

Empowerment Programmes of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and Socio-economic Well-being of Members in Yenagoa Community, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This is an investigation on the empowerment programmes of faith-based organizations (FBOs) and socio-economic well-being of members in Yenegoa Communities of Bayelsa. This study lay to rest the controversy surrounding FBOs, whether they are empowering members or exploiting them and the extent to which such organisations have met its goals especially that of capacity building, charity and giving. The survey research method was used for the study. From a population of 12,565 FBOs leaders and members in Yenegoa communities, a sample of 659 participants was selected through proportional random sampling method. Data were collected with a face and content validated self-structured instrument title: Faith-Based Organisations Empowerment Scales (FBOES), ($r=0.88$). Four research questions were raised and answered using the mean, standard deviation and multiple regression statistics analysis. Results showed that, faith-based organisations provided skills acquisition programmes for member's empowerment. Majority of the FBOs were actively involved in the empowerment of youth, women and the most vulnerable members of the affiliates and even the host communities. Faith-based organisations derived its goals from the teaching on social capital investment elements of trust, cooperation, mutuality, compromise, reciprocity, courage, integrity, networking, mentoring, and communication for peace building and community development. It was concluded that faith-based organisations empowerment programmes had positive impacts on members' social and economic well-being. In view of these findings, it was recommended that leaders of FBOs in the communities should moderate their lifestyles, emulate and enhance the example of service, humanness and sacrifice in their engagement.

Keywords: Community, Empowerment, Faith-based organization, Programmes, Socio-economic Well-being.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in contemporary Nigeria society operate within the context of two divides; namely, what the collective objectives are and what specific objectives and mission statement they represent. Some more recent contribution to the understanding on how faith-based organizations function following an all-encompassing framework is built on key network process, external environment, assets, social capital, social system, technology and dominant coalition. This framework provides the relevance and subsistence of all faith-based organizations in any operating environment. While some faith-based organizations (FBOs) have their vision and mission statements engraved as derived from their respective Holy Books on one hand, others however operate as a dictatorial institution with little or no voluntary participation by members in decision-making as expected in most of these organisations. Thus, a policy of dominance and supremacy tends to sustain as a core value of faith and total submission to a "perceived" will of God.

This obviously in the view of Krelseberg (1992) promotes the doctrine of total dependence on providence without instituting other means through which such organisations can empower individuals and their immediate community on the flank of social capital and social responsibility.

Empirical studies showed that there are interconnections among the FBOs, individual and community (Florin & Wandersman, 1990). Hence, changes in the individuals through interventions of FBOs are prerequisites for community and social changes that invariably translate to members' empowerment (Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Wilson, 1996).

Empowerment in the context of FBOs interventions refers to the process of achieving religious, social and capital strength, interaction, or capability of persons and entities. It requires the empowered initiating confidence in their own capacities to meet or respond to their personal needs and expectations. Recall that most people who have no chances for self-reliance development become, at a minimum, dependent on charity or welfare, this is where the FBOs comes

into the process of economic and social capital intervention. Empowerment of economic drive is conceived as the process of achieving fundamental economic privileges for the marginalized people either directly by those people, or indirectly through the help of the privileged who have access to such opportunities. It also includes actively thwarting attempts to deny those opportunities (Blanchard, John, & Alan, 1996; Wilkinson, 1998).

Empowerment in the view of Luttrell, Quiroz, Soruthon and Bird (2009) seeks to ensure that people have requisite skills, capabilities, resources such as social capital and access to secure sustainable incomes for socio-economic well-being. Based on these dimensions, some FBOs focus mainly on the significance of rights to assets and endowments which are two critical or core elements in any social and economic empowerment discourse. Empowerment then implies letting out the power inherent in people (Blanchard et al., 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). It enables people to obtain the competencies that enable them overcome obstacles in life or workplaces and ultimately, enhance their capacities for positive economic engagement.

In most economic capacity development programmes, empowerment focuses on engaging the self-help efforts of the less-privileged who are significantly excluded, rather than providing them with social welfare. Hitherto, FBOs seem to be more interested in some sorts of spiritual empowerment alone without taking into consideration that for an individual to be spiritually empowered, such has to obtain a corresponding social and economic self-confidence. This is why Stewart (1994) wrote that, the process of economic empowerment is that which enables individuals or groups to fully gain personal and collective rights, authority and power, and to employ such strengths when engaging other people, entities and societies. To what extent then various FBOs are situated in this context of social and economic empowerment among its members?

The Problem

Faith-Based Organisation (FBO) have goals which are derived from the teaching in their respective holy books. Inclusive are beliefs, social capital, cooperation, compromises, reciprocity, networking, mentoring, the Lord's word; heaven and hell, marriage, charity, giving, worship, prayer, the church, spreading the good news, and trust in providence (The Holy Bible, 2003). The basis of these goals is giving out in "charity" and not "receiving". However, when members are not empowered, they cannot give. Unfortunately, receiving from people seems to dominate the frame of most FBOs today, rather than empowering members expected. Consequently, most people seem to be losing self-confidence because they cannot be self-supporting. This is a leading predictor of people's psychological, social, economic and even health challenges leading to engagement in spiritual interventions.

Can it then be said that FBOs are impactful in their membership empowerment efforts? Given that most of these FBOs are said to be out to exploit members, it becomes imperative to empirically establish the contents of their social

and economic empowerment programmes in order to lay to rest the seemingly controversial perception of FBOs been exploitative of members rather than supportive of members. Empirically, the contents of social and economic empowerment programmes of FBOs are yet to be ascertained. This is the gap in knowledge which this research has closed.

Objectives and Research Questions

The general aim of the study is to investigate the contents of those socio-economic empowerment programmes of FBOs in Yenagoa Community, Bayelsa State. The specific objectives were to;

1. determine the types or forms of economic, social or civic programmes of FBOs that empower members;
2. find out the relationship between empowerment programmes of FBOs and members' self-reliance development;
3. ascertain the correlation between the social and economic contents of empowerment programmes of FBOs and their influence on members' self-engagement; and
4. ascertain the constraints faced by FBOs in the provision of their social and economic empowerment programmes for members' socio-economic well-being.

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the types or forms of programmes of FBOs that promote members' empowerment?
2. What is the relationship between the socio-economic contents of FBOs empowerment programmes and members' self-reliance development?
3. How do the contents of socio-economic empowerment programmes of FBOs correlate with members' self-engagement?
4. What are the challenges faced by (FBO) in the provision of empowerment programmes for members' social well-being?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowerment

Empowerment is generically accepted as a multi-dimensional concept although all its dimensions need not necessarily correlate with the same set of determinants or outcomes (Malhotra & Mather, 1997). Empowerment implies to give power to; to give authority, to enable a person or a group of persons gain power over their limitations or overriding circumstances. World Bank (2001) regards empowerment as one of the key constituents of poverty reduction and a primary development assistance goal. It is thus, a liberation instrument for self-reliance and self-sustenance in development milieu.

The promotion of empowerment, according to the World Bank (2001) is based on a dual argument. One that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and is intrinsically worth pursuing on account that, it is a means to other ends. In this aspect, empowerment in all aspects entails an objective means to promote growth, equity, social capital, and social justice and thus, reduce poverty and also promote better governance through public accountability on the part

of the empowered., Two it then depicts a process of challenging existing power relations with the aims of attaining a measure of control over existing source of power (Ezumah, 2002). As a process, it addresses the policies and strategies of reverting dominance while expanding people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them (Kabeer, 2001).

Faith-Based Organisations' Empowerment Perspective

In order to ensure efficiency in the social and economic empowerment programmes of FBOs it is important to be guided by principles of best operations. This is because, efficiency in this context is not expressed mathematically, but rather, it is expressed in the ability to do things wells, successfully and without waste. The principles of empowerment of FBOs are derived from the God's natural rules of engagement and as enshrined in The Holy Bible (2003) namely; that

- following God's guidance, we accept a high view of person respect, skills innovations, freedom and obligations;
- noting the basic significance of our realities as stewards, we generate genuine spaces for the mentee to practice genuine resource management;
- acknowledging God's affirmation of human domain, amazing diversity and complexity of the individual and social responsibility;
- affirming that in the quest for more just, healthy, and prosperous communities, governments, individuals, families and associations of civil society all have major roles to play;
- recognising entrepreneurial efforts and economic exchange - they are fruits of the human development in God's creation;
- emphasising the need for believers to bring a distinctly faith-based perspective on business endeavours;
- affirm that governments bear unique responsibilities to restrain evil and reward good; and;
- acknowledging the obligations of believers to protest against economic injustice.

These engagement principles represent social justice in terms of promising responsibility of believers who are committed to community development and citizens' empowerment. For example, a review of the first principle indicates that, human creativity must be taken seriously. Believers need to promote entrepreneurship and the innovative work accomplished by those who combine human intelligence and natural resources to produce goods and services that meet development needs. The creative values are also evident in the suitability and necessity of practices that respect human freedom, self-development and self-reliance as evident in empowerment.

In general, empowerment through the FBOs social and economic programmes are strictly evidenced through engagement. Such engagement is all the more vital when one considers the great need to empower young people to take on socio-economic responsibilities that define their efficiency in the empowerment process. Nabofa et al. (2016) carried out a study on the efficiency of economic empowerment pro-

grammes of Christian religion organisation in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study found out that, Christian religion organisations provided skill enhancement programmes for members' empowerment. The research also indicated that majority of the Christian religious organisations were actively involved in the empowerment of youth, women and the vulnerable members of the church and even the host communities.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research design which is based on the ex-post- facto research type was used for this study. The survey included church leaders and members with a population of twelve thousand, five hundred and sixty-five (12,565) in the Yenagoa communities. The sample size of 628 respondents were selected through the proportional random sampling technique. That is 628 participants (leaders and members) of the FBOs constituted the specific respondents. A structured standardized questionnaire tagged "Faith-Based Organisations Empowerment Scale" (FBOES) with 20 items was used for data collection. The questionnaire was scaled into 'Yes' or 'No' response structure. There were two parts (A&B), while part 'A' focused on the personal data of the respondents, part 'B' contained items that addressed the research questions raised for the study. The scale attained content, construct, face, concurrent and predictive validity before the determination of its reliability for data collection. A test re-test method was used to determine the reliability. Twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire were administered to similar respondents from Port Harcourt city, a community outside research domain. After two (2) weeks interval, the questionnaire were repeatedly administered and thereafter retrieved and correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient. A reliability coefficient value of 0.88 was obtained which was accepted as very high and therefore, the instrument was accepted to be dependable and repeatable in administration. The questionnaire was administered by the researchers within two (2) weeks. 468 copies of the questionnaire were received out of the 628 copies administered (that is, 74.5% rate of return) from the respondents for data analysis. The data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation scores, and multiple regression analysis to upscale the results of the research questions in terms of the level of significance of relationship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1. What are the types or forms of programmes of FBOs that promote members' empowerment?

The result presented in Table 1 indicates that, all the item mean scores of (2.75, 2.76, 2.77, 2.81, 2.80, 2.95, 2.75, 2.85, 2.82 and 2.56) are greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. On the whole, the Grand Mean score of 2.78 is greater than the cut-off mean of 2.50. The greater scores depict that participants reported positive affirmation on the forms of FBOs. This implies that there existed remarkable numbers of FBOs programmes for members' empowerment. This result validates the submission of Wink (1992) that faith-based organisations often promote-s economic justice

Table 1. Summary of mean and standard deviation scores on the forms of programmes of fbos for members' empowerment

Types/forms of programmes of FBOs	Mean	SD
Educational services (scholarship) are provided by the FBOs	2.75	0.882
Medical services are provided to improve the well-being of people at regular intervals.	2.76	0.942
FBOs have their own library/resource centers that enhance access to internet services by members for empowerment information.	2.77	0.938
Allowances are given to part-time workers	2.81	0.967
Youth are trained on how to operate musical instrument	2.80	1.017
Welfare committee exists to meet the economic needs of the members and non-members whenever need arises.	2.95	0.964
This vision and mission statement are geared toward physical and spiritual well-being of members	2.75	0.999
Teaches on hard-work, economic justice and strategic partnerships for the attainment of members' social well-being.	2.87	0.980
Retreats and regular workshops are given to enhance better personal decisions-making in collective or individual economic activities of members.	2.82	0.880
FBOs promote strategic partnership to enable members have access to required information (including spiritual) and resources for economic decision making.	2.56	0.955
Grand Mean Score	2.78	0.952

Decision mean=2.50

because; economic inequalities are often the basis of oppression. According to Chatters (2001) religion is a catalyst for facilitating transformation of values and sustained social change. Therefore, all form of activities or programmes that most of the faith-based organisations carry out are geared at empowering members. Besides, Kiit and Nielsen (1999) posit that religion and spirituality (through economic activities) are frequently linked to empowerment. Thus, this result has affirmed that all forms of economic empowerment programmes of FBOs contributed significantly in terms of capacity building for the economic engagement of members.

Research Question 2. What is the relationship between the socio-economic contents of FBOs empowerment programmes and members' self-reliance development?

The result presented in Table 2 shows that, all the item mean score of (2.85, 2.93, 2.97, 3.03, 3.04, 3.20, 3.05 and 2.93) are greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. On the whole analysis, the Grand Mean score of 3.00 was also greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exists a positive correlation between contents of empowerment programmes and FBOs members' self-reliance. In order to ascertain level of significance, in terms of the degree of relationship between socio-economic contents of FBOs empowerment programmes and members' self-reliance development the mean scores were subjected to multiple regression analysis, and the result is significant (Table 3).

The result presented in Table 3 shows that, the regression analysis is significant at $p < 0.05$ alpha level. This is because, the calculated F -value of 37.667 is greater than the critical F -value of 3.850 at 0.05 alpha. Hence, the assumption that, there is no significant relationship between empowerment programmes of FBOs and the attainment of set empowerment goals, cannot be valid. The correlation between empowerment programmes of FBOs and their member's self-reliance development is evidently tied to the process of empowerment

itself. This has been explained by Kiiti and Nielsen (1999) who reported a facilitator's perspective that it must be situated on mutual respect and accountability. According to Kiiti and Nielsen (1999): "People have ideas and are able to engage in critical reflection. This perspective thrives on the fact that if people are given the opportunity to understand and express themselves, they can offer solutions" (p. 66).

Analytically, the process of empowerment can depicts critical thinking, reflection, dialogue and conscientization which ultimately lead to raising of awareness among individuals, organisations and communities. Faith-based organisations promote both civic justice and empowerment as derived from teachings on hard work, social justice, economic justice and strategic partnership for the attainment of members' social-well-being. The correlation is therefore characterized by seven mechanisms which include knowledge, agency, opportunity, leadership, capacity building, resource provision and sustainability. It is quite obvious that, the promising responsibilities of FBOs must be focused on commitment to members' economic empowerment through innovative activities, stewardship, active economic engagement, and building resourceful relationships.

Research Question 3. How do the contents of socio-economic empowerment programmes of FBOs correlate with members' self-engagement?

The result presented in Table 4 indicates that, all the items mean scores of (2.94, 2.97, 3.04, 3.04, 3.21, 3.06, and 2.76) were greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. Also, the grand mean score of 3.00 was also greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exists a positive relationship between empowerment programmes of FBOs and the attainment of their members' self-reliance and engagement. The relationship between the empowerment programmes of FBOs and attainment of the well-being of members is underscored as significant.

Table 2. Summary of mean and standard deviation scores on relationship between socio-economic contents of fbos empowerment programme and members' self-reliance development

Socio-economic contents of FBOs empowerment programmes and members' self-reliance development	Mean	SD
FBOs teach on hard work, economic justice and strategic partnerships for the attainment of members' social-well-being	2.85	0.857
Training and Retreats that are provided enhance better personal decision-making in collective or individual economic activities of members	2.93	0.893
FBOs promote strategic partnership to enable members has access to required information (including spiritual resources) for economic decision-making.	2.97	0.860
Teaching on access to economic resources, saving and investment ensure that member can think rationally, positively and make meaningful changes in their economic status	3.03	0.9.3
Vocational skills provided by FBOs assist members to have access to acquire various skills for improved personal and collective circumstances	3.04	0.903
FBOs spiritual doctrines provide knowledge to reform members' perception through exchange, education, and engagement for growth and advancements.	3.20	0.849
Through spiritual training, FBOs promote individual positive self-image thereby overcoming all form of stigma that limit self-concept in economic engagement.	3.05	0.944
FBOs create membership-based network that promotes capacity building, wealth creation and access to economic activities in society	2.93	0.993
Grand Mean Score	3.00	0.906

Decision mean=2.50

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis of the correlation between contents of fbos and their members' self-reliance development

Model	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F.Cal	F.Crit	p
Regression	226.478	1	226.478	37.667	3.850	*<0.05
Residual	11183.366	1860	6.013			
Total	11409.844	1881				

*=Significant at 0.05 alpha level; N=1862

Table 4. Summary of mean and standard deviation scores on the contents of socio-economic empowerment programmes of fbos and members' self-engagement.

Contents of socio-economic empowerment programmes of FBOs and members self-engagement	Mean	SD
FBOs create membership-based network that promotes capacity building, wealth creation, and access to economic development activities.	2.94	0.893
FBOs provide social demand satisfaction for all members in terms of physical, economic and spiritual needs.	2.97	0.861
FBOs allow members to deploy their talents for the services of God and humanity with physical and spiritual.	3.04	0.903
FBOs are keen at developing people's ability to make positive change through positive-thinking in both physical and spiritual circumstances of life.	3.21	0.843
FBOs ensure that members are well guided through processes of generating wealth for the attainment of members' physical and spiritual engagement	3.06	0.943
FBOs are aimed at propagating the gospel and providing comfort (empowerment) to the weak and under privileged in the society.	2.76	0.903
Grand Mean Score	3.00	0.899

Decision mean=2.50

Evidently, all the mean score for the six items used, and the attainment of members' well-being has been depicted as a mathematical function which Oghenekohwo (2006) citing Adedeji (1998) expresses as:

$$\text{Social-well-being (SWB)} = F (E_1, E_2, E_3, \text{SD}, F \ \& \ S)$$

Where F = function

E₁ = Efficiency

E₂ = Equity

E₃ = Employability

SD = Social Demand Satisfaction

F = Flexibility,

S= Set of other immeasurable items.

Given that FBOs work toward civic or social justice, contents of their socio-economic empowerment programmes

Table 5. Summary of mean and standard deviation of scores on challenges faced by fbos in the provision of empowerment programmes for members' social-well-being?

Challenges faced by FBOs in the provision of empowerment programmes	Mean	SD
Over-decentralization limits the efficiency of FBOs empowerment programmes for membership empowerment.	2.87	0.934
Corruption, nepotism and favoritism are associated with access to the empowerment programmes of FBOs thereby compromising the empowerment drive of many of such programmes.	2.89	0.949
Extravagant and flamboyant lifestyles of some FBOs leaders limit the expansion of economic empowerment programmes to impact on the empowerment of members.	2.77	0.950
Statutory contributions or remittance of income of FBOs to headquarters is a limiting factor of empowerment of local members.	2.69	0.980
Misappropriation of funds on social activities and selfish needs limit the impact of economic empowerment programmes of FBOs.	2.85	0.944
Grand Mean Score	2.81	0.951

Decision mean=2.50

are therefore designed to sustain the attainment of efficiency, equity, employability, social demand satisfaction, and self-engagement which Oghenekohwo (2012) conceived as social valuation of an entity and measures of flexibility in the economic empowerment possibility curve.

Research Question 4. What are the challenges faced by (FBO) in the provision of empowerment programmes for members' social well-being?

The result presented in Table 5 indicates that, all the items mean scores of (2.87, 2.89, 2.77, 2.69 and 2.85) were greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. On the whole the grand mean score of 2.81 was also greater than the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This implies that there exist challenges faced by FBOs in the provision of socio-economic empowerment programmes of FBOs for members; in Yenegoa communities in Bayelsa State.

CONCLUSION

Arising from the above specific findings, the study has established that: first, despite the challenges faced by faith-based organisations in the community, majority of the members have absolute trust and confidence on the various socio-economic empowerment programmes or activates that they enjoy and thus, providing them with requisite capacity to be self-sustaining and empowered. Second, the efficiency factors in these empowerment programmes are also found to be evident as programmes are capable of replication, a factor that justify the sustainability of these empowerment programmes of the faith-based organisation. Third, the capabilities that are inherent in empowerment process are facilitated by the faith-based organisations such as access to economic development information and resources for decision-making, exercise of assertiveness in collective decision-making, being positively disposed to social changes, involvement in the growth process and changes that are never ending, self-initiated as well as increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma that may be promoted through poverty, unemployment, socio-economic and spiritual exclusion. Fourth, the challenges faced by FBOs in the community limit their involvement in social and civic justice ultimately and to some extent, compromised their social responsibility impact on the members

and their immediate environment. This again is perpetuated by the flamboyant lifestyle of some of the leaders of these faith-based organisations at the expenses of majority of members who cannot consistently attain empowerment.

Among other things, the study recommends that:

1. Leaders of FBOs should moderate their lifestyles and emulate the example of leaders who c serve humanity and not vice versa.
2. More positive efforts are expected of the FBOs on their empowerment programmes.
3. The empowerment programmes are therefore expected to be driven by these efficiency factors. This will encourage replicability of programmes and economies of scale of such programmes on the empowerment of members.
4. There is the need for a well-articulated and structured synergy between the headquarters of these FBOs and their branches. This synergy must be anchored on a regular and un-hindered information flow between the centres and branches. This is to ensure that efficiency is enhanced in the management of these economic empowerment programmes.

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