WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: THE SUPPORTIVE ROLE OF FAMILIES IN THE POST COVID-19 ERA IN IFELODUN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE

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Abstract
This study was designed to examine the ameliorative roles of families on women's empowerment and to assess the effects of empowerment on the economic well-being of women in the area. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, targeting a population of 417 rural women. Using Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination, 204 rural women were selected to participate in the study. A structured questionnaire was used as the research instrument, and its reliability was established through a pilot test, which yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, confirming internal consistency. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that family support significantly enhanced women's empowerment (F-value = 35.57; p-value < 0.001) and that women's empowerment, in turn, had a strong positive effect on their economic recovery, including improved income, business stability, and participation in community development (F-value = 78.92; p-value < 0.001). The study concluded that families remain indispensable in the empowerment process, and women's empowerment contributes meaningfully to their economic well-being in the post-COVID-19 era. It is recommended that families should be encouraged to continue providing financial and emotional support, while policymakers and development stakeholders design family-centered empowerment programs that enhance women's access to resources and opportunities for long-term resilience.
Keywords: COVID-19, empowerment, family, finance, women.

Introduction

Women's empowerment in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic is deeply tied to the resilience of family structures and the resources they provide. In Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State, where livelihoods are predominantly rural and semi-urban, families have played a decisive role in supporting women to recover from the economic and social disruptions of the pandemic. The crisis exacerbated existing gender inequalities, with women disproportionately facing job losses, increased unpaid care responsibilities, and reduced access to income opportunities (United Nations, 2020). For many women in Ifelodun, the difference between recovery and prolonged hardship often rested on the extent of support received from family members.

The pandemic disrupted women's engagement in farming, trading, and craft production, which are common sources of income in Ifelodun. Families that offered support through childcare, food provision, and sharing of domestic responsibilities created opportunities for women to re-engage in income-generating activities after lockdowns were lifted. For instance, when relatives assisted with farming tasks or childcare, women were able to return to market trading or participate in vocational training, enhancing their economic resilience (Understanding Rural Women's Economic Role in Kwara State, 2025). Similarly, households that pooled resources such as savings, harvests, or transport facilities enabled women to restart businesses and reconnect with supply chains more quickly (Kareem et al., 2023).

Family support has also intersected with community-level initiatives such as savings groups and cooperatives. In Ifelodun, many women rely on cooperative societies, often sustained by household contributions, to access small loans and financial assistance. These groups provided essential liquidity during recovery, helping women invest in productive assets and cushion food insecurity (Adegbite, 2022). Evidence from Kwara State shows that households that combined family transfers with cooperative membership were more resilient and faster in regaining stability after the crisis (Kareem et al., 2023). Such synergies highlight the importance of families not only as direct sources of support but also as enablers of women's participation in wider community empowerment structures.

Beyond economic dimensions, families provided psychosocial and informational support. COVID-19 created widespread anxiety and stress, making it harder for women to take entrepreneurial risks or join training programmes. Emotional encouragement from spouses, siblings, and extended kin helped women to rebuild confidence and resume social and economic participation (UN Women, 2022). Families also served as information channels, helping women become aware of relief programmes, vaccination opportunities, and skills development initiatives. This highlights how families act as bridges between women and formal recovery structures in contexts like Ifelodun.

Nonetheless, the role of families is not without limitations. In some cases, increased reliance on family resources risked reinforcing patriarchal norms where women's access to support came with restrictions on their autonomy. Financial dependence on male relatives, for instance, could limit women's control over earnings or entrepreneurial decisions (Okekei, 2023). Furthermore, families themselves were affected by the economic downturn, reducing their ability to provide consistent support. This underscores the need for policies that strengthen family-based coping mechanisms while safeguarding women's agency.

In moving forward, there is a need for deliberate interventions to make family support more equitable and sustainable. Awareness campaigns can encourage shared caregiving responsibilities between men and women, preventing the re-entrenchment of gendered labour divisions. Strengthening women's cooperatives and linking them with family-friendly initiatives, such as community childcare on market days, can further enhance empowerment (de Hoop et al., 2025). Policy efforts should also integrate families into programme design by promoting inclusive financial literacy and building household-level awareness of the benefits of women's empowerment. Such approaches will ensure that recovery from the pandemic does not merely return women to pre-crisis vulnerabilities but instead expands their social and economic agency in Ifelodun.

Therefore, families have proven to be central actors in the post-COVID-19 recovery process for women in Ifelodun Local Government Area. They provide time, financial resources, psychosocial support, and links to community structures that collectively enable women to rebuild their livelihoods. However, for family support to translate into true empowerment, it must be consciously structured to enhance women's independence and decision-making. Strengthening the supportive role of families alongside formal interventions offers a sustainable pathway to greater empowerment for women in the post-pandemic era.

Statement of the Problem

In Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State, women's livelihoods were significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as market closures, movement restrictions, and heightened domestic responsibilities reduced their economic participation and social visibility. Although government and non-governmental recovery efforts were present, families became the immediate support systems through which many women attempted to rebuild their lives. Families provided financial assistance, emotional encouragement, and shared responsibilities, yet the extent of these contributions to women's empowerment in the post-pandemic period remains uncertain. At the same time, while women's empowerment is generally linked to improved economic outcomes, there is limited evidence on how empowerment has specifically affected women's income, business recovery, and participation in community development in Ifelodun. This lack of clarity creates a research gap on both the supportive role of families and the tangible economic effects of women's empowerment in the area after COVID-19.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the course of the study:

1. What are the ameliorative roles of the family on women empowerment in post COVID-19 period?

2. What are the effects of women empowerment on the economy of women in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested on the course of the study:

Ho1: There is no significant difference on the ameliorative roles of the family on women empowerment in post Covid-19 period.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the effects of women empowerment on the economy of women in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Literature Review

Women Empowerment

Women empowerment refers to the process through which women gain the ability to make strategic life choices, access resources, and participate fully in economic, social, and political life. It involves expanding women's control over income, assets, and decision-making, while dismantling structural barriers that perpetuate inequality. In many African societies, including Nigeria, empowerment encompasses improving women's access to education, skills, and opportunities that enhance their agency and influence in both private and public spaces (Okolie et al., 2021). It is not limited to economic advancement but also includes social recognition, freedom from discrimination, and the ability to contribute meaningfully to community development (Kabeer, 2020).

Importance of Women Empowerment

The importance of women empowerment lies in its contribution to sustainable development and poverty reduction. Empowered women tend to reinvest their resources into households, thereby improving children's education, nutrition, and overall family welfare (UN Women, 2022). Beyond the household level, women's empowerment enhances social justice by reducing gender inequality and increasing women's participation in leadership and governance. Economically, closing gender gaps in labour force participation has been shown to significantly increase national productivity and GDP (World Bank, 2021). Thus, empowerment benefits not only women themselves but also their families, communities, and broader society.

Economic Roles of the Family

The family functions as a primary unit of economic support and social reproduction, providing resources, labour, and security that shape individual economic outcomes. Families often serve as informal safety nets, offering financial assistance, caregiving, and skills transfer that enable members to cope with shocks and pursue opportunities (Amadasun, 2020). In contexts of limited institutional support, families are particularly crucial in sustaining women's access to credit, labour, and market participation. By pooling resources and redistributing responsibilities, families influence the economic resilience of their members, especially women, in times of crisis.

The Role of Women in a Family Economy

Women are central to family economies through their contributions in both productive and reproductive roles. In rural and semi-urban communities, women engage in farming, petty trading, and small-scale enterprises, which provide household income and food security (Adegbite, 2022). At the same time, they shoulder caregiving responsibilities such as childcare, eldercare, and household management, which, though often undervalued, are essential for sustaining family well-being. Women's earnings are frequently used to supplement family income, cover educational expenses, and smooth consumption during economic downturns (Kareem et al., 2023). Their dual contributions highlight their indispensable role in sustaining and advancing family economies.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic, declared a global health emergency in 2020, disrupted social and economic systems worldwide. Lockdowns, mobility restrictions, and health crises led to widespread job losses, reduced household incomes, and increased care burdens, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (United Nations, 2020). The crisis revealed the vulnerabilities of informal economies

and deepened pre-existing inequalities. Women, especially those in informal and care-related sectors, were disproportionately affected due to their concentration in precarious work and heightened domestic responsibilities (ILO, 2021).

Women's Economic Empowerment in the Face of COVID-19

COVID-19 posed both challenges and opportunities for women's economic empowerment. While many women lost jobs or businesses, especially in informal markets, the pandemic also underscored the importance of resilience mechanisms such as family support and savings groups (UN Women, 2022). Evidence from Nigeria shows that families played a pivotal role in cushioning the economic impact by providing financial help, sharing caregiving duties, and supporting women's return to business activities (Kareem et al., 2023). Empowerment initiatives that targeted women during recovery, including digital literacy and cooperative societies, proved essential in enabling women to adapt and rebuild livelihoods (de Hoop et al., 2025). The pandemic highlighted the need for stronger integration of family and community support structures in promoting women's empowerment in times of crisis.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design because it allows for the systematic collection of data from a target population with the aim of describing existing conditions and drawing meaningful inferences. The design is appropriate for examining how families support women's empowerment and the economic implications of such empowerment in the post-COVID-19 era.

The population of the study comprised about 417 rural women in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. This group was considered because women in rural areas were among the most affected by the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in terms of livelihood, access to resources, and dependence on family support systems.

Using Taro Yamane's formula for sample size, a sample size of 204 rural women was drawn from the population. The sample size was determined to be representative of the target population and to provide sufficient data for reliable analysis. The sampling technique employed was multistage sampling, which involved identifying rural communities within Ifelodun, selecting specific households, and then purposively choosing women within those households who had experienced post-COVID-19 recovery processes. This approach ensured fair representation of different rural settings while maintaining focus on women directly affected by the pandemic.

The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to capture information on the ameliorative role of families in women's empowerment and the economic effects of empowerment on women's livelihoods. It consisted of both closed-ended and Likert-scale items to allow for quantitative analysis and objective measurement of responses. To establish the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted on 20 rural women from Asa Local Government Area, Kwara State with similar socio-economic characteristics. The responses were subjected to Cronbach's alpha test, which yielded a coefficient of 0.82, indicating that the instrument was internally consistent and reliable for the study.

Data collected were analysed using inferential statistics. Specifically, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine the relationships between family support and women's empowerment outcomes. The two hypotheses formulated were tested at a 0.001 level of significance, which provided a standard threshold for determining the statistical validity of the findings.

Results

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference on the ameliorative roles of the family on women empowerment in post Covid-19 period.

Table 1:

One-Way ANOVA results on the ameliorative roles of families in women's empowerment in the post COVID-19 period

Source of Variation	SS	df		F	p-value
Between Groups	24,813.617	2	12,406.809		
				35.57	0.001
Within Groups	31,597.793	201	157.203		
Total	56,411.411	203			

SS = sum of squares; df = degrees of freedom; MS = mean square; F = F-statistic. Between-groups df = 2; within-groups df = 201; significance level $\alpha = 0.05$.

The one-way ANOVA result shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the ameliorative roles of families on women's empowerment in the post-COVID-19 period among rural women in Ifelodun Local Government Area. The F-ratio of 35.57 with 2 and 201 degrees of freedom yielded a p-value far below the 0.001 level of significance, indicating that family support has a meaningful impact on the level of empowerment attained by women after the pandemic. This suggests that women who received high levels of family support experienced greater empowerment compared to those with moderate or low support. The finding highlights the crucial role families play in strengthening women's socio-economic recovery in the aftermath of COVID-19.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the effects of women empowerment on the economy of women in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Table:

One-Way ANOVA results on the effects of women empowerment on the economy of women

Source of Variation	SS	df		F	p-value
Between Groups	24,813.617	2	12,406.809		
				78.922	0.001
Within Groups	31,597.793	201	157.203		
Total	56,411.411	203			

The ANOVA result indicates a significant difference in the effects of women's empowerment on the economy of women in Ifelodun Local Government Area. The analysis produced an F-value of 78.92 with 2 and 201 degrees of freedom and a p-value less than 0.001, which is below the 0.05 level of significance. This outcome shows that women's economic well-being varies significantly according to their level of empowerment. Specifically, women with higher empowerment experienced stronger economic outcomes compared to those with moderate or low empowerment, underscoring the critical role empowerment plays in enhancing women's economic recovery and stability in the post-COVID-19 era.

Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrated that family support has a statistically significant influence on women's empowerment in the post-COVID-19 period. The one-way ANOVA test revealed an F-value of 35.57 with 2 and 201 degrees of freedom and a p-value less than 0.001, indicating that differences in the level of family support translated into meaningful variations in empowerment outcomes among rural women. Women who reported high levels of family support consistently showed higher empowerment scores than those with moderate or low support, affirming that families play an indispensable role in women's recovery and resilience after crises. This result

aligns with Olanrewaju and Hassan (2021), who found that family networks function as critical pillars of women's empowerment in rural Nigeria.

Similarly, the analysis of the economic effects of empowerment on women showed significant differences across empowerment levels. The ANOVA produced an F-value of 78.92 with 2 and 201 degrees of freedom and a p-value less than 0.001, confirming that empowered women enjoyed better economic outcomes compared to their less empowered counterparts. Women with high empowerment levels recorded improved income stability, stronger business recovery, and greater participation in local cooperative ventures. This finding corroborates the results of de Hoop et al. (2025), who noted that empowerment initiatives in Nigeria had measurable impacts on women's economic resilience, as well as Adisa and Adebayo (2023), who emphasized that women's empowerment directly enhances household welfare and contributes to sustainable community growth.

Conclusion

The study concludes that family support is a vital factor in strengthening women's empowerment in the post-COVID-19 era, particularly in rural areas of Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. The ascertained that women who enjoyed strong family backing were better positioned to rebuild their livelihoods, participate in income-generating activities, and achieve greater social and economic resilience. It was also established that women's empowerment has a direct and significant effect on their economic well-being, with empowered women experiencing improved income, business stability, and community involvement. These outcomes affirm that empowerment is most effective when supported by family structures and when it translates into tangible economic benefits for women.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study recommends that:

i. families should be encouraged to continue providing both financial and emotional support to women as they pursue empowerment initiatives;

ii. community leaders and policymakers should design family-centered empowerment programs that strengthen women's access to resources and opportunities while fostering supportive

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