results of data regressed on the model run through the SPSS. The accompanying hypothesis will be tested to establish the relationship between the dependent and the explanatory variables, as well as the roles of the predictors in the model.

Analysis of the contribution of microfinance to poverty alleviation

This analysis relates to the study hypothesis which examines the relationship between micro-credit as a microfinance tool and change in income of micro-credit beneficiaries as an indicator of their poverty status.

Hypothesis: Significance of microfinance on poverty alleviation

Ho: There is no significant effect of micro-credit on poverty alleviation in Iwo Town

H1: There is a significant effect of micro-credit on poverty alleviation in Iwo Town

The ANOVA box (Table 2) shows a significance value of 0.000 which is an indication that the regression is significant, that is, the model is a useful one.

The results in this study show that the model has an R2 of 0.798 which in other words mean that 79.8 per cent variation of the dependent variable (Y_p) is explained by the independent variables (LR, Lz, and OT), while the error term takes care of the remaining insignificant 20.2 per cent, representing variables that cannot be included in the model. And of course, the variance shows that there are no more variables to be included even with the adjusted R2 value of 63 per cent. The concern here is the relationship between micro-credit and poverty, which is the focus of this study, relatively disregarding the analysis of other variables. This means that it is not enough to receive the loans as depicted by LR, but what is important is the actual utilisation through income-bearing economic activities. Other factors variable OT did not also matter as a determinant of the people's poverty level. Hence, both LR and OT were disregarded and removed from the model because they did not affect the outcome of analysis.

So, the regressed equation which produced the results (see Table 5.1 above), is thus written as

$$Y_p = \beta_0 + 0.737Lz + \varepsilon \quad (3)$$

At 5 per cent level of significance, the F-value shows that the model is useful in determining the influence of funds utilization on the income (or poverty) with computed F-value equal 86.086 greater than the tabular F-value of 4.183.

The coefficient of Lz is significantly different from 0.000 because its p-value is smaller than 0.05 alpha level. The t-value is also significant at 5 per cent level of significance. That is, Lz with the

t-test computed value of 9.278 is greater than the tabulated value of 0.68 which shows that funds utilisation is a significant contributor to income as an indicator of poverty level.

In all, the results of the regression show that there is a positive relationship between the utilization of funds from loans and poverty level of the people.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

A model was first constructed consisting of loans receipt (whether respondents received loans or not), the utilisation of the loans (for productive purposes or consumption) and other factors that may affect the loans receipt and usage. All these are the independent variables while increased or change in income is the dependent variable. From Okpara (2010)'s evaluation of the relationship between poverty index and microfinance credit, he noted that as microfinance credit increases, poverty index also increases though at a decreasing rate. In this, while the study acknowledges the role of micro-credit in poverty alleviation, it does not have a clear-cut instant impact. The two variables, loans received and other factors, having no impact on the model can be removed.

From the analysis, two results can be deduced. First, micro-credit has been widely credited as being able to reduce poverty but without much note on the use of the loans by the beneficiaries. So, poverty reduction does not depend only on micro-credit but also on the utilisation of the loans. All along, the standard of living is affected by the change in income. Second, access to the loans goes a long way in positively affecting the poverty status of the people whether the loans are utilised for long-term investment or short-term.

Evaluation of the relationship between micro-credit utilisation and incidence of poverty indicates a positive relationship between the two variables. The implication of this is that as micro-credit utilisation increases towards productive uses, resulting income increases. This is depicted by the positivity of parameter of b_2 . The implications of this development are summarised below.

The research assessed the impact of micro-credit programme on poverty reduction using the change in income measure which represents the poverty status of the people, as the dependent variable. Micro-credit has indeed positively impacted the income of the people. This has been established in the model that though micro-credit does not directly influence a change in income but its utilisation has significant effect on the income change experienced by the beneficiaries. As shown in the model and by the results, the two variables (YP and Lz) are highly correlated.

The loans received from the MFIs by the beneficiaries can be considered a factor in enhancing the income of the people. Much more significant in this case is also the actual use or utilisation of the loans as a significant contribution to the income-earning capacity of the beneficiaries. Income change goes on to cause a change in the standard of living evident in utility like drinking water, access to power, good housing, health, general socio-economics and so on.

The results in Table 5.1 are the basis for testing the research hypothesis which shows that micro-credit has a significant impact on poverty reduction. The impact of micro-credit on poverty is positive as is shown through the change in income of the beneficiaries. It can be concluded that access to micro-credit has a significant relationship on the reduction of poverty though this has to be combined with other factor like the use of the loans. This finding validates the hypothesis that micro-credit has a significant impact on poverty reduction.

Beneficiaries' statuses are assessed by the change in their poverty situation indicating the nature of prevailing poverty situations. Traditionally, poverty is conceptualized in terms of income and expenditure ability. Following access to micro-credit, beneficiaries utilized the loans

productively and earned more income compared to those that used their loans for consumption purposes. This of course impacts their consumption behaviour, helping to improve the standard of living and further lifting them out of poverty.

Main Insights and Recommendations

Based on the findings from the research, the following recommendations are encouraged to be pursued:

- Advancing loans to the poor can be profitable for MFBs/ MFIs provided these can be well converted to loyal customers, supporting them through empowerment and enhancing their capability. It is important to note that the poor pay for services rendered to them and should hence be treated as consumers rather than passive beneficiaries. This will make the MFBs/ MFIs use their resources creatively and innovatively towards providing great services to them.
- MFBs/ MFIs while providing micro-credits, focus also on other products that can positively impact the livelihoods of the people and enhance the programme sustainability, like savings and micro-insurance. Access to loans and involvement with a credible financial institution that will share the aspirations of the people are two things which are desired by the rural poor. The poor see these services as necessity to build up from small amounts securely, to make investment, expenditures, and insure against risk (Prahalad, 2004).
- Informal and semi-formal institutions have proven to be a great platform for related microfinance savings, credits and facilities. In the absence of formal institutions, the poor often make recourse to the informal sector, which is categorized by exploitative practices and extortionate interest rates. Informal systems are typically inefficient and are exploitative as a result of their 'monopoly' power; and the interest rates are hardly fixed. Savings clubs and credit associations are the main groups through which the poor form financial bonds. These poor have demonstrated their capacity to the usage and payment for financial services through long standing informal arrangements such as savings clubs, rotating savings and credit associations and mutual insurance societies.

In the light of this study's results, Sebstad & Cohen (2001) offered other recommendations below which as well are fundamental to enhancing the capacity of MFBs/ MFIs in providing important services to the economically active rural poor for the necessary impact:

1. Products should be matched to meet the needs of the poor

The development of financial products and services by MFBs/ MFIs should be matched to meet poor clients' needs in terms of their actual needs, and the delivery mechanisms should convey same.

2. Repayment amounts and cycles should be matched to meet the needs of the poor

The design of the repayments should be to the benefit of the MFBs/ MFIs though, but not at the detriment of the poor for whom the risk attributable to taking a loan should be reduced in as much as repayment amounts and cycles agree to income flows and the repayment capacity of borrowers.

3. Loan size should be matched to the needs of the poor

Not just the size of the business of the poor but a lot of factors should be considered in advancing loans in terms of size as appropriate loan size that meets the borrowers' needs with flexibility and manageability should be well considered.

4. Increase services to vulnerable non-poor households

Expanding the outreach of microfinance services to vulnerable non-poor households is important from the perspective of poverty impact and prevention.

The action of the government is very important to the success of microfinance as well as the advancement of its commercialization. A favourable policy environment can be made available for its advancement. Government regulation of microfinance sector through the CBN is essential as intermittent interventions will ensure that more poor clients are captured as beneficiaries of micro-credits. It is also imperative for government to invest in social amenities and physical infrastructures especially in the rural areas, where the potential to boost effective demand for microfinance is high.

Good governance framework for MFBs/ MFIs are of vital necessity while regulation should be done so that it will enhance seamlessness of business in order that both deposit and lending activities can be carried out in a balanced manner. It is very imperative for enterprise sustainability of the MFBs/ MFIs which will appropriately guide microfinance operations. Government regulation must also ensure consumer protection.

The CBN in close conjunction with government and other partner institutions (local and international) should assume a true role of development institution helping to build an inclusive financial sector. The place of macroeconomic stability, development policies, sound monetary and fiscal policies, infrastructural development, promotion of financial access and protection of consumers of these services should be well pronounced in their functional roles.

Recommendations for agencies

The roles of partner agencies like development organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also important for the success of microfinance. Partner agencies are expected to work closely with the government to ease the environment of microfinance enterprise particularly in the rural and semi-urban settings. These international agencies which not only serve as funders and donors, can also assist the government to improve on the legal and regulatory environment for effective policy. They can also assist the MFBs/ MFIs to be well equipped by offering technical advices and assistances through trainings and any other contributions as may be required from time to time. The agencies are also helpful in creating a linkage between the MFBs/ MFIs and NGOs with banks to avail commercial funding. All these will make the MFBs/ MFIs stronger whereby they can develop new markets, create enterprises, develop products, evolve ideas and, innovate strategies.

Recommendations for further research

The market for the microfinance industry is still young and potentially profitable for MFIs. It also has an array of opportunities for government and development partners to alleviate poverty. As a result of the huge gap between these potentials and expected results, there is need for more intense research to fill up this gap or tap into the opportunities therein.

Research has to be carried out to explore such areas like Islamic microfinance and other dimensions of microfinance like cooperatives, local lending, regulatory issues, and so on. Other aspects have to deal with gender issues, capacity of the MFIs and stakeholders, rural development and the business of microfinance.

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Appendix C-I: Sample of Research Questionnaire

S/N	Questions	Options for responses	
1.	Gender of respondents	Male / Female	
2.	Marital status of respondents	Married / Single /Once married	
3.	Number of children	0-1	/ 2-4 / 5+
4.	Number of dependants	0-3 / 4-6 / 7+	
5.	Educational level of respondents	Post-secondary / Secondary / Primary / None	

6.	Age group (in years) of respondents	Above 40/ 30-40 / Less than 30	
7.	Residential status of respondents	Township / Village	
8.	Occupation of respondents	Artisan / Craft/Trader/Farming	
9.	Size of occupation of respondents (by value of stocks in NGN)	Big (+100,000)/ Medium (between 50,000 – 100,000) / Peasant (less than 50,000)	
10.	Average income (daily, in NGN)	Less than 185 / Income of 185 / Greater than 185	
11.	Why did you choose to access MFIs' services?	To access loans / Others	
12.	Poverty level of loan beneficiaries	Poor / Non-poor	
13.	Accessibility to any form of banking services	Yes / No	
14.	Accessibility to other forms of microfinance services	Yes / No	
15.	How adequate are the microfinance services?	Adequate / Moderate / Inadequate	
16.	How regular are the microfinance services?	Highly regular/ Moderate / Irregular	
17.	Perception of the success rate of the MFIs or MFBs	Successful / Unsuccessful	
18.	How do you use the loans taken?		

Appendix C-II: Sample of Some Other (Unstructured) Questions Asked from Respondents

1.	Has microfinance helped or increase your life style?
2.	Has the type or quality of accommodation increased following access to micro-credit?
3.	Has your standard of living moved from a lower level to a higher level after access to micro-credit?
4.	Expectations of your family members have been met through micro-credit
5.	Micro-credit helped to improve the educational level of family members
6.	Income and purchasing power increased after access to micro-credit
7.	Consumption level has increased after access to micro-credit
8.	Has your access to micro-credit expanded your business?
9.	Savings has increased after access to micro-credit
10.	Do you believe that microfinance is an effective tool for getting prosperous?

Author's Profile

Olayinka Kehinde Binuomoyo currently works as a Branch Service Support Head of Stanbic IBTC Bank in Nigeria. He has worked in both the sales and operations of the Bank. His responsibilities include operations, control and service functions. He is also a researcher with interests in Pensions and Social Economics, Inclusive and Development Finance (notably financial inclusion and microfinance), CSR and Sustainability, and Development Economics. He is an Associate Chartered Economics with the Institute of Chartered Economics of Nigeria (ICEN) and also a Certified Risk and Compliance Management Professional (CRCMP) with the International Association of Risk and Compliance Professional (IARCP), USA.
