Impact of Women Empowerment on Poverty Reduction: Empirical Evidence from Nigeria and Ivory Coast

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Abstract

Poverty is one of the major causes of many social vices in less developed countries, which increasingly affecting vulnerable class in the society, particularly women. This study examines the impact of women empowerment on poverty reduction in Africa using time series panel data across Nigeria and Ivory Coast covering 2011 to 2021. The study used Livin, Lin and Chu (LLC) panel unit root test and found that all the variables are stationary at level and Pedroni test of cointegration confirmed the long run relationship among the variables. The causality result showed evidence of bi-directional causality running from poverty rate to multidimensional women empowerment and poverty rate and unemployment. Lastly, the study recommends that more importance should be attached to women empowerment in order to reduce the poverty rate across the countries of the study.

Keywords: Empirical Evidence, Panel Data, Poverty Reduction, Vulnerability, Women Empowerment,

Introduction

The World Development Report 2000/2001 emphasizes a number of poverty faces from inadequacy of opportunity, empowerment and security (World Bank, 2001). The prospects are unopened to the deprived groups, and resulting to practically incapability in the humanity. While less or absence of empowerment restricts their chances in almost every aspects of life and their insecurity confirms their vulnerability to diseases, violence and discrimination (Rowland, 1995).

World Bank data (2007), stresses about the percentage of people whose members of households with total spending per person lower than the poverty line continue falling down globally since 1990. With this reduction, the incidence and perseverance of poverty cannot be ruled out completely in the world, it could be proclaimed that its incidence in Africa is by far much higher than it is among

European, Central Asian and other continents altogether. Among the African nations themselves, the level of poverty varies between the Northern and Southern parts, leading to the inadequacy of the basic means to facilitate growth and progress. It is as well observable that, poverty is certainly a global endemic. Nonetheless, the degree of poverty plays great role in determining the taxonomy defining the individuals or nations.

Situated in the Western Africa around the inter-tropical zone, Côte d'Ivoire has a size of 322,462 Km². It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean in the South, by Ghana in the East, by Burkina Faso and Mali in the North, as well as by Guinea and Liberia in the West. The political and economic capitals of Côte d'Ivoire are located in Yamoussoukro and Abidjan, respectively. The population of the country was estimated at 20.8 million in 2008; out of which 26% are immigrants from neighboring nations within the sub-region. Côte d'Ivoire has about sixty ethnic groups across the four major groups. Reduction of poverty always remains the main priority of the Government's economic, social and cultural development plans. Indeed, the need to spend on human, particularly on education, health and basic socio-economic infrastructure, resulted to the adoption of a national poverty reduction program by the government in 1997 (Parizi, 2002).

In Nigeria, prevalence of poverty is an authenticity that is reflected by deprivation. As such, female are continuously regarded as a center of the global progress agenda and strengthening them as well as upholding gender parity are recognized as world progressive targets in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (USAID, 2020). Regardless the fact that women's strengthening is generally seen as a "good thing", the inquiry of how development processes may add to achieving the development together with lengthy and unsmooth path of women's strengthening, and to allow them to carry out most suitable and effective decisions about their own lives, is a controversial and argued area. Poverty and absence of women empowerment go parri-passu. As earning poverty decreases, women are more empowered (Zulfiqar, 2017). Progress processes that centered on "practical gender needs", counting females' earnings and material resources that can facilitate to the poverty reduction and to more women empowerment (Baulch & Hoddinnott, 2000).

Also, micro financing and female money savings strategies are kings of governments' supports via a spotlight on realistic gender requirements, aims to decrease poverty and add towards females' strengthening. Due to the persistent spread of poverty at individual levels, various sectors and activities directly related

women equally are affected and cost of living among them is high, due to the fact that they are at the fore front of house management, but their entrepreneurship development and empowerment is low. Nigeria and Ivory Coast are West Africa nations share similarities on higher rate of governments' commitments on women empowerment over years (Doss, 2013; Akanle & Nwaobiala, 2020), and studies carried out on women empowerment are country specific mostly considered on aspect of empowerment at a time leaving others (Hanmer & Klugman, 2016; Enfield, 2019). Inability of previous studies to address this issue necessitated for the use of multidimensional women index to capture all aspect of the women empowerment at a time. Against this backdrop, the study is carried out to examine the impact of women empowerment on poverty reduction in Africa with evidence from Nigeria and Ivory Coast (Code de Voire). The remaining parts of the paper are divided into four: the literature review is presented in Section two. The data sources and estimation techniques are highlighted in Section three, the empirical results are presented in Section four. The last section concludes and draws policy framework.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Conceptual Review
In a more generic sense, empowerment is considered as deliberate attempt aimed at maximizing the possibility of the person. It is similar with the argument that the strengthening is a procedure of change from a condition of zero power to a condition of virtual power over one's self. The main idea in this definition is that individuals acquire power in their milieu (Sadan, 1997). The basic idea as indicated in the conception cannot rest unaccompanied and solely does focus on the individuals, but the degree to which they are able to influence issues for their society.

In another conception, Rowland (1995) highlighted that strengthening extends beyond acquiring right in doing decisions; it equally includes all processes that motivate individuals to feel able and righteous to dwell in position of assessment making process. This view supports the argument that strengthening may not be considered as the process, but rather the effect which rises essentially in the use of all the abilities and competence in the countenance of troubles which happen in common existence. Therefore, strengthening has to do with enriching the person's inner quality to make unusual milestone which may be a commitment to raise output and improve individual's effort to one's society. In order to tackle the issues experienced in environment now, the victory is determined on power acquired and

enjoyed by to all concerned in problem solving (Parizi, 2002). Even though, the meaning of empowerment is always claiming about upholding individuals towards equal opportunity in decision making processes. This indirectly promotes them to possess equal access to right politically as well as partaking in making economic decisions (Enfield, 2019).

The conceptualization of women empowerment helps to appreciate all that is required in order to transform the actual situation of the deprived women. The condition of women particularly in the Less Developed World and some developing nations today is not worth bearing. Women in less developed countries possess very limited opportunities to empowerment and a little chance in decisions making for themselves due to so many reasons of which poverty is the leading one. Also, Zulfiqar (2017) stressed that female's empowerment can take any of the following dimension: Right to educational chances, partaking in the politics and allowance in economic chances and micro financing efforts. Additionally, there can be many classes of empowerment needed by women based on their needs, location and circumstances. Essentially, Mayoux (2000), reveals that empowerment can be classified into three classes: economic, educational, as well as political empowerments. The division of the classes is aggravated to fact that research findings highlighted that empowerment is a major force that assists in poverty reduction.

Rowland (1995) also opines that females are empowered by granting them with major control over the activities related to their routine lives is mandatory, but most importantly is their role over politics. Rowland did not look at empowerment of the women and political stages to be associated so that transformation at one stage has effect and result about causation on another stage. Rather, dwells to females' participation in politics and acquiring power of all these at general levels in order to create a control at the individual capacity.

On the other hand, the term poverty has its genesis in the Latin word *pauper* means poor, with its origin in the words *pau-and pario,* "giving birth to nothing"; it refers to non-working farm animals and farm area (Westover, 2008). History shows that some individuals got rapt with deprivation, while others have spells in poverty which over the years remain the main concern of the majority examination (Hulme & McKay, 2005). For instance, during 18th century, France clarified differences between the pauvre and the indigent. In the pauvre, individual suffering from seasonal condition when crops production was poor or agricultural labor demand

was low. But rather, in the indigent individual was permanently in the condition of poor health both physical and mental, accident, age or alcoholism. And the major concern was to upgrade the poor in such a way that they will escape away of being indigent (Hulme &McKay, 2005).

In modern connotation, this issue related to deprivation is not much discussed and more particularly its measurement is on its state of severe. Therefore, this issue is more severe especially in economics domain in which concerned study on period began in the late 1980s (Gahia, 1993). Much of the researches was on the perseverance of poverty on personal and family levels and strongly associated with the harshness of deprivation. In the early 1990s for instance, similar researches began on accessible panel data sets and by 2000, the first known anthology of papers on this was published (Baulch & Hoddinnott, 2000).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Arrow Model popularly known as AK production function Model is adopted as the theoretical anchor of this study. The model viewed capital broadly to encapsulate both physical and human components. According to this model capital as factors of production are assumed to be broken into two i.e. physical capital and human capital, K and H. Therefore, women empowerment is considered as an investment in human capital, which must be combined with physical capital like infrastructure to yield a resulting output that help in reducing the deprivation level among the females. By incorporating the empowerment into the traditional Ramsey's approach, this study measures the contribution of empowerment skills as a determinant of output or income. Thus; Q=f (L, K, H).

2.3 Empirical Review

Empirically, Mbuli (2008), conducted a research on poverty reduction strategies in South Africa using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tool and found out that as a result of inadequate pro-poor growth, poor effective execution at the public stage, low wealth relocation, greater income inequity, little employment creation level by SME'S, more spread of infectious, corruption at public level and poor controlling of poverty. Consequently, if significant improvement is made toward lessening, poverty may reduce.

McFerson (2010) examines the interface of conventional limits on female possession rights, poor leadership and aggressive social clash in perpetuating gender bias and female deprivation in those nations. Empirical results reveals that improvement in female progressive indices in Sub-Saharan Africa over a decade,

relatively related with progress in leadership and the closing of civil war in some nations. Strengthening and promoting this improvements needs planned strategies that consider conditions of many association of female at the same time motivating the establishment of recovery networks among the associations as well as the establishment of better windows for females' voice.

Conversely, Addae-Korankye (2014) reviewed the causes of poverty in Africa, using content analysis and reported that poverty in African continent occurs owing to a number of forces like bribery and bad leadership, restricted job chances, inadequate social amenities, bad wealth utilization, wars and persisting conflicts, and weak World financial institutions' policies. The study further concluded that deprivation issues could be resolved by provision of qualitative framework, and even sharing of wealth. This process needs non-compromised leadership efforts. Though, in Less Developed Countries (LCDs) particularly Africa, strategies developed to tackle poverty is not completely implemented due to the fact that targeted funds fall in the hands of unclean people who pocket the majority.

Also Okeke (2014) carried out a study on women empowerment and development in Nigeria using content analysis. The study indicated that women in Nigeria are unable to reach a stable expected level for their well-being from rewarding economic activities. Also, lack of access to good health, education, and legal right in the decision making process partaking have limited their complete capability. Lastly, the study offered suggestions that compact farming system as well as microfinance inclusion will strength and improve the level of women, their food security and integrated national development.

On the other hand, Adamu (2021) conducted a study on the impact of empowerment on women welfare in Ngaski, Kebbi State. The study applied primary data collected among 400 women farmers and analysed using Logit Model and descriptive statistics. The major finding of the study was that empowerment promotes women welfare in the area of the study and it offered suggestion for keeping the empowerment program in order to ensure sustainable women welfare.

In another development, Mahbub (2021) carried out a review analysis on women empowerment with regard to theory, practice, process and importance. The major issues reviewed are the concept of women empowerment, theory of empowerment, process of women empowerment, dimension of empowering women, major variables of empowering women, forms of empowerment, approaches to women empowerment, practice of empowerment and major importance of the women

empowerment. The study concluded that women empowerment helps the women to realize their identity, potentiality and power in all sphere of lives. Lastly, the study recommended that empowering the women will make the country free from a large burden of illiteracy, unemployment as well as curse.

Neverseless, Wei, Sarker,Ukiewicz-Sobczak, Roy, Alam,Rabbany, Hussain and Aziz (2021) conducted a research on the influence of Women's Empowerment on Poverty Reduction in the Rural Areas of Bangladesh: Focus on Health, Education and Living Standard. The study applied a structured questionnaire and a random technique of sampling. The major analytical tools are descriptive statistics, logit, and OLS models. The study reveals that higher females' right to schooling, wealth possession, making decision on younger people's health and knowledge, and right to good medical care, spores an important reduction in deprivation and poverty index utilized. Nevertheless, extra-gender conflicts, use of wealth contrary to the women's interests, and limiting women from outside interactions, spore a serious fall in income per head and a raise poverty and poverty index. Generally, the study reveals that females' strengthening has a strong effect in the reduction of poverty and poverty index of area.

Kabeer (n.d.), examined gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millenium Development Goals. The study applied content review of the Article III of Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). The study observes the definition of women empowerment and reveals process through which the indices related to these goals on schooling, job and politics may add to it. So many empirical studies were conducted to examine the impact of empowerment on different socio-economic variables in different places and time. From the knowledge of this study, none of the previous studies examined causality between poverty and women empowerment. This study contributes by conducting a research on the impact of women empowerment on poverty reduction in Africa covering 20 years from 2001 to 2021.

3. Methodology
3.1 Source and Type of Data
The study used panel data covering a period of 20 years from 2001 to 2021 across two countries i.e. Nigeria and Ivory Coast (Cote de Voire). The selection of the countries is informed based on their similarities with regard to the socio-economic characteristics of poor rural women and governments' commitments in women empowerment during the last decade and data availability. Starting period of 2001

marked the year of ending World Bank interview for the voices of poor report in Africa. Also, the annual data series were obtained from the World Development Indicators (WDI) (2021).

3.2 Model Specification

Following the established practice in the literature, endogenous model based on the work of Ukashatu, Gwadebe, Imam and Koki (2019). This study adopted Dynamic Panel data models in measuring the relationship between women empowerment and poverty reduction across the sections and periods of the study. The study used Poverty Rate, Unemployment Rate and the Multidimensional Women Empowerment Index, which is obtained by aggregating the four dimensions of production/income, resource, education and time, based on the Dual Cutoff Approach consistent with Alkire and Foster (2007). The model is specified in economic function given as:

$$POVRATE = (MultiD\ Index, Unemployment\ Rate,) \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (3.1)$$

The econometric form of this equation is written, thus:

$$POVRATE = \beta 0 + \beta 1 Multidem\ Empower\ Index + \beta 2 UnemployRate + \mu it \ldots\ldots\ldots (3.2)$$

The above model is then transformed into log-log form as below:

$$LogPOVRTE = \beta 0 + \beta 1 LogMultidEmpowerIndex + \beta 2 LogUnemRate + \mu it \ldots\ldots\ldots (3.3)$$

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

Following the work of Garba and Ibrahim (2010), this study intends to apply Livin, Lin and Chu unit root test for panel data, if the series were identified to be I(1), panel cointegration based on Pedroni will then be applied to determine the existence of long run associationship or otherwise. Lastly, panel causality based on Dumitrescu-Hurlin (2012) will be applied.

Panel Unit Root Test: Unit root test in this study is carried out using Livin, Lin and Chu Test due to its relative advantage in accommodating homogenous panel in which the AR coefficient for the unit roots are assumed to be the same across the cross sections (Baltagi, Bresson & Pirotte, 2006).

$$\Delta_{Y_{it}} = \alpha_{it} + \rho Y_{I,J-1} + \sum_{k-1}^{\propto} \emptyset\ \Delta Y_{I,J-K} + \delta t + \theta_t + \mu_{it} \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots. (iv)$$

Panel Cointegratration Test: The test for co-integration in this study is in line to Pedroni (2020), based on its multiple regression for the co-integration vector to vary across the sections of the panel series. Thus, it is specified as follow:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_{it} + \delta_i + \sum_{m=1}^{m} . \beta_{mi} + X_{mi,t} + \varepsilon_{it} \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots (v)$$

Panel Causality Test: To investigate the direction of causality between women empowerment and poverty reduction across the areas of the study. This study followed the panel causality test developed by Dumitrescu-Hurlin (2012) as adopted by Ukashatu, Gwadabe, Imam and Koki (2019).

$$Y_{it} = \theta_i + \sum_{k=1}^{\propto} y_1^{(k)} y_{I,t-K} + \sum_{k-1}^{k} . \delta_1^{(k)} + X_{I,t-k} + \varepsilon_{it} \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots (vi)$$

Where x and y are two stationary variables observed on T periods for N countries. The individual effects are assumed to be fixed and lag order K is supposed to be common. $y_1^{(k)}$ Denote the autoregressive parameters and $y_1^{(k)}$ are the regression coefficients' slopes; both parameters differ across countries.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 1. Panel Unit Root Result

Variable	LLC	Level	1ST Difference
		Prob.	Prob
LogPRate	-1.7817	0.0874	0.0250**
LogMultdWEm	-0.6587	0.0569	0.0000*
LogURate	2.2705	0.0891	0.0001*

Source: Researcher's Computation Using Eviews 9.
*, ** indicate level of significance at 1% and 5% respectively.

In the table 1 panel unit root result is reported. The result portrays that the variables are all non-stationary at level using LLC but, after differencing all the variables are found stationary, meaning that the variables are I(1) processes.

Table 2: Panel Co-integration Result

	Within-Dimension (Panel)	**Between Dimension (Panel)**
V-Statistics	-0.167486 (0.5665)	
Rho-Statistics	-1.879784 (0.0301)**	-0.986070 (0.1620)
PP-Statistics	-8.425400 (0.0000)*	13.47167 (0.0000)*
ADF-Statistics	-7.591063 (0.0000)*	-5.521671 (0.0000)*

Source: Researcher's computation using Eviews 9.

*, ** indicate level of significance at 1% and 5% respectively.

Table 2 indicates that in "within dimension", the p-value of V-statistic is insignificant, while the p-values of rho-statistics is significant at 5% within dimension, but insignificant for between dimension even at 10%. The p-values of pp-statistics and ADF-statistics are significant at 1% each within dimension and between dimensions. This result portrays that only two out of its seven statistics (panel v-statistics and group rho-statistics) do not reject the null hypothesis of no cointegration. Therefore, the overall result reveals that there is long-run relationship amongst the variables in the model. The result obtained in this study is consistent with the empirical findings of Garba and Ibrahim (2010), in their study on poverty and women empowerment in West Africa.

Table 3. Panel Causality Result

Null Hypothesis	**Zbar-Statistics**	**Prob.**
LogPRate does not homogeneously cause LogMultidWEIndex	0.58071	0.5487
LogMultidWEIndex does not homogeneously cause LogPRrate	0.78545	0.4322
LogPRate does not homogeneously cause LogUnRate	0.61148	0.5409
LogUnRate does not homogeneously cause LogPRate	2.22693	0.0260**

Source: Researcher's Computation Using Eviews 9.

*, ** indicate level of significance at 1% and 5% respectively.

The results as highlighted in Table 3 show that the choice of this panel granger causality test is also to observe the existence and nature of the direction of the causal link among the variables and equally to portray if the direction is uni-directional

(one-way granger causal link) or bi-directional (two-way granger causal link). This is achieved by using Dumitrescu-Hurlin (2012) granger causality. The decision rule is to reject the null hypothesis if the Zbar-statistical value is higher than the p-value, otherwise null hypothesis cannot reject (Wooldridge, 2009). Based on the empirical estimation, causality test result shows evidence of uni-directional causality running from unemployment rate to the poverty rate. This implies that poverty reduction efforts among women should focus on reduction of unemployment via extensive women empowerment across Cote de Voire and Nigeria. It further reveals absence of causality running from poverty rate to multi-dimentional women index and its other way round. This finding of one way causality concurs the empirical result of Luciano and Sylvain (2017).

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study examines the impact of women empowerment on poverty reduction using panel data across Nigeria and Ivory Coast covering a period of 20 years spanning from 2001 until 2021. Cointegration and causality techniques were empirically applied to test the long run links among the variables. The causality test result shows evidence of uni-directional causality running from unemployment rate to the poverty rate. The study argued that more importance should be attached to reduction of unemployment through intensive women empowerment so as curb the problem of poverty among the women.

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