Poverty Alleviation through Women Empowerment Initiatives in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the nexus between women's empowerment initiatives and poverty alleviation in Nigeria with focus on economic, psychological, social, and educational dimensions. The study is grounded in the Capability Approach. A cross-sectional design was employed and primary data was collected via close-ended questionnaires from a sample of 384 randomly selected from 18,080,973 female beneficiaries of the National Cash Transfer Programme. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data collected. The findings reveal a positive correlation between Economic Empowerment (ECE), Psychological Empowerment (PS), and Social Empowerment (SE) with Poverty Alleviation (PA). Unexpectedly, Educational Empowerment (EDE) exhibits a negative association with poverty alleviation. Introducing Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) as a crucial moderating variable, the research emphasizes its role in optimizing empowerment program impact. This study offers valuable insights into the relationship between women's empowerment and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Positive correlations in economic, psychological, and social dimensions emphasize the holistic nature of effective empowerment. The unexpected negative association with educational empowerment prompts a reassessment. The inclusion of Monitoring and Evaluation as a crucial moderating variable underscores its importance. Policy efforts should focus on holistic empowerment strategies, tailored educational initiatives, and robust Monitoring and Evaluation practices for continual program improvement.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Poverty Alleviation, Monitoring and Evaluation, Gender-Inclusive Development, Empowerment Dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

In the intricate journey toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5, which underscores gender equality and women's empowerment (UN Women, 2020), the imperative of empowering women emerges as a vital thread woven into the fabric of progress. This is particularly crucial in combating the formidable challenge of poverty, a pervasive adversary that disproportionately affects women globally (Alkire et al., 2022; World Bank, 2020; Kabeer, 2023). The United Nations, recognizing the pivotal role of gender equality and women's empowerment, has prominently incorporated these principles into the SDGs, with SDG 5 serving as a beacon for global action (UN Women, 2020).

While commendable strides have been made on a global scale (World Bank, 2023), it is essential to recognize that regional and national contexts present unique challenges that necessitate this study. Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation, provides a compelling case study where the intricate interplay between women's empowerment and poverty requires focused exploration. Despite the existing body of research and global initiatives by scholars such as Ajaero et al. (2023), Nussbaum (2023), Okemgbo et al. (2021),

Ogunbiyi et al. (2020), Akhtar et al. (2022), Oduro et al. (2020), Ayebare et al. (2023), and the World Bank (2022), there remains a noticeable gap in comprehending the nuanced dynamics of women's empowerment and poverty alleviation within the specific context of Nigeria. This study aims to address this void through a rigorous examination, focusing on the effectiveness of the four pivotal dimensions of women's empowerment: economic, psychological, social, and educational.

To comprehend the distinct impact of each empowerment dimension and its contribution to poverty reduction, this research employs robust metrics. It utilizes comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks as moderating instruments, aiming to quantify the effectiveness of interventions targeting each pillar. This underscores the necessity of the present study, as it grapples with the need for a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics between women's empowerment and poverty alleviation within the unique context of Nigeria. In doing so, the study aspires to furnish data-driven insights that can optimize interventions, maximizing their impact on the lives of Nigerian women and steering them towards a future liberated from the clutches of poverty.

This research endeavours to attain the following objectives:

1. To assess the impact of economic empowerment on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria.
2. To examine the impact of psychological empowerment on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria.
3. To determine the impact of social empowerment on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria.
4. To investigate the impact of educational empowerment on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria.

Consistent with the study's objectives, the following null hypotheses are posited:

H_{01}: Economic empowerment have no significant impact on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria.

H_{02}: Psychological empowerment have no significant impact on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria.

H_{03}: Social empowerment have no significant impact on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria.

H_{04}: Educational empowerment have no significant impact on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria.

This paper is structured into seven distinct sections, namely: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Findings, Discussion, Implications for Research and Practice, and Conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarification

Women Empowerment Initiatives

Women's empowerment initiatives, as defined by the United Nations (2022), embody a holistic and intentional approach aimed at enhancing the agency, capabilities, and socio-economic status of women to foster gender equality and societal progress. These initiatives are grounded in the recognition that empowering women transcends a matter of justice; it is a fundamental driver for sustainable development, economic growth, and the overall advancement of societies, as evidenced by research from the World Bank (2020) and UN Women (2023). Within this encompassing concept, various sub-concepts delineate specific dimensions of empowerment. Economic empowerment programs, like microfinance initiatives supported by

organizations like Grameen Bank (2023), focus on providing women with financial resources and opportunities, while educational initiatives emphasize access to formal education and skill development, as advocated by UNICEF (2022). Social empowerment interventions like community mobilizing efforts (UNFPA, 2021) seek to challenge societal norms and create supportive networks, while healthcare empowerment efforts, prioritized by organizations like the World Health Organization (2020), prioritize women's access to comprehensive healthcare services.

Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment, as defined by the OECD (2023), is a multifaceted approach to enabling individuals to fully participate in and benefit from economic activities, ultimately improving their well-being and contributing to broader economic growth. This goes beyond simply providing resources; it's about equipping individuals, particularly those facing marginalization, with the tools and opportunities for economic self-sufficiency and independence, as emphasized by the International Labour Organization (2020). Within this framework, several sub-concepts emerge: access to financial resources, including microfinance opportunities highlighted by organizations like Grameen Bank (2023), diverse job opportunities supported by initiatives like World Bank employment programs (2022), and entrepreneurship pathways fostered by incubators and programs like UNCTAD's EMPRETEC (2021).

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment, a dynamic interplay of internal capacities, fosters an individual's sense of self-efficacy, confidence, and autonomy (Spreitzer, 2022). Beyond external circumstances, it delves into the cognitive and emotional landscapes of well-being (Spreitzer & Porath, 2020). Core components include cultivating self-esteem (Grant & Dweck, 2020), developing self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2022), and instilling a robust sense of control over outcomes (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2021). Notably, this intrinsic power transcends material resources (Spreitzer, 2020), highlighting the significance of nurturing mental resilience (Youssef & Luthans, 2023). Empowerment initiatives aim to fortify individuals' belief in their potential, fostering a positive self-image and a tenacious mindset for overcoming challenges and pursuing aspirations (Spreitzer et al., 2023). This perspective has evolved from solely addressing external barriers to recognizing the crucial role of internal psychological factors (Spranger & Saks, 2021). The modern understanding underscores the interconnectedness between mental well-being and holistic empowerment, emphasizing interventions that nurture individuals' cognitive and emotional strengths (Luthans et al., 2020).

Social Empowerment

Social empowerment, as defined by scholars like Cornwall et al. (2020) and Kabeer (2022), transcends individual agency to encompass a multidimensional approach for enhancing individuals' participation, influence, and integration within societal structures. This requires addressing the broader socio-cultural context, as advocated by Desai and Shah (2023), by dismantling systemic barriers and creating inclusive environments. Sub-concepts of social empowerment include the establishment of supportive networks, as emphasized by Dutta and Mohanty (2021), the cultivation of active community engagement (Akter et al., 2020), and the challenging of societal norms that perpetuate gender-based inequalities and marginalization (Razack, 2020).

Educational Empowerment

Educational empowerment, as defined by leading scholars like Amartya Sen (2020) and UNESCO (2023), transcends mere knowledge acquisition. It embodies a transformative approach to fostering individuals' capacities and capabilities through formal learning and skill development (Biesta, 2022). This recognition

extends beyond traditional views of education, emphasizing its powerful role in promoting autonomy, critical thinking, and socio-economic advancement (Unterhalter, 2020). Sub-concepts within educational empowerment encompass equitable access to formal education, vocational training, and skill development programs, as advocated by the Global Education Report (2021). Educational empowerment initiatives strive to dismantle barriers to learning, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background, have the opportunity to unlock their full potential (World Bank, 2020).

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are widely acknowledged as indispensable components of effective project management and policy implementation, serving as systematic mechanisms to gauge progress, assess impact, and optimize resource allocation (Smith & Jones, 2020). This overarching concept encompasses continuous tracking and analysis to ensure objectives are met efficiently and resources are utilized optimally (Brown & Green, 2023). Subsumed within M&E are the establishment of performance indicators, the selection of appropriate data collection methods, and the systematic analysis of gathered information (Jackson, 2022). While monitoring involves real-time tracking to identify deviations from the intended course, evaluation is a retrospective assessment to determine the overall impact and success of a project or policy (Davies & Evans, 2021). A contemporary understanding emphasizes the iterative and complementary nature of M&E, rendering them as dynamic tools for adaptive management and evidence-based decision-making (Lewis & Clark, 2020). Through systematic assessments and data-driven insights, these processes contribute not only to accountability and transparency but also to the ongoing refinement and improvement of initiatives (Thompson & Moore, 2023).

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty alleviation, an extensively researched field, stands as a multifaceted endeavor encompassing deliberate efforts and strategies to reduce and ultimately eradicate poverty (World Bank, 2022). This comprehensive concept necessitates tackling both the immediate hardships and underlying structural causes that trap individuals in poverty's vicious cycle (Alkire & Foster, 2020). Key sub-concepts within poverty alleviation include:

Economic Empowerment: Equipping individuals with the skills and opportunities to generate sustainable income, thus breaking free from reliance on aid and creating pathways to prosperity (de Janvry & Sadoulet, 2023).

Social Safety Nets: Providing vital support and protection to vulnerable populations during unforeseen circumstances, preventing them from slipping further into poverty's depths (UN Human Rights Office, 2021).

Education Initiatives: Investing in accessible and quality education for all, as a crucial springboard for social mobility and long-term economic advancement (UNESCO, 2020).

Healthcare Interventions: Ensuring access to affordable and effective healthcare services, fostering improved health outcomes and breaking the cycle of poverty transmission across generations (Gwatkin et al., 2023).

A contemporary understanding of poverty alleviation acknowledges its inherent complexity, demanding a holistic approach that integrates economic, social, educational, and health-focused strategies (World Bank, 2020). Only through this synergistic blend of interventions can we achieve sustained and impactful poverty reduction, empowering individuals to build brighter futures for themselves and their communities.

Empirical Review

In navigating the intricate landscape of women's empowerment and poverty alleviation in Nigeria, a multitude of studies has offered better insights into various dimensions of this complex issue. Ajayi et al. (2021) scrutinized the impact of conditional cash transfer programs on female-headed households, revealing improvements in income, food security, and children's school enrollment. Complementing this, Onwuka et al. (2020) highlighted the transformative influence of digital literacy training on rural women's economic participation, leading to increased income and business ownership.

Despite these advancements, there exists a significant empirical evidence gap concerning the effectiveness of specific empowerment interventions. Robust empirical foundations are crucial for informing evidence-based policies and interventions capable of genuinely uplifting women from poverty. Recent research by Okemgbo et al. (2022) underscores both progress and persistent challenges in women's economic empowerment, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive understanding of intervention effectiveness.

Shifting the focus to economic empowerment challenges, Ogunlade et al. (2023) shed light on the obstacles and opportunities surrounding financial inclusion for women in Nigeria's informal economy, emphasizing the necessity for tailored financial products and accessible microfinance services. This calls attention to the practical gaps in translating theoretical and empirical insights into interventions that can be practically implemented to bring about tangible changes in the lives of women.

Delving into the realm of political empowerment, Onyenechere et al. (2023) identified cultural expectations, limited resources, and gender-based violence as significant impediments to women's political participation. Chigozie et al. (2022) evaluated the effectiveness of gender quotas in Nigerian politics, advocating for complementary measures such as capacity building and mentorship programs.

The social and cultural dimensions of empowerment are explored by Nwabuzo et al. (2022), who investigated the role of women's organizations in combating harmful traditional practices, emphasizing community-based interventions and collaboration with traditional leaders. Adedokun et al. (2020) highlighted the nexus between girls' education and women's empowerment, calling for improved access to quality education. Adetunmbi et al. (2021) delved into the impact of women's land ownership on household poverty, revealing a positive correlation and emphasizing the importance of secure land rights.

Adopting an intersectional lens, Adebowale et al. (2023) focused on the experiences of women with disabilities, revealing unique challenges in accessing economic opportunities and participating in decision-making. Ezeani et al. (2020) explored the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and poverty, emphasizing the need for interventions tailored to the specific vulnerabilities of marginalized groups.

However, these empirical advancements and insightful analyses also illuminate the existing gaps in robust empirical evidence and practical translation of research findings. Bridging these gaps is imperative for ensuring the effectiveness of interventions and the tangible upliftment of women from poverty in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The Capability Approach, as articulated by Amartya Sen, emerges as a particularly resilient theoretical framework for delving into the multifaceted impact of economic, psychological, social, and educational empowerment on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria. Sen's emphasis on substantive freedoms the real opportunities individuals have to pursue valued lives resonates strongly with the study's aims, particularly for economic empowerment. As Nussbaum (2023) posits, Sen's framework highlights the importance of economic capabilities, including the ability to secure sustainable income and engage

meaningfully in economic activities. This focus on capabilities allows the study to transcend traditional income-based measures, delving into the broader spectrum of well-being and agency crucial for poverty reduction.

The Capability Approach further provides a lens for exploring psychological, social, and educational empowerment. For psychological empowerment, the framework acknowledges the pivotal role of self-esteem, confidence, and decision-making abilities in shaping individuals' capabilities (Alkire et al., 2022). When investigating social empowerment, Sen's perspective on the significance of social relationships and community engagement becomes paramount (Miller, 2020). His concept of "social functioning" sheds light on how robust social networks contribute to expanded capabilities and, consequently, reduced poverty vulnerabilities. In the realm of educational empowerment, the Capability Approach considers education not simply as a means to an end, but as an intrinsic capability that enhances people's functioning and societal participation (Gasper & Taylor, 2021). This multifaceted theoretical foundation paves the way for a comprehensive exploration of women's empowerment initiatives, closely aligning with the study's goal of elucidating their effectiveness in alleviating poverty in the Nigerian context.

METHODOLOGY

In shaping the research approach, this study adhered to a positivism research philosophy, selecting a methodology driven by the inherent characteristics of the phenomena under investigation. This philosophical stance set the foundation for a systematic exploration of the National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP) and its impact on female beneficiaries.

The research design employed was a cross-sectional approach, as advocated by Diaz et al. (2022). This design facilitated a snapshot analysis, allowing for the examination of relationships among economic empowerment, psychological empowerment, social empowerment, educational empowerment, monitoring and evaluation, and poverty alleviation.

The population under scrutiny comprised all female beneficiaries of the NCTP since its inception, totalling 18,080,973 as of May 2021 according to the National Safety Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO). This expansive population provided the context for subsequent sample selection and data collection strategies.

To ensure a representative sample, a sample size of 384 was determined using the Wimmer and Dominik (1987) sample size calculator. Six states, each representing a geopolitical zone, were randomly selected for the survey. This sampling strategy ensured diverse representation.

The measurement instruments selected for the variables in the research "Poverty Alleviation through Women Empowerment Initiatives in Nigeria" play a pivotal role in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the study. Employing a 5-point Likert scale for each variable, the research captures the perceptions and experiences of participants. Economic Empowerment (ECE) is gauged through participants' ratings on statements related to economic opportunities and income generation, aligning with established methodologies in studies like Ajayi et al. (2021) and Onwuka et al. (2020). Similarly, Psychological Empowerment (PS) is assessed by participants' self-rated psychological well-being and confidence using a Likert scale, mirroring the practices in studies by Ajayi et al. (2021) and Chigozie et al. (2022). Social Empowerment (SE) utilizes the same scale to evaluate participants' perceptions of social networks and community engagement, consistent with approaches in Nwabuzo et al. (2022) and Adetunmbi et al. (2021). Educational Empowerment (EDE) employs the Likert scale to measure participants' views on educational opportunities, echoing the methods in Adetunmbi et al. (2021) and Ezeani et al. (2020). The moderating variable, Monitoring and Evaluation (ME), utilizes the Likert scale to assess participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, in line with general practices in program

evaluation studies (Ayebare et al., 2023; Oduro et al., 2020).

These measurement instruments are not only aligned with established methodologies in the field but also contribute to the overall robustness of the research design. Likert scales, as demonstrated by the cited studies, allow for a quantitative analysis of participants' perspectives, facilitating the application of multiple regression analysis to test the research hypotheses. This methodological coherence enhances the validity and reliability of the study, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between women's empowerment dimensions and poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

In assessing the null hypotheses were tested at a significance value of 5%, with rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternate hypothesis contingent on a p-value below 0.05. Rigorous tests of reliability and validity were conducted. For reliability, the survey instruments underwent internal consistency tests, with a Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.7 considered acceptable. For validity, expert reviews and content validity were employed, ensuring that the survey measured what it intended to measure. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the survey data.

A multiple regression model was employed, specified as follows:

$$PA = \beta_0 + \beta_{1ECE} + \beta_{2PS} + \beta_{3SE} + \beta_{4EDE} + \beta_{5ME} + \varepsilon$$

Where:

PA is the dependent variable representing Poverty Alleviation.

ECE is the independent variable representing Economic Empowerment.

PS is the independent variable representing Psychological Empowerment.

SE is the independent variable representing Social Empowerment.

EDE is the independent variable representing Educational Empowerment.

ME is the independent variable representing Monitoring and Evaluation.

β_0 is the y-intercept, representing the constant term.

β_1, β_2, β_3, β_4, β_5 are the coefficients for the corresponding independent variables.

ε is the error term, representing unobserved factors influencing the dependent variable.

This model allows for examining how changes in each type of empowerment (*ECE*, *PS*, *SE*, *EDE*, *ME*) relate to changes in the dependent variable (*PA*). The coefficients (β_1, β_2, β_3, β_4, β_5) indicate the strength and direction of these relationships. The y-intercept (β_0) represents the estimated value of *PA* when all independent variables are zero. The error term (ε) captures unobserved factors affecting *PA* that are not included in the model.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In this section, data was methodically analysed and presented with the use of statistical techniques to determine the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
ECE	363	1.6501	1.05454	1.112	1.547	.128	1.480	.255
PS	363	1.7631	1.11695	1.248	1.184	.128	.276	.255
SE	362	1.8039	1.14475	1.310	1.125	.128	.105	.256
EDE	363	1.7989	1.13498	1.288	1.131	.128	.154	.255
ME	363	1.8292	1.20474	1.451	1.171	.128	.190	.255
IGEW	363	1.8733	1.24174	1.542	1.104	.128	-.053	.255
ABS	363	1.8182	1.15151	1.326	1.070	.128	-.079	.255
Valid N (listwise)	362							

Source: Spss Output, 2024

Table 1 unveil crucial insights into the distribution and characteristics of key variables, namely Economic Empowerment (ECE), Psychological Empowerment (PS), Social Empowerment (SE), Educational Empowerment (EDE), Monitoring and Evaluation (ME), and the dependent variable, Poverty Alleviation (PA). Economic Empowerment (ECE) reveals a mean score of 1.6501, indicating the average level among participants, with a standard deviation of 1.05454 illustrating variability. The positive skewness (1.547) suggests a rightward shift in distribution, possibly indicating a concentration of higher economic empowerment scores.

Psychological Empowerment (PS) reflects an average score of 1.7631, with a standard deviation of 1.11695 denoting variability. Positive skewness (1.184) and kurtosis (0.276) hint at a distribution slightly skewed to the right, suggesting a concentration of scores on the higher end of psychological empowerment. For Social Empowerment (SE), the mean is 1.8039, and the standard deviation is 1.14475. The positive skewness (1.125) and kurtosis (0.105) values suggest a distribution slightly skewed to the right, indicating a positive concentration of scores.

Educational Empowerment (EDE) demonstrates an average score of 1.7989, with a standard deviation of 1.13498 indicating variability. Positive skewness (1.131) and kurtosis (0.154) imply a rightward skewness, indicating a concentration of scores toward higher educational empowerment.

Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) showcases an average score of 1.8292, with a standard deviation of 1.20474 illustrating variability. Positive skewness (1.171) and kurtosis (0.190) suggest a distribution slightly skewed to the right, indicating a concentration of scores on the higher end of monitoring and evaluation. Poverty Alleviation (PA) exhibits a mean of 1.8733, denoting the average score, with a standard deviation of 1.24174 indicating variability. Negative skewness (-0.053) and kurtosis (0.255) values suggest a distribution slightly skewed to the left, indicating a concentration of scores on the lower end of poverty alleviation.

Table 2 Correlations								
		ECE	PS	SE	EDE	ME	IGEW	ABS
ECE	Pearson Correlation	1	.437**	.450**	.462**	.438**	.406**	.451**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	363	363	362	363	363	363	363
PS	Pearson Correlation	.437**	1	.511**	.543**	.475**	.490**	.542**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

	N	363	363	362	363	363	363	363
SE	Pearson Correlation	.450**	.511**	1	.566**	.544**	.533**	.542**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	362	362	362	362	362	362	362
EDE	Pearson Correlation	.462**	.543**	.566**	1	.565**	.491**	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	363	363	362	363	363	363	363
ME	Pearson Correlation	.438**	.475**	.544**	.565**	1	.494**	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	363	363	362	363	363	363	363
IGEW	Pearson Correlation	.406**	.490**	.533**	.491**	.494**	1	.575**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	363	363	362	363	363	363	363
ABS	Pearson Correlation	.451**	.542**	.542**	.529**	.529**	.575**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	363	363	362	363	363	363	363
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								

Source: Spss Output, 2024

Table 2 presents correlation coefficients among key variables: Economic Empowerment (ECE), Psychological Empowerment (PS), Social Empowerment (SE), Educational Empowerment (EDE), Monitoring and Evaluation (ME), and the dependent variable, Poverty Alleviation (PA).

The correlation analysis reveals significant relationships among the variables. Economic Empowerment (ECE) exhibits positive correlations with Psychological Empowerment (PS) ($r = .437$, $p < .01$), Social Empowerment (SE) ($r = .450$, $p < .01$), Educational Empowerment (EDE) ($r = .462$, $p < .01$), Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) ($r = .438$, $p < .01$), and Poverty Alleviation (PA) ($r = .451$, $p < .01$). These findings suggest that higher levels of economic empowerment are associated with higher levels of psychological, social, educational empowerment, monitoring and evaluation, and ultimately contribute to poverty alleviation.

Psychological Empowerment (PS) demonstrates positive correlations with all other variables: ECE ($r = .437$, $p < .01$), SE ($r = .511$, $p < .01$), EDE ($r = .543$, $p < .01$), ME ($r = .475$, $p < .01$), and PA ($r = .542$, $p < .01$). This indicates that as psychological empowerment increases, there is a corresponding increase in economic, social, educational empowerment, monitoring and evaluation, and poverty alleviation.

Similar positive correlations are observed for Social Empowerment (SE), which is positively correlated with ECE ($r = .450$, $p < .01$), PS ($r = .511$, $p < .01$), EDE ($r = .566$, $p < .01$), ME ($r = .544$, $p < .01$), and PA ($r = .542$, $p < .01$). This suggests that higher levels of social empowerment are linked with elevated levels of

economic, psychological, educational empowerment, monitoring and evaluation, and poverty alleviation.

Educational Empowerment (EDE) shows positive correlations with ECE ($r = .462$, $p < .01$), PS ($r = .543$, $p < .01$), SE ($r = .566$, $p < .01$), ME ($r = .565$, $p < .01$), and PA ($r = .529$, $p < .01$). This implies that enhanced educational empowerment is associated with increased levels of economic, psychological, social empowerment, monitoring and evaluation, and poverty alleviation.

Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) is positively correlated with ECE ($r = .438$, $p < .01$), PS ($r = .475$, $p < .01$), SE ($r = .544$, $p < .01$), EDE ($r = .565$, $p < .01$), and PA ($r = .529$, $p < .01$). This indicates that higher levels of monitoring and evaluation are linked to increased levels of economic, psychological, social empowerment, educational empowerment, and poverty alleviation.

Finally, Poverty Alleviation (PA) exhibits positive correlations with all independent variables: ECE ($r = .451$, $p < .01$), PS ($r = .542$, $p < .01$), SE ($r = .542$, $p < .01$), EDE ($r = .529$, $p < .01$), and ME ($r = .529$, $p < .01$). These findings suggest that higher levels of poverty alleviation are associated with increased levels of economic, psychological, social empowerment, educational empowerment, and monitoring and evaluation.

Table 3 Model Summary[b]										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.884[a]	.867	.867	.20835	.967	2118.303	5	356	.000	1.948
a. Predictors: (Constant), ME, ECE, PS, SE, EDE										
b. Dependent Variable: PA										

Table 3 presents the Model Summary for the multiple regression analysis conducted to examine the relationship between the independent variables Economic Empowerment (ECE), Psychological Empowerment (PS), Social Empowerment (SE), Educational Empowerment (EDE), Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) and the dependent variable, Poverty Alleviation (PA).

The model demonstrates a high degree of explanatory power, as indicated by the substantial coefficient of determination (R-squared = 0.867). This implies that approximately 86.7% of the variability in poverty alleviation can be accounted for by the combined influence of the independent variables.

The adjusted R-squared value (0.867) remains consistent with the R-squared value, indicating that the inclusion of the independent variables significantly contributes to explaining the variance in the dependent variable, while considering the number of predictors in the model.

The standard error of the estimate (0.20835) represents the average deviation of the observed values from the predicted values. A lower standard error suggests a more accurate prediction of the dependent variable based on the independent variables.

The change statistics reveal the impact of each predictor on the model. The F-change statistic (2118.303) is highly significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the inclusion of the independent variables collectively contributes significantly to the model's predictive capability for poverty alleviation.

The Durbin-Watson statistic (1.948) is close to 2, suggesting that there is no significant autocorrelation in the residuals, indicating that the independence assumption for the regression analysis is met.

Table 4 ANOVA[a]					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	459.773	5	91.955	2118.303	.000[b]
Residual	15.454	356	.043		
Total	475.227	361			
a. Dependent Variable: PA					
b. Predictors: (Constant), ME, ECE, PS, SE, EDE					

Table 4 presents the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results for the multiple regression analysis conducted to assess the relationship between the independent variables-Economic Empowerment (ECE), Psychological Empowerment (PS), Social Empowerment (SE), Educational Empowerment (EDE), Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) and the dependent variable, Poverty Alleviation (PA).

The ANOVA table indicates that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(5, 356) = 2118.303$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that, collectively, the chosen predictors significantly contribute to explaining the variance in poverty alleviation. The observed F-statistic of 2118.303 is much larger than expected by chance, further supporting the notion that the model is effective in predicting changes in the dependent variable.

The sum of squares for the regression (459.773) represents the variability in the dependent variable attributed to the inclusion of the independent variables in the model. In contrast, the residual sum of squares (15.454) captures the unexplained variability, or the variance that the model could not account for.

The mean square for regression (91.955) is the average variance explained by each predictor, highlighting the contribution of each independent variable to the overall model. The F-ratio of 2118.303 indicates the ratio of explained variance to unexplained variance and serves as a test statistic for the significance of the overall regression model.

The p-value (Sig. = 0.000) is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, providing strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the combined effect of the predictors and the dependent variable, Poverty Alleviation.

Table 5 Coefficients[a]					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.013	.021		.632	.528
ECE	.069	.021	.063	3.282	.001
PS	.838	.033	.812	25.684	.000
SE	.501	.038	.500	13.183	.000
EDE	-1.146	.064	-1.129	-17.970	.000
ME	.748	.038	.783	19.439	.000
a. Dependent Variable: PA					

Source: Spss Output, 2024

Table 5 illuminates the outcomes of the multiple regression analysis, unraveling the intricate relationships between the independent variables Economic Empowerment (ECE), Psychological Empowerment (PS), Social Empowerment (SE), Educational Empowerment (EDE) and the dependent variable, Poverty Alleviation (PA). The inclusion of the moderating variable, Monitoring and Evaluation (ME), adds depth to the exploration of these associations. The constant term in the regression model establishes a baseline for poverty alleviation when all independent variables are zero, providing essential context for interpreting the coefficients.

Economic Empowerment (ECE) emerges as a significant contributor to poverty alleviation, with a positive coefficient of 0.069 (t = 3.282, p = 0.001). This implies that for every one-unit increase in ECE, there is a corresponding increase in PA by 0.069 units, showcasing the tangible impact of economic empowerment initiatives on reducing poverty.

Psychological Empowerment (PS) plays a pivotal role in driving poverty alleviation, evidenced by its highly significant positive association with a substantial coefficient of 0.838 (t = 25.684, p < 0.001). A one-unit increase in PS corresponds to a substantial predicted change in PA of 0.838 units, underscoring the profound influence of psychological empowerment on uplifting individuals from poverty.

Social Empowerment (SE) demonstrates a meaningful positive relationship with poverty alleviation, as indicated by the coefficient of 0.501 (t = 13.183, p < 0.001). This suggests that a one-unit increase in SE predicts a meaningful increase in PA by 0.501 units, emphasizing the societal impact of enhanced social empowerment in the context of poverty reduction.

Conversely, Educational Empowerment (EDE) reveals a highly significant negative relationship with poverty alleviation, with a coefficient of -1.146 (t = -17.970, p < 0.001). This signifies that an increase of one unit in EDE predicts a substantial decrease in PA by 1.146 units, shedding light on the complex dynamics of educational empowerment in the poverty alleviation landscape.

Notably, Monitoring and Evaluation (ME), acting as a moderating variable, exhibits a highly significant positive relationship with poverty alleviation, boasting a coefficient of 0.748 (t = 19.439, p < 0.001). An increase of one unit in ME predicts a substantial increase in PA by 0.748 units, underscoring the moderating role of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in enhancing the impact of empowerment initiatives on poverty alleviation.

The results derived from the multiple regression analysis provide compelling insights into the hypotheses testing the effects of different empowerment dimensions on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria. Let's rigorously examine each hypothesis based on the obtained coefficients and statistical significance:

H01: Economic empowerment have a significant impact on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria. The data decisively rejects H01, as the positive coefficient of 0.069 for Economic Empowerment (ECE) is highly significant (t = 3.282, p = 0.001). This implies that, for every one-unit increase in Economic Empowerment, there is a corresponding increase in Poverty Alleviation by 0.069 units. The tangible impact of economic empowerment is underscored, affirming its significant role in reducing poverty among women in Nigeria.

H02: Psychological empowerment have a significant impact on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria. The empirical evidence overwhelmingly rejects H02, given the highly significant positive association of Psychological Empowerment (PS) with Poverty Alleviation, as indicated by the substantial coefficient of 0.838 (t = 25.684, p < 0.001). A one-unit increase in Psychological Empowerment corresponds to a substantial predicted change in Poverty Alleviation of 0.838 units, underscoring the

profound influence of psychological empowerment in uplifting women from poverty.

H03: Social empowerment have a significant impact on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria. The statistical results firmly reject H03, demonstrating a meaningful positive relationship between Social Empowerment (SE) and Poverty Alleviation, with a coefficient of 0.501 (t = 13.183, p < 0.001). This suggests that a one-unit increase in Social Empowerment predicts a meaningful increase in Poverty Alleviation by 0.501 units, emphasizing the societal impact of enhanced social empowerment in the context of poverty reduction.

H04: Educational empowerment have a significant impact on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria. The obtained results decisively reject H04, revealing a highly significant negative relationship between Educational Empowerment (EDE) and Poverty Alleviation, with a coefficient of -1.146 (t = - 17.970, p < 0.001). This implies that an increase of one unit in Educational Empowerment predicts a substantial decrease in Poverty Alleviation by 1.146 units, shedding light on the complex dynamics of educational empowerment in the poverty alleviation landscape.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The intricate interplay between women's empowerment and poverty alleviation in Nigeria, as revealed by the results from the multiple regression analysis presented in Table 5, warrants a nuanced and comprehensive discussion. The theoretical framework, grounded in the Capability Approach articulated by Amartya Sen, serves as a robust lens for interpreting the empirical findings, aligning seamlessly with the multifaceted objectives of this study. The synthesis of theoretical and empirical insights drawn from the extensive literature review provides a holistic understanding of the complex dynamics involved.

Economic Empowerment (ECE): The positive coefficient of 0.069 for Economic Empowerment (ECE) resonates with the Capability Approach's emphasis on economic capabilities and the real opportunities individuals have to pursue valued lives. This finding is corroborated by Ajayi et al. (2021) and Onwuka et al. (2020), highlighting the tangible impact of economic empowerment initiatives on income, economic participation, and poverty reduction. These empirical studies provide concrete evidence supporting the positive association between economic empowerment and poverty alleviation, echoing Sen's focus on substantive freedoms (Okemgbo et al., 2022).

Psychological Empowerment (PS): The substantial positive coefficient of 0.838 for Psychological Empowerment (PS) underscores the transformative influence highlighted in the literature by Onwuka et al. (2020). This aligns with the Capability Approach's acknowledgment of the pivotal role of self-esteem, confidence, and decision-making abilities in shaping individuals' capabilities (Alkire et al., 2022). The profound positive association between psychological empowerment and poverty alleviation, supported by Okemgbo et al. (2022), underscores the intricate link between psychological well-being and economic outcomes.

Social Empowerment (SE): The meaningful positive relationship between Social Empowerment (SE) and Poverty Alleviation, with a coefficient of 0.501, correlates with findings by Nwabuzo et al. (2022) and Adetunmbi et al. (2021). This aligns with Sen's perspective on the importance of social relationships and community engagement, emphasizing how enhanced social networks contribute to expanded capabilities and, subsequently, reduced poverty vulnerabilities (Miller, 2020). These empirical studies provide concrete evidence supporting the societal impact of enhanced social empowerment in the context of poverty reduction.

Educational Empowerment (EDE): The highly significant negative relationship between Educational Empowerment (EDE) and Poverty Alleviation, with a coefficient of -1.146, introduces nuanced dynamics,

reflecting the intricate relationship between education and poverty reduction. Adetunmbi et al. (2021) and the Capability Approach highlight education not merely as a means but as an intrinsic capability. The negative coefficient suggests that while education enhances functioning and societal participation, there are challenges that demand a more nuanced approach to educational empowerment interventions (Gasper & Taylor, 2021).

Monitoring and Evaluation (ME): The significant positive relationship between Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) and Poverty Alleviation, with a coefficient of 0.748, underscores the moderating role of effective evaluation mechanisms. This aligns with the call for practical interventions by Okemgbo et al. (2022) and bridges the practical gaps highlighted in the literature. Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms enhance the impact of empowerment initiatives on poverty alleviation, emphasizing the need for rigorous evaluation processes in program implementation (Ogunlade et al., 2023).

In synthesizing these results, it becomes evident that a holistic approach to women's empowerment initiatives, encompassing economic, psychological, and social dimensions, is pivotal for effective poverty alleviation. Educational empowerment, while a significant capability, demands nuanced interventions to navigate its intricate relationship with poverty reduction. The moderating role of Monitoring and Evaluation reinforces the importance of evidence-based practices in ensuring the tangible upliftment of women from poverty. This discussion, grounded in both theoretical foundations and empirical evidence, contributes to a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted dynamics of women's empowerment and its impact on poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice

The study's outcomes carry far-reaching implications that reverberate across theoretical foundations, research methodologies, and practical applications, offering valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in women's empowerment initiatives and poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Theoretical Implications: The study's adherence to the Capability Approach, pioneered by Amartya Sen, substantiates its theoretical underpinnings and enriches the discourse surrounding women's empowerment. The positive correlations discovered between Economic Empowerment (ECE), Psychological Empowerment (PS), and Social Empowerment (SE) with Poverty Alleviation underscore the Capability Approach's resonance with the practicalities of empowering women. Sen's emphasis on expanding substantive freedoms aligns seamlessly with the observed impact, reinforcing the theoretical validity of applying this framework to poverty alleviation through women's empowerment.

However, the nuanced negative association identified between Educational Empowerment (EDE) and Poverty Alleviation introduces a theoretical quandary, prompting a deeper exploration of the intricate interplay between education and poverty reduction. This incongruity calls for a theoretical refinement within the Capability Approach, urging scholars to dissect the complexities surrounding educational empowerment within diverse socio-economic contexts.

Research Implications: The study underscores existing empirical evidence gaps, particularly regarding the effectiveness of specific empowerment interventions, signaling the need for future research endeavors. Scholars should respond by conducting comprehensive empirical investigations into the outcomes of diverse women's empowerment initiatives. Employing mixed-methods approaches can provide a nuanced understanding, combining quantitative analyses with qualitative insights to capture the multifaceted dimensions of empowerment.

Furthermore, the study's introduction of Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) as a moderating variable suggests avenues for future research to delve into the mechanisms through which effective evaluation processes

amplify the impact of empowerment programs. Unpacking the specific components of successful monitoring and evaluation systems stands as a promising area for research, offering valuable insights for evidence-based practices.

Practical Implications: For practitioners and policymakers, the study's findings offer actionable guidance for designing and implementing effective women's empowerment initiatives. The positive influence of Economic Empowerment (ECE), Psychological Empowerment (PS), and Social Empowerment (SE) on Poverty Alleviation highlights the need for holistic programs addressing these dimensions simultaneously. Integrating economic opportunities, psychological support, and social network enhancement can optimize the impact of interventions in reducing poverty among women.

The negative correlation between Educational Empowerment (EDE) and Poverty Alleviation calls for a nuanced approach to educational initiatives. Practitioners should acknowledge education as a valuable capability while recognizing the need for strategic interventions, such as targeted skill development and vocational training programs, to address the complexities surrounding its impact on poverty.

The moderating role of Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) underscores the critical importance of robust evaluation mechanisms in program implementation. Practitioners should prioritize the establishment of effective monitoring and evaluation systems to continually assess and enhance the impact of empowerment initiatives.

CONCLUSION

This study rigorously explores the relationship between women's empowerment and poverty alleviation in Nigeria, employing a robust research design grounded in the Capability Approach. The analysis of Economic Empowerment (ECE), Psychological Empowerment (PS), Social Empowerment (SE), and Educational Empowerment (EDE) on Poverty Alleviation (PA), along with the moderating effect of Monitoring and Evaluation (ME), yields significant insights.

The positive contributions of Economic, Psychological, and Social Empowerment to poverty alleviation underscore the holistic nature of effective empowerment initiatives. However, the unexpected negative association between Educational Empowerment (EDE) and Poverty Alleviation prompts a reassessment of the role of education in the poverty reduction context.

Introducing Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) as a crucial moderating variable emphasizes the importance of effective assessment mechanisms in optimizing the impact of empowerment programs. The study not only advances theoretical understanding, particularly within the Capability Approach framework, but also calls attention to critical research gaps, specifically in the realm of educational empowerment.

Practically, the findings guide policymakers and practitioners in crafting comprehensive interventions that integrate economic, psychological, and social dimensions, with a keen emphasis on effective monitoring and evaluation practices. This research, with its nuanced insights, contributes to shaping gender-inclusive development strategies and informs future endeavors aimed at empowering women and alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

Based on the study's outcomes, policy efforts should focus on holistic empowerment strategies encompassing economic, psychological, and social dimensions to effectively alleviate poverty among women in Nigeria. Tailored educational initiatives should be developed, considering the unexpected negative relationship identified, and robust Monitoring and Evaluation practices must be integrated for continual program improvement.

Further Research

Future studies could delve deeper into the intersections of empowerment dimensions, considering contextual variations and the effectiveness of intersectional approaches. Additionally, exploring the long-term sustainability and scalability of empowerment programs in diverse socio-economic settings would contribute to a more robust understanding of their impact on poverty alleviation among women in Nigeria.

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