



# Residents' perception of coping and alleviating strategies of poverty in rural areas of Ayedaade local government, Osun State, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT.** The attempts of government in eradicating poverty are always based on a government's view of what rural dwellers need. Without the rural dwellers themselves assessing their level of poverty, ascertaining their coping strategies and their needs for poverty alleviation; the desired goal of a government in reducing poverty cannot be achieved. This paper thus examined the perception of rural dwellers on coping and alleviating strategies of poverty in rural areas of Ayedaade local government area, Osun State. Questionnaires were administered to three hundred and sixty-eight household heads who were selected across the twenty-five villages in five rural wards of the study area. Poverty was assessed based on the perception of residents. Data were analysed using percentage distribution and Geographical Information System technique. The result of the findings reveals that 57.9% reported themselves as being poor. Poverty based on residents' perception was denser in the southern part than in the northern part of the study area. Hardworking (25.5%) and gathering of the remnant fruits (23.1%) were the most adopting coping strategies in the area. Residents identified provision of infrastructure (54.7%) and financial assistance (18.2%) as crucial poverty alleviating strategies. The study concluded that the dividend of democracy can only be effective if a government considers the perceptions of rural residents in planning and provision for poverty alleviation in rural areas. This study recommends that the government should consider the residents' perception in planning and execution of poverty alleviation in their areas.

**Keywords:** rural residents; poverty; coping strategies; alleviation; perception.

## Percepção dos residentes sobre enfrentamento e alívio de estratégias de pobreza em áreas rurais do governo local de Ayedaade, Estado de Osun, Nigéria

**RESUMO.** As tentativas do governo de erradicar a pobreza são sempre baseadas na visão do governo do que os moradores rurais precisam, mas sem que os próprios moradores rurais avaliem seu nível de pobreza, verifiquem suas estratégias de enfrentamento e suas necessidades de alívio da pobreza o objetivo desejado pelo governo na redução da pobreza não pode ser alcançado. Este artigo analisou, assim, a percepção dos moradores rurais sobre as estratégias de enfrentamento e alívio da pobreza nas áreas rurais do governo local de Ayedaade, Estado de Osun. Os questionários foram aplicados a trezentos e sessenta e oito chefes de domicílio selecionados nas vinte e cinco aldeias em cinco alas rurais da área de estudo. A pobreza foi avaliada com base na percepção dos moradores. Os dados foram analisados utilizando-se a distribuição percentual e a técnica do Sistema de Informações Geográficas. O resultado dos achados revela que 57,9% se referiram a si mesmos como pobres. A pobreza baseada na percepção dos moradores foi mais densa na parte sul do que na parte norte da área de estudo. O trabalho árduo (25,5%) e a coleta dos frutos remanescentes (23,1%) foram as estratégias mais adotadas na área. Os moradores identificaram a oferta de infraestrutura (54,7%) e assistência financeira (18,2%) como estratégias cruciais de alívio da pobreza. O estudo concluiu que esse dividendo da democracia só pode ser eficaz se o governo considerar as percepções dos residentes rurais no planejamento e provisão para alívio da pobreza nas áreas rurais. Este estudo recomenda que o governo considere a percepção dos moradores no planejamento e execução de estratégias para o alívio da pobreza em suas áreas.

**Palavras-chave:** residentes rurais; pobreza; estratégias de enfrentamento; alívio; percepção.

Received on December 15, 2021.

Accepted on May 23, 2022.

## Introduction

Many strategies have been applied to alleviate poverty in the world but these have proved abortive in many parts of the world. The anticipation to end poverty has suffered a setback which was majorly due to COVID-19, conflict, and climate change facing all countries (The World Bank, 2020). It has been estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed an additional 88 million to 115 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, which might be rising to 150 million by 2021 (The World Bank, 2020). Various countries viewed and measured poverty with reference to their own areas of locality, politics, society and economy. Poverty is an unsatisfactory lifestyle which is associated with illiteracy, insecurity, illness, lack of access to decent work, low life expectancy and any other life deficiencies (Oluwajenyo, 2013; Odishika & Adedeji, 2015; Jaiyeola & Bayat, 2019). Various literatures have indicated that poverty can be in many forms, be it rural or urban, absolute or relative, chronic or transitory, and extreme or moderate poverty (Egwemi & Udoh, 2013). Poverty has become a pervasive matter in both the developed countries and the developing world but it is more affecting in the developing countries, especially in the rural area where the main livelihood is from farming (Odishika & Adedeji, 2015; Singh & Chudasama, 2020). The proportion of rural population in extreme poverty is high, and its number of poor people exceeds the agricultural capacity to enhance sustainable livelihood and development (Olinto, Beegle, Sobarado, & Uematsu, 2013).

Studies have shown that poverty is more persistent in rural areas of the world, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Olinto et al.(2013); and Obayelu & Awoyemi (2010) inferred that most rural dwellers derive their means of living from agriculture and the number of poor people in rural areas out-grow the capacity of agriculture to alleviate poverty in rural areas. Less access to social amenities, urban-rural bias, less impacts of democracy, and inappropriate agricultural and economic policies exacerbate the intensity of poverty in farming communities (Odishika & Adedeji, 2015; Adeleke & Charles, 2016; Qasim, 2020). Factors such as a large number of household dependents, low income, low access to the arable land, no credit facilities, and inadequate storage facilities for farm products, inefficient market and transport network cannot be under-estimated as causes of poverty in rural areas (Ogwumike & Akinnibosun, 2013; Dobis, Beaulieu, Zhalnin, & Kumar, 2019).

Rural communities usually rely heavily on secure and equitable access to land, fishery and forest, which are sources of food and shelter, the basis for social, cultural and religious practices and a central factor for economic growth (United Nations, 2012). National Population Commission [NPC] (2006) of Nigeria defines a rural area in the country as any settlement with less than 20,000 population. A number of studies have shown that the vast majority of Nigerians live in rural areas of the country where basic facilities are either inadequate or lacking. Nigeria as one of the countries in Africa has experienced set-back in fighting poverty, and it was quite unfair for Nigeria, a giant of Africa, for not meeting the target for Millennium Development Goal Poverty Reduction (National Planning Commission, 2004).

Since the inception of the present democratic dispensation in 1999, it was assumed democracy will usher in a participatory governance system that will translate to reduced poverty and improved living standards as a dividend of democracy, it has been observed and documented that Nigeria's poverty situation has gone from bad to worse (Maku, Tella, & Fagbohun, 2020). Omoyibo (2013) inferred that the marginalization by government has made rural dwellers more vulnerable to poverty than their urban counterparts. Democratic governance in Nigeria is characterized by bad governance and a spiral increase in corruption from one regime to another. Nigeria's government is unable to meet the needs of the public, and is not even accountable and transparent to its citizens (Adeleke & Charles, 2016). Maku et al. (2020) observed that Nigeria's political system plays a significant negative role on a large number of its citizen living in extreme poverty.

Farinde (2014) found that lack of access to loans, poor transport system to the market, and ineffective storage facilities were problems facing rural farmers in Egbedore, Irepodun and Orolu Local Government Areas of Osun State. Approximately, fifty-six percent of houses in his study area were about 200 metres away from the market. These affected the farming activities, income generation and lives of the farmers. But in order to alleviate poverty in the area, rural dwellers engage in non-farm activities to earn additional income. Rural development intervention, interconnectivity among villages, efficient transport network, provision of credit facilities and personal investment were suggested as poverty alleviation strategies in the area (Farinde, 2014).

Adeniyi and Ojo (2013) classified Iwo, Ayedire and Ayedaade as food-insecure areas as almost seventy percent of their population were below the food security line of 2,280 calories per adult equivalent. The problems were traced to small farm size, low average monthly income and lack of modern farm input. Their study revealed that 80% had farm plots of less than one hectare, while 79.1% earned less than 18,000 Naira per month. Amao, Ayantoye and Oladejo (2013) maintained that household size and level of literacy were essential determinants of poverty in Ilesa West Local Government of Osun State. The probability of being poor was directly proportionate to the size of a household. Olawole (2010) observed that more than half of his sampled population in Badagary Local Government Area of Lagos State was below five thousand Naira (poverty line), and recommended that policy should be enacted and enforced to enhance the earning capacity of rural population, most especially the women in order to make their socio-economic status efficient.

Leke and Oluwaleye (2015) attributed the increased poverty in Nigeria to poor infrastructure which was the yield of corruption that undermined democracy and good governance. The failure of poverty alleviation programmes was attributed to a lack of good governance which entangled the provision of public infrastructure in Nigeria (Innocent, Eikoljonwa, & Enojo, 2014). Ajala and Aguda (2007) in their study of development inequality in Osun state identified Ayedaade as one of the 16 local government areas out of 30 local government areas in Osun State that was less developed with an index score of less than 1.0 in terms of infrastructure. If poverty must be effectively alleviated, there must be adequate provision and utilization of social amenities and basic needs for the poor (Leke & Oluwaleye, 2015). Omoyibo (2013) recommended that attention should be given to human capital development and infrastructure in rural areas in order to alleviate poverty among rural Nigerians.

The work of Ashagidigbi, Abiodun and Samson (2011) on the effects of infrastructure development on crop farmers' productivity in three selected LGAs of Olorunda, Ayedaade, & Ife Central, showed a slight improvement in farmer's output. Adeniyi and Ojo (2013) who focused on food security among rural households in Iwo, Ayedire and Ayedaade LGAs concluded that the study areas were food-insecure as 69.9 percent of the population were below the food security line per adult due to small farm size. Despite the twenty years of democracy in Ayedaade Local Government and entire Nigeria, studies have shown that the poverty situation especially in the rural area of Ayedaade LGA has not improved significantly based on poverty line measurement.

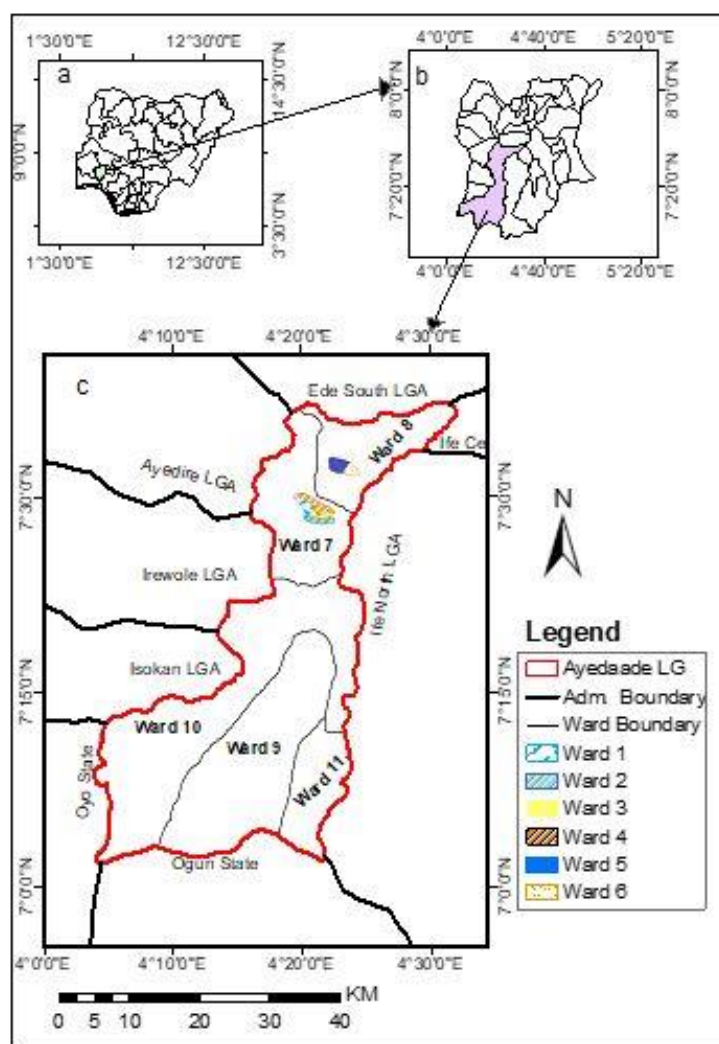
Different results and perspectives of scholars pointed to the fact that poverty study is complex and requires continuous review through research in order to provide updated information on poverty situations at different levels. Many of the previous studies only addressed the poverty situation based on international and national poverty lines and indices without considering poverty based on the perceptions of rural dwellers themselves. Therefore, this study intends to examine residents' perceptions of coping and alleviating strategies of poverty in rural areas of Ayedaade Local Government, Osun State, Nigeria. For the purpose of this study, poverty is taken as a lack of essential needs of life and inaccessibility to public infrastructure which has made an individual/ household concerned to be physically, socially, economically and politically stagnant and backward and unable to meet the minimum acceptable standard of living. This is thus measured based on the subjective view of rural dwellers.

## **The study area**

Ayedaade Local Government is one of the thirty Local Government Areas in Osun State. It is located between Latitude 7°2' N and 7°39' N of the Equator and Longitude 4°3' E and 4°32' E of the Greenwich Meridian. It shares a boundary with Ede South Local Government in the North, Irewole Local Government in the West, Ife North Local Government in the East, and Ogun State in the South (Figure 1).

## **Methodology**

Both primary data and secondary data were used in this study. Primary data were collected by using questionnaires and a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS). Secondary data on the political wards and villages in the study area were obtained from archives of National Population Commission [NPC] (2006), Ayedaade local government council; and Interdependent National Electoral Commission (INEC) database in Ayedaade local government area. Based on these, the study area consists of eleven political wards (six urban wards and five rural wards). The rural wards are Ward 7, Ward 8, Ward 9, Ward 10 and Ward 11.



**Figure 1.** (a) Nigeria showing Osun state, (b) Osun state showing Ayedaade local government area, and (c) Ayedaade showing all eleven political wards.

Households were selected for questionnaire administration using a multi-stage sampling technique. First, the villages in the rural area were categorised based on household numbers (i.e. villages with fewer than 250 households, and villages with more than or equal to 250 households). Second, five villages were purposively selected based on categories of villages with a proportion of 4:1 from each ward, this resulted into 25 villages in all. Third, out of 36,946 estimated households in the study area, 368 households (76, 85, 73, 43, and 91, from Wards 7 to 11 proportionally and respectively) were selected based on the recommendation of Slovin's principle for a 95% confidence level. Lastly, the houses were selected using a systematic sampling procedure in each village, the first house was selected based on balloting and subsequent houses were selected at regular interval got by dividing the sample size by the number of houses. In each selected house, the questionnaire was administered to the household head or his delegate. From preliminary fieldwork, a total of 2,735 houses were listed. Poverty was measured based on a self-assessment of rural residents. Descriptive (such as percentage and pie chart) and inferential (ANOVA) data analysis on Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and interpolation on ArcGIS were used.

## Results and discussion

Demographic attributes of the respondents considered here include sex, age and education attainment of the respondents. These attributes are important to determine the level of understanding and assessment of the respondents on the subject matter of the study which have an influence on their responses to variables in the questionnaire. As revealed in Table 1, 86% (317) were males and the remaining 13.9% (51) were females. The observed preponderance of male respondents confirmed that there were more male-headed households than female headed households in the study area. Observed few female-headed households are either widowed, divorced or separated.

The age of the respondents revealed that 4.6% were below the age of 30 years, 29.3% were ages of 30 to 45 years, 30.7% were ages of 45+ to 60 years, and 35.3% were aged more than 60 years, representing the modal age group in the study area (Table 1). This gives an indication that about 60% of the study population were still within the active years of 30 to 60 years. It means that able body population has resorted to farming and makes their living in a rural area, unlike previous studies that showed that rural population is aging out, for instance, Bearnholdt, Yan, Hinton, Rose, & Mattos, (2013) in their study of quality of life in rural and urban area inferred that proportion of old people in rural areas is high.

In terms of educational attainment, Table 1 also revealed that 18.2% of the respondents had Primary School Leaving Certificate, 5.4% had attained Junior Secondary School while 35.4% of the respondents attained Senior Secondary School Certificate. It is worthy of note that 10.8% of the respondents attained tertiary education status which includes Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) /National Diploma (ND), Higher National Diploma (HND) and university Degrees. It is also noted that 12.8% still claimed to have attained Modern or Standard School (the old system of education in Nigeria about 60 years ago). This is attributed to the influence of free education under the western regional government's education programme in the first republic. Of the total respondents, only 17.4% did not have formal education at all (Table 1). The observed age structure shows that the sample population were old enough to appraise the issues involved in poverty, particularly the impact that infrastructure could make in making their living better.

**Table 1.** Sex, age group and level of education of the respondents.

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	317	86.1
Female	51	13.9
Total	368	100
Age group(x)	Frequency	Percentage
X < 30 Years	17	4.6
30 ≤ X ≤ 45 Years	108	29.3
45 < X ≤ 60 Years	113	30.7
X > 60Years	130	35.4
Total	368	100
Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	67	18.2
JSS 3	20	5.4
SSS 3	130	35.3
ND/NCE	34	9.2
HND/Degree	6	1.6
Modern/Standard/Form Four	47	12.8
No Formal Education	64	17.4
Total	368	100

### Spatial pattern of poverty based on perceptions of rural residents

In determining the spatial pattern of poverty based on a subjective view of rural residents, Figure 2 reveals that there is poverty everywhere except in Akoriboto-Okò where all respondents believed that they were not poor. Even at least sixteen villages, out of twenty-five villages have half of their population in poverty. Based on quartile, three villages are in the first quartile (0-25%), six villages in the second quartile (26-50%), ten villages in the third quartile (51-75%), and six villages in the fourth quartile (76-100%) as it is depicted in Figure 2.

Despite the fact that poverty spread all over the area, Figure 3 shows that poverty is denser in the southern part than in the northern part of Ayedaade Local Government. The high incidence of poverty based on perceptions of rural residents may be a result of rural dwellers in the southern part seeing themselves as being less privileged as they are highly distant to the two urban centres (Gbongan and Ode-Omu) in the study area. This indicates that a large number of rural residents are in extreme poverty as all fifteen villages in the southern parts (more than half of the studied villages) are highly in extreme poverty.

However, the validity of the hypothesis that assumed equal means for the level of poverty across the communities in the study area was tested at a significant level of  $\alpha = 0.05$  using ANOVA. The result of the ANOVA in Table 2 shows an observed f-value of (0.234) and a p-value of (0.916). Since a p-value of (0.916) is higher than  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; and the observed f- value of (0.234) is less than the critical f- tabulated value of  $F_{0.05,4,21} = 2.87$  at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the level of poverty across the study area is hereby accepted. This implies that there is significant uniformity in the level of poverty in the study area.

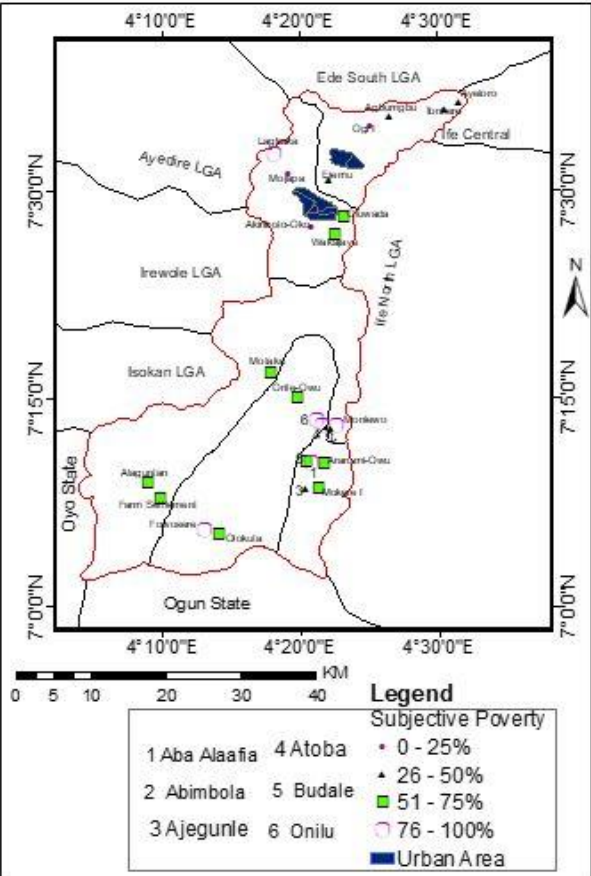


Figure 2. Poverty based on rural residents' perception.

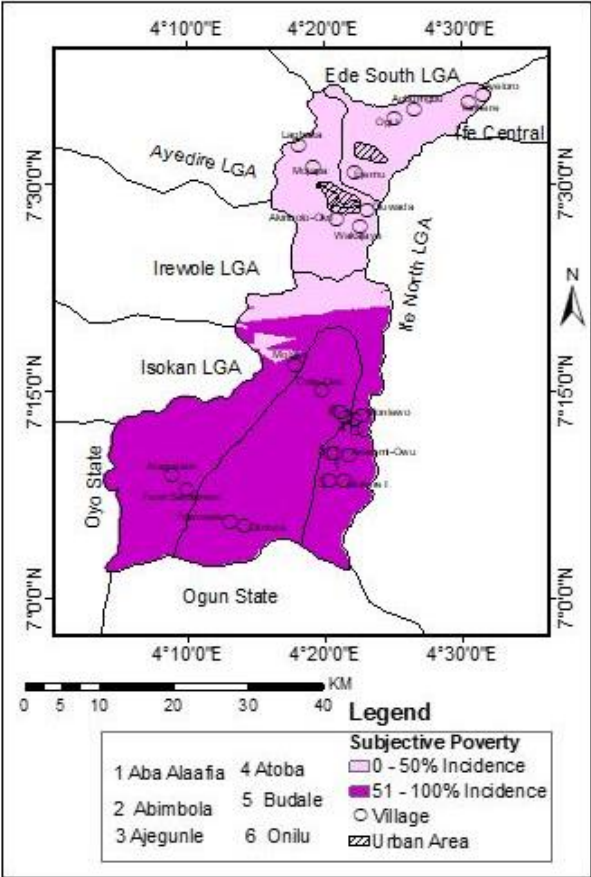


Figure 3. Spatial pattern of incidence of poverty based on rural residents' perception.

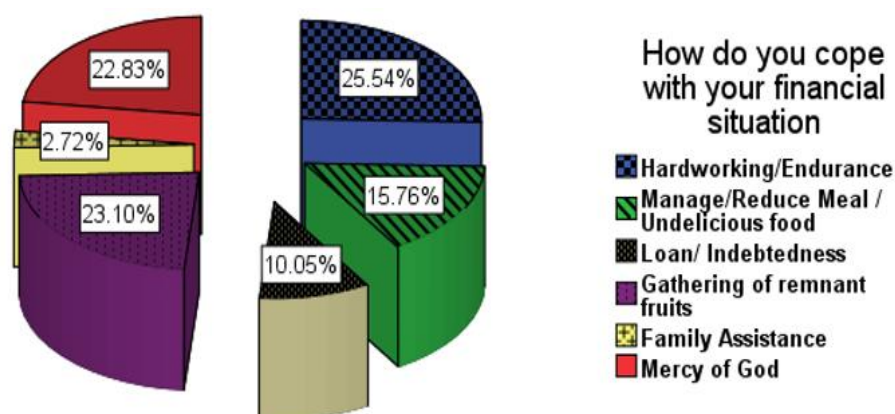


**Table 2.** ANOVA for testing of significant variation in the level of poverty.

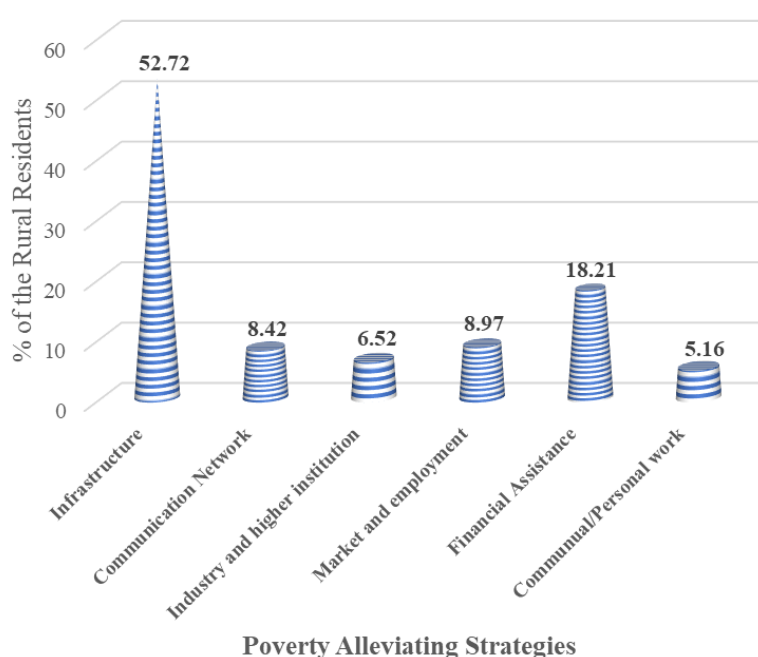
	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	99.040	4	24.760	0.234	0.916
Within Groups	2119.200	20	105.960		
Total	2218.40	24			

### Coping and alleviating strategies of poverty based of rural residents' perception

This section deals with how the rural residents cope with poverty and the way they know that poverty can be alleviated as illustrated in Figure 4 and 5. Despite the significant level of poverty, the residents in the study area have ways of coping with their level of poverty. Figure 4 presents that eighty- five (23.1%) respondents out of 368 respondents cope through the gathering of remnant fruits like dry-palm kernels called *Ira* in Yoruba land. Another 84 (22.8%) household heads believed that only the mercy of God sustained them. The reduction in the meals per day from 3 times to 2 times, eating unbalanced-diets, and management of little resources have been the coping strategy for 58 household heads (15.8%). More than a quarter (25.5%) of the respondents, representing the highest proportion, coped through hardworking /endurance and casual work, while the remaining 37 (10.1%) coped through borrowing or indebtedness.

**Figure 4.** Coping strategies of the rural residents to poverty.

The way of alleviating poverty has been the focus of every region of the World. Figure 5 presents residents' perceived ways of tackling poverty in all its dimensions.

**Figure 5.** Poverty alleviating strategies.

The figure shows that 194 (52.7%) residents view provision and improvement in the condition of infrastructure as the means of alleviating poverty in the study area; 67 (18.2%) see financial assistance in terms of loans, making of consumer goods and agricultural implements cheap, and giving of incentives to rural dwellers as the way of ameliorating poverty; 33 (9%) residents suggest providing good markets for their agricultural products and provision of job opportunity to the unemployed as the best ways of alleviating poverty, while 31 (8.4%) perceived that poverty cannot be alleviated except there is a good means of communicating with other people like their agricultural product buyers, their relatives and other people through a provision of a stable communication network. Only 24 (6.5%) perceived that an establishment of industry and higher institutions that will boost the market in the villages as poverty alleviating strategies. Creation of employment to rural residents' children is the way out of poverty for 6.5% of rural residents; while 19 (5.2%) respondents see poverty alleviation as the personal work of every individual and communal duties of every village.

From the aforementioned, it is clear that diverse ways were perceived as a panacea to poverty alleviation in the study area, with more than half (52.7%) of the respondents seeing a provision of infrastructure in form of construction of roads, pipe-bore water, hospital, electricity and other public infrastructure as the most potent strategy to alleviate poverty in the study area. Other poverty alleviation strategies perceived by the respondents were financial assistance, market and employment opportunities, an establishment of industry and highest institution, a stable communication network, individual diligence and community commitment.

## Conclusion

This study inferred that poverty is more dominant in the southern part than the northern part of the study area, and this may be due to the closeness of the residents in the northern parts to urban areas which enables them to experience urban benefits. The study also reveals that there are many ways by which rural dwellers cope with poverty such as endurance, management, loan and indebtedness, a gathering of remnant fruit, family assistance, and the mercy of God. The perception of the residents is that poverty can be alleviated in the study area by improving the condition of public infrastructure, rendering financial assistance to rural residents, creating a ready market for their farm products, providing employment opportunities, establishing industries and tertiary institutions, enhancing communal cooperation and personal diligence. But among all these poverty alleviation strategies, improvement in public infrastructure has been perceived as the best way of reducing poverty. This corroborates with the findings of Leke and Oluwaleye (2015) that there must be adequate provision and utilization of social amenities and basic needs for the poor. The study concluded that dividends of democracy can only be effective if the government considers the perceptions of rural residents in planning and provision for poverty alleviation in the rural areas.

For poverty coping strategies of rural residents to be enhanced and poverty to be alleviated, this study thus recommends that:

- i. The public infrastructure should be in good condition especially roads for easy accessibility of rural dwellers and their products, free education and health service in order to reduce their expenses, stable electricity and security.
- ii. Financial assistance in terms of loans and incentives, and reduction in the price of farm implements and consumer goods.
- iii. There should be involvement of rural residents in the planning and development in order to alleviate poverty.

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