

Original Research Article

## Cooperative Society: A Veritable Tool for Wealth Creation and Poverty Alleviation in Bayelsa State

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### Article History

Received: 08.02.2024

Accepted: 22.03.2024

Published: 27.03.2024

**Abstract:** Concerns have also been raised about cooperative organisations' efforts to reduce poverty and generate wealth in the communities in which they operate. Most cooperatives fail to achieve their goal of enhancing members' financial security and well-being, which ultimately results in their dissolution. Thus, this study looked at how cooperative societies in Bayelsa state contribute to wealth development and poverty reduction. In order to accomplish its goals, the study employed a survey research methodology with a structured questionnaire, which was analysed using chi-square and basic descriptive statistics. The study's findings showed that cooperatives help members acquire assets both directly and indirectly (in the form of cash or in kind). The support of cooperative society has enabled the acquisition of a variety of assets, including buildings, cars, gadgets, and land. This helped each member achieve their needs for safety and physiology while also improving the people's economic situation. Members who gained assets after they satisfied their fundamental needs were able to transcend extreme poverty. Asset acquisition is a physical economic progress. Here, cooperatives function as both major contributors to and agents of poverty alleviation. Therefore, in order for cooperative society activities to continue having a good influence on the livelihood of its members in Bayelsa state, it is advised that they be appropriately governed by the government and the relevant agencies.

**Keywords:** Cooperative society, poverty, poverty alleviation, wealth creation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global economic and financial crisis has sparked a renewed interest in alternative forms of economic organisation that have produced sustainable income in the majority of developed and developing nations worldwide. Examples of these alternative forms of economic organisation include social capital and cooperative societies. Cooperative societies are created to satisfy the needs of individuals, and they are both predicated on the compelling notion that a group of people can do things together that none of them could do on their own.

A cooperative society is made up of individuals who share common goals and concerns for the advancement of the underprivileged and those in need. Cooperative societies support the growth of 85 percent of rural families through their network, which includes banking, finance, agro-processing, storage, marketing, dairy, and housing. With assistance for resource and input utilisation, water resource harvesting, marketing channels, storage facilities, distribution routes, value addition, market information, and a regular monitoring network system, it has a crucial place in agricultural growth (Verma, 2004). In addition, cooperative organisations carry out economic operations such as loan distribution and the distribution of agricultural supplies (agrochemicals, fertilisers, and seeds). In order to address the issues of food security, employment creation, and poverty reduction, cooperatives are naturally advantageous. According to Verma (2004), it is thought to have enormous potential for providing products and services in places where the public and private sectors have fallen short.

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**CITATION:** Akarara, Ebierinyo Ayebaemi & Azebi, Oyeinbrakemi Innocent (2024). Cooperative Society: A Veritable Tool for Wealth Creation and Poverty Alleviation in Bayelsa State. *South Asian Res J Human Soc Sci*, 6(2): 87-97. 87

According to the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA, 2019), cooperatives are people-centered businesses that are democratically run and jointly owned by its members in order to meet their shared socioeconomic needs and goals. Since they are values- and principle-based businesses, they prioritise justice and equality, enabling individuals to start long-lasting businesses that provide wealth and long-term jobs. Under the tenet of "one member, one vote," cooperatives are governed by producers, users, or workers. Customers who are members of the business voluntarily own and run it, and it serves them on a non-profit basis. In order to improve members' standard of living and family, cooperatives are thought of as a conduit for the provision of services such as farm input, farm implements, farm mechanisation, agricultural loans, agricultural extension, member education, and marketing of members' produce.

The Nigerian government has implemented a number of policies, initiatives, and plans over the years to try and lower the country's poverty rate. Some of these include the National Poverty Eradication Programme, Vision 2020, You Win Programme, Green Revolution, Better Life for Rural Women, Family Support Programme, Operation Feed the Nation, and Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (Sur-P). Elem (2018) contends that despite the execution of these programmes, the living conditions of over 70% of the population, particularly those residing in rural regions, continue to deteriorate.

Ademu, Aduku, Elesho, and Nweke, (2018) "revealed high rates of unemployment, high rates of maternal and child mortality, high levels of illiteracy, poor access to sanitary conditions and healthcare facilities, and a lack of resources for those wishing to pursue a career in farming, including land, capital, inputs, seed, and seedlings." A lot of folks never eat anything before bed. It is confirmed that despite all the efforts made to reduce poverty, the rate of poverty is still rising; in contrast to other nations, particularly the developed nations, which have made remarkable strides towards ending hunger and poverty, the issue does not appear to have had a notable impact on developing nations, particularly Nigeria and the study area. (Elem, 2018, Ijaiya, Dayang and Norimah, 2016; Ijaiya & Adesina-Uthman 2019). However, the current state of affairs runs counter to the notion that the nation is rich in both people and natural resources. This study was necessary as the majority of households in the study region lacked the funds necessary to operate their businesses and secure loans. This study also tries to give a causal explanation for cooperative society, poverty reduction, and the overall well-being of Bayelsa State's residents by investigating individual and neighbourhood contextual variables, social capital, and social cohesiveness.

The study's main aim is to evaluate how cooperative society activities contribute to wealth development and poverty reduction in Bayelsa State. The particular aims are to:

1. Determine the degree to which cooperative organisations have eased the difficulties small business owners face in obtaining expensive startup funding in Bayelsa state.
2. Evaluate the contributions cooperative societies have made to the generation of wealth and the eradication of poverty in Bayelsa state.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Conceptual Clarification

#### Cooperative Society

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), cited in Zeuli and Cropp (2004), defined a cooperative as an autonomous association of people coming together voluntarily to address their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. A major focus of this concept is voluntary membership. This suggests that genuine cooperatives are voluntary and allow members to quit at any time.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defined a cooperative in 1987 as a user-owned, user-controlled company that provides advantages depending on use. According to Zeuli and Cropp (2004), the three essential cooperative features—user ownership, user control, and proportionate benefit distribution—are included in the definition. These characteristics make cooperative organisations appealing as a way to improve rural communities and lessen poverty. Cooperatives may be defined as a unique, mutually based association or group with a varied membership base and democratic administration in light of these guiding principles. A community development organisation with tactics akin to a pressure group, or a cooperative, which varies from a socio-professional organisation and has the defence of its members' interests as its purpose. A cooperative's most important element is the members' shared commitment to one another (Chitsike, 1988). Each member is responsible for upholding the organisation's independence as a legally recognised collection of people involved in profitable private activity.

#### Cooperative Society Types

Cooperative societies serve a variety of purposes since they encompass all facets of human endeavour. Nonetheless, there are three broad categories into which cooperative groups fall. For simplicity of interpretation and analysis, Zeuli and Cropp (2004) divided cooperative societies into:

- a. **Cooperatives by primary business activity:** This category includes cooperatives that produce agricultural products, as well as marketing, consumer, purchasing, insurance, and service cooperatives, which cover a variety of industries including energy, housing, health, and insurance.

- b. **Cooperatives by market area:** Local cooperatives, interregional and national cooperatives, and multinational cooperatives are all included in this classification.
- c. **Cooperatives by ownership structure:** According to ownership structure, cooperatives can be classified as federated, hybrid, centralised, New Generation Cooperatives (NGCs), or other types of corporate structures.

### **Cooperative Societies' Role in Generating Sustainable Income**

According to Gertler (2001), cooperatives are a great option for sustainable income since they are flexible, participative, community-based, and grounded in democracy. Since cooperatives are becoming more and more important globally in reducing poverty and promoting job creation, economic growth, and sustainable income, creating and maintaining a cooperative also entails creating and fostering a sense of community, identity, and social organisation (Gibson, 2005).

It is believed that cooperatives are crucial instruments for enhancing the living and working circumstances of both men and women. Cooperatives make decisions that strike a balance between the need for profitability and the well-being of its members and the community they serve, as the consumers of their services are their owners. Cooperatives provide its members more negotiating power, which helps them by offering social safety and greater income among other things, since they promote sustainable revenue of scope and size. Because of this, cooperatives provide its members with opportunity, security, and empowerment—all of which are crucial for raising them out of destitution and poverty (Somavia, 2002). Cooperatives are seen as helpful tools to control member risk and maintain the efficiency of markets when governments all over the globe reduce services and stop regulating markets (Henehan, 1997).

Cooperatives contribute significantly to national and international economic and social growth in a number of ways. Cooperatives encourage everyone to participate fully in economic and social growth and help ensure that the advantages of globalisation are distributed more fairly. They support human development that is sustainable and are crucial in the fight against social marginalisation. Consequently, one of the foundations of sustainable income should be the development of cooperatives (Levin, 2002).

Cooperatives improve the communities in which they operate in addition to the immediate advantages they offer to members. Cooperatives are particularly viewed as important tools for the mobilisation of resources for revenue production and the establishment of good jobs, according to Somavia (2002). Because they operate in particular geographic areas, many cooperatives pay local taxes and create jobs. Over 100 million men and women are thought to be employed by cooperatives globally, according to estimates from Levin (2002) and (Wikipedia, 2006).

Cooperatives in Nigeria have the ability to create jobs, deliver much-needed services, move money locally, and foster a feeling of belonging. They may give children in their base towns both short-term and long-term job options, as well as opportunity for their workers to enhance their skills through seminars and courses. During extended breaks, students may also work on a casual appointment basis. Cooperatives will support economic growth through these.

### **Barriers to Sustainable Income in Cooperative Societies**

Despite the fact that cooperatives are respected in many countries, research has demonstrated that these organisations face particular obstacles in each of those countries. Koopman (2006) noted that while there were some success stories in developing nations, there were also a number of failures. The cooperative notion was often used for political or ideological purposes, which contributed to its demise. In addition to trying to influence cooperative growth from above, governments and parastatals frequently tried to hinder it for their own purposes. A large number of the ensuing cooperatives were not viable or inadequately developed. Some developing countries still have remnants of these state-run quasi-cooperatives.

According to Mellor (2009), the primary obstacles that Ethiopian cooperatives must overcome are low member participation, deficient accounting systems, problems with leadership and organisation, executives' and employees' limited entrepreneurship knowledge and skills, restricted market access and lack of market information, low bargaining power, a dearth of storage facilities, and poor management of storage facilities.

Cooperative colleges are government-owned, according to Pollet (2009), and provide courses to both school leavers who have finished their secondary education and employees of government cooperative agencies. Training is restricted to primary cooperative personnel and members, and is usually provided by department officials during a brief training session at the time of cooperative registration. Cooperatives often limit their involvement in government policy efforts to those that directly affect cooperative development.

According to Nkoki-Mandleni and Anim's (2014) research, disagreements among members, conflicts of interest, a lack of member commitment, and challenges with member management are typically the reasons cooperatives in South

Africa fail. Agricultural cooperatives have also failed as a result of limitations including insufficient infrastructure, a lack of funding, inadequate extension services, and restricted access to land.

According to Luvienne (2010) and Twalo (2012), autonomous cooperative company forms face a number of strategic difficulties in a market-based economy. The most crucial thing to remember is that in a highly competitive global market, a single worker cooperative is probably destined to fail. The lack of access to capital, land, business training, marketing, and agro-processing possibilities are significant issues faced by primary agricultural cooperatives, according to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry (2010). One of the issues cooperatives encounter is illiteracy because the majority of cooperatives are owned by the elderly. These cooperatives' inability to obtain financing is one of the main obstacles to their development in the industry. It is simply not possible to guarantee that an increasing number of cooperatives with potential can join the mainstream economy and significantly contribute to the eradication of poverty and the creation of jobs, thanks to the funding programmes that are currently in place, either nationally or at the provincial level (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, 2010).

### **Wealth Creation**

Building money through a range of strategies and financial products is referred to as wealth creation. You receive larger returns on your financial product investments when you make long-term investments. In order to reach all of your long-term financial objectives, including your dream home, your child's school, and much more, it is therefore a crucial component of your financial journey.

### **The Need for Wealth Creation**

Creating wealth is important for several reasons:

1. It gives you the money you need to reach your long-term objectives.
2. It provides a consistent income stream even in the event that you are unemployed or work less. This might be a really effective strategy to maintain cash flow and support the continuation of a comfortable, prosperous, and secure life for your loved ones.
3. With rising daily and medical costs, retirement may be a difficult time. But if you build wealth, you'll never face a financial hardship and may enjoy a life of independence.

### **Poverty Alleviation**

All strategies used by the government, non-governmental organisations, or affluent people to lessen or completely eradicate poverty within a community are collectively referred to as poverty alleviation. The greatest way to reduce or eradicate poverty is to increase people's capacities or their freedoms. The long-term answer to poverty is empowerment, which is the corollary of this development strategy. Empowerment is the process of assisting those living in poverty in obtaining the resources necessary to satisfy their fundamental requirements.

## **2.2 Empirical Literature**

A research on the function of cooperatives in maintaining rural communities' means of subsistence was carried out by Mhembwe and Dube (2017). The study focused on rural cooperatives in Zimbabwe's Shurugwi District. A mixed method approach was taken in this investigation, including a descriptive survey design. The major research instruments were a questionnaire, interviews, and observation techniques. Data were gathered from government representatives and members of the six cooperatives in Shurugwi District using the purposeful sampling approach. The study had fifty research participants in total. It was discovered that the establishment of cooperatives was a tactic used to maintain rural populations' means of subsistence. By establishing cooperatives, residents of rural areas were able to improve their standard of living and lessen poverty by increasing food production, creating jobs, empowering women and other marginalised groups, and fostering social cohesion. The majority of cooperatives encounter several obstacles, such as inadequate funding, incompetent or incompetent administration, and a dearth of competitive marketplaces in which to sell their goods.

Nda and Obande (2021) researched on how cooperative organisations might help agricultural producers in Nigeria's Benue State reduce poverty. Secondary data from journals, research reports, textbooks, and online sources were used in this work. The investigation was guided by the collective Action theory. According to the paper, cooperative societies play a number of roles in helping crop farmers reduce poverty. These roles include, but are not limited to, lending money at a low interest rate, offering goods and services at a low cost, doing away with middle-men's exploitation, defending the rights of the underprivileged, defending the rights of producers and consumers, and raising awareness among cooperative members. The low level of education and illiteracy among members, the tiny membership, the high interest rates, the insufficient capital base, the inability to acquire farmland, the ineffective management style, and the absence of sufficient government backing have all been noted as obstacles to these responsibilities. The study found that, although much work still to be done, cooperative organisations have had a favourable influence on agricultural producers in Benue State.

Ajayi, Dada and Obisesan (2021) evaluated the relationship between cooperative societies and the reduction of poverty in Ekiti State. The study used a descriptive research design, collecting primary data through the use of a well-designed questionnaire. The data was analysed using descriptive analysis and ordinary least square regression. The results of the study showed that there is a positive relationship between cooperative societies and the reduction of poverty in Ekiti State; additionally, the study found that cooperative societies have experienced a number of significant financial and economic setbacks over time, which have had a negative impact on the sustainability of their finances.

Ajayi (2023) “determined how agricultural cooperative societies affected the rural residents of Ekiti State, Nigeria, in terms of their capacity to maintain a sustainable income. The study's population consists of 331 carefully chosen agricultural cooperative societies spread across four local governments in Ekiti State: Ado Ekiti, Ikole Ekiti, Irepodun/Ifelodun, and Oye Ekiti Local Government Area. The sample, on the other hand, is made up of 175 individuals drawn at random from the Taro model. The research's data was evaluated using both inferential and descriptive statistics. Multiple regression analysis was utilised as the inferential statistic, while percentages and frequency tables were utilised as the descriptive statistics. The findings demonstrated that agricultural cooperative societies' production, lending, and other financial resources had a major impact on the long-term economic viability of rural residents” in Nigeria's Ekiti State. “The study found that because of the large amounts of money required, loans from public and private institutions brought on by the country's present economic crisis, and the dearth of options for rural inhabitants to market their agricultural goods, cooperative members do not have enough capital for production.”

Enwa (2022) “examines how cooperative organisations, with a focus on rural farmers' cooperative societies, have helped to alleviate hunger and poverty in Nigeria. Farmers' cooperative organisations have the ability to eradicate hunger and poverty among its members, according to the results of an analysis of the collected data using a basic t-test and a binary logistics regression model. Because the results showed that cooperators with loan access had income levels that are much greater than those of cooperators without loan access.”

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **Area of the Study**

This study was conducted in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. Between Delta State and Rivers State, in the central Niger Delta area of southern Nigeria, sits the state of Bayelsa. The state is divided into three (3) senatorial districts: Bayelsa Central, which includes Kolokuma/Opokuma, Southern Ijaw, and Yenagoa LGAs, Bayelsa East, which includes Nembe, Brass, and Ogbia LGAs, and Bayelsa West, which includes Ekeremor and Sagbama LGAs. Yenagoa is its capital city. With dialects including Kolokuma, Mein, Bomu, Nembe, Epie-Atisa, and Ogbia. Ijaw is the primary language spoken there. English is the official language of the state, just like it is across the nation. The State's population, as estimated by the National Bureau of Statistics for 2019, is 2,510,313, having been created on October 1, 1996, from the former Rivers State. Eight Local Government Areas make up this region: Yenagoa, South Ijaw, Ogbia, Nembe, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Ekeremor, and Brass.

#### **Research Design**

The cross-sectional survey design is used in this investigation. This kind of design is generally employed for gathering data (information) from a population at a certain moment in time for a research. Participants in this kind of design are chosen according to relevant variables. The cross-sectional survey design gives the researcher the chance to simultaneously evaluate the exposures and observational outcomes in the study's target participants since the study is observational (cross-sectional). The fact that the study is population based makes this research design appropriate for it as well.

#### **Population For the Study**

The population of this study is comprised of all the persons that resides in Bayelsa State that are registered members of at least one cooperative society as at the time the study was conducted which is put at one hundred and eight thousand (108,000) person (Bayelsa State Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2024).

#### **Sampling and Data Collection**

In order to accomplish its goals, the study primarily uses primary data sources that are examined utilising regression analysis and basic descriptive statistics. Respondents to the research included members of several cooperative groups. Due to the inability to obtain access to the list of registered cooperative society members in the state, a non-probability sampling approach (Snowballing or referral sampling technique) was used to pick the respondents rather than a random selection. A total of six hundred (600) questionnaires were given out. 568 of the 600 questionnaires that were sent were collected for the research. Respondents come from several cooperatives located around the state.



#### 4.0 Presentation and Analysis of Data

The 568 cooperative members who completed and returned the surveys are referred to as respondents for the purposes of this study. The completed surveys underwent manual processing, with the outcomes of the processing and analysis documented in a table displaying the proportion of replies to the various questions.

**Table 4.1: Gender of the respondents**

Gender	No of respondents	Percentages (%)
Male	219	39
Female	349	61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: Field Survey: 2024

Table 4.1 above shows that 61% of the sample sizes were female and 39% of the sample sizes were male. This complies with the cooperative movement's founding ideal of open and voluntary membership. Every interested person, regardless of gender, is welcome to join a cooperative organisation.

**Table 4.2: Age of the respondents**

Age	No of respondents	Percentages (%)
21-25 years	28	5
26-30 years	49	9
31-35 years	132	23
36-40 years	112	20
41-45 years	108	19
46-50 years	67	12
51-55 years	48	8
>55 years	24	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey: 2024

It is evident from the above table that around 57% of respondents fall into the category of young (less than 40 years old). This demonstrates that youth view cooperative societies as a means of fostering growth and facilitating the timely realisation of life goals.

**Table 4.3: Educational Background of the respondents**

Educational Qualification	No of respondents	Percentages (%)
WASC/GCE/NECO	137	24
OND/NCE	179	32
HND/BSc	182	32
MBA/MSC/OTHERS	70	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey: 2024

According to Table 4.3 above, 137 respondents, or 24% of the total, have a WASC/GCE/NECO certificate, 179 respondents, or 32% of the total, hold an OND/NCE certificate, 182 respondents, or 32% of the total, hold an HND/BSC certificate, and 70 respondents, or 12% of the total, hold a higher degree certificate.

**Table 4.4: Years of Cooperative membership**

Membership Years	No of respondents	Percentages (%)
Less than 1 year	98	17
1-5 years	163	29
6-10 years	154	27
11-15 years	65	11
16-20 years	55	10
21 years and above	33	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey: 2024

Table 4.4 above shows that 29% of respondents had joined a cooperative in the previous five years, 27% had been members for six to ten years, and 17% had less than a year's experience. Furthermore, 11% and 10% of respondents,

respectively, had been cooperative members for 11–15 and 16–20 years. Following their realisation of the advantages of membership, 6% of members have remained with the cooperative for more than 21 years.

**Table 4.5: Opinion on Loan Collection**

No. of Access to loan facility	No. of respondents	Percentages (%)
Indeed, I have used my cooperative's lending service at least once.	496	87
No, I have never used a loan option provided by my cooperative.	72	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey: 2024**

According to Table 4.5, 87% of the respondents had borrowed money at some point in the past, while 13% had never utilised a cooperative society's lending programme. This demonstrated how a cooperative may empower its members by granting them access to loans, enabling them to become financially independent.

**Table 4.6: My cooperative made saving money simple for me**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	454	85	29	0	0	568
Percentage (%)	80	15	5	0	0	100

**Source: Field Survey 2024**

Table 4.6 shows that 454 respondents, or 80% of the sample, strongly concur that cooperatives made it simple for members to save money. However, 85 respondents, or 15% of the sample, concur that the cooperative made it simple for members to save money. However, 29 people, or 5%, have not responded. Thus, it may be said that the cooperative made saving simple for its members. At the time of salary payment, cooperative savings and contributions are subtracted, and the member receives the net amount.

**Table 4.7: Cooperatives offer easy financial availability**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	386	131	4	34	13	568
Percentage (%)	68	23	0.7	6	2.3	100

**Source Field Survey: 2024**

According to table 4.7, 386 respondents, or 68% of the sample, firmly believe that cooperatives offer easy access to credit, and 131 respondents, or 23%, concur. In the meanwhile, the position is disagreed with by 34 respondents, or 6%, and severely disagreed with by 13 respondents, or 2.3%. However, 4 people, or 0.7%, have not responded. Thus, it is possible to conclude that a cooperative helps its members obtain credit quickly, relieving their financial burden and lowering their stress levels.

**Table 4.8: Members of the cooperative can obtain loans at a lower interest rate**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	416	152	0	0	0	568
Percentage (%)	73	27	0	0	0	100

**Source: Field Survey 2024**

According to table 4.8 above, 416 respondents, or 73% of the sample, strongly agreed that cooperatives provide loans to members at a lower interest rate; 152 respondents, or 27% of the sample, agreed as well. Thus, it is possible to conclude that cooperatives relieve poverty and build wealth by offering loans to its members at a lower interest rate.

**Table 4.9: Getting a loan from my cooperative is far more difficult for me than from banks**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	0	0	18	254	296	568
Percentage (%)	0	0	3	45	52	100

**Source: Field Survey 2024**

Table 4.9 above shows that 254 respondents, or 45% of the sample, strongly disagree with the statement that it is more difficult to receive a loan from a cooperative than from a bank. However, 18 people, or 3%, have not responded. Given that the majority of respondents vehemently disagreed with the statement, it can be said that borrowing money from cooperatives is not more difficult than from banks.

**Table 4.10: Cooperative helps with both my children's and my schooling needs**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	238	227	0	30	73	568
Percentage (%)	42	40	0	5	13	100

Source Field Survey 2024

As can be seen in table 4.10 above, 238 respondents, or 42% of the sample, strongly agreed that cooperatives help with both their own and their children's education, and 227 respondents, or 40%, agreed. In the meantime, the percentage of respondents who disagree and strongly disagree with the position are 30, or 5%, and 73, or 13%, respectively. Consequently, it may be said that cooperative societies promote their members' and their children's education.

**Table 4.11: Typically, my cooperative society distributes dividends to its members at the conclusion of the fiscal year**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	528	40	0	0	0	568
Percentage (%)	93	7	0	0	0	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 4.11 shows that 93% of respondents strongly agreed and the remaining 7% agreed that their cooperative society often pays dividends to members at the conclusion of each fiscal year. It may be concluded that the cooperatives assessed are viable, offer value to their members, produce money, and reduce poverty since they consistently pay an annual dividend at the conclusion of the fiscal year.

**Table 4.12: Members were helped with cooperative loans to launch small businesses**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	288	119	13	52	96	568
Percentage (%)	51	21	2	9	17	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

According to table 4.12 above, 288 respondents, or 51% of the sample, strongly believe that cooperative loans helped members launch small businesses, and 119 respondents, or 21% of the sample, agree as well. In the meantime, 52 respondents, or 9%, and 96 respondents, or 17%, disagree and strongly disagree with the opinion, respectively. Nevertheless, 13 people, or 2%, remain unsure. This investigation demonstrated how cooperative societies encouraged the formation of small businesses. This has helped to lower the unemployment rate, produce revenue, build wealth, and lessen poverty.

**Table 4.13: Cooperatives periodically provide its members with training sessions and business advice**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	517	28	23	0	0	568
Percentage (%)	91	5	4	0	0	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

According to table 4.13 above, 517 respondents, or 91% of the sample, strongly agreed that cooperatives should regularly provide members with training seminars and business assistance. 5% of respondents agreed, and 4% of respondents were unsure.

**Table 4.14: Members of cooperatives receive assistance in purchasing assets such as buildings, cars, land, and electronics**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	496	55	17	0	0	568
Percentage (%)	87	10	3	0	0	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

According to table 4.14 above, 496 respondents, or 87% of the sample, strongly agreed that cooperatives helped members acquire assets including cars, buildings, land, and electronics. 55 respondents, or 10% of the sample, agreed with this statement, and 17 respondents, or 23%, were unable to make up their minds. The majority of them concurred that the cooperative had helped them acquire various assets, raising their standard of living and enriching their lives.



**Table 4.15: Cooperatives use their diverse investments, such as consumer stores and transportation businesses, to create jobs and make money**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	497	71	0	0	0	568
Percentage (%)	88	12	0	0	0	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

According to table 4.15 above, 88% of respondents firmly believe that cooperatives, via their diverse investments such as transportation businesses, consumer shops, etc., provide employment and produce revenue; 12% of respondents concur. Through these initiatives, the cooperative has reduced poverty, produced money, and generated jobs.

**Table 4.16: Cooperative Societies Affect the Creation of Wealth and the Reduction of Poverty**

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
No of Respondent	386	182	0	0	0	568
Percentage (%)	68	32	0	0	0	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

According to table 4.16 above, 386 respondents, or 68% of the sample, strongly agreed that cooperatives had an impact on wealth creation and poverty reduction; the remaining 32% agreed as well. The cooperative has reduced poverty in Bayelsa State by generating money, jobs, and employment via a variety of initiatives.

## 4.2 Hypothesis Testing

**Table 4.17: Computation Of Test Statistical for Hypothesis**

Response	Observed frequency (O)	Expected frequency (E)	O - E	(O - E) <sup>2</sup>	(O <sub>i</sub> - E <sub>i</sub> ) <sup>2</sup> E
Strongly Agree	375	113.6	261.4	68,329.96	601.5
Agree	98	113.6	-15.6	243.36	2.1
Undecided	17	113.6	-96.6	9,331.56	82.1
Disagree	23	113.6	-90.6	8,208.36	72.3
Strongly Disagree	55	113.6	-58.6	3,433.96	30.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>568</b>			<b>788.2</b>

$$X^2C = 788.2$$

$$X^2t = 5.991 \text{ (from the chi-square distribution table)}$$

### Decision Rule

Accept the alternative hypothesis if  $X^2c > X^2t$  and reject the null hypothesis, which claims that cooperative societies have no discernible impact on wealth creation and poverty alleviation in Bayelsa state. According to the analysis above,  $788.2 > 5.991$ , or  $X^2c > X^2t$ . This approach leads to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) and the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). This indicates that in the state of Bayelsa, the actions of cooperative organisations have a major impact on wealth generation and poverty reduction.

### Discussion of Findings

From the results above, this study found that cooperative societies the Bayelsa state have contributed significantly to creating wealth for its members and by extension reduced or alleviated the level of poverty amongst its members and by extension, Bayelsa state. This finding is line with those of Enwa (2022), Ajayi (2023) and Ajayi, Dada and Obisesan (2021), who in there separate studies found that cooperative societies in their respective study areas have contributed positively and significantly in creating wealth and reducing the level of poverty.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has evaluated the contribution of cooperative societies to wealth generation and poverty reduction in Bayelsa State. Numerous studies have shown that cooperatives are one of the cornerstones of growth and the doorway to economic independence in Nigeria's Bayelsa state. Cooperatives have a positive influence on members' saving cultures and offer simple, unrestricted access to microcredit, which not only makes personal growth possible but also significantly improves members well-being. Cooperatives help members acquire assets both directly and indirectly (in kind or with cash). The support of cooperative society has enabled the acquisition of a variety of assets, including buildings, cars, gadgets, and land. This helped each member achieve their needs for safety and physiology while also improving the people's economic situation. Members who gained assets after they satisfied their fundamental needs were able to transcend extreme poverty. Asset acquisition is a physical economic progress. Here, cooperatives function as both major contributors to and agents of poverty alleviation. Therefore, in order for cooperative society activities to continue to play its role of wealth

creation and poverty alleviation of its members in Bayelsa state, it is advised that they be appropriately governed by the government and the relevant agencies.

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