

Determinants of Women's Empowerment in Nigeria

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Abstract: Empowering women entails fortifying women to make crucial choices across various issues in an economy. This study investigated the socioeconomic determinants of women's empowerment status in Nigeria. Secondary data from 17,677 respondents were sourced from the National Health Demographic Survey (NDHS) 2018 and were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe women's socioeconomic characteristics and the women empowerment indicators, Women Empowerment Index (WEI) to determine the level of women empowerment and probit regression to identify and examine the determinants of women empowerment in Nigeria. Results showed an average age of 33 years for Nigerian women, many were Muslims, had a household size of 1-5 persons, had no formal education, belonged to the richest group of the wealth quintile, resided in the rural area, and the majority were married. Also, the majority were employed and earned in cash, but more than half were poorly empowered. Furthermore, at $p < 0.05$, being employed, educated, an urban resident, a service provider, earning more than husband, and respondent's age positively influence women empowerment, while household size, being a farmer, married woman, traditionalist, and residing in the Northeast, Southeast, South-south, and Southwest negatively influence women empowerment status in Nigeria. Thus, the study recommends the organization of awareness programs about the importance of women's participation in decision-making at the household level and the society at large, and that governments and NGOs should strive more for gender equality and empower women to reach their full potential.

Keywords: *Empowerment, Women, Decision-making, Households.*

1. Introduction

Individual or social empowerment presupposes the existence of a social oppression state that disempowered individual groups by denying them the opportunities or resources that have defined them as inferior humans; thus, lowering their self-esteem. Moubarak (2021) thus, viewed empowerment as a political and economic set of procedures aimed at increasing individual and group power, self-reliance, and strength. Empowerment fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities, and their society by acting on important issues (Charity, 2021). Women empowerment engross the legal recognition of women's rights and the endorsement of their rights to speak, to take part in public affairs, and to defend their beliefs in society. Similarly, women's empowerment means the ability of women to strategically make life choices where they are previously been denied. Women's empowerment is of great importance in maintaining and improving women's contribution at individual, household, community, and economic levels. It encompasses various activities that literarily boost women's status via education, training, and awareness (Charity, 2021). Henceforth, women's empowerment is all-encompassing as it enables and fortifies women to make crucial choices across various issues in an economy. For centuries, women's rights have been developing slowly and continuously. From ancient civilizations to the present day, women have fought for their rights and equal treatment in different aspects of life, including the political, economic, and social spheres. Women were viewed as inferior to men in ancient societies like Greece and Rome and lacked political and social influence and were only allowed to work in the home in these societies, and participation in public life was prohibited.

However, over time, women began to challenge these limitations and push for greater rights (Smith, 2021). The 19th century was a turning point for women's rights as the suffragette movement took hold. Women, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth, fought for the right to vote and for greater political representation. This eventually led to the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which granted women the right to vote in 1920. The 20th century saw further progress for women's rights, as women were given greater access to education and employment opportunities (Johnson, 2018). Also, the 1960s and 1970s were particularly important, as the feminist movement gained momentum and challenged traditional gender roles. This led to important legislation such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which aimed to eliminate gender-

based pay discrimination in the workplace, and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, which provided job-protected leave for employees for specific family and medical reasons. In recent times, women's rights have continued to be an important issue, as women face ongoing challenges such as the gender pay gap and workplace discrimination. However, the progress made over the years has provided a foundation for continued advocacy and activism as women work toward a future in which they have equal rights and opportunities (Johnson, 2018). The notion of women's empowerment has recently become a central focus of global development efforts. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly recognize the need to encourage gender equality and empower women and girls in all aspects of life.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with more than 200 million people. The country is also one of the most diverse in the world, with over 250 ethnic groups and a wide range of cultural practices (Ogunleye, 2020). According to Charity (2021), Nigeria still has an untapped potential for sustainable development and has not yet grasped the importance of empowering women in ensuring successful outcomes. Nigerian women encounter a wide range of restrictions to their empowerment, including discrimination in the workplace, limited access to education and healthcare, and gender-based violence (Ogunleye, 2020). Amaechi (2019) contributed that despite the availability of limited opportunities, the roles played by many Nigerian women have demonstrated that granting them more opportunities will help Nigeria attain sustainable development. The disparities between men and women arise from the training, not innate abilities. If women were given the same training as men, they would excel similarly. A just and equitable society without gender discrimination is all that is needed for women to demonstrate their capacity to drive development in many fields. Since independence in 1960, several Nigerian women have risen to prominence in the political arena, advocating for women's rights and urging that decisions affecting everyone should be made by everyone, and have made progress in promoting gender balance and women's empowerment in recent times (Charity, 2021). The country has ratified several international agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In addition, Nigeria has developed several initiatives and policies to promote gender equality, such as the National Gender Policy and the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (Ogunleye, 2020). However, Tripathy (2018) contributed that the process of empowerment must start with a woman's mindset because most women were raised to view their primary role as pleasing men and fulfilling their desires, and male children are seen as more important than female children. Thus, women have internalized beliefs that they are weak and inferior to men. To achieve women's empowerment, these false beliefs must be replaced with the truth, and women need to be educated about their inherent value and potential. Women must be liberated from the self-imposed constraints placed by society. Nigeria has encountered a multitude of significant development obstacles, impeding the nation's ability to achieve sustainable progress. One of these major obstacles is gender inequality (Joseph, 2022). According to the World Bank (2019), women make up 50% of the population in Nigeria and account for 70% of the country's poor. Gender-based violence is another significant challenge to women's empowerment in Nigeria. Women and girls in Nigeria are at high risk of violence, including domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment. This can have significant physical and psychological consequences for women and can limit their ability to participate in public life and access economic opportunities. These highlight the need to focus on strategies that can help women access economic opportunities and improve their livelihoods.

The Nigerian government has taken steps to reduce these issues, but progress has been slow as women remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making tasks, and most times debarred from economic opportunities (Eni *et al.*, 2022). Despite the efforts of the government, non-governmental organizations, and international contributions to achieve women's empowerment in Nigeria, women still face significant barriers to their empowerment. For example, cultural practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) remain widespread in some parts of the country. Women also face limited access to credit and other financial resources, which can make it difficult for them to start businesses and support themselves and their families. Moreover, there is a paucity of data and research on women's empowerment in Nigeria, which makes it difficult to develop evidence-based policies and initiatives (Chioma, 2021). This study provides insights into the socioeconomic determinants of women's empowerment. By identifying the determinants, this study also aims to provide a basis for developing effective strategies to promote women's empowerment in Nigeria and

will be useful for policymakers and development practitioners in designing programs and policies that address these factors and promote gender equality.

Objectives of the Study

This study broadly assessed the socioeconomic determinant of women's empowerment in Nigeria. It specifically;

- described women empowerment indicators
- assessed the level of women empowerment
- examined the socio-economic factors influencing women's empowerment in Nigeria

2. Literature Review

Theoretical Review

The theories underpinning this study are Feminist Theory, Gender and Development Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Human Rights Theory.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory emerged in 1794 by Mary Wollstonecraft. The theory proposes that, naturally, women are not inferior to other sex but seem to be inferior mainly because of their inaccessibility to education. The theory posited further that women who have the same right to education as men will surely be exceptional mothers and capable workers in many professions. It also recognizes the importance of understanding how gender intersects with other forms of inequality, such as race, class, and sexuality (Hill, 1990). It therefore suggested that women's status could be improved through radical reformation of the national education system. Feminist theory contributes to promoting women's empowerment by advocating equal access to education by men and women, promoting women's agency, and recognizing the diversity of women's experiences.

Gender and Development Theory

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach was influenced by Oakley (1972) (Rathgeber, 1990). This theory argues that gender relations influence development outcomes by systematically subordinating women, especially in developing nations such as Nigeria. According to this theory, gender inequality is the root cause of underdevelopment, and promoting gender equality, especially about access to resources is essential for sustainable development in any economy. It therefore emphasized the importance of addressing the root causes of gender inequality, such as patriarchal norms and discriminatory laws and policies. It also recognizes the need to recognize the distinctive nature of women's knowledge and responsibilities, especially in decision-making processes to promote their leadership and participation in all spheres of life. This recognition is particularly important in Nigeria, where women face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory (HCT) was formulated by Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz in the 1960s and it posited that individuals' education and skills training are essential components of their capital; therefore, investing in the education and training of individuals, especially women, increases their productivity, which leads to economic growth. In the context of women's empowerment, HCT suggests that investing in women's education and skills increases women's human capital, which, in turn, leads to economic growth, this is significant because education and skills development can improve women's economic prospects, labor force participation, and enable essential contributions to families' and communities' well-being. Education and skills development can also lead to increased social mobility, self-confidence, and decision-making power, which are essential components of women's empowerment (Uzor, 2019).

Human Rights Theory

John Locke developed human rights theory in 1689 based on the perception that every human is by nature, entitled to a certain right. This theory is a framework for understanding the importance of protecting the rights and dignity of all individuals, including women. It stated that the promotion and protection of these rights and dignity are essential for achieving sustainable development. Human rights theory emphasizes the need to protect women's rights to life, liberty, and security, rights to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities (Merry, 2006). It also recognizes the essence of protecting women's rights to participate in decision-making

and to be free from gender-based violence and discrimination (United Nations, 1979). According to this theory, women's empowerment requires interventions that promote and protect their human rights, which could involve strengthening laws and policies that protect women's rights, promoting women's access to justice, and providing support for women who have experienced violence or discrimination (Chinkin, 2000).

Empirical Review

Laurent et al. (2022) evaluated the variables impacting the empowerment of women small-scale entrepreneurs in Dodoma City Council using the Women's Development Fund (WDF). Cross-sectional data were collected from 75 small-scale women entrepreneurs using purposive sampling techniques. The collected data were subjected to quantitative (descriptive statistics) and qualitative (content analysis) analytical techniques. This was ascribed to several factors, including a 4% decrease in the loans allocated by local government authorities (LGAs), delayed loan disbursement, inadequate training provided to beneficiary groups, and insufficient supportive supervision provided to credit beneficiaries. Reduced capacity for entrepreneurship and disregard for WDF norms also had an impact on the profitability of the company.

Njoku and Mbah (2021) examined the factors affecting female empowerment and its advantages for community development in Imo State, Nigeria. To choose 120 respondents for the study, a multistage random selection procedure was used. Statistical techniques for inferential and descriptive analysis were used to examine the data. The findings showed that, on average, 51.3 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that female empowerment had a positive impact on community development. Additionally, it was discovered that the main determinants of female empowerment in Imo State were age, income, and education and the major barriers to female empowerment included limited access to opportunities, low-quality education, and underrepresentation in politics; major strategies for empowering women included training (3.25), opportunities, mentoring, and positions of decision-making.

The factors impacting women's empowerment among a tribe of ex-criminals in West Bengal, India, were studied by Jana and Midya (2023). Cross-sectional data from 110 Lodha tribal women who had ever been married were the main source of data for the study. Qualitative content analysis along with descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data that were gathered. The findings showed that, from a variety of household viewpoints, women's participation in decision-making was far from satisfactory. Most participants did not have the opportunity to base their choices on family matters. The results also demonstrate that women's involvement in paid labor and/or self-help group activities are important mechanisms that support women's decision-making abilities in the home. Age, education, family structure, and income potential were also discovered to significantly influence the level of women's participation in the decision-making process.

Oboqua and Odenigbo (2022) explored the factors influencing rural women's engagement in community development projects in the Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study, and 394 respondents were chosen proportionately from 11 political wards. At a 5% level of significance, the obtained data were analyzed using a t-test statistic to test the hypotheses. The study's conclusions showed that rural women's involvement in community development initiatives was highly influenced by their occupation and educational attainment.

Factors influencing women's engagement in leadership positions in Nigeria were explored by Okeke and Onyishi (2020) using multilevel modeling. The study adopted the survey-solving method of data collection. The study used both primary and secondary data of a qualitative and quantitative nature. It was found that both individual-level and organizational-level factors were significant predictors of women's participation in leadership positions in Nigeria. Specifically, education, income, and leadership experience were positively associated with women's participation in leadership at the individual level. Gender-based discrimination was negatively correlated with women's participation in leadership at the organizational level, but a positive organizational culture was positively associated with it. The multilevel model also showed that organizational culture, as opposed to individual-level characteristics, had a greater impact on women's leadership engagement. This implies that improving organizational culture is a critical first step in boosting the representation of women in leadership roles.

Yemenu (2020) investigated the variables that affect the inclusion of women in leadership positions. The study was descriptive, and the survey-solving method was used in data gathering. Primary and secondary data were used for this research. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study showed a low level of women's participation in city administration, which was attributed to societal, institutional (organizational), and individual factors. Women's career advancements were affected by a combination of different factors. Women's participation in leadership positions is low due to improper implementation of women's policies, unequal treatment of women when assigning leadership positions, and a lack of supportive work environments. These factors also make it difficult for women to make decisions and limit their ability to do so.

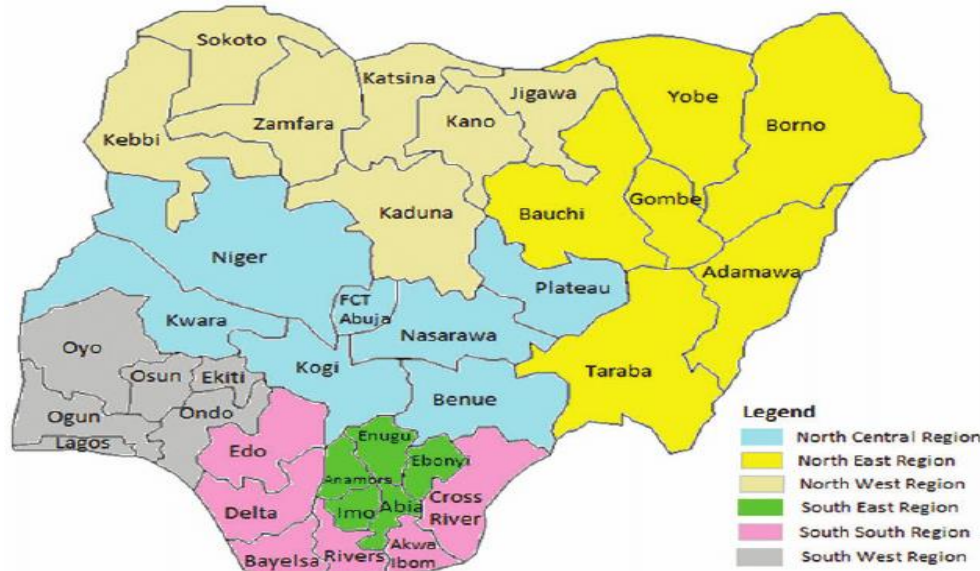
Ayetigbo (2022) examined Nigerian women's political involvement in the democratic process from 1999 and 2019. For the study, secondary data were employed. The representation of women in politics from 1999 to 2019 was examined using descriptive data, with particular attention paid to the National Assembly, which is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The findings indicate that there was variability in women's political representation and participation during the 1999–2003 transition period to a new democratically elected government. In addition, from 2007 to 2015, there was a rise in the number of women participating in politics in the National Assembly. Nevertheless, in the 2019 general election, women's membership in the House of Representatives and Senate decreased significantly.

3. Research Methodology

Research Area

The study location is the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Nigeria is situated between the Greenwich meridian's 30°E and 150°E longitude and the equator's 40°N to 140°N latitude. Nigeria lies in the center of Africa, or West Africa. Its borders are the Atlantic Ocean to the south, the Benin Republic to the west, the Niger Republic to the north, the Cameroon Republic to the east, the Chad Republic to the northeast, and the West African Republic to the east. Nigeria has a total land area of about 923,768 km². The largest distance is roughly 1,300 km from east to west and 1,100 km from North to South. Nigeria's female population increased significantly over the previous 50 years, from 30.6 million to 110 million people, rising at an increasing annual rate that reached a maximum of 3.09% in 1980 and then reduced to 2.39% in 2023. The total live population in Nigeria is 229,561,527, of which females hold about 49.4% (113,316,719) as of July 24, 2024 (countrymeter.info. 2024). Nigeria has a long record of gender inequality and discrimination against women. Figure 1 is the map of Nigeria showing the six geopolitical zones.

Figure1: Map of Nigeria Showing the Six Geopolitical Zones



Source: National Population Commission (NPC) and International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), 2019

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The study used secondary data sourced from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2018. The NDHS (2018) adopted a two-stage stratified sampling technique to select 42,000 representative households. The data were cleaned up to a total of 17,677 households, with the complete required data on the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents, women empowerment indicators, and factors influencing women empowerment. The data used were descriptively analyzed, the women empowerment index (WEI), and the Probit regression model. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the socio-demographics of the households; the women empowerment index was generated to determine the level of women empowerment in Nigeria; and the Probit model was adopted to identify and examine the factors influencing the level of women empowerment in Nigeria.

The women's empowerment index was generated using four domains, which consist of 10 indicators as utilized by Kuma and Godana (2023). The domains are; education level (primary, secondary, tertiary), type of earnings (cash or otherwise), autonomy (decision on earnings, decision on health care, decision on visits to friends and family), and ownership of assets (own land, own house). Each indicator was given a score of 1. The number of scores by each respondent was given over 10 where the minimum is 0/10 and the maximum is 10/10. The women's empowerment index was coded 0-1.0 and the values were used to distribute respondents to empowerment categories:

Where: WEI = 0; Not empowered

WEI = 0.1-0.3; Poorly empowered

WEI = 0.4-0.6; Moderately empowered

WEI = 0.7 - 0.9; Highly empowered

WEI = 1.0; Perfectly empowered

The probit model was adopted because it is the kind of model used to estimate the probability relationship between dichotomous dependent variables. For the Probit regression model, (women empowerment) equals 0 when the women empowerment index ranges between 0- 0.49, and it equals 1 when the women empowerment index is 0.5 or higher. The models can be expressed as:

$$P_i(Y_i = 1|X_i) = \Phi(\beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \beta_6X_6 + \beta_7X_7 + \beta_8X_8 + \beta_9X_9 + \beta_{10}X_{10} + \epsilon_i)$$

Where,

Y_i = Women empowerment (0= unempowered, 1 = empowered)

P_i = Probability, $P_i(Y_i = 1|X_i)$ = probability that Y_i equals 1 given the explanatory variables

Φ = Function of Probit model based on normal distribution Z

β_0 = Intercept, β_1 = Estimation parameters

Y_i = women empowerment (0= unempowered, 1 = empowered)

X_1 = occupation (professional, clerical, sales, services, skilled, unskilled, and agriculture)

X_2 = Employment status (1=employed, 0=unemployed)

X_3 = Residence (1= urban, 0=rural)

X_4 = Educational level (no formal education, primary, secondary, and higher education)

X_5 = Geopolitical zone (Northcentral, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and South-south)

X_6 = Marital status (married=1, otherwise=0)

X_7 = Religion (Christian religion, Islam religion, and Traditional religion)

X_8 = Household size (number)

X_9 = Age (years)

X_{10} = Earning more than husband (1= yes, otherwise= 0)

4. Results

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 illustrates the socioeconomic characteristics of Nigerian women

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency (n=17,677)	Percentage
Age (years)		
15-24	2,554	14.45
25-34	6,979	39.48
35-44	5,884	33.29
≥45	2,260	12.78
33.42 (±8.25)		
Religion		
Christianity	8,469	47.91
Islam	9,073	51.33
Traditional	135	0.76
Wealth status		
Poorest	3,167	17.92
Poorer	3,268	18.49
Middle	3,422	19.36
Richer	3,693	20.89
Richest	4,127	23.35
Household size		
1-5	8,460	47.86
6-10	6,951	39.32
11-15	1,697	9.60
>15	569	3.22
6.53 (±3.68)		
Marital status		
Unmarried	638	3.86
Married	16,994	96.14
Geopolitical zones		
Northcentral	2,744	15.52
Northeast	2,771	15.68
Northwest	4,445	25.15
Southeast	2,454	13.88
South-south	2,216	12.54
Southwest	3,047	17.24
Educational level		
No formal education	6,442	36.44
Primary education	3,243	18.35
Secondary education	5,945	33.63
Higher education	2,047	11.58
Type of residency		
Rural	10,222	57.83
Urban	7,455	42.17
Employment status		
Unemployed	758	4.29
Employed	16,919	95.71

Source: Author's Computation from NDHS, 2018

Results showed that more than half (53.93%) of the respondents were in the 15-34years age group with a mean of 33(±8.25); this implies that most of the women are still in their active age, which may facilitate their empowerment. Over half (51.33%) of the respondents practiced Islamic religion, while very few (0.76%) of

them are traditional worshipers or traditionalists. Most (63.6%) fell within the middle of the richest group of wealth quintiles. Results showed further that the majority (96.14%) were married, and almost half (47.86%) had household sizes of 1–5. This result is by the findings of Alinsato *et al.* (2022) that more than half of the married women in farming households in Abeokuta had household sizes of 1-6. The study also showed that the highest proportion (36.44%) of the women had no formal education, 18.35% had primary education, 33.63% had secondary education, and only 11.58% had higher education. Over half (57.83%) of the women reside in rural areas, and the majority (95.71%) were employed. This implies that Nigerian women are barely unemployed even though most of them live in rural areas.

Indicators of Women's Empowerment

The indicators of women's empowerment are described in Table 2

Table 2: Indicators of Women's Empowerment

Variable	Frequency (n=17,677)	Percentage
Educational level		
No formal education	6,442	36.44
Formal education	11,235	63.56
Type of earnings (cash earnings) Yes	14,920	84.40
House ownership (own house alone) Yes	611	3.46
Who decides on health care (Respondents)? Yes	2,178	12.32
Who decides on visits (Respondents)? Yes	2,809	15.89
Who decides on household purchase decisions (Respondents)? Yes	1,245	7.04

Source: Author's Computation from NDHS, 2018

Results in Table 2 describe the women empowerment indicators and it was found that a high proportion (36.44%) of Nigerian women had no formal education, however, the majority (84.40%) earned in cash. Also, the majority could not make decisions on healthcare (87.68%) and visits to relatives (84.11%). Almost all of them did not own a house alone (96.54%) or could not make decisions on large household purchases (92.96%). Although, the majority of Nigerian women earned in cash, they do not possess most of the empowerment indicators.

Level of Women Empowerment in Nigeria

The levels of women empowerment in Nigeria are presented in Table 2.

Table 3: Level of Women Empowerment in Nigeria

Variable	Frequency (n=17,677)	Percentage
Women empowerment category		
Not empowered	245	1.39
Poorly empowered	10,388	58.77
Moderately empowered	6,466	36.58
Highly empowered	576	3.26
Perfectly empowered	2	0.01

Source: Author's Computation from NDHS, 2018

Results further show in Table 4.3 that despite women's employment (95.71% in Table 1), most (60.16%) of Nigerian women were either not empowered or poorly empowered while only 3.27% were either highly empowered or perfectly empowered. On the average, Nigerian women are poorly empowered.

Level of women empowerment by socioeconomic characteristics

The results of the chi-square analysis, which shows the relationship between the levels of women empowerment and their socioeconomic characteristics, are presented in Table 3.

Table 4: Level of Women Empowerment by Socioeconomic Variables

Socioeconomic variables	χ^2	df	P-value	Decision
Wealth status	2.1e+03	16	0.000	significant
Age	142.2777	12	0.000	significant
Religion	1.8e+03	8	0.000	significant
Household size	921.7545	12	0.000	Significant
Marital status	68.5153	4	0.000	significant
Geopolitical zones	2.4e+03	20	0.000	significant
Employment status	64.2640	4	0.000	Significant
Earning more than husband	147.4224	4	0.000	Significant

Source: Data analysis, 2024

Women's socio-economic characteristics are significantly related to women's empowerment level in Nigeria at a 1% ($p < 0.01$) level. The women's empowerment level in Nigeria was influenced by factors such as their wealth status (2.1e+03, df=16), age (142.2777, df=12), religion (1.8e+03, df=8), household size (=921.7545, df=12), marital status (=68.5153, df=4), geopolitical zones (=2.4e+03, df=20), employment status (=64.2640, df=4), and a woman earning more than their husbands (=147.4224, df=4) at $p=0.01$. These show that the socioeconomic characteristics of women are very important in their empowerment.

Socioeconomic Determinants of Women's Empowerment in Nigeria

Table 5 presents the probit regression results on the direction and size of the influence of socioeconomic factors on women's empowerment in Nigeria.

Table 4: Socioeconomic Determinants of Women Empowerment

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Marginal Effect	Standard Error	P-Value
Occupation (b: professional)				
Clerical	0.0288	0.026	0.118	0.807
Sales	-0.016	-0.003	0.052	0.757
Services	0.257	0.056***	0.062	0.000
Skilled	0.013	0.002	0.072	0.856
Unskilled	-0.388	-0.859	0.304	0.202
Agriculture	-0.193	-0.042***	0.059	0.001
Employment Status (b: unemployed)				
Employed	0.180	0.039***	0.066	0.006
Residence (b: rural)				
Urban	0.065	0.014**	0.026	0.015
Educational Level (b: no formal education)				
Primary education	0.783	0.173***	0.038	0.000
Secondary education	1.995	0.441***	0.039	0.000
Higher education	3.454	0.764***	0.073	0.000
Geopolitical Zone (b: north central)				
Northeast	-0.349	-0.077***	0.049	0.000
Northwest	-0.430	-0.009	0.045	0.341
Southeast	-0.585	-0.129***	0.045	0.000
South-south	-0.240	-0.053***	0.045	0.000
Southwest	-0.974	-0.021**	0.042	0.022
Marital Status (b: unmarried)				
Married	-0.141	-0.0313**	0.056	0.012

Religion (b: Christian)				
Islam	-0.348	-0.007	0.036	0.341
Traditional	-0.840	-0.186***	0.154	0.000
Household Size (years)	-0.014	-0.003***	0.003	0.000
Age	0.016	0.003***	0.001	0.000
More Earnings	0.027	0.006**	0.011	0.021
Constant	-1.916		0.122	0.000
Number of observations = 17,677				
LR chi ² (22) = 9755.12				
Prob > chi ² = 0.0000				
Log likelihood = -7008.3137				
Pseudo R ² = 0.4104				

Source: Data Analysis, 2024.

Occupation and Women's Empowerment

Services were positively related to women empowerment at $p < 0.01$, rendering services of different forms (being a service provider) increases the probability of women being empowered by 5.6%. However, being into agriculture as a profession was negatively related to women empowerment at 1%, implying that being a farmer hinders the probability of women being empowered by 4.2%. Therefore, women who render services have a higher probability of being empowered while those who farm have a lower probability of being empowered than women in professional lines.

Employment Status and Women's Empowerment

Employment status was positive and significant at $p < 0.01$. Being employed was positively associated with women's empowerment by 3.9%. Meaning that employed women possessed a higher probability of being empowered than the unemployed.

Residence and Women's Empowerment

Furthermore, the sector where women reside was positively associated with women's empowerment at a 5% ($p < 0.05$) level of significance. Therefore, women in the urban sector have a higher probability (1.4%) of being empowered than those in the rural sector.

Educational Level and Women's Empowerment

Concerning education, women's education of various levels significantly ($p < 0.01$) contributed to women's empowerment at 1%. Attaining primary, secondary and a higher level of education increased the probability of women being empowered by 17.3%, 44.1%, and 76.4% points. This depicted that educated women, especially those who had a higher education, have a higher probability of being more empowered than those who had no formal education.

Geopolitical Zone and Women's Empowerment

The region where Nigerian women belong was significant and negatively influenced women's empowerment. Northeast, Southeast, and South-south were associated with 7.7%, 12.9%, and 5.3% reductions in the probabilities of women being empowered respectively, at $p < 0.01$, while the Southwest geopolitical zone was associated with a 2.1% reduction in the probability of women being empowered at $p < 0.05$. These results depict that women in the Northeast, Southeast, South-south, and Southwest of Nigeria have a lower probability of being empowered than Northcentral women. Women in all geopolitical zones of Nigeria have a lower probability of being empowered.

Marital Status and Women's Empowerment

Results indicate further that being married was negatively associated with women's empowerment by 3.1% at $p < 0.05$; married women have lower chances of being empowered when compared with unmarried women. This could be due to the inability of married Nigerian women to make decisions autonomously (Table 2).

Religion and Women's Empowerment

It was found that religion does not encourage women's empowerment in Nigeria. Traditional religion significantly ($p < 0.01$) reduced the probability of women's empowerment by 18.6%. Thus, traditional women possess a lower probability of being empowered when compared with Christian women. This may be because most traditionalists in Nigeria strongly believe in Nigeria's culture of patriarchy which makes women less privileged in some cases.

Household Size and Women's Empowerment

Household size negatively influenced the probability of women empowerment by 0.3%, at $p < 0.01$. This indicates that, for every unit increase in household size, the chances of women being empowered are reduced by 0.3 percent. This could be due to an increase in the load of care of the women as the number of persons, especially dependents, in the household increases. Therefore, the probability of women's empowerment decreases as household size increases.

Age and Women's Empowerment

Women's age positively impacted women's empowerment at $p < 0.01$. Age increases the probability of women's empowerment by 0.3 percent point. The more Nigerian women age, the higher their chances of being empowered. This could be due to the possibility that the woman may be able to embark on empowerment activities as she goes beyond the childbearing age and the number of dependents decreases.

Earning More Than Husband and Women's Empowerment

Results also indicate that earning more than husband was associated with a 0.6% increase in the probability of women's empowerment at $p < 0.05$. Therefore, women who earn more than their husbands stand a higher chance of being empowered than those who do not. This may be attributed to the fact that the majority (84.40%) of the women earn in cash rather than in kind as described in Table 2. Also, earning more than the husband can confer a degree of autonomy in decision-making on issues concerning the household such as purchases and health care as stated in Table 2

Summary of the Findings

This study investigated the socioeconomic determinants of women's empowerment status in Nigeria. The findings indicate that most of the women are in the active stage of life, Muslims/Christians, moderately rich, have a normal household size, married, educated, employed, and reside in the rural sector in all the geopolitical zones in Nigeria, especially the Northwest. Although Nigerian women are employed, they are poorly empowered as the majority do not actively take part in household decision-making or own assets alone. The findings show further that the socioeconomic characteristics of the women highly influence their level of empowerment. Providing services (occupation), being employed, residence (urban), education (especially tertiary), age, and earning more than husband were found to be significantly related to (improves) women empowerment, while being into agriculture business, geopolitical zone, marital status (married), and household size were inversely related to (reduces) women empowerment in Nigeria.

This study is in line with previous research on women's empowerment. Jana and Midya (2023) found a dissatisfying level of women's engagement in decision-making activities at the household level. It was also found that women's age, education, and earning opportunities were correlated with the level of women's involvement in the process of decision-making. Similarly, Okeke and Onyishi (2020) found that both the individual-level and organizational-level factors, specifically, education, income, organizational culture, and leadership experience contributed to women's involvement in a leadership setting at the individual level. Also, a study by Yemenu (2020) depicted a low level of women's engagement in leadership positions which was attributed to societal, institutional, and individual factors that hinder women's decision-making abilities.

5. Contributions, Conclusion and Recommendations

The Study's Contributions

Recently, women's empowerment has been a topic of several debates across the globe as it is directly related to gender-based issues, which various agencies have been addressing so far. This study aims to contribute effectively to the ongoing conversation and add to the existing body of knowledge. The study aligns with the

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, which is to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation to promote gender equality and empower women and girls at all levels. Also, policymakers, organizations, and advocates can utilize the findings to design targeted interventions and policies aimed at promoting women's empowerment.

Conclusion

Concerning the results of this study, it can be deduced that Nigerian women are educated, not very poor, but are poorly empowered, which is attributed to their inability to make household decisions that could elevate their level of empowerment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Awareness programs should be organized about the importance of women's involvement in decision-making both at the household level and in society.
- Government and NGOs should strive more for gender equality and empower women to reach their full potential.
- The Government should focus more on investing more resources in entrepreneurship programs for women, especially in rural areas.
- To ensure judicious resource utilization, any women's empowerment program should be monitored and followed up.

Suggestions for Further Research

Using secondary data, this study investigated socioeconomic factors influencing women's empowerment in Nigeria. Further research could explore the organizational factors that influence women's empowerment through a case study, utilizing primary data to provide greater flexibility in gathering essential information. Further research could also assess the impact of various empowerment programs on women's empowerment status.

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