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**SOCIAL WORKS AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN
MBO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA,
AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**



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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the effect of social works on poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State., inequality, and human development outcomes for the people of Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design to gather quantitative data on the effect of social work on poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area. The total population was estimated at 2150, this consisted of rural household heads who had directly benefited from or were involved in social work projects within the selected communities.

Taro Yamane's sample size determination technique was deployed in determining the study's sample size which was 337. After the return of the questionnaire by the respondents, the data was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) with interpretation made using frequency tables and percentages. The chi-square statistical analysis was used in measuring the hypotheses of the study. From the analysis, the findings revealed that there exist significant relationship between social works and poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area especially in the area of vocational training, economic empowerment and social protection.

However, it was concluded among others that Governments, donors, and stakeholders need to ensure adequate and sustained funding for community-based development projects. Reliable financial support is critical to overcoming resource constraints and enabling projects to effectively address poverty reduction goals. Also that the coordinators of social work initiatives in Mbo Local Government Area should Establish robust management frameworks and transparent monitoring systems that can help address inefficiencies and ensure accountability.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The brain child of poverty encompasses the absence of life essential and resources which an average citizen should have.. These include fundamental necessities such as food, shelter, medical care, and safety, following Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of need which are universally regarded as essential for preserving human dignity. Mbarra and Gopal, (2021) noted that poverty stands out as one of the greatest challenges to social development in history, now being accompanied by the rise of terrorism and insurgency, which further exacerbate poverty. However, what constitutes a necessity can vary from person to person and is heavily influenced by social constructs and past experiences. According to Maruta, Odhiambo, and Mavikela, (2020), the bane of poverty lies in inequality, with poverty essentially being a state of relative deprivation, and lack of essentials.. In other words, poverty is defined by the lack of resources and opportunities compared to others in society. Poverty in Africa is a complex issue that extends beyond just having low income levels. It encompasses various dimensions, such as limited access to education, health-care, clean water, and other basic necessities. High poverty rates in Africa are influenced by a multitude of factors, including historical, political, economic, and social inequalities.

Addressing poverty in any environment requires a comprehensive understanding of the socio -cultural, political, ethnic , racial or systemic manipulation of such people. The essential components of many international and regional organizations, including the United Nations (UN), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Labour Organization (ILO), African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and numerous bilateral partners. These principles are reflected in their agendas. According to the International Labour Organization/United Nations Development Goals (ILO/UNDG, 2016), the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development Goals by all UN Member States reaffirmed the global commitment to prioritize social protection to achieve several SDGs agenda. Prominent among the SDGs agenda is SDG 1.3 which calls upon all countries to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems for all to prevent and reduce poverty across the life cycle and promote prosperity to ensure that no one is left behind (World Bank, 2022).

However overtime, One approach that has gained recognition as a crucial tool in tackling poverty is the implementation of social work policies. Adopting a social work approach on poverty allows communities to address local concerns in a flexible manner, as they can tailor their efforts based on the specific needs and resources available (Lamidi and Igbokwe 2021). According to the World Social Protection Database (ILO/WSPDB, 2017) published by the International Labour Organization, more than 55% of the global population does not have access to any form of basic needs of life. It is in this context that International Organizations and indeed all countries are encouraged to develop and adopt social programmes that will enable poverty reduction, reduce inequality, and enhance human development to ensure that no one is left behind.

1.1 Statements of Problems

Poverty and its related issues have been at the centre of national and international discourse and this is because poverty is a global scourge, a threat to humanity and community capacity for sustained development. According to Gaolathe (2014), one in five people of the world's population which is two third are in abject poverty and more than 24 percent of the population of the developing and emerging industrialized nations live on less than US \$1 a day. In corroboration, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2021) reportedly stated that Nigeria's poverty rate has increased over the years from 15% in 1960 to about 66% in 1996 and about 70% in 2025.

In Akwa Ibom state as well as Mbo Local Government Area social works programmes initiated by government and development agencies such as the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Empowerment Support Initiative (ESI), micro-credit, agricultural development programmes, empowerment, vocational training programmes, Skills Acquisition Programmes by NGOs etc. are all geared towards poverty alleviation, but with these programmes, the menace of poverty among the citizens is still on the high side, giving room for probing whether or not social works programmes influence poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the influence of social works on poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom state.

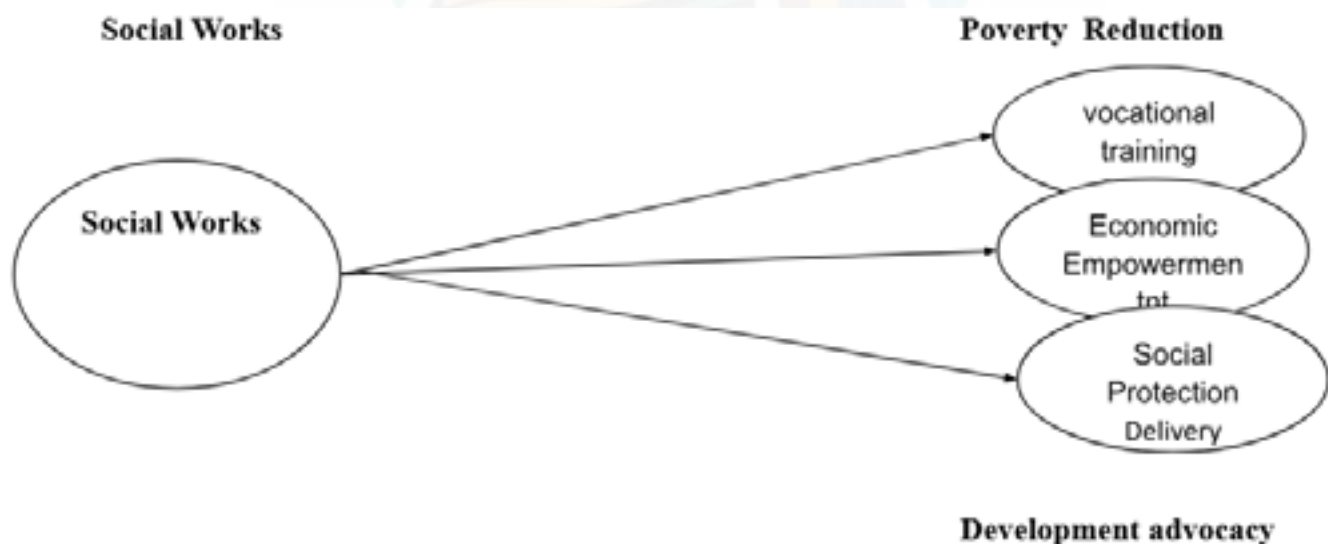
1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the influence of social works on poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom state.

1.4 Hypothesis of the Study

H01: There is no significant relationship between social work and poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom state.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW



2.1 Social Works

Social work mostly is used interchanging with community work and community participation. Community work is concerned with working collectively with communities and groups for positive social change, inclusion, and equality. Over the past fifty years and more, voluntary and professional community work has supported communities in seeking such change (Kirst-Ashman, 2010). According to Gordon (1995), Com-

munity work or community development involves an analysis of social and economic situations and collective action for change based on that analysis. It is centred on a series of principles that seek to go beyond consultation to participation and beyond capacity building to consciousness-raising and empowerment. It recognizes the changing and often hidden nature of the structural inequalities based on „race“, class, gender, ethnicity, and disability to name but a few. It seeks to be transformative rather than conforming and empowering rather than controlling.

In the word of Ugwu and Aruma (2019) social work can be defined as a process whereby members of participating communities mobilize themselves to participate in groups as community members for the common purpose of addressing their problems with a view to improving people's living conditions in the concerned communities. In the views of Desai (2011) social work simply means a situation whereby people act in groups in order to influence the direction and outcome of development projects which will ultimately affect them in the society. The ultimate purpose of stimulating social work in community development projects is to elicit adequate involvement of members of the participating communities not only in project implementation, but at various stages of community development project including decision-making process in order to improve the living conditions of people in the concerned communities.

2.2 Poverty Reduction

Poverty reduction refers to strategic efforts aimed at decreasing the number of people living below the poverty line by improving their economic conditions and access to basic needs. It involves multi-dimensional approaches that target income generation, education, healthcare, and social protection to uplift vulnerable populations (Molina & Rodríguez, 2018). The concept recognizes poverty as not only a lack of income but also deprivation in social and economic

opportunities, requiring comprehensive interventions to foster sustainable improvements. Governance and institutional frameworks are critical in shaping poverty reduction outcomes. Transparent, accountable institutions facilitate efficient resource allocation and ensure that poverty reduction programs reach intended beneficiaries (Obeng & Mensah, 2022). Community participation and local governance strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of poverty interventions, ensuring that policies reflect grassroots realities and priorities, which bolsters ownership and sustainability of development initiatives.

Poverty reduction involves all the methods, ways or techniques adopted by government, non-governmental organizations or wealthy individuals to reduce or eradicate poverty from a collectivity. Poverty reduction is best approached as an exercise in raising people's capabilities or enhancing freedoms. The corollary of this approach to development is empowerment, which is, helping people in poverty to acquire the tools they need to meet their basic needs as the long-term solution to poverty (Echeonwu, Adikwu and Ekirigwe-Edeh, 2024). Reducing poverty is the fundamental objective of economic development. Poverty alleviation programmes are necessary due to the scourge that crept into the nation economy, especially among the rural folks. Emmanuel, (2015). identify the following as the approaches to poverty alleviation and youth empowerment in Nigeria.

2.3 Social Works and Poverty Reduction

Generally, Social works programs are said to contribute to improved standard of living and access to education/health among the poor and vulnerable in society. ILO (2019) stated that global trends in social works have shown significant progress over time in contrast to the situation that existed several decades ago such that today, there is practically no country where at least the basic measures of social works have not been implemented. However, it claims that the

current situation is far from optimal.

In Nigeria, there is a lot of evidence to show that Social works Programmes have recorded some level of achievements in the areas of livelihood enhancement, employment, education, health services, infrastructure, housing, and social insurance schemes among others, thereby improving the social qualities of many Nigerians, especially at the rural areas (Agboola & Lamidi, 2017). For example, the World Bank (2022) reported that over 80% of the Nigerian population live and farm in rural areas. Hence, the Agro-based social protection policies of the Nigerian have helped to empower the rural population who are endowed with agrarian economic activities thereby reducing their poverty level, and inequality gap and improving their living standard. However, a record from a 2023 special research report of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) indicates that Nigeria has one of the lowest social protection coverage rates globally and in Africa and has not fared well in her various forms of social protection programmes (NESG, 2023).

Community participation and social works are foundational principles in sustainable development and local governance, referring to the active involvement and control of community members in decision-making and project implementation. Participation empowers communities to voice their needs, priorities, and preferences, enhancing relevance and effectiveness of interventions (Khumalo & Chikozho, 2021). This ensures that communities take responsibility for the outcomes, promoting long-term sustainability and accountability of development efforts. Effective participation fosters social capital and strengthens trust between communities and implementing agencies. According to Ndlovu and Moyo (2020), social works participatory approaches contribute to increased collective action and resource sharing, which improves project success rates. This collaborative engagement shifts power dynamics by enabling marginalized groups to influence policies that directly impact their

lives, thus democratizing development processes.

The degree of social works directly affects project sustainability. Research by Ibrahim and Bello (2019) shows that communities with stronger social works exhibit higher motivation to maintain infrastructure and services post-intervention. This also promotes adaptability, as local actors are more likely to modify initiatives based on evolving needs and environmental changes, ensuring resilience beyond project timelines. Furthermore, integrating community participation through social works into development frameworks requires deliberate policy and institutional support. Otieno and Kimani (2023) argue that fostering enabling environments through capacity development, and equitable resource allocation bolsters community agency. Moreover, participatory mechanisms contribute to social justice and equitable development, making participation and ownership central to transformative change in communities. Social work acts as a critical driver of poverty reduction by empowering individuals, improving access to essential services, and fostering sustainable livelihoods. Through tailored interventions such as financial counseling, vocational training, and community development—social workers enhance the capacity of the poor to escape poverty.

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was theoretically underpinned on Participatory Development Theory. Participatory Development Theory was prominently developed and advocated by Robert Chambers in the early 1980s. Chambers criticized conventional top-down development approaches and emphasized the need for bottom-up strategies that place local people at the center of development processes. According to Chambers (1983), sustainable and effective development can only be achieved when communities are actively involved in identifying their needs, planning, im-

plementing, and evaluating projects that affect their lives. This theory is particularly relevant to the present study for several reasons. Firstly, it aligns directly with the principles of social works, emphasizing that development must begin with the people and be shaped by their collective participation. Secondly, it explains the importance of social works programmes in promoting local ownership, which is essential for the success and long-term sustainability of development, especially in rural Nigerian contexts. Thirdly, Participatory Development Theory supports sustainable poverty reduction by ensuring that interventions are grounded in local realities, thus addressing both economic and social aspects of poverty. Additionally, the theory offers insight into why some development projects succeed while others fail often due to differences in the extent of community involvement. Lastly, it emphasizes capacity building as a critical component for empowering rural populations and sustaining development outcomes over time in order to reduce poverty.

4.0 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Ozoemena, Mbah, & Nkwo, (2025) conducted a study on Effect of Community-Based Development Projects on Poverty Reduction in Rural Nigeria. The study investigated the effect of community-based development projects on poverty reduction in rural Nigeria by surveying 345 community members. Results showed that over 60% of respondents experienced improvements in income levels following project implementation, although some reported no change or income decline. Community involvement in project planning and sustainability varied significantly, with only about a quarter actively participating, while many reported limited or no engagement. Major challenges hindering project success included inadequate funding (31.9%), poor community participation (23.2%), and inefficient management

(20.3%). Correspondingly, 67% of respondents indicated these challenges significantly impeded poverty reduction efforts. The findings highlight the need for increased inclusive participation, enhanced funding, and improved management to boost the effectiveness of community-based initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty in rural Nigerian communities.

Andong, et al (2025) Vocational Training Programmes and Economic Empowerment of Street Children in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. The study investigated vocational training programmes and economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. Three research questions and null hypotheses were formulated to achieve the purpose of the study. The research design adopted for this study was Ex-post facto. The population of the study consisted of all street children in Calabar Metropolis with a total of 300 subjects. A sample of three hundred (300) respondents were used for the study. Census sampling technique was adopted for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled: "Vocational Training Programmes and Economic Empowerment of Street Children (VTPEESCQ)." Data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis at .05 level of significance. The result showed that there was a significant relationship between barbing skills acquisition programme, plumbing skills acquisition programme, furniture-making skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in the study area. These findings formed the basis of the recommendations made in this study that, Government agencies (e.g., Ministry of Youth & Sports, Social Welfare, or Skill Acquisition) should integrate barbing skill development into youth empowerment and poverty reduction policies. Include barbing in national and state-level Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curricula and strategies. Offer scholarships, stipends, or conditional cash

transfers to trainees, particularly street children, to reduce dropout rates due to financial hardship

Babatunde, (2025) studied the Roles of social workers in bridging the gap between social policy and social action in youth unemployment in Nigeria. The study investigates the roles of social workers in bridging the gap between social policy and social action in order to mitigate youth unemployment in Nigeria. A correlational survey research design was utilised for this study. The study's population consisted of 6,047 registered social workers and the sample size of 360 participants was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan table. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique, incorporating disproportionate simple random sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling, to select participants from the Social Work associations across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. The validity of the research instrument was confirmed by expert scholars, and a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained from a pilot study involving participants not included in the main sample. The questionnaire was administered electronically and responses analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study identified a relationship between social policy and social action but there is no synergy between policy formulation and social action. Consequently, the roles of social workers were not integrated into the interactions between social policy and social action. The government, Social Work professional associations, and other stakeholders should sensitize social workers to offer innovative interventions to unemployed youth in overcoming the challenges of unemployment and transitioning to entrepreneurship

Nahuche, Hassan, and Ismail (2024) examined the effects of social innovation and social value on poverty alleviation in Zamfara State. Using survey data analyzed via SMART-PLS3, they found social innovation positively and significantly affected poverty reduction, while social value showed a negative ef-

fect. Their study suggests that community programs should prioritize innovative approaches to reduce poverty.

Ogbari et al. (2024) explored social empowerment's impact on poverty alleviation among women agricultural entrepreneurs in Nigeria using SEM-PLS with survey data from 335 respondents. They found empowerment through access to resources and decision-making positively influenced poverty reduction. The study highlights the importance of genderfocused community development initiatives to sustainably improve livelihoods and reduce rural poverty.

Erundu, and Anya (2024) studied Effects of Social Protection Programs on Poverty Reduction, Inequality, and Human Development Outcomes in Nigeria. The paper investigated the impacts of social protection programmes on poverty reduction, inequality, and human development outcomes for the people of Nigeria. The information on the social protection programmes in Nigeria and their impact on the well-being of the people was obtained from secondary sources. The discussion centred on the outcomes of the programmes which included poverty reduction, food security through increased agricultural production, and women and youth empowerment. The paper identified some major challenges of social protection programmes in Nigeria including lack of political will by the Government, the misconception of the programmes by the target population, corruption, and insecurity, among others. It was recommended that the Government and all Agencies involved in the programmes increase funding, and properly sensitize the target population. In contrast, security Agencies should adopt strategies that will end terror and insecurity in the country.

Williams and Deekor, (2021) examined the Influence of Community Development Programmes on Poverty Alleviation Among Women in Rivers State. The study investigated the influence of communi-

ty development programmes on poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design with a population of 7402 respondents who are members of Community Based Organizations in the three Senatorial districts of Rivers State. A sample of 598 respondents was drawn from the population with the use of the multi stage sampling technique. A self structured questionnaire titled 'Influence of Community Development Programmes among Women Questionnaire' was used in collecting data from the respondents. The questionnaire was face and content validated by the researchers' supervisor and two other experts in Measurement and Evaluation. Mean and Standard Deviation was used in answering the research questions, while the ANOVA statistics was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. An average reliability index of 0.84 was achieved with the use of Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The result of the findings revealed that to a high extent skill acquisition programmes carried out for women has helped in poverty alleviation in Rivers state. This is because the acquired skills has made women self-employed, women now contribute to their family upkeep, women now depend on their earning and has encouraged women to start up their own businesses. The study also revealed that to a high extent health education programmes has helped towards poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. This is for the reason that women engage in family planning, proper hygiene, improved sanitation for healthy living among community members, proper nutrition etc. Based on the findings, it was recommended that centres for skills acquisition should be established in every Local Government Areas to ensure easy access to acquiring beneficial skills for capacity building. It was also recommended that young girls should also be a target of development programmes, because they grow up to become the driving force of the economy. Hence inculcating in them the necessary skills and empow-

erment is sustainable way of tackling future problem.

Omorogiuwa, (2020). Investigated Social work practice in strengthening household economic empowerment and support: Building sustainable livelihoods for working children's parents. Social Work and Education. The study qualitatively examines the feedback obtained from social workers on social intervention measures that could strengthen household economic development with a view to addressing the problem of child labour. Using the thematic data analysis, the social workers interviewed put forward various elements of a holistic strategy for improving parents or guardians economic status as well as remediating children involved in child labour, which included; schooling assistance and socio-economic development. Hence, recommendations are made that policies and programmes need to be focused on developing and strengthening household economic sustainability. Social workers as service providers should ensure that support measures are significant to responding to clients' needs.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design to gather quantitative data on the effect of social work on poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area. This design was appropriate for collecting standardized information from respondents and allowed for statistical analysis of the relationships between variables.

5.2 Area of Study

The research was conducted in rural communities in Mbo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, which include Oduo Ebughu, Okobo Ebughu, Utu-Udum, Udesi Isong-Inyang and Enwang. These communities provided a relevant context to explore the impact of social work initiatives on poverty reduction.

5.3 Population

The population consisted of rural household heads who had directly benefited from or were involved in social work projects within the selected communities. The total population was estimated at 2150 based on local government records (Mbo Local Government Area developmental report, 2025).

5.4 Sample Size

Taro Yamane's sample size determination technique was deployed in determining the study's sample size. This was achieved as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size
N = Population
e = Sampling error (0.05)
1 = Constant

Applying the formula, the sample size for the study =

$$\frac{2150}{1 + 2150(0.05)^2}$$
$$= \frac{2150}{1 + 2150(0.0025)} = \frac{2150}{1 + 5.375}$$
$$\frac{2150}{6.375}$$
$$= 337.25$$

Thus, 337 became the sample size for this study.

5.5 Sampling Technique

The simple random sampling technique will be adopted for the study. The choice of the technique is to allow for equal opportunity for the respondents. Also, the simple random sampling technique avoids bias in the selection of respondents.

5.6 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire formed the major data collection instrument for the study.

5.7 Method of Data Collection

After the return of the questionnaire by the respondents, the data was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) with interpretation made using frequency tables and percentages. The chi-square statistical analysis was used in measuring the hypotheses of the study. Chi-square statistical tool was used to estimate the relationship between two quantitative variables. It was used to determine how strong the relationships were between two variables.

5.8 Decision criteria

Decision to either accept or reject the null hypotheses (Ho) was as follows;

- Accept the null hypothesis (Ho) if table values are greater than the calculated value
- Reject the null hypothesis (Ha) if table values are lesser than the calculated value.”

5.9 Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected from the respondents were presented and analyzed using table and percentage.

Table 1 Analysis of Questionnaire Administered

Number of questionnaire sent out	Questionnaire returned	Questionnaire not returned	Percentage returned	Percentage unreturned
337	312	25	93	7
337	312	25	93	7

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 1 shows that three hundred and thirty seven (337) questionnaires were distributed to respondents, three hundred and twelve (312) representing 92% were returned while twenty five (25) representing 9% was not returned. Therefore, there was 92% compliance. Hence, this analysis was based on the returned questionnaire.

Table 2: There is a significant relationship between social work and poverty reduction

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agreed	89	29
Agreed	65	21
Strongly Disagreed	50	16
Disagreed	59	19
Undecided	49	15
Total	312	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 2, shows that 89 respondents representing 29% strongly Agreed that there exist significant relationship between social work and poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area, 65 respondents representing 21% agreed on the same assertion. 50 respondents representing 16% strongly disagreed, 59 respondents representing 19% also disagreed While 49 out of the total respondents representing 15% were Undecided.

Therefore, since the total of 89 respondents representing 29% were strongly in agreement, it is concluded that there exist significant relationship between social work and poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area.

Table 3: Chi-square (χ^2) computed table for hypothesis one

Variables	Fo	Fe	Fo-Fe	(Fo-Fe) ²	$\frac{(Fo-Fe)^2}{Fe}$
Strongly Agreed	89	62.4	26.6	707.56	11.33
Agreed	65	62.4	2.6	6.76	0.10
Strongly Disagreed	50	62.4	-12.4	153.76	2.46
Disagreed	59	62.4	-3.4	11.56	0.18
Undecided	49	62.4	-13.4	179.56	2.87
Total	312	312			16.94

Source: Field Survey, 2026

At 5% level of significance and (4) degree of freedom, the critical value of chi-square is 9.488. Therefore, since the calculated value of chi-square (χ^2) 16.94 is greater than the critical value 9.488, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

Hence, there exist significant relationship between social work and poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area.

6.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of hypothesis one showed that there exist significant relationship between social work and poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area. Social workers significantly reduce poverty by acting as connectors between individuals and resources, strengthening community capacity, and implementing targeted interventions that foster self-reliance and social justice. They address poverty through multifaceted approaches, including enhancing access to basic services, fostering economic empowerment, and supporting vulnerable households through tailored, step-by-step assistance plans. The findings is in agreement with the study of Omorogiuwa, (2020) who Investigated Social work practice in strengthening household economic empowerment and support: Building sustainable livelihoods for working children's parents. The finding showed that social works put forward various elements of a holistic strategy for improving parents or guardians economic status as well as remediating children involved in child labour, which included; schooling assistance and socio-economic development hence, help in reducing poverty. Furthermore, Ogbari et al. (2024) explored social empowerment's impact on poverty alleviation among women agricultural entrepreneurs in Nigeria using SEM-PLS with survey data from 335 respondents. They found empowerment through access to resources and decision-making positively influenced poverty reduction. Also, Ozoemena, Mbah, & Nkwo, (2025) conducted a study on Effect of Community-Based Development Projects on Poverty Reduction in Rural Nigeria. The findings highlight the need for increased inclusive participation, enhanced funding, and improved management to boost the effectiveness of community-based initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty in rural Nigerian communities. In constrast , Babatunde, (2025) studied the Roles of social workers in bridging the gap between social policy and social action in youth unemployment in

Nigeria. The study identified a relationship between social policy and social action but there is no synergy between policy formulation and social action. Consequently, the roles of social workers were not integrated into the interactions between social policy and social action.

Social workers in Mbo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State have contribute to poverty reduction primarily through implementing government-backed social welfare schemes, promoting community-driven development, and facilitating skill acquisition programs. By extension, Social workers, facilitate programs focusing on vocational training (e.g., agro, build, tech) to boost youth employability and reduce unemployment-induced poverty. Social workers work with community-based organizations, such as rural-based women groups, to promote income generation through joint labor and cooperative financial accumulation. Despite these efforts, impact is often limited by poor infrastructure and top-down project designs. During our research some of our findings on the effect o Social Workers and Poverty Reduction in Mbo Local Government Area are tabulated below:

S/N	POVERTY REDUCTION INITIATIVES	ACHIEVEMENTS
1	Vocational training and Skill Acquisition	Social workers and related agencies have facilitated the establishment of youth empowerment centres in Enwang Mbo, Local Government Area providing training in printing, photography, and other vocations to create sustainable livelihoods.
2	Economic Empowerment	Recently, social work initiatives target 1,100 women in Mbo LGA (100 per ward) designed to provide financial and agricultural support through cooperative frameworks, aiming to move rural women from subsistence to income-generating activities. Through their agricultural initiatives, they also give microfinance loans for rural dwellers, which improves economic well-being as such reduce poverty.
3	Social Protection	Social workers operate as bridges connecting vulnerable individuals (orphans, elderly, disabled) to available social protection resources, such as those provided by NGOs and state government initiatives like the Ibom Sure-P in Mbo Local Government Area. In rural areas, they manage cases of child abuse, family abandonment, and rehabilitation of the disabled, providing direct services that act as safety nets

Source; Field survey, 2026

7.0 CONCLUSION

The study on the effect of social work on poverty reduction in Mbo Local Government Area reveals that these initiatives have contributed positively to improving income levels and access to basic services for many residents. This shows that the initiative made some impacts on poverty reduction, reduction in the wide social equity gap, and improving human capital developments through vocational training and skills acquisition, economic empowerment as well as social protections. However, the benefits are unevenly experienced, with a notable proportion of community members seeing little or no improvement.

Community involvement in project planning and sustainability is inconsistent, highlighting the need for more inclusive and participatory approaches to foster stronger ownership and long-term success. Additionally, significant challenges such as inadequate funding, limited community engagement, and inefficient management continue to hinder the overall effectiveness of these projects in reducing poverty. Addressing these barriers through enhanced resource allocation, improved stakeholder participation, and robust management practices is essential to maximize the impact of social work efforts and promote sustainable poverty alleviation in Mbo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Development agencies and project implementers should prioritize inclusive and participatory approaches that actively involve community members in all phases of projects planning, implementation, and sustainability. This will foster stronger ownership, better alignment with local needs, and improved project outcomes.

2. Governments, donors, and stakeholders need to ensure adequate and sustained funding for community-based development projects. Reliable financial support is critical to overcoming resource constraints and enabling projects to effectively address poverty reduction goals.
3. The coordinators of social work initiatives in Mbo Local Government Area should establish robust management frameworks and transparent monitoring systems that can help address inefficiencies and ensure accountability.

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