SIGNIFICANT PREDICTORS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN FARMERS ORGANISATIONS IN AKWA IBOM , NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

For the numerous and diverse local organisations in Nigeria's rural areas to effectively participate in agricultural and rural development programmes, they have to be better organised and empowered through active and broad based membership participation. The study attempted to identify significant predictors of level of social capital in the farmers' l organisations (FOs) operating in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Results derived from 225 members of 15 FOs reveal that 7 factors significantly predicted the level of social participation, viz: status of respondent, age of respondent, ages of respondents' children, number of years of FO affiliation, multiple group membership, mode of generation of funds for FO activities and relationship of FO member with information source for affiliation. Status and age of respondents; however contributed about 65% of the variations in level of social participation. Recommendations have been proffered for the development of member – driven FOs. These include the necessity to encourage FO leadership to be more proactive in new membership recruitment activities and to emphasize on innovative measures to economically empower FO affiliates, for more active inputs into FO operations.

Keywords: Akwa Ibom State **,** Social Capital, Farmers' Organizations, Nigeria, Significant Predictors

INTRODUCTION

The African small scale farmer has remained the Central focus of development efforts, based on the belief that policies targeting them are likely to impact massively on both food production and poverty alleviation. It has also been

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stated that beneficiary participation is crucial to the success of Agricultural and rural development programmes and projects (Akpabio 2005). With regard to small farmers' they are more easily mobilized and motivated to participate in development programmes through the formation of appropriate functional and broad based local organizations, through which their views are more easily articulated and cohered for effective action (Akpabio 2005). In essence, membership driven groups have a greater tendency to be more organised and therefore possess the potential capacity to make positive contributions to development efforts (GTZ, 1996). This brings to fore, the issue of social capital. This is a concept which Gillinson (2004) described as the value of local networks and the ways in which they make our lives more productive. It is the stock of shared understanding, norms, rules and expectations that groups bring to a recurrent activity which produces a flow of future income (Gatzweiller, 2002) In the views of Putnam (2000) social capital is the connections between individuaals (in a group relationship) and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. Social capital in local groups, which is viewed in terms of active and critical participation by group members in group activities, (Howes, 1992) confers organizational ability, which in turn confers strength and empowerment which are pre-requisites for taking action (Akpabio, 2005)

A lot of farmers' organizations (FOs) exist in sub-Saharan Africa but Arokoyo (1998) and Francis et al (1996) specifically pointed out that most west Africa countries, including Nigeria, are very weak in terms of popular grassroots organizations. Grootaert (1998) lamented that the situation is compounded by the fact that no attempts are being made to develop social capital at the community level, all over the world. A lot of FOs exists in the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State and their inputs are being fervently sought to help improve development programmes organized by government and international NGOs and which are targeted at rural farmers. Arising from the above, it has become imperative to invest in strengthening the capacity of the myriad of FOs dotted all over the study area. A first step in this regard was taken by Akpabio (2005) who determined the level of social membership participation in Akwa Ibom based FOs. It was reported that FO members achieved an average level of social participation in Akwa Ibom based FOs

Against this background, it becomes pertinent to ascertain significant predictors of social capital in FOs. Findings from this study are expected to help determine means of recruiting and sustaining FO membership interest, in order to enhance concerted action in furtherance of sustained agricultural and overall rural development. This study was therefore conceived to ascertain significant predictors to social capital formation in the FOs located in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

METHODS

The study was undertaken in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The State has a high but relatively homogenous population density of between 285 – 400 persons per square kilometre. The state is also equipped with a young, educated and vibrant population who are largely homogeneous in socio-psychological characteristics. Historically, the first socio-political organization in Nigeria, the Ibibio State Union, was founded in the state in 1928.

The universe for this study was all the 76 viable, officially registered FOs in the State. A multi-stage sampling procedure was thereafter utilized to select 225 FO members from 15 FOs. Requisite information was collected from respondents with the aid of a structured and validated Interview Schedule, consisting of closed-ended questions, based on the objectives of the study. Data analysis was with the aid of both descriptive and inferential statistics like; Chi-squared, Pearson Products Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression.

Independent variables for this study were grouped into: (i) characteristics of FOs and (ii) characteristics of FO members. The dependent variable was level of social capital, which was measured in terms of seven elements, viz; duration of membership, attendance at meetings, financial and material contributions, recruitment of fresh membership, participation in FO projects, committee membership and official position held in FOs. An individual's total level of social capital (SC) score was obtained by the summation of respondent's responses to different questions raised on the aforementioned elements and to which different weights had been assigned. Respondents were thereafter categorized into; high, average and low levels of SC

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Correlation Relationship between Factors Affecting Social Capital and Level of Social Capital

Table 1 reveals that 5 of the 16 independent variables involved in the analysis recorded significant and positive correlation coefficients with level of social capital. These were: status of respondents ($r = 0.78$, $p = 0.01$); number of years spent in FO ($r = 0.27$, $p = 0.001$); number of other local association's affiliation ($r = 0.27$, $p = 0.001$); age of respondent ($r = 0.21$, $p = 0.01$); ages of respondents' children ($r = 0.21$, $p = 0.01$). These findings are as analyzed below;

Status of Respondent

The revelation that "status of respondent" correlates significantly with SC level may be due to the fact that an FO executive has a higher stake in ensuring success and eventual sustenance of his or her local group. In essence, it may be

implied that an FO that distributes executive positions among a majority of its members will attract a high SC level.

Number of Years Spent in FO

Table 1 reveals that higher SC levels accrue to individuals with a relatively longer period of FO affiliation. It may be noted that individuals do not affiliate without expectations of some social, psychological or material reward. That is why Shingi and Bluhm (1987) reported that an individual seeks and retains membership of any group that makes it possible for him/her to actualize his/her expectations. The individual also becomes deeply involved in the group's operations and activities, in order to sustain such benefits. It may therefore be implied that individuals with relatively long periods of FO affiliation are assumed to be exposed to some form of benefit s and are more likely to participate more effectively in group activities and procedures.

Number of other Local Associations' Affiliation

It is epicted on Table 1, that FO members with multiple group membership participate more actively in FO activities and operations. Bebbington et al (1994) argued on the inevitability of multiple group membership, based on the multiplicity of rural needs and which a single organisation cannot solve. This trend is in consonance with Reddy and Horton's (1973) finding of "a higher level of SC for individuals already involved in some other voluntary activities". It may be inferred that individuals with multiple group membership, extend knowledge derived from other associations, into the activities and operations of the local organisation under focus. This attitude is expected to enhance FO effectiveness and subsequent sustainability.

Age of Respondent and Ages of Respondents' Children

Age of respondent and ages of respondent's children were shown on Table 1 to record positive and significant correlations with SC level. These findings assume relevance when compared with available literature. Adeyeye (1991) affirmed that the older the male or female participant, the higher the level of their participation in group (especially farming) activities. With regard to ages of children, Reddy and Horton (1973) also posited that the older the children of participants, the higher the level of SC. These findings may be attributed to the reasons that, an older individual is expected to be more focussed in his/her desires and would not affiliate for mere fun. The individual therefore ensures that the purpose of affiliation is achieved through increased participation in group activities. On the other hand too, parents with older children are relieved of some filial responsibilities and may therefore be able to devote more time to the achievement of set objectives, using FOs as a bridge. From these findings therefore, it may be implied that relatively older individuals with older children, are more liable to achieve higher levels of SC in FOs.

Chi-square Analysis for Factors Affecting Level of Social Capital in FOs

Table 2 displays the association between some factors affecting social capital and level of SC of FO members. According to the table only two variables significantly predicted the level of SC of members in FO activities and operations. These variables are: relationship of FO members with information source for affiliation ($X^2 = 21.50$, $p < 0.05$) and mode of generation of funds by FOs ($X^2 = 39.39$, $p < 0.05$). These findings are as analyzed below:

Mode of Generation of Funds

Table 2 reveals a significant association between mode of generation of funds for FO activities and level of SC. An earlier finding (Akpabio, 2005) had reported the revelation that more than 50% FOs generated operational funds from members' donations, pledges, levies and dues. It may be inferred therefore that a higher level of SC occurs in FOs with internally generated revenue sources. This particular view had been earlier upheld by the World Bank's (1996) declaration that most successful groups are those in which a larger proportion of lending capital is derived from group members' savings. Esman and Uphoff (1984) had also posited that local resources generation inhibits free ridership and also reduces cases of fund embezzlement and failure to repay financial loan packages. It may be finally inferred that FOs that derive the bulk of their material and financial resources from members and within their operating environment, attract higher levels of SC from their members, because of membership desire to safeguard their investments.

Relationship of Respondent with Information Source for FO Affiliation

Table 2 also depicts a significant association between FO membership relationship with information source for affiliation and level of SC. An earlier report (Akpabio, 2005) had revealed a research result that 61.5% respondents claimed to have become more aware and subsequently affiliated with the FOs under focus, due to information and prodding from friends and/or relations. It may therefore be inferred that FO members who affiliated through information derived from friends and/or relations, participate more actively in FLO operations and activities. This result concurs with Reddy and Horton's (1973) assertion that "personal relationship is a triggering factor in the voluntary participation of most people. In essence, most people become deeply involved in social activities because of a social acquaintance that they can trust to provide factual information on the true functional status of a group. In conclusion therefore, individuals involved in recruitment into FOs are advised to focus on their acquaintances, who may be more easily convinced to affiliate, based on interpersonal relationship.

Multiple Regression Analysis for Significant Predictors of Level of Social Capital

Multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine the percentage contribution of each of the seven identified significant predictors, to level of social capital. Table 3 shows that only two variables made significant percentage contributions to level of social capital. These are; status of respondent ($B = 15.31$, $p < 0.01$) and age of respondent ($B = 1.57$, $p < 0.05$). it may thus be inferred that "status of respondent" and "age of respondent" are the two variables, prominent in explaining the variation in level of SC of FO members based in Akwa Ibom State. Altogether, according to table 5 these two variables have a joint correlation of 0.81. The R^2 value also suggests that these two variables explain approximately 65 percent of the variations in level of SC leaving the other 35% to the remaining 5 factors and other factors not included in the equation. The table of analysis of variance (Table 4) also reveals that since calculated F value is higher than the table value, it may be concluded that the regression coefficients are real and did not occur by chance. It may therefore be inferred that relatively older individuals, occupying positions of responsibility participate more actively in the operations and activities of focal FOs. By implication then, FOs will become more effective if efforts are targeted at recruiting relatively older individuals, and if efforts are geared towards distributing responsibilities more broadly among FO members.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the deplorable trend of failed agricultural and rural development initiatives in our rural areas, the numerous diverse local organisations in our rural areas would have to be better organized and empowered in terms of active and critical participation by members. This will facilitate a sustained level of human and physical development of our rural communities. This study was therefore an attempt to identify the membership related and organizational factors that may significantly predict level of social capital in the activities and operations of farmers organisations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Results revealed that seven variables significantly predicted FO membership level of social capital. These were: status of respondent; age of respondent; ages of respondents' children and number of years of FO membership affiliation. Other significant predictors included, multiple group affiliation; mode of generation of funds for FO activities and relationship of FO member with information source for affiliation. It was also revealed however that, both status of respondent and age of respondent contributed approximately 65% of the variations in level of social participation. It may therefore be concluded that effective social participation will occur in FOs that will: engage in a broader distribution of responsibilities among its members; target for recruitment, relatively older

individuals, with multiple group membership and focus on internally generated revenue as main funding sources.

The findings of this research have profound implications for broad policy formulations aimed at enhancing and sustaining social participation in FOs. The following recommendations are worthy of consideration:

FO executives should be pro-active in conducting recruitment drives because they are believed to be more credible and are more committed to ensuring club success. In instances where ordinary FO members embark on recruitment exercises, FO leaders should provide back-up services –through personal calls and visits. Targets for recruitment should include: friends and relations (because they are more easily convinced than strangers); relatively older adults with older children (because they are more focused and their children may be left alone without supervision for a reasonable period of time); and individuals already involved in at least one other local association (because they bring experiences from other associations to improve on the services of their new organization).

Sustainable group development is predicated on sustainable economic development. FOs are advised to embark on measures to economically empower its affiliates by encouraging them to diversify their agro-enterprises. Leadership positions within FOs should be made to rotate among the broad spectrum of longer serving members. This will ensure greater commitment to group success and sustenance by a greater number of members.

Non-Governmental and Governmental organizations should be proactive in enhancing the capacity of FOs to mobilize their own resource and other resources within their environment before supplementing their efforts with grants, credits and donations, etc. This process ensures probity and accountability.

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Table 1: Correlation Matrix Showing Relationship between Some Factors Affecting Social Participation and Levels of Social Participation of FLO Affiliates

Factors Affecting Social Participation	X_1	X_2	X_3	X_4	X_5	X_6	X_7	X_8	X_9	X_{10}	X_{11}	X_{12}	X_{13}	X_{14}	X_{15}	X_{16}	Level of Participation
Status (X_1)	1.00																
Age (X_2)	0.05	1.00															
Household Size (X_3)	0.16	0.32**	1.00														
No. of Children (X_4)	0.15	0.34**	0.58**	1.00													
No. of relatives (X_5)	0.18*	0.24**	0.65**	0.29	1.00												
Educational Level (X_6)	0.07	0.0003	-0.22**	-0.09	-0.10	1.00											
Monthly Income (X_7)	0.12	-0.05	-0.01	0.06	0.12	0.23**	1.00										
Farm Size (X_8)	0.10	0.13	-0.01	0.08	0.03	0.02	0.30**	1.00									
Yearly Farm Income (X_9)	0.09	-0.01	0.06	-0.04	0.08	0.12	0.25**	0.30**	1.00								
Prop of Income from farm (X_{10})	0.03	-0.01	-0.014	-0.16	-0.14	-0.22**	-0.16	0.33**	0.25**	1.00							
Cosmopoliteness (X_{11})	0.16	0.02	0.18*	-0.07	0.03	0.53**	0.34**	0.30**	0.30**	0.11	1.00						
Years in FLO (X_{12})	0.24**	0.23**	0.20*	0.12	0.26**	0.04	-0.02	-0.07	-0.10	-0.04	-0.01	1.00					
No. of other associations affiliation (X_{13})	0.36**	0.14	0.14	0.12	0.18*	0.16	0.15	0.09	-0.02	-0.07	0.15	0.18	1.00				
Attitude (X_{14})	0.30	0.03	-0.10	-0.07	0.01	0.13	0.02	0.14	0.05	-0.08	0.03	0.04	-0.09	1.00			
No. of associations in community (X_{15})	-0.09	-0.15	0.05	-0.03	0.03	0.30**	0.05	-0.002	0.24**	-0.19*	0.33**	0.09	0.14	-0.14	1.00		
Ages of Children (X_{16})	-0.17	0.47**	0.39	0.40**	0.26**	-0.36**	0.16	-0.13	0.07	0.17	0.15	0.04	0.03	0.89	0.16	1.00	
Level of Participation	0.78**	0.21**	0.15	0.12	0.13	0.08	0.07	0.09	0.04	-0.05	0.14	0.27**	0.27**	0.06	-0.05	0.21*	1.00

* = Significant at 0.01 level
** = Significant at 0.001 level
Source: Based on Field Survey 2006

Table 2: Summary of Tests of Relationship Between Factors Affecting Social Participation and Level of Social Participation of FLO Members, Using Chi-Square Analysis

Title of Table	Xc	df	p	Xt	C	Remarks
Mode of entry and exit	5.77	8	0.05	15.51	0.67	NS
Sex	2.20	2	0.05	5.99	0.33	NS
Marital status	12.40	8	0.05	15.51	0.13	NS
Church attended	0.75	4	0.05	9.49	0.95	NS
Primary occupation	3.42	6	0.05	12.59	0.75	NS
Secondary occupation	16.67	10	0.05	18.31	0.08	NS
Land acquisition mode	23.12	20	0.05	31.41	0.28	NS
Types of crop planted	4.04	4	0.05	9.49	0.40	NS
Assistance given to FLOs	4.16	14	0.05	23.68	0.60	NS
Mode of relaxation	8.07	6	0.05	12.59	0.23	NS
Cosmopliteness	12.49	8	0.05	15.51	0.86	NS
Mode of funds generation	39.39	8	0.05	15.51	0.02*	S
Number of years in community	4.87	6	0.05	12.59	0.56	NS
Initiation of efforts to form FLO	4.75	6	0.05	12.59	0.58	NS
Mode of obtaining information	7.37	10	0.05	18.31	0.69	NS
Relationship with information source	21.50	10	0.05	18.31	0.02*	S
Amount in FLO purse	2.40	10	0.05	18.31	0.99	NS
Frequency of visits by eternal bodies	9.64	6	0.05	12.59	0.14	NS
Contributions to community development	6.76	4	0.05	9.49	0.23	NS
Linkage mechanism	9.29	6	0.05	12.59	0.16	NS
Mode of taking decision	10.04	8	0.05	15.51	0.26	NS
Quality of life before affiliation	15.45	8	0.05	15.51	0.12	NS
Quality of life after affiliation	5.65	2	0.05	5.99	0.06	NS

Notes

Xc = Calculated values of chi-square
df = Degree of freedom
P = Level of confidence
Xt = Table value of chi-square
C = Coefficient of contingency
S = Significant
NS = Not significant
Remarks = Relationship is regarded as significant when Xc > Xt
Source: Statistical analysis based on field survey, 2006.

Table 3: Variables In The Regression Analysis

Variables		B	SEB	Beta	T	Sig T
Mode of funds generation	0.48	1.00	0.021	0.481	0.63	
No. of other groups affiliation	0.27	0.52	0.023	0.530	0.60	
Relationship with information source	1.13	0.57	0.084	1.984	0.05	
No. of years spent in FLO	0.78	0.76	0.044	1.026	0.31	
Age of respondent	1.57	0.49	0.150	3.205	0.002	
Status of respondent	15.31	0.96	0.731	16.034	0.000	
Ages of children	0.21	0.40	0.026	0.532	0.60	
Constant	-3.87	3.00		-1.289	0.20	

Source: Statistical analysis (2004)

Thus, the linear model for predicting the level of social participation in FLO in the stud area is

$$Y = -3.87 + 1.57X_4$$
$$(-1.29) \quad (16.03) \quad (3.21)$$

Note: (Figs. In parentheses are calculated T values

Table 4: Analysis of Multiple Regression of Factors Affecting Level of Social Participation in FLOs

Source of variation	Degree of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean square	*F value*
Regression	7	11241.18	1605.88	75.58**
Residential	217	6052.35	27.89	-
Total	225	17293.53	-	-

Multiple Regression Coefficient = 0.81

Standard error = 5.28

R^2 = 0.65

** = Sig. at 0.01