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**MICROFINANCE BANKS INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND
POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The paper examined the relationship between microfinance banks investment promotion and poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status among the people in Cross River State, Nigeria. One null hypothesis was formulated in the study. The survey research design was adopted and data were collected from 572 randomly selected respondents. Data were statistically analyzed using chi-square test statistic at 0.01 significant level. The result revealed that a significant association exist between promotion of investment and poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status among the people in Cross River State. The paper recommended that microfinance banks should educate their customers on investments that will improve their level of income, that will turn reduces poverty and improved their health, education of their children and social status. The study concluded that investment promotion is a significant predictor of poverty alleviation by improving access to health, educational services and social status.

Keywords: Microfinance, microfinance banks, poverty alleviation, promotion of investment, Cross River State

1. Introduction

Poverty is a global phenomenon that affects both developed, developing and underdeveloped nations. Although, the level of poverty differs between countries depending on their development status, poverty is seen as an undesired state or condition where individuals or groups cannot afford the basic necessity(ies) of life. Poor people are subjected to total deprivation from opportunities, employment and security. Therefore, poverty has a multi-dimensional effect on the life of the individual or group. Poverty can lead to deprivation, which makes it difficult for the poor to afford to participate in many socially vital activities, for instance, the poor lack the opportunities to work, due to their low income as an obstacle to acquire skills through education. Education is necessary for a better employment opportunity that will guide against low income; inability to afford medical services makes the poor to suffer from health hazards with the attendant inability to afford drugs` for any diseases. Therefore, poor health may prevent the people from taking advantages of opportunity to work, to learn and to participate in society. Similarly, the poor is mostly found living in slumps and disadvantaged neighbourhood. In such settlements, the poor condition tends to have negative impact on the socio-economic life of the inhabitants (Aliyu & Umaru, 2016; Alozie, 2017). Reversing this condition through poverty alleviation may be possible; this has been a serious concern in developing countries.

Poverty alleviation has been an impending challenges to development strategies for now. Among the identified challenges that the very poor face includes not having access to funds within the formal sector making them not taking advantage of opportunities which abound in the economy towards increasing the output and bettering their livelihood, therefore living above poverty. The issue of increasing poverty, alongside problems which come with it, is a great concern in Nigeria. The poverty level has

been increasing for years now within Nigeria. For example, poverty index heightened from 27 per cent in 1980 to 46 per cent in 1985; it declined slightly to 42 per cent in 1992 and increased very sharply to 67 per cent in 1996, the figure has consistently hovered around 70 per cent between 2000 and 2010, and it declined to about 50 per cent in 2018 (IMF, 2018). Poverty for long has been a major contending force against the pace of development in Nigeria especially the rural areas. It has remained persistently unabated despite many programmes designed to alleviate it (World Bank, 2013).

Microfinance presently made entrepreneurs to unlocked the ambitions of the rural poor. Equally, lead to creation as well as sustaining new income generation moves among rural entrepreneurs and subsistence farmers with the aim of making themselves reliance and independent in order to alleviate poverty (Owolabi, 2015). While microfinance has been accompanied by significant impact in other environments, there is dearth of literature on its positive influence on localities within Cross River State, Nigeria. Thus, the present research work examined the potential of microfinance banks to boost socio-economic wellbeing of the people of Cross River State.

The poor and low income families require credit delivery through promotion of investment by microfinance which could lead to “creation of employment opportunities and increase their level of income which in turn alleviate poverty and improve their social status as well as fund their lifecycle needs, via improved healthcare needs, educational needs of their children, better housing, and increase choices in dietary needs and improvement in their knowledge and methods of enterprise (Ibrahim, 2013)”. With reference to this background, this study seeks to find out if microfinance banks services have the potentials for poverty alleviation in terms of fostering investment opportunity in Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. Statement of the problem

Poverty remains a major concern in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Cross River State, Nigeria, a large part of its population is affected by poverty which may be the underlining factor for the involvement in street crime, substance abuse, internet fraud, armed robbery, ritual killings, kidnapping and other social and public health concerns. According to World Bank Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report (2017) Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the World where the total number of extremely poor people consistently rise after over 41% of total population (Muller-Jung, 2018).

Therefore, poverty reduction is an important challenge in Cross River State, Nigeria. Poverty is highly correlated with many negative measurable aspects of standards of living. Reducing poverty can have a positive impact on the lives of the people. Several government poverty alleviation programme have not achieved significant results in terms of improvement in healthy education and social status. It is assured that microfinance bank, the private sector has an important role to play in its investment promotion goals.

3. Objectives of the study

The paper investigated promotion of investment through microfinance banks services and poverty alleviation in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, it:

- i) Determine how promotion of investment opportunity alleviates poverty in respect to improved health, education and social status among the people in Cross River State.

4. Research hypotheses

- i) Promotion of investment has no significant association with poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status among the people in Cross River State.

5. Literature review

Microfinance banks play significant role in reducing poverty on the active poor (their clients) through promotion of investment as a result of credit delivery which leads to creation of employment opportunities and increase in their level of their income as well as improved health, education and social status of their customers which in turn alleviate or reduce poverty among them. Microfinance banks services in terms of promotion of investment have help in alleviating or reducing poverty and improving standard of living of their client (Aliyu & Umaru, 2016).

Akinlo and Oni (2012) cited in Uyang (2019) revealed that more than 70 per cent of the customers of microfinance banks in terms of microcredit facility were able to have access to good things of life which showed that their status have improved and it is an indication of poverty alleviation. Akinlo and Oni (2012) cited in Uyang (2019) further found that microfinance banks played great role in reducing poverty in terms of the standard of living of their customers, help them in planning and expanding their business activities through promotion of investment by the provision of microcredit loans.

According to Alozie (2017), cited in Uyang, Abanbeshie, Omono and Aboh (2021), microfinance banks have been able to alleviate poverty among their clients as credits granted are expanded by beneficiary(ies) thus improving the level of income through promotion of investment and moving them out of poverty line. Alani and Sani cited in Uyang (2019) studied the effects of microfinance banks services in promotion of investment such as agricultural sector development with reference to semi-financial institutions in Tanzania. Their study used descriptive and regression analysis and showed that despite the fact that rural microfinancial institutions in Tanzania are new and operate in a difficult environment, they played very significant roles in agricultural

sector development in the area of promotion of investment. Microfinance facility is seen as a tool for poverty reduction and empowerment through promotion of investment. It places little emphasis on the financial sustainability or profitability of microfinancial institutions but focus on the promotion of investment of their poor active customers and extreme poor to help them escape from poverty (Owolabi, 2015).

Asemelash (2004) cited in Uyang (2019) carried out a study in Ethiopia on the impact of microfinance in Ethiopia: The case of DCSI in Ganta Afeshum Woreda of Eastern Tigray, the study showed that microfinance had positive impact on the poor. The result also showed that microfinance led to increased income for the poor through promotion of investment. Chuks (2007) cited in Uyang (2019) indicated that microfinance credit through promotion of investment strengthens human capital of inducing investment in health, enterprise, education and literacy, etc. which enhances poverty reduction. The findings are consistent with Ibrahim (2013) who argued that the poor and low income families need promotion of investment through microfinance banks to fund their lifecycle needs, through improved healthcare needs, educational needs of their children, better housing and methods of enterprise.

Microfinance banks services including promotion of investment enable the poor and low income households to take advantage of economic opportunities, build assets, and reduce their vulnerability to external shocks that adversely affect their standards of living (Ihugba, Bankong & Ebomuche, 2016). Poverty reduction improves the quality of life of the people and provides them with the means to acquire and maintain their basic needs. This is achieving through promotion of investment by microfinance banks in terms of promoting the poor economic capacity and bringing

sustainable development (Ashamu & Ogundina, 2015).

Idowu and Oyeleye (2012) cited in Uyang (2019), averred that promotion of investment is one of the services provided by microfinance banks. They maintained that microfinance banks through promotion of investment of their customers by granting them access to credit has positive effect in terms of better access to education, health care and improved social status which in turn alleviate poverty among the poor. Access to microfinance institutions services such as access to credit facility translates into huge social benefits, including improved health (better nutrition, better living conditions, and preventive health practices, higher immunization rates), increased educational participation (children of microfinance clients are more likely to go to school, and dropout rates of these students are lower than average); and greater (increased confidence and assertiveness, increased participation in household and community decision-making (Hubka & Zaidi, 2005; cited in Uyang, 2019; Uyang, Abanbeshie, Omono & Aboh, 2021).

Owolabi (2015) submitted that microfinance banks provide a series of financial business education, health and social empowerment programmes through the promotion of investment of their clients. Ojua, Tiku and Agbor (2014) admitted that access to credit facility of microfinance banks improves the income of the beneficiaries. They admitted further that increase in beneficiary's income through promotion of investment of the clients of microfinance banks translates into improvement in the living conditions of their households. They opined that improvement is also evident in school enrollment, food and clothing for the family, access to decent accommodation and utilization of health care services. Girigiri (2002) cited in Uyang (2019) noted that a significant association exist

between promotion of investment through microfinance institutions and poverty alleviation in rural areas. For him, promotion of investment helps clients of microfinance institutions out of their economic conditions and improved their health, education of their children as well as change their status which is an indices of poverty alleviation.

6. Theoretical framework

Functionalist theory

The functionalist perspective, also called functionalism is one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology associated with Herbert Spencer, Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Robert Merton, Talcott Parsons (Charles, 2010 cited in Uyang, 2019). According to functionalism, society is a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole. The theory sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability (De Rosso, 2012 cited in Uyang, 2019). It looks at society through a macro-level orientation which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole and believe that society has evolved like organisms (De Rosso, 2012 cited in Uyang, 2019). This approach looks at both social structure and social functions. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements, namely, norms, customs, traditions and institutions. These parts of society are organs that work toward the proper functioning of the society as a whole.

This theory has relevance for this study. This is because functionalists generally believe institutions in the society perform positive functions (they do good things for the individual and society). The microfinance bank is an identifiable economic structure. Its major goals are its contribution towards meeting societal needs of poverty reduction. The emergence of micro finance banks and its continuous existence is explained in terms of its vital

contribution to the maintenance (function) of the rural and urban communities of Cross River State. The banks exist to meet both social and economic needs in the society.

The provision and accessibility to credit facility and promotion of investment are the specific structures through which microfinance banks perform the function of poverty alleviation. These are considered in a systemic manner. The nature of credit facility has an impact on improving income level and promotion of investment has the propensity to bring about improvement in health, education and social status of the people.

7. Methods

The research design adopted for the study was survey. A questionnaire was designed based on the variable drawn from the study. Cross River is the study area with a population of 3,866,300 (National Population Census and National Bureau of Statistics Estimation, 2016). Cross River State is grouped into three senatorial districts. They are Northern Senatorial District, Central Senatorial District and Southern Senatorial District with 18 Local Government Areas. The study adopted the multi-stage sampling procedures. The state was stratified along the existing three senatorial districts. These three (3) senatorial districts constituted the three strata of the study. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select one third (1/3rd) of the local government areas per major stratum. The breakdown of the Senatorial Districts indicated that the South has 7 LGAs, the central has 6 LGAs while the North has 5 LGAs. The total number of LGAs in the Senatorial District is 18. Thus, represented strata 1, 2 and 3 respectively. One third of the local government areas translates to 2 local government areas per stratum. This yielded to 6 LGAs. These constituted the 6 minor strata.

Systematic sampling technique was adopted to select the actual respondents of the study. This was used to select between 115 and 97

respondents from village/ward (cluster). It involved the enumeration of households in each village or community or wards or street as usually done during census (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,8, 9, 10 etc.). The researchers systematically selected respondents from even-numbered households. This process yielded 600 respondents who participated in the study. Only one adult male or female in a particular household was qualified for the study. Since minor stratum A was Calabar Municipality and being the Cross River State headquarters, the number of beneficiaries identified were more. Altogether 115 respondents were involved in minor stratum, For the rest of the remaining 5 minor strata, 97 respondents were involved. Therefore, a total of 600 respondents (participants) participated in the quantitative study. This sample size was considered appropriate for generalization. The administration of the research instrument was done by the researchers together with five (5)

assistants. These research assistants underwent a-two-day training on data collection. The study started in November 2022 and was completed in March 2023. Data derived from the administration of the questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentages and chi-square statistical test. The percentages were used to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in the study, while chi-square statistical test was used to test the hypothesis formulated for the study.

8. Results and discussion

For this study, a total of 600 copies of questionnaire were distributed while 572 were returned. The analysis was therefore based on 572 questionnaires retrieved from the field and at 0.01 significant level. The sociodemographic statistics of respondents was examined first before testing the hypothesis drawn for the study.

TABLE 1 Distribution of respondents

	No of respondent	Per centage of respondent
Age bracket		
25 – 30 years	251	43.88
31 – 35 years	192	33.56
36 - 40 years	76	13.28
41 – 45 years	27	4.72
46 – 50 years	19	3.34
50+ years	7	1.22
Marital status		
Single	312	55.22
Married	224	39.65
Divorced	21	3.72
Widowed	8	1.41
LGA		
Akamkpa	95	16.61
Calabar Municipal	111	19.40
Ikom	97	16.96
Obubra	91	15.91
Obudu	93	16.26
Ogoja	85	14.86
Religion		
Christianity	481	95.06
ATR	6	1.19
Islam	19	3.75
Occupation		
Farming	211	36.89
Fishing	82	14.33
Trading	120	20.98
Civil service	128	22.38
Unemployed	21	3.67
Others	10	1.75
Education		
Primary	98	17.13
Secondary	136	23.78
Tertiary	309	54.02
Informal	29	5.07
Income		
Less than N50,000	166	29.02
N51,000 – N100,000	231	40.39
N101,000 – N200,000	98	17.13
N201,000 – N300,000	52	9.09
Above N300,000	25	4.37
Sources of capital		
Credit facility from Microfinance	357	62.41
Credit facility from Coop. society	198	34.61
Payment transfer	17	2.97
Sources of income per month		
Profit from trading	120	20.98
Profit from fishing	81	14.16
Profit from enterprises	41	7.17
Salary	128	22.38

Profit from agriculture	192	33.56
Other investment	10	1.75
No of children		
None	167	29.20
1 – 2	232	40.56
3 – 5	143	25.00
6+	30	5.24

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 1 indicates the socio demographic data of respondents. The distribution indicated that 251 respondents representing 43.88 per cent of the total respondents were between the ages of 25 and 30 years, 192 respondents representing 33.56 per cent were between the ages of 31 and 35 years, 76 respondents representing 13.28 per cent were between the ages of 36 and 40 years, 27 respondents were aged between 41 and 45 years while 19 respondents representing 3.34 per cent were between the age bracket of 46 and 50 and seven respondents representing 1.22 per cent were above 50 years.

Among the respondents, 312 representing 55.22 per cent were single, 224 respondents representing 39.65 per cent were married, 21 respondents representing 3.72 per cent were divorced and eight respondents were widowed. Also, the distribution showed that 95 respondents representing 16.61 per cent were resident in Akamkpa, 111 respondents representing 19.40 per cent were resident in Calabar Municipal, 97 respondents representing 16.96 per cent were residing at Ikom, 91 respondents were in Obubra, 93 respondents in Obudu and 85 respondents representing 14.86 per cent were resident in Ogoja Local Government Area. With regard to religion, 481 respondents representing 95.05 per cent were Christians, 6 and 19 respondents respectively belonged to African traditional religion and Islam.

Also, the distribution showed that 211 respondents representing 36.89 per cent were farmers, 82 respondents representing 24.33 per cent were fishermen/women, 120 respondents

representing 20.98 per cent were traders, 128 respondents representing 22.38 per cent were civil servants, 21 respondents were unemployed and other categories not listed were 10 respondents. The distribution further showed that 98 respondents out of 572 had primary education as their highest educational qualification, 136 respondents representing 23.78 per cent had secondary education, 309 respondents representing 54.02 had tertiary education and 29 respondents had no formal education. The monthly income levels of the respondents were: 166 respondents representing 29.02 per cent earned below N50,000, 231 respondents representing 40.39 per cent earned between N51,000 and N100,000, 98 respondents representing 17.13 per cent had their monthly earnings between N101,000 and N200,000 while 52 respondents earned between N201,000 and N300,000 and 25 respondents representing 4.37 per cent eamed above N300,000 monthly.

For sources of capital, the Table indicated that 357 respondents representing 62.41 per cent stressed that their source of capital was credit facility from microfinance, 198 respondents representing 34.61 indicated credit facility from cooperative society while the remaining 17 respondents indicated payment transfer as their source of capital. With regard to sources of income per month, the distribution showed that 120 respondents representing 20.98 indicated profit from trading, 81 respondents representing 14.16 per cent indicated profit from fishing, 41 respondents representing 7.17 indicated profit from enterprises, 128 respondents indicated that their source of monthly income was salary, 192 respondents representing 33.56 per cent

indicated profit from agricultural activities and 10 respondents indicated other investments as sources of their monthly income. The respondents also indicated the number of children they have; 167 respondents representing 29.20 per cent had no children, 232

Table 2 Descriptive statistics

respondents representing 40.56 per cent had children between one and two, 143 respondents representing 25 per cent had three to five children while 30 respondents had six and above children representing 5.24 percent.

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Error
Promotion of investment and poverty alleviation								
Credit delivery and invest. opport.	572	1.48	.500	.250	.084	.102	-2.000	.204
Access to credit and standard of living	572	1.52	.500	.250	-.084	.102	-2.000	.204
Microcredit and poverty reduction	572	1.69	.464	.215	-.809	.102	-1.350	.204
credit invest and human capital dev	572	1.65	.477	.228	-.632	.102	-1.606	.204
Microfinance assist and life cycle needs	572	1.65	.478	.229	-.616	.102	-1.626	.204
Microfinance assist and cust' bus exp	572	1.64	.480	.230	-.592	.102	-1.655	.204
Investment in agric and food security	572	1.47	.499	.249	.134	.102	-1.989	.204
Valid N (listwise)	572							

Sources: SPSS Output

Table 2 showed the descriptive statistics of the survey. The distribution described the statistical structure of the data collated for the survey. Generally, N represent the number of respondent that reacted to items, the mean is the average response of the respondents, the standard deviation indicated the deviation of the respondents from the mean while skewness and kiertosis indicated the shape of the data in terms of peak. The table indicated that the items were all responded to, hence N = 572. The variables promotion of investment and poverty alleviation have the following sub items: credit delivery and investment opportunities (N = 572, mean = 1.48, standard deviation 0.500, variance = 0.250, skewness = 0.084 and kurtosis = -2.000); access to credit and standard of living (N = 572, mean = 1.52, standard deviation 0.500, variance = 0.250, skewness = -0.084 and kurtosis = -2.000); microcredit and poverty reduction (N = 572, mean = 1.69, standard deviation 0.464, variance

= 0.215, skewness = -0.809 and kurtosis = -1.350); credit investment and human capital development (N = 572, mean = 1.65, standard deviation 0.477, variance = 0.228, skewness = -0.632 and kurtosis = -1.606); microfinance and life cycle needs (N = 572, mean = 1.65, standard deviation 0.478, variance = 0.229, skewness = -0.616 and kurtosis = -1.626); microfinance and customers' business expansion (N = 572, mean = 1.64, standard deviation 0.480, variance = 0.230, skewness = -0.592 and kurtosis = -1.655) and investment in agriculture and food security (N = 572, mean = 1.47, standard deviation 0.499, variance = 0.249, skewness = 0.134 and kurtosis = -1.989).

8.1 Hypothesis one

Promotion of investment has no significant association with poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status among the people in Cross River State.

Test statistic: Chi square analysis

TABLE 3 Chi square analysis for test of association between promotion of investment and poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status among the people in Cross River State

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	25th	50th (Median)	75th
Investment promotion	572	1.48	.500	1	2	1.00	1.00	2.00
Health, education, society	572	1.65	.478	1	2	1.00	2.00	2.00

Chi-Square Test

Investment promotion

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
No	298	286.0	12.0
Yes	274	286.0	-12.0
Total	572		

Health, education social status etc

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
No	202	286.0	-84.0
Yes	370	286.0	84.0
Total	572		

Test Statistics

	Investment promotion	Health, education, soc.etc
Chi-Square	21.285 ^a	49.343 ^a
Df	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 286.0.

Source: SPSS Output

Table 3 presented Chi square analysis for test of association between promotion of investment and poverty alleviation in terms of health, education, and social status among the people in Cross River State. The result of the test showed significant variation in the mean responses regarding promotion of investment and poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status etc in the descriptive statistic. The mean response for promotion of investment was 1.48 while the mean response for health, education and social status was 1.65.

The values of the standard deviation were 0.500 and 0.478 respectively. The per centile deviation did not reveal any significant deviation among the data. The observed and expected chi square values yielded test statistics of 21.285 for investment promotion (which was significant) and 49.343 for health, education and social status (which also was significant at 0.01 level). Thus, since the test statistic for promotion of investment was significant and poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status was significant, the

null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis adopted and conclusion drawn that promotion of investment has significant association with poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status among the people in Cross River State. This was confirmed by comparing the critical chi square values of 10.8 at 0.10 and a degree of freedom with the values of the test statistics. Since the critical table value was lower than promotion of investment test value the null hypothesis was rejected.

8.2 Promotion of investment and poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status

The result of statistical analysis revealed that promotion of investment significantly relates with poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status. From this analysis, the calculated value of chi-square (X^2) was found to be greater than the critical value. This implies there is a significant positive association between promotion of investment and poverty alleviation in respect to improved health, education and social status. This was admitted by 370 (64.68%) of total respondents. Through microfinance banks investment promotion, people are able to access better health care services, females are able to pay their children school fees and meet other educational requirements. The people confessed that school enrollment has increased. This implied that poverty has reduced. The findings are in accordance with Aliyu and Umaru (2016) they maintained that microfinance banks plays significant role in reducing poverty on the active poor (their clients) through promotion of investment as a result of credit delivery which leads to creation of employment opportunities and increase in their level of their income as well as improved health, education and social status of their customers which in turn alleviate or reduce poverty among them. They agreed that microfinance banks services in terms of promotion of investment have help in alleviating

or reducing poverty and improved standard of living of client.

The findings corroborate Akinlo and Oni (2012), cited in Uyang (2019) according to them, more than 70 per cent of the customer's of microfinance banks in terms of credit facility were able to have access to good things of life which showed that their status have improved and it is an indication of poverty alleviation. Akinlo and Oni (2012) cited in Uyang (2019) further found that microfinance banks played great role in reducing poverty in terms of the standard of living of their customers, help them in planning and expanding their business activities through promotion of investment by the provision of microcredit loans.

Chuks (2007) cited in Uyang (2019) reached a similar conclusion, according to him, microfinance credit through promotion of investment strengthens human capital of inducing investment in health, enterprise, education and literacy, etc. which enhances poverty reduction. The findings are consistent with Ibrahim (2013) who argued that the poor and low income families need promotion of investment through microfinance banks to fund their lifecycle needs, through improved healthcare needs, educational needs of their children, better housing and methods of enterprise.

The findings are congruent with Idowu and Oyeleye (2012) cited in Uyang (2019), they averred that promotion of investment is one of the services provided by microfinance banks. They maintained that microfinance banks through promotion of investment of their customers by granting them access to credit have positive effect in terms of better access to education, health care and improved social status which in turn alleviate poverty among the poor. The findings are in consonance with Girigiri (2002) cited in Uyang (2019) who noted that a significant association exist between promotion of investment through microfinance

institutions and poverty alleviation in rural areas. For him, promotion of investment help clients of microfinance institutions out of their economic conditions and improved their health, education of their children as well as change their status which is an indices of poverty alleviation.

Conclusion

The role of microfinance banks in investment promotion has been confirmed in this study. In Cross River State, government poverty reduction efforts have not yielded maximum success. This explains why people continue to live in deplorable social conditions of frustration and deprivation due to lack of access to qualitative education, inadequate access to health facilities etc. The findings of this study indicate that microfinance investment promotion has reduced poverty through improved health, education and social status of the people in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

- 1) Microfinance banks should educate their customers on the good and bad sides of existing investments and what the investment requires.
- 2) Customers should be educated on investments that will improve their level of income, and in turn reduce poverty and improve their health, education of their children and social status.
- 3) Cliente/customers should be encouraged to take advantage of the economic situation (during festive period) and invest, this will go a long way to enable them generate income which will improve their access to health, education of their children/wards and as well improve their social status in the society.

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