**Impact of Social Capital on Livelihood Activities of Vulnerable Women during Covid-19 pandemic in Lapai Local Government Area Niger state, Nigeria.**

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**Abstract**

*The number of vulnerable women in Nigeria and in many developing countries across the world has continued to be on the increase in the past two to three decades. This situation is mainly a result of weak capacity to withstand social, economic and environmental shocks and stress due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In seeking ways to reduce vulnerability in women livelihood activity, Alex (2014) encouraged, the adoption of social capital as it has been identified a crucial element in promoting resilience of people in vulnerable situation. Different studies have explored the concept of social capital and the role it can play in preventing livelihood vulnerability. This study therefore seeks to identify the social capitals available to the vulnerable women of Lapai Local Government Area during the pandemic period and determine its impact on their livelihood activities. The study is a descriptive research that employed purposive sampling technique to administer questionnaires to the sample size of 383 women in the different wards of the study area. The research establish that there are gender base, profession base, ward base, religious, and other form of social capital within Lapai Local Government, all of which if properly engaged would reduce the likelihood of vulnerability due to weak adaptive capacity in economic, social and environmental activities. The study finding promotes participation in social capital activities, as it is a tool reduces the likelihood of vulnerability and in turn mitigates poverty during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

**Keyword:** Vulnerable Women, Social Capital, Livelihood Vulnerability, Covid-19 pandemic

**INTRODUCTION**

Vulnerability describes the degree of exposure to risks and a system’s ability to resand withstand unexpected pressures. According to Shaffer (2001), vulnerability in itself is not poverty but is a state that can lead to a poverty as it leaves a state of social, economic and environmental need. Adger (2006) considered vulnerability as the condition of susceptibility to harm due to shocks and stress. He observed that vulnerability is an outcome of social, economic and environmental changes on one hand, and weak adaptive capacity on the other. Individuals or groups who are unable to recover from social, environmental or economic shock and stress are believed to be vulnerable. A livelihood on the other hand is the command an individual, family or groups have over income or bundles of resources that they use or exchange to satisfy their needs. Schraven *et al* (2013) defined livelihood as a multifaceted system consisting of assets like material goods, social possessions and activities used to generate a living. Livelihood vulnerability does not occur only due to devastation of the physical environment; but is also a result of limitation in participation within the political, economic and social environment Madhuri *et al,* (2014)

In seeking ways of reducing livelihood activity vulnerability, Alex (2014), encouraged the adoption of social capital a system that seek to create an enabling environment, allows un-biased circulation of resources, and encourage social associations. As he considered it a major factor that can reduce livelihood activities vulnerability and take women out of a state of vulnerability. According to Ereinstein (2011), Social capital embodies the quality of relationships and networks available to an individual, Although Ellis (2000), Dubos (2017) tried to present a concise definition of social capital as a network of relationships that can be leverage on in the event of shocks and stress to take one out of a vulnerable state.

**CONCEPT OF LIVELIHOOD**

Livelihood according to Shyamalie and Saini (2010) involve the flow of monetary and non-monetary resources that is exploited for continuous sustenance. Schraven *et al* (2016), define livelihood as a multifaceted system consisting of the material or social assets, through which a source of living is generated. Schraven et al (2016) went further to imply that the material assets could be those tangible activities or intangible actions through which a person or people can generate a living. Livelihood in the opinion of Datta *et al* (2010) includes social and cultural means. It involves culture, information, knowledge, social networks and legal rights as well as land, tools and other physical resources. According to Isaac *et al* (2019b) livelihoods of women are affected by the social, economic, environmental and political contexts surrounding them.

**CONCEPT OF VULNERABILITY**

Vulnerability is not poverty, according to Shaffer (2001), multiple authors have conceptualized poverty but in all the ways it has been looked it is not poverty. It just pronounces the prospect of sinking or falling into a sense of total deprivation. Vulnerability describes the degree of exposure to risks and the capacity to respond to the pressures. Adger (2006) considered vulnerability as the condition of susceptibility to harm due to shocks and stresses. He observed that vulnerability is an outcome of social, economic and environmental changes on one hand, and weak adaptive capacity on the other. In similar vein, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) maintained that weak adaptive capacity increases the vulnerability of individuals. The link between vulnerability and livelihood activities logically indicates the need to evaluate livelihood susceptibility at the individuals and households level Rignall and Kusunose, (2018). In the opinion of Vincent and Cull (2010), vulnerability of livelihood activity is a serious factor that can result in collective susceptibility; thus, it requires collective action.

Livelihood vulnerability affects all livelihood activities, although in different dimensions and to different extents Madhuri and Bhowmick, (2014). However, based on the arguments of Vincent and Cull (2010), the vulnerability of livelihood activities in developing countries is easily exhibited in individual or a group’s social vulnerability. Several scholars according to Amos *et al* (2014) have argued that climate change is the foremost predictor of livelihood vulnerability However, Pandey *et al* (2017) observed the primary factor responsible for the vulnerability of livelihood activities is social exclusion.

**CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL**

The concept of social capital centers on bridging the social exclusion in people’s relationships and engagements amongst the different sectors of the society, the history of social capital according to Mukaila *et al* (2016) is associated to the work of Hanifan in the 20th century, where he refers to social capital as Goodwill, Fellowship, Mutual sympathy and Social interaction. Routledge and Amsberg (2003) acknowledged that Hanifan used the term ‘capital’ specifically to highlight the importance of the social structure to people with business and economic perspective. According to Routledge and Amsberg (2003), it was not until the early 1990s that the concept began to gain widespread recognition with the writings of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam who are consider the contemporary authors of social capital. The concept seeks to explain the role of dyads in human, social and economic development. Christopher (2017) argued that societies that have high stock of social capital inform of grassroots association are less vulnerable and have greater capacity to resolve conflicts and as well take advantage of new opportunities for improvement. Hence, the central idea of social capital as the type of network and association that have in them norms and transformational value.

Szreter and Woolcock (2004) argues social capital to be product of the prior history of political, constitutional and ideological developments in any given setting at a particular time. Thus, the exact nature of social capital differs in respect to cultural setting, as the factors that shape social capitals are reliant on specific norms of behavior, linkages and organizations that are present and active within that setting. Defining social capital according to its role Sharon (2009) exposes a concept that entails been of great environmental, economic and social benefits to like-minded individuals who are willing to achieve similar goals by putting together efforts to achieve the desired goals. Improved social capital facilitates increases access to resources leading to reduction in the vulnerability of women which leads to poverty Knight and Yueh, (2008).

**THE STUDY AREA**

Lapai is one of the 26 local government area in Niger state, it is located along the Southeastern part of the state and shares boarders with Paikoro and Agaie local government area. Lapai town serve as the headquarters of the local government area and is a traditional emirate, which originally was populated by the Gbagyi (Gwari) people, who were subject to the Hausa kingdom of Zazzau after 1804. The local government has a total land area coverage of 3,051 km² and a total population of 110,127 as at 2006 census (Niger State Bureau of Statistics 2012). It is located on longitude [9°03′00″N and latitude 6°34′00″E](https://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Lapai&params=9_03_00_N_6_34_00_E_region:NG_type:city_source:GNS-enwiki) near the Gurara River, which is a tributary to the Niger River. Lapai local government area been an urban center is multidimensional in nature, that covers enormous expanse of land, and accommodate diverse economic activities (Raji, 2013). The residents of Lapai local government area are predominantly farmers, the Lapai town serves as a market center for Sorghum, Yams, Millet, Shea nuts, Cottons and many other fruits.

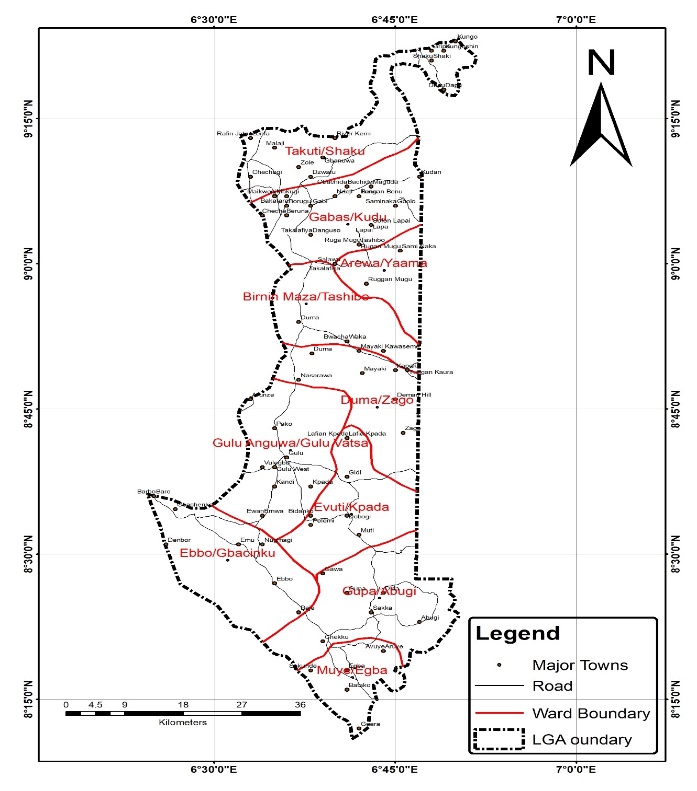


Fig 1. Maps showing the Study Area

Source: Authors survey

**METHODOLOGY**

**Data Collection**

This study relied on the primary data collected within the lapai local government area using structured questionnaires Emphasis was placed on the vulnerable women who engaged in different livelihood activities. The Sample Frame was determined from National Population Commission (NPC) population figure as 36,113, this population figure was projected to year 2020 and it was 95,335. The Krejcie and Morgan sampling calculator was used to determine the sample size, which was 383, with purposive sampling technique employed to administer the questionnaires in the different wards.

**Table 1 Wards Population and Sample Size of Study in Lapai Local Government Area**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S/No | Wards | 1991 population | 2020 Projected Population | Sample Size | |
| 1 | Gabas/Kudu | 4,317 | 11,396 | | 45 |
| 2 | Arewa/Yamman | 3,846 | 10,153 | | 41 |
| 3 | GuluAngwan/GuluVatsa | 5,162 | 13,627 | | 54 |
| 4 | Gupa/Abugi | 4,117 | 10,869 | | 44 |
| 5 | Muye/Egba | 2,951 | 7,790 | | 31 |
| 6 | Brini Maza/Tashibo | 2,575 | 6,798 | | 28 |
| 7 | Duma/Zago | 1,459 | 3,851 | | 16 |
| 8 | Ebbo/Gbanciku | 3,394 | 8,960 | | 36 |
| 9 | Takuti/Shaku | 5,151 | 13,598 | | 54 |
| 10 | Evuti/Kpada | 3,141 | 8,292 | | 34 |
|  | **Total** |  | **95,335** | | **383** |

Source: Author, 2021

**ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

**Figure 1.0 Available Social Networks**

Source: Authors Field Survey, 2021

The survey exposes the different type of social capitals available to the women in lapai local government area, Figure 1.0 highlighted the different Social capital available within Lapai local government area with 89.90% of the respondents stating that they are members of different forms of Market Based social capital, examples of this Market based social capital includes, Grain sellers association, Recharge card sellers association and Food vendors union among others. Membership to social groups is for this study assumed as ownership of social capital. Religious based social groups with 64.50% were the second most noted available social group within the study area that lots of the women belong. The individual Wards social capital was also noted from the survey by 47.80% of the sample, This ward base social capital have to do with those social groups like vigilante groups, Youth political groups and Rice Processors group of the ward among others. Furthermore, the study reveals that 55.60% of the women respondents claimed to have and belong to different forms of Gender base social capital, examples which are the Married women association, Young women association, Women political association and Women Farmers Cooperative association in Lapai local government. Profession based social groups was identified by 49.60% of the respondent as one of the social capital means available to them, examples of these professional groups are Women Teachers association within the Lapai town, Sanitary workers association and Fashion designers association among others. 21.40% of the respondents noted that there exists Other social capitals within the local governments from which they get benefits as regards to their livelihood activities, they names some as Fisher women association of Muye/Egba ward women, Pot makers association.

**Figure 1.2 Benefits from Social Networks**

Source: Authors Field Survey, 2021

The benefits of social networks to women livelihood activities in Lapai local government, as revealed by the survey on Figure 1.2 shows financial benefits as the highest benefits acquired from the social networks to livelihood activities of the women, According to the women, they get short-term loans due to their social networks. Food supply with 58% of the women response is second in other of benefits attained as regards to livelihood activities during the Covid 19 pandemic, as majority of this networks took it upon them self’s to support their members during this period. Social security was also noted as part of the gains acquired from the different social networks during the pandemic. The study also revealed that during the Covid 19 lockdown in lapai local government area, the women benefited from their different social capitals, in the aspect of provision of grains, toiletries, foodstuffs among others. This helped sustained them when livelihood activities were partially halted. Social capital also provide more livelihood activities in terms of employment opportunities to the women. The survey furthers reveals that 51% of the respondents claimed to have greater business opportunities due to the social capitals available to them.

**CONCLUSION**

One of the major factor that leads to women vulnerability in livelihood activities is their in ability to withstand shocks and lack of capacity to recover. This study projected social capital as a mechanism that can reduce this state of vulnerability and improve the quality of life through networks and relationships. As revealed from the survey, the women of Lapai local government area have acquired different forms of benefits from the social capitals available, these benefit that have to do with improved business opportunities, neighborhood security, financial supports and also social security. These different forms of benefits have created certain level of security in their livelihood activities and reduced the likelihood of the women being in vulnerable conditions.

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