Impact of Social Capital on Poverty Reduction in Benue State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *Benue State comprises diverse communities, each facing unique socio-economic challenges including poverty. This study examined the impact of social capital on poverty reduction in Benue State, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted for the study. Primary data was collected from 6 Local Government Areas of Benue State. Logit binary regression analysis was used to estimate variables used in the study in relation to its effect on poverty reduction. All variables tested improved Benue state poverty except political party membership and involvement. The results revealed that cooperative society participation, social media involvement, rural group membership, and social club membership has the tendency to reduce poverty by 50% to 68% in Benue State. Overall, with an R-square value of 0.870, there is a strong positive linear relationship between the variables. Social capital may reducepoverty based on community trust, social connection, and socioeconomic context. Addressing inequalities and distributing incentives equitably is crucial to improving social capital.*

KEYWORDS: Social Capital, Poverty Alleviation, Poverty Reduction

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, social scientists and development experts are frequently perplexed as to why economic growth and poverty vary widely between countries and areas that have nearly equal access to resources, markets, and technology (Adeleye, Gershon, Ogundipe, Owolabi, Ogunrinola & Adediran, 2020). It is a significant difficulty for academics (natural, physical, and financial) to explain the significant economic inequalities between nations with otherwise equivalent production circumstances in terms of capital and technology. This issue has even caught the attention of policy makers.

A considerable correlation has been established between poverty and household ownership of social capital; this correlation has a positive and statistically significant impact on the expenditure and earnings of households per capita (Hasan & Birungi 2011; Atemnkeng & Vukenkeng, 2016; Olaleye et al., 2020). In numerous situations, the impact of social capital was demonstrated to be comparable to, if not greater than, that of human capital. Previous investigations in Africa as a whole and Nigeria specifically attempted to elucidate the causes of poverty through the lens of disparities in material, human, and financial resources, neglecting the significance of social capital (Pham & Mukhopadhaya, 2022). Nevertheless, there has been an increasing scholarly focus on comprehending the impact of social capital on household welfare and economic development ever since Ahmad and Hall (2017) conducted research on the role of social capital in elucidating the reason behind the high levels of poverty in most African nations.

To achieve sustainable development and reduce poverty, it is essential to comprehend the complex relationships between social networks and structures. In the context of Benue State, social capital analysis becomes a critical lens through which to understand the means of reducing poverty. The ties, networks, and common norms that make up a community's social capital can be a transformational factor in tackling the complex issues surrounding poverty. Through an examination of the complex relationships that exist between social capital and the reduction of poverty in Benue State, this study seeks to shed light on the ways that strong community ties and cooperative efforts can support economic empowerment and improve the general well-being of the state's citizens.

Benue State, a primarily agrarian state, struggles with systemic poverty; in this regard, the significance of social capital becomes especially relevant. The numerous communities around the state, each with its own distinct social fabric, offer a wealth of personal connections that can be leveraged for programs aimed at reducing poverty. Social capital is a pool of resources that, when carefully utilized, can enable people and communities to escape the cycles of poverty, from cooperative farming methods to shared support networks (Anzoise & Oliveira, 2020). To better understand social capital dynamics in Benue State, this investigation will focus on how it might act as a stimulant for community-led projects, knowledge-sharing, and economic resilience—all of which are promising approaches to long-term poverty alleviation. Carrillo and Riera (2017) posit that social capital, which is present in memberships of cooperative societies, political parties, community clubs, social media platforms, and cooperative societies, functions similarly to how social capital embedded in memberships of social networks reduces poverty (Collier, 2002). These memberships facilitate the dissemination of information regarding markets and technology, mitigate information and technology-related market failures, and foster trust.

Given that Benue state is renowned for being the nation's food basket, there is an increasing need to reduce poverty there. Due to the state's abundance of fertile land, the majority of the

native population works as farmers. Benue is a fertile region known for its popular crops, which include cereals like rice, corn, and sorghum, legumes like groundnut, soya bean, and benniseed, and tree crops like oranges, bananas, pineapples, cashews, etc. that are produced in large quantities. In this rural state, most of the indigenous people rely only on farming and the sale of their produce to make ends meet. Benue State is situated deep within the Guinea-Savannah region. The state benefits from a favorable climate that not only helps the fertile soil that is ideal for producing a variety of crops but also livestock, including cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs. Additionally, because the state has a large number of water bodies, fisheries resources are plentiful (Benue State Agricultural and Rural Development Authority, BNARDA, 2012).

It is meant to serve as a source for modern policies that will lessen the effects of poverty on the populace and raise their standard of living, according to those in charge of policymaking. This study's primary goal is to investigate how social capital affects Benue State's efforts to reduce poverty. The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of social capital on poverty reduction in Benue State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

i. Investigate the impact of membership of cooperative society on poverty reduction in Benue state.
ii. Evaluate the impact of membership and active participation in social media groups on poverty reduction in Benue state.
iii. Determine the impact of membership in rural groups and social clubs on poverty reduction in Benue state.
iv. Ascertain the impact of political party membership and participation on poverty reduction in Benue State.

The following null hypotheses were guided:

H_{O1}: There is no significant impact between membership of cooperative society and poverty reduction in Benue state.

H_{O2}: There is no significant impact between membership and active participation in social media groups and poverty reduction in Benue state.

H_{O3}: There is no significant impact between memberships in rural groups, social clubs and poverty reduction in Benue state.

H_{O4}: There is no significant impact between political party membership and poverty reduction in Benue state.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Issues

Concept of Social Capital: Although there are several definitions and interpretations of social capital, there is a growing actor's capacity to acquire advantages as a result of participation

in a social network or other social institutions. According to Bailey and Gannon (2013), social capital is a meaningful notion at the micro, and macro levels if we adopt a wide perspective of what composed this other social structure. Government, the rule of law, civil and economic liberty are all examples of social capital institutions at the macro level. There is abundant evidence that social capital has a demonstrable effect on national economic performance at the macro level. Social capital refers to the network that rules and regulates interaction among people, families and communities at the micro and macro levels. Local associations or local institutions are often (but not always) used to offer structure to such networks. (Batty & Beatty 2010).

The restricted definition of social capital was re-examined as a collection of "horizontal associations" between individuals made up of social networks (networks of civic participation) and related norms that influence communal output. This notion is underpinned by two empirical presumptions: network and norms are empirically linked, and both have significant economic implications. Baym and Boyd (2012), stated that social capital might also include "vertical" linkages, defined by hierarchical ties and uneven power distribution among members.

In general, "government social capital" and "civil social capital" are the two categories of social capital. Government social capital, according to Beebeejaun & Grimshaw 2011), is defined as governmental structures that impact people's capacity to cooperate for mutual advantage. Contract enforceability, the rule of law, civil liberty, and the state's permissible economic liberty are all examples of these institutions. While civic social capital refers to shared ideals, conventions, informal networks, and associational memberships that influence people's capacity to collaborate to accomplish common objectives. In study social capital is captured in four standpoints: Cooperative Membership, Social Media Membership, Social Club Membership and Political Party Membership.

Cooperative Membership- Cooperative membership refers to the status and active involvement of individuals, organizations, or entities as members of a cooperative enterprise (Osei and Zhuang (2020). It involves the ownership, participation, and engagement of members in a democratically controlled organization where they collectively pursue common economic, social, or cultural goals for mutual benefit (Liu, Wei, Li and Lan, 2021). Fulton & Gibbons (2012) discussed how members' participation and involvement in cooperatives have been fundamental to the success and sustainability of these organizations. The ICA defines cooperative membership as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise (ICA, 2020).

Social Media Membership- Social media participation refers to the engagement, interaction, and involvement of individuals, businesses, or organizations on various social media

platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It involves activities such as creating and sharing content, interacting with other users through comments and messages, joining groups or communities, and leveraging social networks for communication, marketing, networking, and information dissemination (Qualman, 2013). The statement "it is not what you know, but who you know" sums up a common concept of the linkages between socioeconomic position, social mobility, and social networks (Baym & Boyd 2012). Social media participation encompasses the active involvement and interaction of users or entities within online platforms, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, Reddit, and others (Osei and Zhuang (2020).

Social Club Membership- The literature and data on reciprocity within social networks of persons facing poverty emphasises the hardship that participation in a network may impose on individuals and families (Heflin, London et al. 2011; Offer, 2012). One of the reasons parents were concerned of their children attending birthday parties, according to Boon and Farnsworth's (2011) study with families in New Zealand, was the weight of gift-giving this would impose on them. Social Club Membership refers to the formal affiliation of individuals with a social club, indicating their participation in recreational, cultural, or community-based activities organized by the club (Liu, Wei, Li and Lan, 2021). Social clubs provide a platform for members to socialize, share common interests, and engage in various events and programs. Social Club Membership is the formal association of individuals with a social club, emphasizing shared interests, camaraderie, and the pursuit of social and cultural activities (AASC 2023). In the realm of community and leisure studies, Social Club Membership signifies the structured engagement of individuals in organized social and recreational pursuits (Nyandoro and Dube, 2018).

Political Party Membership- Research also suggests that the social networks with the highest levels of trust are the ones that individuals can utilise the most is also attainable from political membership, support and group interaction. These levels of trust are based on and reflect high levels of generalised reciprocity: contributing something to the network in the expectation of receiving something in return in the future (Offer, 2012; Putnam, 2000). Political Party Membership is the voluntary and formal association of individuals with a political party, reflecting their shared political ideology, policy preferences, and commitment to participating in the democratic process (APSA, 2023). Political Party Membership is characterized by individuals formally affiliating with a political party, contributing to the party's organizational strength, and participating in candidate selection, policy formulation, and electoral campaigns (ECPR, 2023). Political Party Membership involves individuals joining a political party, paying membership fees, and engaging in party activities (National Election Commission Statement, UK, 2023). IFES defines Political Party Membership as the formal affiliation of individuals with a political party, highlighting the role of parties as crucial components of democratic systems (IFES, 2023).

Poverty Reduction and Alleviation: The term "poverty alleviation" describes initiatives and plans meant to lessen and eventually eradicate poverty in a particular nation, area, or community (Osei and Zhuang, 2020). It entails dealing with the underlying causes of poverty and putting different policies into place to help the socioeconomic circumstances of those who are impoverished on an individual and community level. Several approaches and initiatives are commonly employed for poverty alleviation:

(i) Economic Empowerment: This involves initiatives that focus on creating employment opportunities, supporting entrepreneurship, providing access to financial services like microfinance, and promoting economic growth in disadvantaged areas.

(ii) Social Safety Nets: The goal of initiatives like food assistance programs, cash transfer plans, and social welfare programs is to give impoverished people and families access to emergency support and relief.

(iii) Education and Skill Development: Investing in education and skill-building programs can empower individuals to access better job opportunities, thereby lifting them out of poverty in the long term.

(iv) Healthcare Access: Improved access to healthcare services, including basic health facilities, vaccinations, and healthcare insurance, can help reduce healthcare-related expenses for impoverished populations.

(v) Infrastructure Development: Developing basic infrastructure such as roads, water supply, sanitation, and electricity in impoverished areas can enhance living conditions and create opportunities for economic development.

(vi) Policy Reforms: Governments can implement policy changes aimed at reducing inequalities, promoting inclusive growth, and ensuring social justice for marginalized communities.

Efforts for poverty alleviation are often complex and require coordinated actions from governments, NGOs, international organizations, and the private sector. Monitoring progress through data collection, impact assessments, and evaluation of poverty reduction programs is crucial for effective implementation and adjustment of strategies.
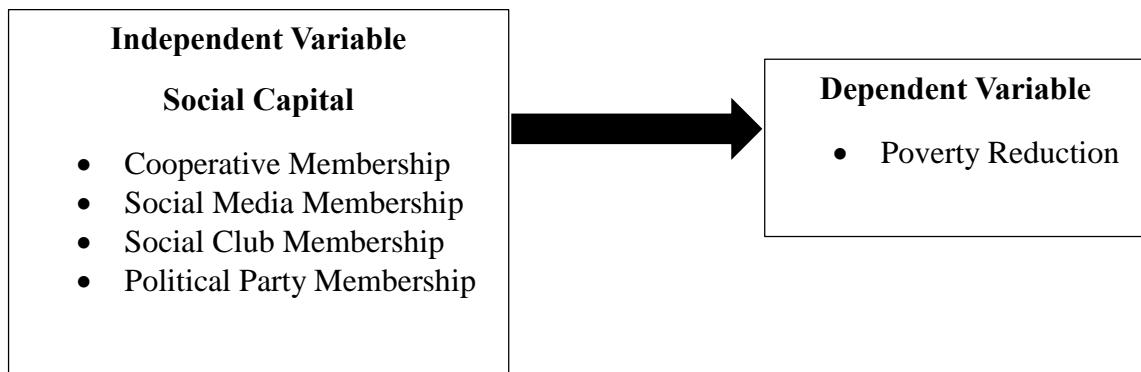
Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Sources: Adapted from Nyandoro and Dube (2018).

Theoretical Issues
This study is anchored on the theory of social action (Weber 1947) clearly explains the character of cooperative societies. Cooperatives are made up of individuals who, by pooling their resources, can tackle and overcome a variety of socioeconomic issues. According to social action theory, understanding poverty requires an examination of the subjective meanings' individuals attribute to their experiences. This highlights the importance of considering the perspectives and experiences of individuals in poverty to develop effective poverty reduction strategies.

According to Granovetter (1973) Social action theory emphasizes the role of social interactions and networks in shaping individual behaviour. In the context of poverty reduction, this perspective suggests that interventions should consider the social networks and relationships that individuals engage in for support and resources. Social action theory acknowledges that social change can occur through collective action. In the context of poverty reduction, this implies that empowering communities to come together and address shared challenges can lead to more sustainable solutions (McCarthy, & Zald, 1977).

The social action theory highlights the role of power and social inequality in shaping individual actions and societal structures. In the context of poverty reduction, understanding power dynamics is crucial for addressing systemic issues that contribute to poverty (Lukes, 1974). Social action theory acknowledges the significance of cultural and symbolic elements in shaping behaviour. Understanding the cultural context of poverty allows for the development of interventions that are sensitive to local values and norms (Bourdieu, 1977).

Empirical review
Wu and Guo (2023) were keen to provide a policy reference for further consolidating the outcomes of poverty eradication, thus it took social capital as a starting point and used the

2018 CFPS database to study the impact of social capital on household poverty, urban–rural heterogeneity, and the moderating effect of economic development. According to the results, social capital can significantly lower the likelihood that a household will be poor, and it can also significantly reduce poverty more in urban households than in rural ones. However, the degree of economic development has a significant moderating effect on the relative poverty that social capital can reduce. It also noted that the impact of social capital on lowering the relative poverty of households increases with economic progress.

Achmad, Nurwati, Fedryansyah and Sumadinata (2022) noted that When Indonesia tries to reduce poverty, economic strategies are usually given priority. Creating new infrastructure, providing financial and educational capital, and enhancing health and human capital are some of these tactics. To assess, map, and encourage the reduction of poverty in a community by maximizing the social capital that exists within that society, this article uses the social capital theory. This study combines a descriptive research methodology with a qualitative technique. The results show that social capital has a significant role in lessening the intensity of poverty and has the power to help the impoverished escape it.

Liu, Wei, Li and Lan (2021) evaluated social capital's moderating function in the relationship between digital information technology and multifaceted poverty. Residents of urban and rural areas are affected differently by digital information technology due to variations in regional, industrial, and other variables. The data for this work comes from the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) database, and the issue is examined using a mediating effect model. It has been discovered that using digital information technology improves social capital from social networks, social engagement, and social trust, which in turn reduces multifaceted poverty. The findings suggest that when it comes to the mediating effect of digital information technology on multidimensional poverty, social trust is more important than social capital and social involvement.

Nwosa and Ehinomen (2020) used autoregressive distributed lag estimation to investigate the link between income inequality, poverty, and economic development in Nigeria from 1981 to 2018. Nigeria's economic development was shown to be boosted by inequality, while poverty had no influence on the country's growth. Adeleye et al. (2020) used pooled ordinary least square, fixed effects, and the system generalised technique of moment to compare growth, poverty, and inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean from 2000 to 2015. According to the findings of the research, the pace of inequality growth increases poverty, whereas the rate of economic growth decreases it. In addition, the growth-poverty-inequality trilemma differs with groups and regions. However, according to the report, income disparity is a major factor in poverty.

By using autoregressive distributed lag, Dada and Fanowopo (2020) looked at data from 1984 to 2018 to assess the influence of Nigerian institutions on the link between economic

development and poverty reduction. The research found that both short-term and long-term poverty reduction is favourably influenced by economic development and stable institutions (such as corruption control and political stability). Economic development and well-functioning institutions may be leveraged to reduce poverty in Nigeria, research revealed. Osei and Zhuang (2020) examined the relative contributions of social capital, social innovation, and female entrepreneurship to the reduction of rural poverty. Using 333 female entrepreneurs in the agribusiness industry from Ghana's Sekyere South District and structural equation modelling (SEM) approach. The study observed transformational power of rural women entrepreneurs who aim to reduce rural poverty by leveraging social capital from formal and informal social networks. It showed a favourable and substantial relationship between women's entrepreneurial growth performance and the reduction of rural poverty. Further evidence revealed the beneficial effects of relational social capital and social innovation on reducing poverty.

Nigeria's agricultural growth was studied by Osabohien et al. (2019) using the generalised technique of moments for 15 West African nations. Poverty indicators were shown to be negatively correlated with the food productivity index using ordinary least squares and extended method of moment's estimation approaches. Adepoju (2019) determined how social capital investment affects the poverty rate of fish farming households in Oyo State, Nigeria. The respondents were chosen using a multistage sampling process. In four local government districts that represented the four agricultural zones—Ibadan-ibarapa, Oyo, Ogbomoso, and Saki in Oyo State, Nigeria—primary data were gathered using a structured questionnaire from a representative sample size of 359 households. The impact of social capital on household poverty was investigated using a multinomial logit regression model in this study. According to the regression model's estimations, social capital endowments significantly influence a household's likelihood of being poor in addition to the socioeconomic features of those families. Islam (2019) explored the relationship between health care access issues among older adults in Bangladesh and social capital (SC). A random sample technique was used in this study to choose 310 older persons in Bangladesh who were all 60 years of age or older and exploratory factor analysis was applied with logistic regression. The results of the logistic regression indicate that the health care access problem will reduce by OR= 0.732 (95% CI = 0.529–1.014); OR= 0.641 (95% CI = 0.447–0.919); and OR= 0.748 (95% CI = 0.556–1.006) units for every unit increase in social network, reciprocity norms, and civic involvement.

Islam and Alam (2018) investigated the connection between poverty alleviation and social capital, specifically focusing on Bangladesh. In 310 families in a rural area in northeastern Bangladesh, a cross-sectional survey was carried out to gather primary data. Multiple aspects of social capital were extracted through the application of exploratory factor analysis. Next, a multivariate binary logistic regression model was used to assess the relationship between poverty and social capital components. In this model, the regression coefficients were shown

using odds ratios. The research validates the correlation between poverty and social networks, reciprocity norms, social trust, and civic engagement. According to the logistic regression, there is a negative correlation between poverty and social trust, social networks, reciprocity norms, and civic engagement (OR=0.488, 95% CI=0.377–0.633; OR=0.709, 95% CI=0.542–0.927; OR=0.619, 95% CI=0.473–0.812; and OR=0.783, 95% CI=0.598–1.025 units).

The study by Nyandoro and Dube (2018) uses qualitative and quantitative data to show that Africa has witnessed economic progress since post-independence, despite the degree of poverty in most African nations. It claims that other continental human-poverty patterns, rather than income distributional processes, might be used to assess the effectiveness of the continent in achieving growth or reducing poverty. It claims that the income level evaluation gives insights into how poverty has expanded in Africa. Another factor contributing to the persistence of income inequality in Africa is its overreliance on the production of primary products, which generates insufficient income to meet the escalating demand for higher profits due to lower prices and changes in the continent's economic capabilities. Due to Africa's large rural populations and rapid urbanisation, the provision of basic social services on the continent was constrained by management budgetary limitations and the inadequate ameliorative and palliative civic policy to meaningfully disturb poverty-reduction, making the situation in Africa even worse.

In spite of the country's multi-dimensional poverty, these numerous causes of poverty are linked and support each other, they argue. Poverty and poor-quality education are intertwined, resulting in a cycle of little or no income for those who lack the proper education. The research argues that in order to combat poverty and make progress, all of the associated elements must be addressed simultaneously. On the theoretical side of poverty in Nigeria, (Danaan, 2018). Fosu (2017) used data from the early 1990s from both country-specific and regional developing nations to evaluate the impact of income disparity in the transition of economic expansion into poverty reduction. It was decided to utilise poverty headcount ratios of 1:25 and 2:50 dollars per day. According to findings, income growth is the primary driver of changes in poverty. In states where growth has been the primary driver of poverty reduction, there is a belief that greater growth can be made if the distribution of revenue is more equal.

Value-added agriculture had a negative influence on poverty in the nations studied, according to panel data spanning the years 2000–2016. According to a comparable investigation, agricultural production, poverty alleviation, and inclusive development in Nigeria between 1991 and 2015 were evaluated by (Ogundipe et al. 2016). Ogbeide and Agu (2015) examined the connection between poverty and inequality in Nigeria from 1980 to 2010 in order to determine whether there was a direct link between the two. The research employed data from the Central Bank of Nigeria, the National Bureau of Statistics and World Bank's World Development Indicators to conduct Granger causality analysis. The research found that

poverty and inequality have a significant causality impact, whereas poverty and unemployment have no causality in the nation. There is a direct link between poverty and inequality, but there is an indirect link through joblessness and life expectation, which leads to inequality resulting in poverty itself. That's why the research recommends a focus on employment in Nigeria's efforts to combat poverty and inequality.

METHODOLOGY

An experimental quantitative research design (Pangarso & Setyorini 2023) and a survey approach were utilised in this research. The last population census estimated the population of Benue State to be 4,253,641 (NPC, 2006) which was expected to rise to 5.3million by 2022. In determining the sample size for this study, the researcher adopted Cochran's formula to determine the sample size of the infinite population of the farmers in Benue state as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 PQ}{e^2} \qquad (1)$$

n = Sample size; Z= determined from Z Statistics Table; P= Estimated percentage of population; q= is 1-P; e= Margin error

By substitution, $n = \frac{(1.96)^2 0.5(1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} = 384$.

Therefore, the sample size approximately is 384. This Simple Random Sampling Technics was adopted for the research because the researcher used balloting to select a subset of participants from the infinite population to represent farmers in Benue state. To ensure that the there is adequate return of the number of questionnaires for the analysis, the researcher have increased the number sample by 30%, thus the selected sample is approximately 500 respondents. Primary data was gathered and generated for the purpose of this study. For the study, a questionnaire was given to every person in the sample population. The research adopted a five-point Likert questionnaire. To ensure high return, the questionnaire was administered through survey planet. Socioeconomic characteristics of respondents, such as age, gender, income, the number of households, educational attainment, and so on, was elicited using questionnaires. The responses were given specific numerical values for further analysis after the data were cleaned up, which included editing, coding, and tabulation to find any anomalies in the responses. The data will be quantitatively analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS software. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to test the hypothesis (Musthofa, Nasikhin, & Hasanah, 2023). Following the conceptual framework established, the model for this is structured as follows:

$$PR = f(SC) \qquad (1)$$

Where SC means Social Capital and PR stand for Poverty Reduction in Benue State, Nigeria. Social capitals are captured in four standpoints to include Membership of Cooperative

Society in Benue State (CS), Membership and Active Engagement on social media in Benue State (AM), Membership in Rural Groups and Social Clubs in Benue State (RG) and Political Party Membership and Participation in Benue State (PP). Therefore, the model is expanded as follows:

$$PR = f(CS, AM, RG, PP) \qquad (2)$$

Equation (3) can be presented in a linear form as follows:

$$PR = \emptyset_0 + \emptyset_1 CS_i + \emptyset_2 AM_i + \emptyset_3 RG_i + \emptyset_4 PP_i + \mu_i \qquad (3)$$

While other variables remain as explained, $\emptyset_0$ is the Intercept $\emptyset_1$ to $\emptyset_4$ are the parameters to be estimated and μ_i is the error term assumed to be normally distributed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Five hundred structured questionnaires were administered to heads of households in 6 selected LGAs of Benue State but four hundred and forty only were duly filled and retrieved. The empirical analyses were done based on all the retrieved questionnaires. These were collated and codified into excel spreadsheet and exported into the SPSS 26.0 for descriptive and inferential statistical technique. This research captured three demographic elements: gender, age, and marital status of the respondents. The essence is to demonstrate the categories of respondents in the questionnaire to establish its validity.

Table 2 shows the age demographics of the 440 respondents. It was revealed that among the 440 respondents, 136 (30.99%) of the total respondents were between age group of 41-50 years. Also, it was revealed that 175 (39.77%) of the total respondents were between age ranges from 25-40 years. It was also shown that respondents below 25 years of age comprises approximately 18.18% of the total respondents. Lastly, those above 50 years comprised approximately 10.91% percent of the total respondents. Overall, the age characteristics of the respondents shows that larger percent of the respondents was between the age range of 41-50 years.

Table 2 also shows the marital status of the respondents which shows a total of 440 respondents. It is evident that 68 (15.46%) of the total respondents were widow. Also, it was revealed that 107 (24.32%) of the total respondents were married. Similarly, the divorced among the respondents comprised about 17.95% of the total respondents. Lastly, 186 (42.27%) of the total population were single. Overall, marital status of the respondents shows that a larger chunk of the population was single.

Table 2 Demographic Information of the Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Gender			
1	Female	138	31.36
2	Male	302	68.64
Age			
1	Below 25 Years	80	18.18
2	25 - 40 Years	175	39.77
3	41 - 50 Years	136	30.91
4	50 and above	48	10.91
Marital Status			
1	Single	186	42.27
2	Married	107	24.32
3	Divorced	79	17.95
4	Widow/Widower	68	15.46

Source: Author's Computation Using SPSS 26

The gender characteristics of the respondent was also presented in Table 2. It was revealed that 138 (31.36%) of the respondents' head of household were female while 302 (68.64%) of the total households have their head to be male. Overall, the findings of the study conclude that the gender of household head were male, this is because of the high percentage that earmarks on this basis.

Pre-estimation Analysis
The descriptive statistics results, shown in table 3, included the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values for each of the variables under consideration. Poverty reduction (PR) has the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values as 2.98406, 1.33523, 1 and 5 respectively while Membership of Cooperative Society in Benue State (CS) has the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values as 3.03645, 1.32539, 1 and 5 respectively. Membership and Active Engagement on social media in Benue State (AM) has the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values as 3.05695, 1.26741, 1 and 5 respectively. Membership in Rural Groups and Social Clubs in Benue State (RG) has the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values as 2.86333, 1.31361, 1 and 5 respectively and Political Party Membership and Participation in Benue State (PP) has the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values as 2.71526, 1.26906, 1 and 5 respectively.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	OBS	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
PR	440	2.98406	1.33523	1	5
CS	440	3.03645	1.32539	1	5
AM	440	3.05695	1.26741	1	5
RG	440	2.86333	1.31361	1	5
PP	440	2.71526	1.26906	1	5

Source: Author's Computation Using SPSS 26, 2023

This study reports the results of correlation coefficients in Table 4. It was shown that none of the variables is correlated. Thus, all the variables may be estimated concurrently in the model since they are not substantially connected with each other. In other words, Azu, Jelivov, Aras, and Isik (2020) and Azu and Nwauko (2021), noted that when independent variables are correlated, this is a likelihood of multicollinearity issues in the model. The correlation matrix in Table 4 does not include this.

The estimated regression will be used to test the hypothesis to ascertain the impact of social capital on poverty reduction in Benue State. These independent factors may have an 87.0% impact on the dependent, according to the R-Square. The statistical regression analysis's residuals do not show any signs of autocorrelation, according to the Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic test. A score of 2.003, which is greater than 2.0, indicates that there is no autocorrelation seen in the sample. The result of the logit regression is reported in Table 5.

Table 4 Correlation Matrix

Variables	PR	CS	AM	RG	PP
PR	1				
CS	0.1026	1			
AM	-0.0299	0.6567	1		
RG	-0.0281	-0.0652	-0.1819	1	
PP	0.1386	0.5239	0.3754	-0.1896	1

Source: Author's Computation

The first objective of this research is to investigate the impact of membership of cooperative society on poverty alleviation in Benue state. It was observed that membership of cooperative society (CS) has a coefficient of 0.592 and statistically significant at 5%. This implies that as membership of cooperative society increases by 1%, poverty reduction improves by 59.2%, all things being equal. Therefore, the first hypothesis (Ho_1): There is no significant impact

between membership of cooperative society and poverty reduction in Benue state is hereby rejected.

On the other hand, the study evaluated the impact of membership and active participation in social media groups on poverty reduction in Benue state. The result also presented that membership and active participation in social media groups (AM) has a positive coefficient of 0.679 and statistically significant at 5%. This implies that as membership and active participation in social media groups (AM) increases by 1%, poverty reduction improves by 67.9%, all things being equal. Therefore, the second hypothesis (Ho2): There is no significant impact between active social media participation and poverty reduction in Benue state is hereby rejected.

Again, the impact of membership in rural groups and social clubs on poverty reduction in Benue state was determined. It was observed that the coefficient of membership in rural groups and social clubs (RG) is 0.507 and statistically significant at 5%. This means that as risk response planning increases by 1%, poverty reduction improves by 50.7%, all things being equal. Therefore, the third hypothesis (Ho3): There is no significant impact between memberships in rural groups, social clubs and poverty reduction in Benue state is hereby rejected. This result signifies that as membership in rural groups and social clubs intensifies, poverty reduction intensifies too.

Table 5 Result of the Binary Logit Regression Model

Regressors	Coefficients	Wald Ratio	Probability Value	Odds Ratio
Intercept	-1.937	10.231	0.039	0.094
CS	0.592	5.682**	0.040	2.830
AM	0.679	6.002**	0.047	3.249
RG	0.507	5.451**	0.054	2.350
PP	0.735	2.802	0.194	4.019

Source: Researcher's Computation Using SPSS (2022).
$X^2 = 3856.100$ P-value = 0.0003; $R^2 = 0.870$; *** shows that p-value significant at 1%; ** shows that p-value is significant at 5%; * shows that p-value is significant at 10%.

Finally, the study ascertained the impact of political party membership and participation on poverty reduction in Benue State. It was reported that political party membership and participation has a coefficient of 0.735 but not statistically significant. This is to say that as political party membership and participation has the potential to improve poverty. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis (Ho4): There is no significant impact between political party membership and poverty reduction in Benue state cannot be rejected.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Numerous states in Nigeria have high rates of poverty and severe economic hardship. Nigeria's Benue State has significant challenges when it comes to poverty. Poverty is still a major problem in the state even though it is a naturally resource-rich and agriculturally rich area. This research assessed the impact of social capital on poverty reduction in the State. It captured social capital in four perspectives: membership of cooperative society, membership and active engagement on social media, membership in rural groups and social clubs and political party membership and participation. Logit binary regression for estimating the impact of these variables on poverty alleviation.

It was observed the impact of all the variables are positive toward improving poverty level in Benue state except for political party membership and participation. In other words, membership of cooperative society, membership and active engagement on social media, membership in rural groups and social clubs reduces poverty by 50% to 68%, all things being equal. However, membership to political party has the potential to reduce poverty but the influence is not convincing. It's crucial to note that, even while social capital can be an effective instrument for reducing poverty, its effects can differ depending on the situation and the calibre of social ties. Enhancing social capital should also take into account correcting any inequality that may exist and making sure that the community's advantages are shared fairly.

It is suggested that this study be carried out within the North Central Zone of Nigeria and other four geopolitical zone. Comparing the outcomes from different zones is also encouraged. Again, the use of secondary data to assess the impact of social capital on poverty reduction in Nigeria and other African countries will make a good contribution. It is also suggested that the use of other variables for social capital should be tested on poverty reduction.

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