

ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF THE YOUTH THROUGH COOPERATIVES IN OGBARU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ANAMBRA STATE.

BY

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Abstract

This study assessed the Economic Empowerment of the youth through cooperative society in Ogbaru local government area of Anambra state. To achieve this, the study assessed the effect of cooperative input on the Agricultural activities of the youth in the study area, ascertain the effect of marketing of members' produce on the income of the youth in the study area, and assess the effect of cooperative loans on the agricultural production of the youth in Ogbaru local government Area, Anambra state. The researcher adopted a descriptive research design and made use of a survey to make generalizations based on the findings of the study and also adopted a judgmental sampling technique of which five (10) operational Farmers' cooperative societies with a total membership of 3,500 and 1000 youths were chosen because they are functioning and viable. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size. Primary data were collected through the use of a structured questionnaire and the data analysis was obtained using simple descriptive statistical tools such as the frequency distribution scale and simple percentage. The findings of the result showed that cooperative input has a significant effect on the agricultural activities of the youth members. The study recommends that cooperatives in Nigeria should form a national youth network where youth from different stages can come together to share ideologies and experiences which will help the youths to adopt new ways of agricultural production.

Keywords: Economic Empowerment, Youth, Ogbaru, Cooperative and Agriculture

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

Empowerment is the process of growing stronger and more self-assured, particularly in terms of taking charge of one's life and asserting one's rights. It enables individuals to take the initiative, make self-directed decisions, and deal with challenging situations. Giving those who have few or no resources the means to live a life beyond basic needs is known as economic empowerment. Giving children the chance to be financially independent allows them to have more alternatives in life. (Amy 2022).

Youth empowerment is a method that gives young people the knowledge and power to make wise decisions and bring about change in both their own lives and the lives of others. It is a

strategy for motivating young people to make remarkable contributions to their society as well as to themselves. (Lanre 2019).

The society would gain from youth empowerment in many ways. For instance, it will provide young people a purpose in life (particularly if they are given administrative roles), it will encourage self-employment and rapid industrialisation, and it is beneficial for nation-building and growth (Deborah & Aurelia).

According to the United Nations Organization (UNO), youth are those between the ages of 15 and 24. The youth are all young people between the ages of 18 and 29 according to the Nigerian

youth policy. The number of young people who are "neither in employment nor in education or training" is rising, especially in emerging nations, with close to 75 million young people worldwide. In addition to endangering our kids, the absence of economic possibilities puts entire communities at risk of experiencing escalating social conflicts and political unrest. Young people who are underutilized not only fall short of their potential, which results in noticeable failures, but this underutilization of youth in the labor market can also start a vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty and social isolation. (ILO 2012).

The need to address the various issues faced by young people (such as access to education, health, employment, and gender equality) has grown more urgent than ever as youth are increasingly demanding more just, equitable, and progressive chances and solutions in their society.

A group of individuals can get together to create a cooperative society, which has as its main goal advancing the socioeconomic goals of its members. To do this, the cooperative distributes its earnings among its members in proportion to their financial support of the cooperative's operations, which generates its overall profitability. The democratic ethos of the cooperative organization fosters participation, increases ownership, and supports young empowerment (ILO 2012). With a strong focus on sustainability and social responsibility, cooperatives have the potential to provide long-term economic gains for both its members and the larger society. By fostering a sense of belonging, interdependence, and shared accountability, they want to empower their members. Under- or overproduction, uncertainty in the marketplace, and exorbitant expenditures are all issues that cooperatives address. They address market failure and close gaps that other private companies overlook, such as the supply of inexpensive, wholesome, and organic foods; access to reasonably priced credit and banking services; and access to markets for products and services that are responsive to cultural norms (Jessica 2014).

There are several kinds of cooperative societies, including producers' cooperatives, consumer's cooperatives, credit and thrift cooperatives, multifunctional cooperatives, marketing cooperatives, farmers'/agricultural cooperatives, housing cooperatives, etc.

The Agricultural Cooperatives Society is a notable example of how cooperatives economically enlighten their children. The agricultural cooperative has become one of the best institutions for promoting youth development and self-employment globally.

Increasing member productivity and income is a primary goal of agricultural cooperatives. In order to do this, a link between finance, agricultural inputs, information, and output markets must be found. In order to help farmers increase their outputs and incomes, agricultural co-operatives pool their resources to meet shared service needs and economic empowerment (Deborah & Aurelia).

Agriculturists buy input supplies used in agricultural production, such as grains, fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, fuel, spare parts for tools and machinery, veterinary medications, etc., jointly with

other members at lower prices and sell more of their goods and services in larger markets at higher prices, resulting in the farmers making higher profits (Rim 2022).

Marketing the goods made by its members is another method cooperatives give their young people authority. Farmers are small-scale and have comparatively little negotiation and bargaining strength as compared to the consumers of their products. At the same time, individual farmers face relatively high transaction costs associated with the production and distribution of agricultural goods. Cooperatives help farmers market their products by collective marketing or by providing marketing services, such as market information or connecting farmers with potential customers, transporting and storing members' products, thereby lowering marketing costs and boosting their profits.

Access to financing to invest in farms and boost productivity may also be used to empower young people through cooperatives. One can quickly acquire loans as a member of a cooperative. Co-donors are recognized as guarantors and members' contributions serve as collateral. In addition, they are not as onerous as those offered by banks in terms of interest rate and payback conditions. Many people, particularly the young, have benefited from this easy access to loans in terms of bettering their standard of living.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to studies conducted in certain nations, young people who are not necessarily connected to the cooperative movement find it uninteresting and do not see it as a realistic source of employment in really existing organizations. Younger generations have two primary trends; some view the cooperative movement as archaic, traditional, formal, and incapable of embracing change. On the other hand, some people view cooperatives as an alternative to the traditional economic system, a means of resolving their issues and establishing a forum for social, economic, and political engagement.

They still lack a thorough understanding of what a cooperative is and the potential benefits the model may have for the nation's future, particularly in terms of Economic Empowerment. A cooperative movement that has social, economic, political, and cultural components does not always exist. Lack of knowledge about cooperatives restricts young people's capacity to select the cooperative enterprise choice (International Labor Organization, 2012). It will take a lot of effort to jointly create a movement that all young people will see as a way to change our society. But as youngsters learn more about the cooperative model and its guiding principles, they readily join in.

Many works have been done as regards youth Empowerment through co-operatives, but none has been done to the best of my knowledge in the Ogbaru Local government area, thence the motivation of this study.

1.3 Research Objectives

The broad objective of the study is to assess the Economic Empowerment of the youth through Cooperatives in Ogbaru Local Government Area of Anambra state, Nigeria.

The specific objective is to:

- i. Assess the effect of cooperative input on the Agricultural activities of the youth in Ogbaru
- ii. Local Government Area of Anambra State.
- iii. Ascertain the effect of marketing of members' produce on the income of the youth in Ogbaru Local Government Area of Anambra State.
- iv. Assess the effect of cooperative loans on the agricultural production of the youth in Ogbaru of Anambra State.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What effect does cooperative input have on the Agricultural activities of the youth in the area?
- ii. To what extent does the marketing of members' produce affect the income of the youth in the area?
- iii. How do Cooperative loans affect the agricultural production of the youth in the area?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

Ho¹: Cooperative input has no significant effect on the agricultural activities of the youth in the area

Ho²: Cooperative input has a significant effect on the agricultural activities of the youth in the area

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Empowerment

A psycho-social phrase, "empowerment" refers to a person's emancipation and liberty in various spheres of life. Giving individuals the tools and encouragement they require to maximize their potential is the first step towards empowering others.

Anne 2012 opined that Empowerment can be understood in two different dimensions:

- To improve people's skills and knowledge so they can generate income, enhance the quality of their daily lives, and contribute to the advancement of society. This includes educating and qualifying individuals, as well as specific target groups like youth, women, the elderly, and/or families.
- The means to create or make possible the prerequisites for people's basic needs, such as peace, gender equality, human rights, food availability, access to land, and microcredits or adequate education systems, which are required to enable people, special target groups like youths, women, the elderly, and/or families to improve their quality of life.

Empowerment, according to Haddad & Toney-Butler 2022, originates from inside the person and shows up in decision-making. Meaning, competence, self-determination, and influence are the four cognitions that make up this intrinsic drive.

According to Linda (2016), empowerment is the process of transferring power resources in order to better people's lives. Structures in the areas of housing, health care, employment opportunities, and education may alter when power is transferred. A sense of support and belonging (for example, through friendship

networks), motivating work settings, or the acknowledgment of identities, personality characteristics, performances, and accomplishments are other social-psychological changes that can empower people. Transferring power resources often gives the recipient additional agential alternatives, increasing their sense of control and self-efficacy. It has been demonstrated that a better sense of control may have a significant influence on life happiness and health.

According to Soares et al. (2015), empowerment may take place on two different levels: the psychological/individual and the communal/collective. The individual level refers to people's increased capacity to feel empowered to make decisions in their life. The ability of a community to accomplish a shared objective via participation is referred to as collective empowerment.

Types of Empowerment as opined by Lia and Jennifer (2023)

1. **Social Empowerment:** People who are socially empowered are more able to speak out against harmful or unwelcome features of their society. A person who has social power thinks they can actually improve society. Both individual and group action is included by this.
2. **Educational Empowerment:** Free access to excellent educational resources is made available through educational empowerment. People believe they have control over a certain area of their lives when they are able to learn about it. In order to achieve this, financial obstacles to education must be removed, and more courses and information must be made available without charge.
3. **Psychological Empowerment:** When individuals begin to see how various biases and social standards affect their own conduct as well as that of others, they begin to feel more psychologically empowered. Systemic prejudices, such as systemic racism in the US, must be eliminated by psychological empowerment.
4. **Political Empowerment:** Political empowerment expands political opportunities and the range of views that may be heard. When persons who resemble them are in positions of political authority or are seeking for government, people feel politically emboldened. Supporting BIPOC, handicapped, and female candidates helps the next generation become more independent.
5. **Economic Empowerment:** By providing individuals with financial instruments, economic empowerment is developed. Due to their lack of knowledge and resources to manage it independently, many people are afraid of money, investment, and business. Easy-to-use, intuitive tools help consumers make better financial decisions by removing the anxiety associated with money.

2.1.1 Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is the process of giving people the means, resources, and opportunity to better their economic situation and become financially independent, especially those who are members of underprivileged or marginalized groups. The ability to make

educated decisions and take charge of one's financial situation involves access to possibilities for education, training, job, and entrepreneurship, as well as financial and other types of support.

The process of enhancing an individual's or group's economic ability to make decisions and translate those decisions into desired actions and outcomes is known as economic empowerment, according to the United Nations Development Programme. (UNDP, 2013).

To combat poverty, advance gender equality, and achieve sustainable development, individuals must be economically empowered. According to studies, empowering young people economically may improve both their personal well-being and that of their families, communities, and the world at large (World Bank, 2019). Additionally, it may result in stronger national economic expansion, the creation of jobs, and a decline in poverty (OECD, 2018).

Microfinance, entrepreneurial development, and skill development are a few projects and programs that work to promote economic empowerment. These initiatives frequently concentrate their efforts on underrepresented populations, such as women, young people, and people with disabilities, who may have additional obstacles to pursuing economic possibilities.

Economic empowerment can take many forms, including:

- **Employment Opportunity:** This involves creating jobs or providing training and education programs to help individuals acquire the skills needed for gainful employment.
- **Access to Financial Resources:** This includes providing access to credit, savings, and other financial services that can help individuals and communities build their assets and improve their financial stability.
- **Entrepreneurship:** This involves supporting individuals to start and run their businesses, which can create job opportunities and contribute to economic growth.
- **Education and Skill Development:** This includes providing education and training programs that can help individuals acquire the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the job market.
- **Asset-based Empowerment:** This involves providing individuals with the assets and resources necessary to create wealth, such as land, housing, or other forms of property.
- **Empowerment:** This involves creating a supportive social environment that enables individuals to access economic opportunities and make decisions that benefit their economic well-being.
- By expanding people's access to resources, opportunities, and economic power, economic empowerment attempts to promote the economic well-being of individuals and communities. Economic empowerment's overarching objectives include the reduction of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion as well as the promotion of sustainable economic growth.

2.1.2 Youth Empowerment

According to Hally (2021), the idea that adolescents are capable of extraordinary things lies at the heart of youth empowerment. Young people can take on anything and everything when they are exposed to motivating ideas, chances, and the resources to boost their confidence.

Youth empowerment is a process that gives young people the capacity, authority, and agency to make decisions and bring about change in their own lives and the lives of others both now and in the future while taking responsibility for the results of those decisions and actions. It is both a means and an end in itself. It also entails setting up and fostering the conditions that will allow young people to operate independently of others and according to their own terms.

These enabling conditions include:

- Economic and social base
- Political will and commitment to mainstreaming youth issues at all levels, adequate resource allocation, and supportive legal and administrative framework
- A stable environment for equity, peace, and democracy
- Access to knowledge, information, and skills

Youth empowerment is frequently discussed as a gateway to initiatives that promote the healthy development of young people, including those that increase assets, involve citizens, create democracy, and enhance intergenerational equity. Youth empowerment is distinct from youth development because empowerment focuses on the growth of individual potential whereas development is more concerned with the development of individuals.

According to Markus (2014), youth empowerment is the process through which they develop the abilities to make a difference in their own lives as well as the lives of other people, communities, and organizations. Additionally, he noted that organizational and individual levels may both contribute to young empowerment.

- ✓ A culture, vision, and system that supports youth empowerment at the individual level must be implemented at the organizational level for youth empowerment to take place.
- ✓ Youth empowerment is the process of creating a culture, vision, and system within an organization that supports youth empowerment at the individual level.

As opined by Lanre (2019) below are a few reasons why youth empowerment is important:

- ❖ **Poverty Eradication:** Empowering youth may significantly reduce the poverty rate. The development of skills is one of the cornerstones to empowering young people. When a young person has the necessary skills, they may use them to take care of themselves and others, invest for the future, and contribute to the economy of their country. As a result, the nation's GDP will expand and the employable rate will rise.
- ❖ **Improved Standard of Education:** Youth

empowerment may help them see the value of education, which contributes to the social advancement of the nation. Young people who have gained authority can give educational facilities to primary, secondary, and even postsecondary institutions. Academic youth empowerment boosts the level of patriotism in the school sector. The youth who have gained authority understand the value of education. Due to the academic empowerment they received, many people donate scholarships to kids because they recognize the importance of education. People who are educated learn things they previously were unaware of.

- ❖ **Good Governance:** Youth empowerment also empowers the public, laying the foundation for a better future. We must support today's youngsters if we are to create a brighter future.
- ❖ **Crime reduction and National Security:** Youth empowerment makes sure they have the skills needed to support a living, preventing them from choosing the criminal route.
- ❖ **Employment Creation:** Another benefit of young empowerment is this. Youth empowerment will prevent a society from suffering significantly from the unemployment issue that many countries are now facing. A talented young person can create jobs.

In addition, empowering young people benefits society as a whole by fostering more knowledgeable, involved, and active citizens. Giving young people a voice and the means to influence change will enable them to contribute to the creation of a more secure, fair, and prosperous future for all. In the end, youth empowerment seeks to contribute to the development of a society in which every young person has the chance to prosper.

2.1.3 Cooperative

According to Joshua (2021), a cooperative is a voluntary group of people working together to achieve a shared economic goal while supporting its members in accordance with cooperative principles. It is also established for nonprofit purposes and is liability-limited.

According to Rashmi (2022), cooperative societies are commercial companies that, by reaching out to the people on a regional and demographic level, provide an alternative strategy for financial inclusion. A cooperative society is a mercantile society where individuals have shared interests and work to meet their own wants as well as the needs of the group by engaging in economic activities including the production, distribution, and consumption of products and services.

ILO (2012) defines a cooperative as an independent group of men and women who come together voluntarily to work toward the same economic, social, and cultural goals through a jointly owned and democratically run business.

Cooperatives are member-owned, member-controlled businesses that are operated by and for its members to meet their shared economic, social, and cultural requirements. People get together in cooperatives in a democratic and egalitarian manner. Cooperatives share globally recognized ideals and work together to create a

better world via cooperation because they are enterprises that are motivated by values rather than simply profit. Cooperatives all around the world enable people to collaborate to build sustainable businesses that produce long-term employment and wealth by putting fairness, equality, and social justice at the center of the company. The advantages of cooperative activity stay in the communities where they are founded since they are not controlled by shareholders and allow people to take charge of their financial future. Profits are either reinvested in the business or distributed to the members.

Cooperative Input on the Agricultural Activities of the Youth.

According to ILO 2012, the agricultural cooperative has demonstrated to be a successful method for involving young people in agriculture while boosting chances for youth employment through both on- and off-farm activities. Additionally, they assist smallholder farmers in acquiring land use rights, better contract conditions for contract farming, and reduced costs for agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizer, and machinery. They also make it easier for smallholder farmers to participate in decision-making at all levels. With this assistance, smallholder farmers may better protect their way of life and contribute to reducing poverty, ensuring food security, and ending hunger by helping to fulfill the rising demand for food on local, national, and global markets.

According to Flink et al. (2018), young farmers who join cooperatives have access to technical training that would otherwise be difficult for them to obtain as independent farmers, which can help them increase the quality and quantity of their agricultural output. Young farmers have access to the generational transfer of information as well as peer-to-peer learning, both of which have the potential to be highly powerful and influential. They also have possibilities to get knowledge from other sources. Within and outside of the cooperative, young farmers can serve as role models for one another by imparting their skills.

According to Rim (2022), agricultural cooperatives collaborate with other members to purchase cheaper input supplies used in agricultural production, such as grains, fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, fuel, tools, spare parts for machinery, veterinary medications, etc. They then sell more of their goods and services in larger markets at higher prices, resulting in higher profits for the farmer.

The effect of these cooperative inputs on the agricultural activities of the youth can be significant. Here are some of the potential effects:

- **Increased Productivity:** The youth can increase their output by raising the yield of their crops and lowering the amount of physical work needed if they have access to high-quality seeds, fertilizers, machinery, etc. This may result in increased earnings and better living conditions for young people.
- **Improved Quality:** Access to high-quality inputs may increase the quality of agricultural goods, making them more appealing to customers and fetching higher market prices. This can enhance young income and motivate them to invest in their enterprises.

- **Reduced Labor Intensity:** The availability of machines can assist adolescents in reducing the amount of manual work necessary for agricultural tasks. This can assist to decrease the physical burden on the kids while also making agricultural production more appealing and sustainable to them.
- **Entrepreneurship:** These cooperative inputs may motivate young people to become agricultural entrepreneurs. This can result in the establishment of new firms and job opportunities, so promoting economic growth and development.

2.1.4 Cooperative Marketing of Members Produce and Increased Income of the Youth.

According to Anna and Caren, a cooperative may play a significant role in addressing the requirements of its members by providing them with services that help them maximize their goods. When farmers do not produce for their own use but instead intend to sell their food on the market, they may require extra services such as transportation, sorting and grading, and adding value through processing. Farmers are small-scale in comparison to their clients and hence have less negotiation and bargaining strength. At the same time, the transaction costs for collecting and marketing agricultural goods for individual farmers are quite expensive. To solve these issues, cooperatives can assist farmers in marketing through collective marketing or by offering marketing services such as market research or the building of links between farmers and possible purchasers.

According to USDA (2000), marketing is everything that has to do with selling a product: analyzing requirements, establishing markets, certifying items, promotion, and so on. Marketing is built on viewing the firm through the eyes of the client and taking into account customer wants and satisfaction. Promotion services are concerned with the smooth promotion of a product. Marketing services could, for example, include product transportation or storage, as well as information transmission from the production area to the market (e.g., on products available, volumes) and from the market back to the production areas (e.g., on prices and supply levels, consumer preferences and changes in taste). If marketing services are enhanced, farmers will perform better.

Agricultural marketing cooperatives serve several purposes. They may combine the products of many manufacturers into bigger lots for more efficient handling and competitive sales, and then grade and transport these lots to the market. Some marketing cooperatives conduct first-stage processing, such as cotton ginning or nut hulling, whilst others vertically integrate by processing products for the consumer or industrial markets.

Cooperative Loans and the Agricultural Production of the Youth.

Cooperative loans are the financial services provided by cooperative organizations to its members. These loans are supplied by member-owned financial institutions, which were founded to

meet the financial requirements of their members. Cooperative loans differ from regular bank loans in that they are member-owned and member-operated, and the members share the institution's earnings.

According to Ipsos (2012), cooperatives reduce poverty by making loans more accessible to low-income users. As a consequence of cooperative help, cooperative members have been able to develop their enterprises, boost their profit margins, and save some money in their accounts.

Agricultural cooperatives provide members with credit for productive uses. A small farmer, for example, may be charged comparatively high-interest rates by commercial banks that are unconcerned about high transaction costs on tiny loan amounts, or credit may be denied entirely owing to a lack of collateral.

Because of its huge associative size, an agricultural cooperative, such as a farmer's credit union, will be able to obtain loan money at an attractive rate from commercial banks, which it would subsequently distribute to its members on the strength of mutual or -pressure guarantees for repayment. Members of the cooperative get loans from funds obtained from the government and its agencies, as well as financial institutions.

According to Zvi (2003), lending to a member effectively forms a closed loop inside the cooperative. The credit issued is for investment, which is intended for production. The cooperative markets the produced produce, guaranteeing that the credit is refunded. The agricultural cooperative's "essential triangle" describes this procedure.

Agricultural cooperative loans can play a key role in increasing agricultural youth production. According to Eskandari et al. (2020), access to financing considerably increases the adoption of new technology and inputs, which improves agricultural output among young farmers. When attempting to establish themselves as farmers, young people frequently confront a range of problems, such as restricted access to finance, land, and information. Agricultural cooperative loans can assist in addressing these issues and providing young farmers with the resources they require for success. Cooperative loans can be utilized to assist young farmers in acquiring land and other assets that are necessary for establishing a successful agricultural enterprise. Agricultural cooperative loans offer kids with the financing they need to establish or develop their agricultural company. This can assist kids in purchasing the necessary equipment, seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs to boost their output. With access to financing, young farmers may invest in their fields, resulting in improved yields and increased profitability.

Agricultural cooperative loans can have a significant impact on the productivity of youth engaged in agriculture. Here are some of the effects:

- ✓ **Increased credit availability:** Agricultural cooperative loans give young farmers with finance that they may utilize to invest in their farms. This allows them to buy agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizer, and equipment, which can help them enhance output.

- ✓ **Improved agricultural practices:** Access to agricultural cooperative loans can also give young farmers with the resources they require to implement new and improved farming methods. This involves using contemporary equipment, better crops, and enhanced agricultural practices to raise yields and overall output.
- ✓ **Increased income:** Agricultural cooperative loans can assist young farmers raise their revenue by raising their output. This can give them with the financial resources they need to develop their farming operations, invest in new technology, and enhance their level of living.
- ✓ **Creation of employment opportunities:** As young farmers raise their productivity and grow their agricultural operations, they may be able to hire additional young people in their community. This has the potential to reduce young unemployment while also contributing to the region's economic growth.
- ✓ **Improved food security:** Young farmers may help improve food security in their communities by raising their output. This is especially essential in rural regions, where agriculture is a major source of income for many people.
- ✓ Overall, agricultural cooperative loans can improve the productivity of young farmers, therefore contributing to the economic growth of their communities.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Cooperative theory

The cooperative theory, as a comprehensive framework, lacks a single proponent or a precise year of formulation. It evolved through time as a result of the efforts of several intellectuals, academics, and practitioners in the fields of cooperative economics and social movements.

Charles Gide, a French economist, and proponent of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), is a notable contributor to cooperative theory. Robert Owens, a Welsh social reformer and cooperative movement pioneer, is another noteworthy contributor. And this thought began to emerge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Cooperative theory is a social and economic theory that focuses on the advantages of cooperative firm ownership and management. It establishes a framework for comprehending how cooperatives may empower individuals, foster social cohesiveness, and contribute to long-term development. It holds that rather than pursuing individual interests, people may achieve their economic and social goals more successfully by working together in cooperative groups.

This theory emphasizes the principles of voluntary and democratic participation, equitable benefit distribution, and social responsibility, as well as the primary goal of cooperative enterprises being to meet the needs and aspirations of their members, rather than to generate profits for external owners or shareholders.

Relevance of the Approach

The cooperative society's fundamental purpose is to build a fair and just economic system by empowering its members economically, socially, and culturally. Members combine their resources and abilities to establish a self-sustaining economic system that benefits everyone.

Cooperative societies, in the context of youth economic empowerment, provide a platform for young people to come together and combine their resources, talents, and ideas to generate long-term economic prospects. Working together, young people can have access to loans, markets, and other resources that would be difficult to attain alone. Cooperative societies also provide a forum for young people to learn about company management, financial literacy, and other important skills for economic success.

Overall, the Cooperative Theory establishes a solid platform for understanding how cooperative societies may economically and socially empower young people. The approach highlights the value of member engagement and cooperation in developing long-term economic possibilities and strong communities.

Empirical Review

The emphasis here is on researching the literature to learn how scholars in other contexts have tackled similar problems in the past. The necessity of having a backdrop as well as an acceptable basis for the study's justification cannot be overstated.

Paulo and Prosper (2016) investigated factors influencing effective youth engagement in agricultural marketing cooperatives in Tanzania. The multi-case study approach was utilized to describe numerous topics related to the research. The study found that sociocultural factors influencing youth participation in AMCOS include, among other things, male biases in coffee ownership, social inequality and generational differences between youths and older members, a lack of interest and inadequate cooperative education among youths, a limited range of services provided by AMCOS, unfavorable production and distribution relations, young women overburdened with domestic chores, and life hardship in rural areas.

Uzo (2013) investigated the function of cooperatives in youth empowerment in Imo state's Ehime Mbano local government area. The sample size was determined using the "Taro Yamane formula" and a basic random sample. Tables, frequencies, and percentages were used to examine the questionnaire data. The study recommends that cooperative members and non-members, particularly youths, be educated on the fundamentals of cooperatives, that the societies' youth empowerment programs be based on result-oriented and viable projects, and that the government closely supervise cooperative societies' empowerment activities to ensure they are working in accordance with government policies on youth empowerment.

Eucharia 2018 explored the role of cooperative societies in the development of youth in the Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. Data were examined descriptively using means, percentages, a 5-point Likert scale, chi-square analysis, and the z-test, and two hypotheses were evaluated. The study

discovered a favorable association between the influence of cooperative society activities and youth development. There is also a considerable difference in the exposure of youth to development activities before to and after joining the cooperative society.

Gap in Literature

With regards to the reviewed empirical literature from different Geographical sources, there are indications that there exists a gap, as these sources ignored in their studies of ways to improve cooperative and youth Economic Empowerment in Ogbaru Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. This study, therefore, is imperative to close that gap.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study.

For this study, the primary source of data was employed through the use of questionnaire

The researcher adopted a judgmental sampling technique. Judgmental sampling was adopted because it makes it easier to select unique respondents for an in-depth study.

Consequently, five (10) operational Farmers' cooperative societies with a total membership of 3,500 and 1000 youths were chosen because they are functioning and viable.

To determine the sample size, The Taro Yamane formula was applied. The formula is:

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

Where n= sample size
N= population of the study
I= constant in value
e= error in margin usually 5%

Therefore, $n = \frac{1000}{1 + 1000(0.05)^2}$

$n = \frac{1000}{1 + 1000(0.0025)}$

$n = \frac{1000}{1 + 2.5}$

$n = \frac{1000}{3.5}$

$n = 286$

Method of Data Analysis

The analysis was obtained using simple descriptive statistical tools such as the frequency distribution scale and simple percentage. The Likert scale responses are assigned numerals to determine their position on the variables being measured.

The mean is calculated as $X = \frac{\sum fX}{n}$

Five-point rating scale = $\frac{5+4+3+2+1}{5} = \frac{15}{5} = 3.0$

After computing the mean, a mean score above 3.0 is acceptable while any mean score less than 3.0 is rejected.

Simple percentage formula= $X/Y = 100/1$

Where x= is the overall frequency of the response of each question
N=the total number of respondents.

In testing the hypothesis, the Product-Moment Correlation analysis was employed. This is because the Product-Moment Correlation analysis measures the strength and relationship that exist between two variables. Product-Moment Correlation analysis is utilized in this study to test the influence of Institutional Based Cooperative on members' well-being. The formula is stated below:

$$r = \frac{n \sum xy - \sum x \sum y}{\sqrt{[N \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2] [N \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Where n = sample size
 $\sum X$ = the sum of x (independent variable)
 $\sum y$ = the sum of y (dependent variable)
 $\sum x^2$ = the sum of square x values
 $\sum y^2$ = the sum of square y values
 $\sum xy$ = the sum of the product of x & y

Decision Rule: Reject the null hypothesis (Ho) if calculated r is less than critical P- value at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 4:1: Distribution on youth member’s personal data

Personal Data variables	Categories	Frequenc y (n= 80)	Percentag e (%)
Gender	Females	44	55.0
	Males	36	45.0
Ages (years)	18-30 years	40	50.0
	31-40 years	34	42.5
	41-50 years	6	7.5
	51 years & above	-	-
Level of Education	FSCL	12	15.0
	WASSCE	19	23.7
	OND/NCE	21	26.2
	HND/B. SC	25	31.2
Years of Cooperative Experience	MBA/MSC	3	3.7
	1-5 years	42	52.5
	6-10 years	28	35.0
	11-15 years	10	12.5
	16 years & above		

Source: Field Survey, May 2022

Gender: Table (3) indicates that there are more female respondents in the study area than male with a frequency and percentage of 44 (55.0%) and 36 (45.0%) respectively.

Age: It reveals that majority of the respondents fall within the age range of 18-30years with a frequency rate of 40(50.0%), followed

by 31-40years with a frequency rate of 34(42.5%), and lastly 41-50 with a frequency rate of 6(7.5%) who are youth members of the Agricultural Cooperatives in the study area.

Level of Educational Qualification: According to the findings, 12(15.0%) of the respondents completed their basic education, 19(23.7%) acquired secondary education, 21(26.2%) obtained OND/ NCE certificates, 25(31.2%) attained HND/B.Sc., while 3(3.7%) of the respondents are MBA/MSC degree holders. The

statistics show that youth members of Agricultural Cooperatives in the study area are quite educated and can read and write fluently.

Years of Cooperative Experience: The study shows that youth members of Agricultural cooperatives in the study area are to some extent experienced. This is evident as 42(52.5%) of the respondents fall under the year of experience range of 1-5.

4.2.Cooperative Input on the Agricultural Activities of the Youth

Table 4: Distribution according to the extent to which Cooperative input improves the Agricultural Activities of the youth

S/N	ITEMS	VLE (5)	LE (4)	NE (3)	SE (2)	VSE (1)	N 80	Mean $\sum fX/n$	Decision
	Cooperative input								
i	Our Cooperative offer Agricultural inputs to the youth	34 (170)	24 (96)		16 (32)	6 (6)	80 (304)	3.8	Accept
ii	Cooperative made agricultural inputs more affordable to the youth	46 (230)	22 (88)		12 (24)		80 (342)	4.3	Accept
	Agricultural Activities								
iii	Access to cooperative input enables the youth to adopt best practices in farming and harvesting	30 (150)	25 (100)		14 (28)	11 (11)	80 (289)	3.6	Accept
iv	Machineries and quality seedlings are obtained by the youth for labor reduction and quality and quantity production through Cooperative inputs	16 (80)	15 (60)	10 (30)	19 (38)	20 (20)	80 (228)	2.9	Reject
	Grand mean							3.7	Accept

Source: Survey report, 2023.

Table (4) depicts the effects of Cooperative inputs on the Agricultural Activities of the youth. Item (iv) is rejected because it is below the threshold of 3.0, implying that cooperative input by Agricultural cooperatives do not necessarily lead to the youth’s acquisition of quality seedlings and machines. However, the grand mean of 3.7 which is above the threshold of 3.0 is acceptable. This therefore indicates that Cooperative input by Agricultural Cooperatives have significant effect on youth’s agricultural activities.

4.3 Marketing of Members' Produce and the Income of the Youth

Table 5: Distribution according to the extent to which marketing of members produce increase the income of the youth.

S/N	ITEMS	VLE (5)	LE (4)	NE (3)	SE (2)	VSE (1)	N 80	Mean $\sum fX/n$	Decision
	Marketing of members produce								
i	Our cooperative offer marketing services to the youth	16 (80)	28 (112)		22 (44)	14 (14)	80 (250)	3.1	Accept
ii	Marketing services are given to the youth to strengthen their access into their market	21 (105)	24 (96)		25 (50)	10 (10)	80 (261)	3.3	Accept

Income of the youth									
iii	Youth's bargaining power are increased which leads to higher income through cooperative marketing	17 (85)	21 (84)		34 (68)	8 (8)	80 (245)	3.1	Accept
iv	Cost of transportation, storage, and marketing are reduced which leads to higher profit of the youth through cooperative marketing	34 (170)	25 (100)		14 (28)	7 (7)	80 (305)	3.8	Accept
Grand mean								3.3	Accept

Source: Survey report, 2023.

Table(5) is a representation of the extent to which marketing of members produce increase the income of the youth. The grand mean of 3.3 is accepted because it is significantly above the threshold of 3.0. This implies that cooperative marketing of members' produce increases the income of the youth in the study area.

4.4 Cooperative Loans on the Agricultural Production of the Youth

Table 6: Distribution according to the extent to which cooperative loans increases the agricultural production of the youth.

S/N	ITEMS	VLE (5)	LE (4)	NE (3)	SE (2)	VSE (1)	N 80	Mean $\sum fX/n$	Decision
Cooperative loans									
i	Our cooperative offer loans services to the youth	47 (235)	23 (92)		10 (20)		80 (347)	4.3	Accept
ii	Loans are granted by the cooperatives to strengthen the agricultural production of the youth	45 (225)	25 (100)		10 (20)		80 (345)	4.3	Accept
Agricultural production of the youth									
iii	Easy access to loan services enables youth to have enough capital to start/expand their agricultural production	47 (235)	33 (132)				80 (367)	4.6	Accept
iv	Youth acquire more lands, quality seedlings, and equipment for improved agricultural production through cooperative loans	44 (220)	19 (76)		17 (34)		80 (330)	4.1	Accept
Grand mean								4.3	Accept

Source: Survey report, 2023.

Table(6) indicates the extent to which cooperative loans increases the agricultural production of the youth. The grand mean of 4.3 is acceptable. This is because it is above the threshold of 3.0. The findings therefore indicates that cooperative loans increases the agricultural production of the youth.

4.5 Testing of Hypothesis

In this section, the research hypothesis earlier formulated which states that "Cooperative input has no significant effect on the

agricultural activities of the youth in the area", was tested using the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis. Questions i – iii of Table (4) were used to test the hypothesis.

Table (7): Observed Frequency from Table 4 to Summarize the Hypothesis.

X	Y	XY	X ²	Y ²
34	30	1020	1156	900
24	25	600	576	625
16	14	224	256	196
6	11	66	36	121
80	80	1910	2024	1842

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

Where N= sample size

$\sum X$ = the sum of x (independent variable)

$\sum y$ = the sum of y (dependent variable)

$\sum x^2$ = the sum of square x values

$\sum y^2$ = the sum of square y values

$\sum xy$ = the sum of the product of x & y

$$r = \frac{5(1910) - 80 \times 80}{\sqrt{[5 \times 2024 - (80)^2] [5 \times 1842 - (80)^2]}}$$

$$r = \frac{9550 - 6400}{\sqrt{[10120 - 6400] [9210 - 6400]}}$$

$$r = \frac{3150}{\sqrt{(3720)(2810)}}$$

$$r = \frac{3150}{\sqrt{10453200}} = \frac{3150}{3233.1}$$

$$r = 0.974$$

The correlation coefficient $r = 0.974$

The table of critical values of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to test the hypothesis. The critical value for r at N - 2 degrees of freedom is 0.878 where N = 5

Decision rule: Reject the null hypothesis (Ho) if calculated r is less than the critical P- value at 0.05 level of significance.

Decision: The result of the computed hypothesis shows that there is a positive relationship between cooperative inputs and agricultural activities of the youth with a calculated $r = 0.506$ and a critical P-value of 0.878 ($r < p$). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept that Cooperatives inputs have a significant effect on the agricultural activities of the youth.

Discussion of findings

Cooperative Input on the Agricultural Activities of the Youth

My finding here shows that cooperative input has a significant effect on the agricultural activities of the youth. This finding agrees with the findings of Okwara and Uhuegbulem (2017) in their work; "The Roles of Cooperatives in Economic and Rural Empowerment in Imo State". Their findings reveal that cooperatives contribute to Economic and rural empowerment through the procurement of farm inputs for members, giving vocational skills, and fighting social exclusion in rural areas.

It is also in line with the findings of Musa and Hiwot (2017) in their work; "The Impact of agricultural cooperatives membership on the Wellbeing of smallholder farmers: empirical evidence from Eastern Ethiopia". Their findings indicate that joining agricultural cooperatives has a positive impact on the well-being of smallholder farmers.

Cooperative Loans and the Agricultural Production of the Youth

My finding here shows that cooperative loans increase the agricultural production of the youth and it conforms with the work of Onyeze and Ebue (2013) "Cooperative society and youth development in Udi local government area of Enugu State. The results showed that a well-run cooperative society provides a pool of funds from which individual members especially youths in Udi LGA take loans to meet their respective needs.

My finding is also in line with the result of Morris (2016) in his work; The impact of cooperatives on the overall well-being of industrial employees, A case study of ANAMMCO's multipurpose cooperative society in Emene Enugu State. His findings also show that Through the cooperative, members obtain loans at low-interest rates to meet up with their needs, buy goods at cheaper prices from the bulk purchase made by the association, save part of their income through the association, have a share in the profits generated by the co-operatives and get necessary encouragement in other self-help projects.

Conclusion

The general objective of the study is to assess the Economic Empowerment of the youth through Cooperative. The findings revealed that Cooperative inputs, marketing of the member's produce, and cooperative loans are key elements in addressing youth's agricultural activities, income, and agricultural production. It is therefore evident that Cooperative has a significant effect on the Economic Empowerment of the youths.

5.3 Recommendations.

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study;

- i. It is recommended that more youth Agricultural cooperatives be formed in both rural and urban areas by the director of the Cooperative. This is to strengthen youth involvement in cooperatives and ensure the far-reaching effect of cooperative inputs, marketing, and loans to the youth.
- ii. The divisional cooperative officer needs to create more awareness of the benefit of cooperatives and their Economic Empowerment capability and encourage youth to join and form cooperatives in both rural and urban areas to enjoy the benefits of increased income which is a resultant effect of cooperative marketing.
- iii. Cooperatives should form a national youth network where youths from different states come together at the national level to share ideologies and experiences which will help the youths to share

knowledge and learn new ways of Agricultural production.

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