



Challenges and coping strategies of female headed households in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State

Chiamaka Chukwuone ✉ chiamaka.chukwuone@unn.edu.ng
Nigeria

Uju Ejinkeonye ✉ ejimsuju@gmail.com
Nigeria

Ijeoma Ezea ✉ ijeomavictoriezea@gmail.com
Nigeria

Abstract

The study investigated the challenges and coping strategies of Female Headed Household in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State. Two null hypotheses guided the study: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of educational levels of females on the challenges of Female Headed Household and there is no significant difference between the mean responses of different occupation of the females on the coping strategies adopted in their households. The area of the study is Ikwuano L.G.A. Simple random sampling techniques was used to select 285 females from 986 registered population of female headed household in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State. Frequency, means and percentages were used to analysis the research questions while ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis. The key findings revealed that the reasons for Female Headed Households include: widowhood, abandonment, divorce, migration and separation. The study revealed the challenges of female headed households as: economic insecurity, lack of income earning opportunities, poor social status, lack of employment, inadequate finances to run the family, lack of respect by family members/society, gender inequality, difficulty in raising children, lack of support from offspring, lack of regular income, struggling to procure food, poor access to basic healthcare and loneliness among many others, coping strategies adopted by female headed households in managing their households include; involvement in daily/weekly contribution , engaging in menial jobs, gender equality, begging, trading, regular income, support from members of religious group, free access to basic healthcare, support from family members, among others. The study recommended that Conferences, seminars and workshops should be periodically organized for heads of female headed household on how to cope with the challenges they are facing sustainability across lifespan in households among others.

KEYWORDS: FEMALE HEADED, HOUSEHOLDS, SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS LIFESPAN IN HOUSEHOLDS, FAMILY LIVING

Introduction

In every human society, the household is one of the most important and intrinsic part of people's lives. Primarily, it is the unit of society where individuals cooperate and compete for

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resources, confront and reproduce societal norms, values, power, authority and privilege. A household consists of one or more people who reside in the same dwelling and also share meals or living accommodation, and may consist of a single family or some other grouping of people (Varley, 2013). The term, head of household refers to the key economic provider, the major decision maker and the person assigned by others as the head of the household. The headship of the household therefore, is usually identified with the person who has the greatest authority in the household.

Head of household from the African perspective reflects the stereotype of a man in the household as the person in authority and the breadwinner (Hedman et al., 2015). Thus, in traditional African societies, males are assumed to be heads of household irrespective of the status of their spouses (Chant and Brydon, 2016). But recently, there is an emergence and increase in Female headship of households in Nigeria and globally across nations. According to Ngwenya (2013) one fourth of all rural households in Nigeria are headed by females. While the debates over the definition of Female Headed Household increases, Batista (2015) defined Female-Headed Household (FHH) as a family where woman in the household is seen as the person in authority and the breadwinner with children and no husband or adult male present. In a female headed household, the woman could be widowed, unmarried mother, divorced or separated (Hedman et al., 2015). Folbre (2014) sees Female Headed Household (FHH) as a source of social power and self-worth.

Furthermore, recent studies have shown that in the developing world, households headed by women are increasing day-by-day and that such heads of households are over represented among the poor (United Nations, 2014). Data from United Nations (2015) on current status of the social situation also indicates that on average; around two thirds of women in developing countries are either heads of the household or the spouses of the head. Recent estimate has further shown that elderly women heads of household constitute 13 per cent in Middle East and North Africa, 22 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa, 16 per cent in Asia, 35 per cent in the Caribbean and 24 per cent in Latin America (United Nations, 2013). In Nigeria, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2015) showed that 16.5% of households in Nigeria are headed by women majority of who are elderly women. These findings have indicated that generally, the social conditions of female heads of households present a perplexing paradox in Nigeria where the gap between women and men heads of households caught in the cycle of poverty has continued to widen in the past decade (Okoya, 2016).

Mullings (2015) stated that a female headed household is a household in which an adult female is the sole or main income producer and decision-maker. In most countries, women are not usually considered as heads of households unless no adult male is living permanently in the household (Folbre, 2014). The assumption that the head of a household is always an adult man, even if a woman's economic contribution to the household's maintenance is the same or greater than that of a man, is a form of gender bias (Ruwanpura, 2015). In developing countries, there is a general trend of more and more women being the primary source of economic support for their families.

Incidentally, the emergence of female heads of households is occurring at a period the traditional familial care and support for the female household heads are declining among family members (Eboiyehi, 2015).

The question now is, how do the heads of female household cope and manage their family activities? Based on this, the researchers decided to investigate the challenges and coping strategies of Female Headed Household (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to investigate into the challenges and coping strategies of Female Headed Household (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State. Specifically, the study;

- i. Identified the reasons for Female Headed Households (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State.
- ii. determined the challenges faced by Female Headed Household (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State.
- iii. Identified the coping strategies adopted by the heads of Female Headed Households (FHH) in managing their households.

Research Hypothesis

Two null hypotheses guided in this study.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of educational levels of female heads of households on the challenges of Female Headed Household (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of female heads of household's occupation on the copying strategies adopted in the households in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The of the study was Ikwuano Local Government of Abia State. The population of the study comprised of 986 registered population of female heads of household in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia. Ikwuano Local Government Area comprises of Oboro and Oloko. Oboro has seven key communities in namely, Umudike, Umuariaga, Amaoba, Amawom, Ndoro, Amaba-Ime, Umugalu Oboro while Oloko has eight key communities namely; Otoro-Nchara, Ama Izi, Ezi-Amata, Ezi Uku, Umu- Akwu, Umu-Ugo, Ahaba, Azu-Iyi and Ohuhu-Nsulu, making 15 communities in Ikwuano. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 19 female heads of household from each of the 15 communities making a sample size of 285 female heads of households.

The instrument for data collection was Challenges and Coping Strategies of Female Headed Household Questionnaire (CCSFHHQ). The CCSFHHQ was developed by the researchers in line with the objectives of the study and done through extensive review of literature the instrument was divided into two major parts; A and B. A dealt with the personal data of respondents while B has three sections 1, 2 and 3 each representing the specific purposes of the study. The CCSFFHQ was validated by three lecturers from Home Science Department, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike. On the basis of their comments and suggestions, the instrument was modified to suit the purpose of the study.

The reliability of the instrument was established through Cronbach Alpha (α) coefficient index. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered to twenty female heads of households in Ihie Ndume in Umuahia North Local Government Area Abia State who are not part of the study. This was conducted through direct delivery to their households, after that it was correlated and it yielded a coefficient of 0.82 which was regarded as reliable. The questionnaire was given to the respondents at their houses by the researchers. The questionnaire items were explained to the respondents and were collected on the spot. Frequency, and percentages were used to analysis the demographic characteristics and means and standard deviations were used for research questions while ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis using a computerized data analysis package known as Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 22.0)

Results and Findings

Table 1 examined the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The data collected revealed that 7.4% representing 21 respondents were divorced, 42.5% representing 121 respondents were widows, 27% representing 77 respondents were separated while 23.2% representing 66 respondents were single parents. This implies that the respondents were of different marital status. The majority of the respondents were widows while the minority of the respondents were divorcees.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Category	Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Marital status	Divorced	21	7.4
	Widow	121	42.5
	Separated	77	27.0
	Single	66	23.2
	Total	285	100.0
Age	25-30 years	14	4.9
	31-35 years	27	9.5
	36-41 years	41	14.14
	42-47 years	47	16.5
	48 years and above	156	54.7
	Total	285	100.0
Education qualification	FSLC	47	16.5
	WAEC	130	45.6
	OND	55	19.3
	HND/BSc	35	12.3
	MSc/PhD	18	6.3
	Total	285	100.0
Occupation	Farming	46	16.1
	Petty trading	161	56.5
	Retiree	54	18.9
	civil servant	24	8.4
	Total	285	100.0
Number of children	None	46	16.1
	1-2	48	16.8
	3-4	104	36.5
	5-6	50	17.5
	7 and above	37	13.0
	Total	285	100.0
Age distribution of the children	5 years	64	22.5
	6-10 years	52	18.2
	11-15 years	143	50.2
	15-20 years	1	.4
	21 years and above	25	8.8
	Total	285	100.0

Source: Field survey (2017).

4.9% representing 14 respondents were within the age range of 25-30 years, 9.5% representing 27 respondents were within the age range of 31-35 years, 14.14% representing 41 respondents

were within the age range of 36-41 years, 16.5% representing 47 respondents were within the age range of 42-47 years, 54.7% representing 156 respondents were within the age range of 48 years and above. This study shows that the respondents were of different age group. The majority of them falling within the age range of 48 years and above while the minority were within the age range of 25-30 years.

16.5% comprising of 47 respondents had FSLC as their academic qualification only, 45.6% representing 130 respondents had WAEC certificate only, 19.3% comprising of 55 respondents had OND certificate, 12.3% comprising 35 respondents had HND/BSc certificate while 6.3% comprising of 18 respondents had only MSc /PhD certificate. This study further showed that the respondents were of different academic qualification. The majority of the respondents had WAEC while the minority had MSc/PhD certificate.

16.1% comprising 46 of the respondents are farmers, 56.5% representing 161 respondents are petty traders, 18.9% comprising 54 respondents were retiree while 8.4% representing 24 respondents are civil servants. The finding of this study suggests that the respondents had different careers/occupations. The majority of the respondents are petty traders while the minority of the respondents are civil servants.

16.1% comprising 46 of the respondents do not have any children, 16.8% representing 48 respondents have 1-2 children, 36.5% comprising 104 respondents have 3-4 children, 17.5% representing 50 respondents have 5-6 children, 13% representing 37 respondents have seven children and above.

0.4% comprising 1 respondent's children were 5 years and below, 18.2% representing 52 respondents' children were 6-10 years, 50.2% representing 143 respondents' children were 11-15 years, 22.5% comprising 64 respondents' children were 15-20 years, 8.8% representing 25 respondents' children were 21 years and above. From this study, it is evident that the majority of the respondents' children were 11-15 years while the minority of the respondents' children were 5 years and below.

From Table 2, the reasons for Female Headed Households (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State was examined. Out of the five-item statement on the reasons for Female Headed Households (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State, all the item statement were all accepted as the reasons for Female Headed Households (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State. The respondents had a mean range of 3.72-3.78. This decision was arrived based on the fact the individual item statement mean score were above the criterion mean of 3.0. respondents with mean score of 3.78 as agreed that widowhood is the reasons for Female Headed Households (FHH).

Table 2: The reasons for Female Headed Households (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State

S/No	Reasons for FHH	SA	A	SDA	D	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	Widowhood	259	9	5	12	3.78	0.71	Accept
2	Abandonment	258	9	5	13	3.74	0.75	Accept
3	Divorce	256	9	6	14	3.73	0.77	Accept
4	Migration	252	11	7	15	3.72	0.78	Accept
5	Separation	255	14	4	12	3.75	0.73	Accept

Respondents with mean score of 3.74 claimed that abandonment is the reasons for Female Headed Households (FHH), respondents with mean score of 3.73 attested that divorce is the reason for Female Headed Households (FHH), respondents with mean score of 3.72 reported that migration is the reasons for Female Headed Households (FHH), finally, respondents with mean score of 3.75 accepted that separation is the reasons for Female Headed Households (FHH). The findings of this study are in line with Verma (2013) who contested that divorce is one of the major reasons for female headed households in Ghana. Verma (2013) further stated that high rate of family crisis among family members which has led to high rate of divorce. This led to rapid and persistent increase in the female headed households in the country. The

outcome of this study is in conformity with Mwawuda (2013) who submitted that family separation is one of the vital reasons behind the rising rate of female headed households in the country. After family separation, the female counterpart of the family is always forced to head her home. The outcome of this study correlates with Asiazobor (2013) who reported that migration and abandonment is one of the major reasons for female headed households in Nigeria.

Table 3 investigated the challenges of female headed household In Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State. Seventeen-item statement were investigated on the challenges of Female Headed Household in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State. Out of the 17-item statement listed, all the item statement were all accepted as the challenges of female headed household In Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State. This was arrived based on the fact that all the item statement listed had a mean score above the criterion mean ($X = 3.0$). respondents with mean score of 3.74 accepted that economic insecurity 3.74 lack of income earning opportunities is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.73 attested that poor social status is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.75 agreed that lack of employment is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.77 reported that inadequate finances to run the family is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.76 asserted that lack of respect by family members/society is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.73 claimed that gender inequality is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.74 reported that difficulty in child raising is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.55 agreed that lack of support from offspring is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.67 claimed that lack of regular income is one of the challenges of female headed household 3.57 struggling to procure food is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.65 reported that poor access to basic healthcare is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.55 agreed that loneliness is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.63 claimed that poor nutrition is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.60 agreed that lack of support from family members is one of the challenges of female headed household, respondents with mean score of 3.56 accepted that lack of community support, finally, respondents with mean score of 3.70 agreed that lack of support from members of religious groups.

The findings of this study are in agreement with who attested that economic insecurity, and unemployment is one of the challenges facing single parents and widows in Jos, Plateau State. The study correlates with who asserted that lack of respect by family members and society as well as depression are major challenges facing widows and single parents in Nigeria. Similarly, Ngwenya (2013) reported that gender inequality is a serious challenge faced by heads of female headed households in Kano, Nigeria. Okoye (2014) reacting to the challenges of widows stated that poor nutrition and lack of support from family members are among the problems confronting single parent households. More so, Batista (2015) identified lack of support from family members and lack of community support as the problems facing female headed households. Finally, the findings of this study agree with Hedman et al., (2015) who identified poor access to basic healthcare and loneliness as challenges facing female headed households.

Table 3: The Challenges of Female Headed Household (FHH) In Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State

S/No	Challenges of FHH	SA	A	SD	D	\bar{X}	Sd	Remark
1	Economic insecurity	261	8	4	12	3.74	0.76	Accept
2	Lack of income earning opportunities	253	12	6	14	3.74	0.75	Accept
3	Poor social status	252	11	7	15	3.73	0.78	Accept
4	Lack of employment	252	17	4	12	3.75	0.71	Accept
5	Inadequate finances to run the family	261	8	4	12	3.77	0.72	Accept
6	Lack of respect by family members/society	258	11	5	13	3.76	0.72	Accept
7	Gender inequality	261	8	4	12	3.73	0.77	Accept
8	Difficulty in child raising	14	6	10	255	3.74	0.75	Accept
9	Lack of support from offspring	216	49	6	14	3.55	0.84	Accept
10	Lack of regular income	223	46	4	12	3.67	0.73	Accept
11	Struggling to procure food	218	49	5	12	3.57	0.83	Accept
12	Poor access to basic healthcare	219	50	4	12	3.65	0.73	Accept
13	Loneliness	213	51	7	14	3.55	0.84	Accept
14	Poor nutrition	214	55	4	12	3.63	0.74	Accept
15	Lack of support from family members	220	47	5	13	3.60	0.81	Accept
16	Lack of community support	213	56	4	12	3.56	0.81	Accept
17	Lack of support from members of religious groups	255	10	6	14	3.70	0.79	Accept

The coping strategies adopted by the heads of Female Headed Households in managing their households was investigated above. 34-items statement on the coping strategies adopted by the heads of Female Headed Households in managing their households were examined. Out of the 34 items statement on the coping strategies adopted by the heads of Female Headed Households in managing their households all the coping strategies listed were accepted by the respondents except item no 34 which the mean score was 2.90. The mean range of the study were 2.90-3.78. This was arrived based on the fact that the individual mean scores were above the criterion mean of the study (criterion mean $X = 3.0$).

The findings of this study are in line with Eboiyehi (2015) who contested that skill acquisition and food service delivery, pattern drafting, decoration bead making, trading and regular income are coping strategies suitable for widows and separated mothers. who contended that widows as well as single parents depends largely on their family members for survival. Furthermore, the study conforms to Varley (2013) who attested that addition to farming and growing of crops as strategies for survival in Malawi, Female headed household's household also go into forests in search of resources such as firewood and thatch grass, among other items. The finding of this study correlates with Verma (2013) who contested that financial support from family members and spiritual support from religious organisations are one of the ways female headed households can survive. Nyamboga (2014) submitted that medical support and domestic support from family members when made available goes a long way to running a female headed households. The findings of this study conform with Cohen (2013) who submitted that academic support for paying of her children's school fees and engagement in entrepreneurial ventures is one of the vital coping strategies for heads of female headed households.

Table 4: Coping strategies adopted by the heads of Female Headed Households (FHH) in managing their households

S/No	Coping strategies adopted by the heads of FHH	SA	A	SD	D	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	Provision of income earning opportunities by government	261	8	4	12	3.74	0.76	Accept
2	Subsistence farming	258	11	4	12	3.73	0.79	Accept
4	Daily or weekly contribution (Esusu)	261	8	4	12	3.77	0.07	Accept
5	engaging in menial jobs	261	8	4	12	3.74	0.77	Accept
6	Gender equality	261	8	4	12	3.75	0.75	Accept
7	Begging	261	8	4	12	3.78	0.69	Accept
8	Trading	261	9	3	12	3.74	0.74	Accept
9	Regular income	261	8	5	11	3.78	0.69	Accept
10	Support from members of religious group	261	8	4	12	3.77	0.72	Accept
11	Free access to basic healthcare	260	9	3	13	3.74	0.75	Accept
12	Support from family members	259	10	3	13	3.78	0.69	Accept
13	Poverty alleviation programmes for heads of female headed household	260	9	3	13	3.77	0.75	Accept
Entrepreneurial skills available for heads of FHH								
14	Skill acquisition	254	10	7	14	3.76	0.72	Accept
15	Food service delivery	253	10	7	15	3.77	0.74	Accept
16	Preparation of refreshing drinks, e.g.; zobo and yoghurt etc.	251	11	9	14	3.75	0.73	Accept
17	Preparation of income yielding foods, e.g.; fish balls, cakes etc.	251	11	9	14	3.75	0.73	Accept
18	Pattern drafting using computer aided designs.	255	10	7	13	3.77	0.70	Accept
19	Pattern drafting using flat pattern method.	244	13	12	16	3.70	0.79	Accept
20	Electric sewing device operations	253	11	7	14	3.76	0.72	Accept
21	Sewing of simple garments	251	11	8	15	3.74	0.75	Accept
22	Sewing garments with advanced designs and pattern	249	13	9	14	3.74	0.74	Accept
23	Laundry services (using washing machine and iron etc.)	247	13	10	15	3.72	0.77	Accept
24	Decoration (interior and exterior)	246	13	11	17	3.71	0.78	Accept
25	Bead making	250	12	9	14	3.74	0.74	Accept
26	Production of home-made cleaning agents, homemade polish.	248	12	10	15	3.72	0.76	Accept
27	Floral designs e.g., macramé.	250	15	19	14	3.73	0.74	Accept
28	Child Development and Care	253	10	9	15	3.76	0.73	Accept
Support from family members for FHH								
29	Financial support from family members	252	11	8	14	3.75	0.73	Accept
30	Spiritual support	246	13	10	16	3.72	0.78	Accept
31	Medical support	253	10	8	14	3.76	0.73	Accept
32	Domestic support	252	11	8	14	3.75	0.73	Accept
33	Academic support for paying of her children's school fees	249	11	10	15	3.73	0.76	Accept
34	Gardening	3	265	5	12	2.90	0.43	Reject

Test of hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of educational levels of female heads of households on the challenges of Female Headed Household (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State.

Table 5 shows ANOVA Result of Difference between the Mean Responses of educational levels of staffs on the challenges of Female Headed Household (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State. \bar{X}_1 = mean responses of staffs with FLSC, \bar{X}_2 = mean responses of staff with WAEC, \bar{X}_3 = mean responses of staffs with OND, \bar{X}_4 = mean responses of staffs with HND/BSc, \bar{X}_5 = mean responses of staffs with MSc/PhD. The study revealed that from the Table 5 that all the items had significant difference except item 10 which is lack of regular income does not have significant difference.

Table 5: ANOVA Result of Difference between the Mean Responses of educational levels of staffs on the challenges of Female Headed Household.

S/No	Item statement	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_3	\bar{X}_4	\bar{X}_5	F ratio	Sig.	Remark
1	Economic insecurity	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.14	4.00	7.46	0.010	S
2	Lack of income earning opportunities	4.00	3.49	4.00	3.77	4.00	7.80	0.030	S
3	Poor social status	4.00	3.46	4.00	3.77	4.00	8.34	0.040	S
4	Lack of employment	4.00	3.53	4.00	3.77	4.00	7.48	0.003	S
5	Inadequate finances to run the family	4.00	3.56	4.00	3.77	4.00	6.17	0.001	S
6	Lack of respect by family members/society	4.00	3.53	4.00	3.77	4.00	6.82	0.000	S
7	Gender inequality	4.00	3.56	3.80	3.77	4.00	3.80	0.050	S
8	Difficulty in child raising	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.77	4.00	7.32	0.000	S
9	Lack of support from offspring	4.00	3.48	3.72	3.22	3.00	8.04	0.000	S
10	Lack of regular income	4.00	3.57	4.00	3.40	3.00	12.30	0.060	NS
11	Struggling to procure food	4.00	3.51	3.74	3.22	3.00	8.37	0.000	S
12	Poor access to basic healthcare	4.00	3.56	4.00	3.34	3.00	13.15	0.000	S
13	Loneliness	4.00	3.48	3.80	3.11	3.00	10.13	0.005	S
14	Poor nutrition	4.00	3.57	4.00	3.14	3.00	16.53	0.003	S
15	Lack of support from family members	4.00	3.52	3.74	3.42	3.00	7.09	0.002	S
16	Lack of community support	4.00	3.52	3.80	3.08	3.00	11.35	0.060	S
17	Lack of support from members of religious groups	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.77	3.33	7.04	0.007	S

H0₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of female heads of households' occupation on the copying strategies adopted in their households in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State.

Table 6 shows ANOVA Result of Difference between the Mean Responses of different occupation on the coping strategies adopted in their households in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State. \bar{X}_1 = mean responses of staffs with farming as occupation, \bar{X}_2 = mean responses of staff with petty trading as occupation, \bar{X}_3 = mean responses of staffs that are retiree, \bar{X}_4 = mean responses of staffs that are civil servants. Table 6 shows that all the items had significant difference except item 24 which is lack of regular income does not have significant difference.

Table 6: ANOVA Result of Difference between the Mean Responses of different occupation on the coping strategies adopted in their households.

S/No	Item Statement	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_3	\bar{X}_4	F RATIO	SIG.	Rark M
1	Provision of income earning opportunities by government	4.00	3.59	3.88	3.87	4.88	0.003	S
2	Subsistence farming	4.00	3.58	3.88	3.87	5.09	0.002	S
4	Daily or weekly contribution (Esusu)	4.00	3.65	3.88	3.80	3.74	0.012	S
5	Engaging in menial jobs	4.00	3.59	3.88	3.87	4.76	0.003	S
6	Gender equality	4.00	3.61	3.88	3.87	4.45	0.004	S
7	Begging	4.00	3.68	3.88	3.87	3.22	0.023	S
8	Trading	4.00	3.62	3.88	3.87	4.29	0.006	S
9	Regular income	4.00	3.68	3.88	3.87	3.22	0.023	S
10	Support from members of religious group	4.00	3.65	3.89	3.87	3.74	0.012	S
11	Free access to basic healthcare	4.00	3.60	3.89	3.87	4.61	0.004	S
12	Support from family members	4.00	3.68	3.89	3.87	3.22	0.023	S
13	Poverty alleviation programmes for heads of female headed household	4.00	3.60	3.89	3.87	4.61	0.004	S
Entrepreneurial skills available for heads of FHH								
14	Skill acquisition	4.00	3.68	3.89	3.87	3.22	0.023	S
15	Food service delivery	4.00	3.64	3.89	3.87	3.89	0.009	S
16	Preparation of refreshing drinks, e.g., zobo and yoghurt etc.	4.00	3.66	3.89	3.87	3.50	0.016	S
17	Preparation of income yielding foods, e.g., fish balls, cakes etc.	4.00	3.63	3.89	3.87	4.14	0.007	S
18	Pattern drafting using computer aided designs.	4.00	3.63	3.89	3.87	4.14	0.007	S
19	Pattern drafting using flat pattern method.	4.00	3.68	3.89	3.87	3.22	0.023	S
20	Electric sewing device operations	4.00	3.58	3.89	3.87	5.16	0.002	S
21	Sewing of simple garments	4.00	3.68	3.89	3.87	3.22	0.023	S
22	Sewing garments with advanced designs and pattern	4.00	3.65	3.89	3.87	3.74	0.012	S
23	Laundry services (using washing machine and iron etc.)	4.00	3.68	3.89	3.87	3.22	0.023	S
24	Gardening	4.00	3.60	3.89	3.87	4.61	0.060	NS
25	Decoration (interior and exterior)	4.00	3.68	3.89	3.87	3.22	0.023	S
26	Bead making	4.00	3.60	3.89	3.87	4.61	0.004	S
27	Production of homemade cleaning agents, homemade polish.	4.00	3.68	3.89	3.50	3.22	0.023	S
28	Floral designs e.g., macramé.	4.00	3.63	3.89	3.50	4.14	0.007	S
29	Child Development and Care	4.00	3.68	3.89	3.50	3.22	0.023	S
Support from family members for FHH								
30	Financial support from family members	4.00	3.65	3.89	3.50	3.74	0.012	S
31	Spiritual support	4.00	3.68	3.88	3.50	3.22	0.023	S
32	Medical support	4.00	3.64	3.88	3.87	3.89	0.009	S
33	Domestic support	4.00	3.64	3.88	3.87	3.89	0.009	S
34	Academic support for paying of her children's school fees	4.00	3.65	3.89	3.87	3.26	0.022	S
35	Gardening	3.00	2.83	3.00	3.00	3.30	0.021	S

Major findings of the study

- i. The respondents attested that the reasons for Female Headed Households (FHH) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State are as a result of widowhood, abandonment, divorce, migration and separation.
- ii. The respondents agreed that the challenges of female headed household (FHH) In Ikwuano Local Government Area Of Abia State are economic insecurity, lack of income earning opportunities, poor social status, lack of employment, inadequate finances to run the family, lack of respect by family members/society, gender inequality , difficulty in child raising, lack of support from offspring , lack of regular income, struggling to procure food, poor access to basic healthcare and loneliness among many others.
- iii. The respondents agreed that the coping strategies adopted by the heads of Female Headed Households (FHH) in managing their households are; involvement in daily or weekly contribution (esusu), engaging in menial jobs, gender equality, begging, trading, regular income, support from members of religious group, free access to basic healthcare, support from family members, poverty alleviation programmes for heads of female headed household, entrepreneurial skills available for heads of female headed households, skill acquisition, food service delivery, preparation of refreshing drinks, for example; zobo and yoghurt and son, preparation of income yielding foods, for example; fish balls, cakes and so on, and pattern drafting using computer aided designs just to mention but a few.

Conclusion

A female headed household is a household in which an adult female is the sole or main income producer and decision-maker. In most countries, women are not usually considered as heads of households unless no adult male is living permanently in the household. The study identified the reasons for Female Headed Households as widowhood, abandonment, divorce, migration and separation. The study investigated the challenges of Female Headed Household and found out that economic insecurity, lack of income earning opportunities, poor social status, lack of employment, inadequate finances to run the family, lack of respect by family members/society, gender inequality among many others are the challenges faced by female headed households. The study further identified the coping strategies adopted by the heads of Female Headed Households in managing their households in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State as provision of income earning opportunities by government, subsistence farming, daily or weekly contribution (esusu), engaging in menial jobs, gender equality and alms begging.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Conferences, seminars and workshops should be periodically organized by communities and religious groups on how to cope with the challenges associated with Female Headed Household.
2. Government and community leaders should organize free seminars for heads of female households on how to manage their homes.
3. Government, rich individuals and religious groups should grant loans to heads of female headed households as form of financial assistance.

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