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GENDER ASSESSMENT OF COPING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY RURAL HOUSEHOLDS DURING ECONOMIC RECESSION: A CASE OF OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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SUMMARY

The study assessed coping strategies adopted during economic recession by male and female members of rural households in Osun State, Nigeria. The study specifically examined the perceived causes of economic recession, investigated the perceived effects and identified the coping strategies adopted by the male and female members of the rural households during economic recession and their level of adoption. A multistage procedure was used to select 120 respondents from 6 local Government Areas of the State. An interview schedule was used to collect data from the respondents. The collected data were analysed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means and independent T-test analysis. The mean ages of the male and female respondents were 45.2 ± 14.1 years and 37 ± 12.6 years respectively. The majority of the males (78.3%) and females (80%) were married with the mean household size of 7 ± 3 people for the male and 6 ± 2 for the female respondents. The cause of economic recession mostly perceived by the male and female respondents was poor economic planning (mean=3.87, 3.77), while prioritizing spending (mean=2.80, 2.52) was the most adopted strategy by both males and females. No significant difference was found in the effects of economic recession on the male and female respondents ($t = -0.19$; $p > 0.05$) and likewise no significant difference was found in their economic recession coping strategies ($t=0.115$; $p \geq 0.05$). The study concluded that there was no significant difference in the economic recession coping strategies between the male and female members of rural households in the study area.

Key words: coping strategies, causes, economic recession, effects, rural households, gender

INTRODUCTION

Recession has been defined as a period when a nation's economy declines significantly for at least six months with a drop in five economic indicators including: real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), income, employment, manufacturing and retail sales (NBER, 2008). Alisi (2016) also reiterated that it is a period of general economic decline usually as a contraction in the GDP for six months (two consecutive quarters) or longer. Generally, people often refer to recession as a period when the GDP growth rate is negative for two consecutive quarters or more (Kimberly, 2016). According to Noko (2016), the first sign of recession is when there are several quarters of slowing but still positive growth. Often it is a quarter of negative growth followed by positive growth for several quarters, and then another quarter of negative growth. The reasons why Nigeria entered recession include oil price decline of 56.39% from 2014's peak in the global oil market of \$100 per barrel to \$50, sharp drop of 26.3% in oil production, partly due to underinvestment in the oil and gas sector and compounded by Niger Delta Avengers sabotage, bad leadership fiscal leakages, corruption and neglect of agriculture (RTC Advisory Services Ltd, 2016).

The period is usually characterised by high unemployment, stagnant wages, and fall in retail sales accompanied by increase in inflation resulting in low purchasing power of many people. It also leads to income inequality, forcing the poor to become poorer and rich to become richer. The majority of Nigeria population live in rural areas (National Population Commission-Nigeria & ICF International, 2014) and belong to low income households. Low income households are generally referred to as those with annual income that is not sufficient to provide the basic household needs of clothing, shelters, health care and food (Noko, 2016). Low level of income in the rural areas predisposes the rural population to disease, hunger, deprivation, want and premature death (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Evidence of recession among the rural populace in Nigeria, as observed by Omoniyi (2012), includes backwardness, bad road, women and children walking barefooted and trekking long distances to get firewood and water, pupils studying under trees, dilapidated and ill-equipped health centres, lack of facilities and natural disasters, crime and violence, ethnic clashes and insecurity.

Nandal (2011) observed that financial and economic crisis have different and unequal impact on women and men and on their potential to respond and develop effective coping strategies. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (1997) as cited by Ifabiyi & Banjoko (2018) defined coping strategy as responses to an immediate and irregular decline in access to resources. It is a set of measures adopted to attempt to meet the physiological, social, economic and political needs of people's everyday life. Economic recession has the tendency of putting a disproportionate burden on women, who are mainly in vulnerable employment and are more likely to be unemployed than men. This is in line with Elson (2010), who posited that women are more vulnerable during economic recessions because of their employment insecurity (often informal or part-time in nature) and the dominance of "male breadwinner" norms that lead employers to keep male over female employees. There is also lack of equal access to controlling economic and financial resources. Murray et al. (2001), as cited by Akeweta et al. (2014), reported that in response to economic shock women engage in labour intensive work as households may resort to unfavourable coping mechanisms, which are often most damaging to the female gender (women and girls), such as carrying loads in the markets, hawking and begging, resorting into prostitution even among teenage girls. Economic recession can also increase women's financial dependence on men (Mohindra, 2011) and lead to a rise in violence against women as a result of stress on families and communities (Nandal, 2011). Women also shoulder the brunt of household coping strategies by adjusting food preparation and shopping, augmenting household income through multiple jobs and controlling expenses by collecting wild foods or collecting firewood in place of more expensive alternatives such as kerosene (UNICEF, 2009).

Previous studies, including Oyesiku (2009), Ifabiyi & Banjoko (2018), have tried to identify the effects of economic recession and the adopted coping strategies in their study areas. However, there is inadequate statistical evidence on gender disaggregation of economic recession coping strategies adopted by male and female members of rural households in the study area, hence this study. The study was conceived to examine the perceived causes of economic recession among the male and female respondents; investigate the perceived effects of economic recession; and determine the level at which the male and female respondents were adopting various coping strategies during economic recession in the study area. Two hypotheses were set in the null form for this study including: there is no significant difference in the effects of economic recession on the male and female respondents; and there is no significant difference in the economic recession coping strategies of the male and female respondents in the study area.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Osun State, Nigeria. The State comprises 30 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and is divided into the following three Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) zones: Ife/Ijesa, Osogbo and Iwo zones. Respondents for the study were selected using a multistage sampling procedure. At the first stage, two Local Governments Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from each of the agricultural zones making a total of 6 LGAs. These included: Ife North and Atakunmosa West LGAs from Ife/Ijesa zone; Ede South and Boripe LGAs from Osogbo zone as well as Aiyedaade and Isokan LGAs from Iwo zone. The second stage involved a random selection of 2 rural communities from each of the 6 selected LGAs making a total of 12 communities. These communities included: Moro and Ipetumodu from Ife North LGA; Osu, and Itaosin from Atakunmosa West; Sekona and Owode from Ede South; Ada and Iragbiji from Boripe; Gbongan and Ode-Omu from Aiyedaade with Ikoyi and Apomu from Isokan. The last stage involved proportionate sampling of a total of 120 respondents comprising the equal number of males and females based on the population of rural households in each community.

The dependent variable for this study was adoption of coping strategies. This was measured by asking the respondents to identify the coping strategies they were adopting from a list of 20 coping strategies provided and to

indicate the extent to which they adopted them, on a four-point scale ranging from never adopted (0), rarely adopted (1), occasionally adopted (2) and always adopted (3). The cut-off point of 1.5 was obtained by adding all the possible scores and divided by total number of points (i.e. $0+1+2+3=6/4$). This was used to determine the strategies they mostly adopted. The coping strategies with the mean score ≥ 1.5 were regarded as strategies mostly adopted by the respondents, while those with the mean score < 1.5 were regarded as less adopted. To determine the level of adoption of these coping strategies among respondents, their adoption score was generated. This was categorized into high and low levels of adoption using the mean score. The perceived causes of economic recession were measured by asking the respondents to react to 12 perceived causes of economic recessions on a five-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Undecided (3 points), Disagree (2 points) or Strongly Disagree (1 points). The grand mean score was used to categorise the perceived causes as major and minor. Finally, the perceived effects of economic recession on the male and female members of rural households were measured by asking the respondents to indicate their responses on a list of 20 perceived effects of economic recession on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Undecided (3 points) Disagree (2 points) or Strongly Disagree (1 points). The total score of each respondent was calculated as their perceived effects score. This was later categorised into two (high and low) levels using the mean score.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

The results in Table 1 show that the mean age of the male respondents was 45.18 ± 14.14 , which was higher than that of the female respondents which was 37.00 ± 12.63 . This implies that both male and female respondents were in their active age during which they would be willing to engage in various economic activities that could enhance their income generation and mitigate the effects of economic recession. This age group has been associated with active participation in economic activities (Reed & Mberu, 2014). More female (80%) than male (78.3%) respondents were married. This agrees with previous findings that couples and offspring complement one another's efforts by reducing the stress that could have been borne by an individual working alone so that available family members reduce the cost of labour (Chikaire et al., 2012). Also, more than half of the male (56.7%) and female (66.7%) respondents practiced Christianity and more males (40%) than females (33.3%) were Muslims. These findings indicated that Christianity and Islam were the dominant religions practiced in the study area. Almost equal proportion of the male (66.7%) and female (68.3%) respondents had between 5-10 persons in their households with the mean household size of 7 ± 3 persons for the male and 6 ± 3 for the female respondents. This is in line with the findings of Alabi et al. (2017), who reported that the majority of rural households had between 6-10 people. One-third of the males (35%) were farmers while very few of the females (5.0%) were farmers; more than half of the female respondents (51.7%) were traders while few of the male respondents (11.7%) were traders; also, more males (26.7%) than females (21.7%) were artisans. This shows that the majority of the male respondents were farmers while the majority of the female respondents were traders. These findings also suggest that rural households diversify into other occupations in addition to farming probably to cushion the effect of economic recession. The mean years of education for the males was 10.2 years while that of the females was 10.8, showing a moderate level of education for both genders. This result implies that the respondents of both genders were literates who could access relevant information that could enhance their coping capabilities in economic recession.

Almost equal proportion of the males (45.0%) and females (43.3%) had a monthly income between ₦10,001.00 and ₦30,000.00 with the mean income of $\text{₦}29,900.00 \pm \text{₦}19,285.28$ for the male respondents and the mean income of $\text{₦}18,546.67 \pm \text{₦}14,278.29$ for the female respondents. This shows that the male respondents earned more income than their female counterparts. This could have implications on how economic recession affects each gender and the type of coping strategies they will employ. This is in tandem with Isabel & Quentin (2013), who established that the majority of low-income households are female. More female (91.7%) than male respondents (81.7%) had 3 acres of farm and below, with the mean farm size of 2.37 ± 2.10 acres for males and 1.32 ± 1.28 for females. This result shows that the male respondents had larger farmland than the females. This suggests that more of the males than females would realise better earnings from farming to minimise the effects of recession. The major source of credit for male (83.3%) and female (76.7%) respondents was their personal savings followed by borrowing from friends and relatives (58.3% for the males and 70% for the females). More female (23.3%) than male respondents (15%) obtained money from cooperative society while more females (16.7%) than males (5.0%) got government grant. This indicates that the majority of both male and female respondents have access to informal sources of credit for coping with economic recession.

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Male		Female	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Age (years)				
≤30	11	18.3	24	40.0
31-45	21	35.0	22	36.7
46-60	23	38.3	11	18.3
≥61	5	8.3	3	5.0
Mean	45.18		37.00	
Standard deviation	14.14		12.63	
Marital status				
Single	7	11.7	4	6.7
Married	47	78.3	48	80.0
Separated	3	5.0	6	10.0
Divorced	0	0	0	0
Widowed	3	5.0	2	3.3
Religion				
Christianity	34	56.7	40	66.7
Islam	24	40.0	20	33.3
Traditional	2	3.3	0	0
Ethnicity				
Igbo	1	1.7	2	3.3
Yoruba	59	98.3	58	96.7
Household size				
≤4	14	23.3	16	26.7
5-10	40	66.7	41	68.3
≥11	6	10.0	3	5.0
Mean	7		6	
Standard deviation	3.10		2.6	
Number of years spent in formal education				
≤6	19	31.7	16	26.7
7-12	23	38.3	29	48.3
≥13	18	30.0	15	25.0
Mean	10.2		10.78	
Standard deviation	5.03		4.67	
Occupation				
Farming	21	35.0	3	5.0
Agro processing	2	3.3	2	3.3
Trading	7	11.7	31	51.7
Civil servant	10	16.7	11	18.3
Hand craft	16	26.7	13	21.7
Motorcyclist	4	6.7	0	0
Income per month				
≤₦10,000.00	13	21.7	27	45.0
₦10,001-₦30,000	27	45.0	26	43.3
₦30,001-₦50,000	12	20.0	4	6.7
≥₦50,001	8	13.3	3	5.0
Mean	₦29,900.00		₦18,546.67	
Standard deviation	₦19,285.28		₦14,278.29	
Farm size in acre				
≤3	49	81.7	55	91.7
4-6	8	13.3	4	8.3
7-9	2	3.3	0	0
≥10	1	1.7	0	0
Mean	2.37		1.32	
Standard deviation	2.10		1.28	
Sources of credits				
Personal saving	50	83.3	46	76.7
Cooperative societies	9	15	14	23.3
Borrowing from friends/relatives	35	58.8	42	70
Government grants	3	5	10	16.7

Source: Field survey, 2018

Respondents' perceived causes of economic recession

The results in Table 2 show the causes of economic recession in descending order as perceived by the male and female respondents, with the grand mean scores of 3.43 for the males and 3.38 for the females. Both male and female respondents perceived poor economic planning (mean=3.87, 3.77) as the prime cause of economic recession. This was followed by poor government policies (mean=3.86), high inflation rate (mean= 3.80) and corruption (mean=3.75) for the males, while for the females, corruption (mean=3.76) ranked second followed by high inflation rate (mean=3.75) and poor government policies (mean=3.75). Other major causes of recession perceived by the male and female respondents respectively include high rate of unemployment (mean=3.72, 3.72), neglect of agricultural sector (mean=3.68, 3.63) and overdependence on crude oil (mean=3.47, 3.73). This implies that all the above causes (above the grand mean scores) were perceived as major causes of economic recession, while others were considered as minor causes of economic recession in the study area when comparing individual mean scores of the perceived causes of both genders with the grand mean scores of 3.43 for the males and 3.38 for the females. These findings agree with Ifabiyi & Banjoko (2018), who reported that overdependence on oil, corruption, neglect of agricultural sector, high inflation rates, poor government policies and economic planning were major perceived causes of economic recession among rural dwellers in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by their perceived causes of economic recession

Perceived causes	Male		Female	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Poor economic planning	3.87	1 st	3.77	1 st
Poor government policies	3.86	2 nd	3.74	4 th
High inflation rate	3.80	3 rd	3.75	3 rd
Corruption	3.75	4 th	3.76	2 nd
High unemployment rate	3.72	5 th	3.72	6 th
Neglect of agricultural sector	3.68	6 th	3.63	7 th
Overdependence on crude oil	3.47	7 th	3.73	5 th
Farmers and herdsman conflicts	3.22	8 th	2.93	11 th
Insecurity and pipeline vandalism	3.22	8 th	3.03	10 th
High interest rate	3.17	10 th	3.10	8 th
Over importation of goods	3.12	11 th	3.03	9 th
Climate change	2.23	12 th	2.40	12 th
Grand mean	3.43		3.38	

Source: Field survey, 2018

Respondents' perceived effects of economic recession

The results in Table 3 show that the male and female respondents perceived the effects of economic recession differently. Among the male respondents, the perceived effect that ranked highest was reduction in the purchasing power of money (local currency) (mean=3.87), followed by increasing economic pressure on household heads (mean=3.85), increasing rural households' debts (mean=3.85), leading to poor health conditions (mean=3.83), leading to high rate of unemployment (mean=3.83), increasing number of people who are vulnerable such as beggars (mean=3.82) and encouraging many people to go back to farming (mean=3.82) among others. On the other hand, among the female respondents, the perceived effect of economic recession that took the lead was increasing number of people who are vulnerable (mean= 4.38), followed by increasing price of goods and services (mean=3.88), increasing crime rate in the rural areas (mean=3.85), reducing the purchasing power of money (local currency) (mean=3.82), leading to high rate of unemployment (mean=3.82), encouraging many people to go back to farming (mean=3.80) and affecting small rural businesses or enterprises negatively (mean=3.80) and increasing economic pressure on household heads (mean=3.75). The fact that the male and female respondents perceived the effects of economic recession on rural households differently is an indication that a gender-based approach should be employed in offering a meaningful intervention to mitigate the effects of economic recession. The results concur to Oyesiku (2009), who also identified increase in crime rates as one of the effects of economic recession. The findings also revealed that, despite the negative effects of economic recession on the rural households, it drives many people back to farming to secure food for their households and as a means of livelihood. This is similar to the findings of Ifabiyi & Banjoko (2018) that economic recession makes rural people go back to agriculture.

Table 4 shows that the majority (73.3%) of the male respondents perceived that the effects of economic recession on the male members of rural households were strong, while some (26.7%) of them perceived the effects to be weak. On

the other hand, 58.3 % of the female respondents perceived that the effects on female members of rural households were strong, while 41 % perceived them as weak. This result shows that there is disparity in the way the males and females perceive the effects of economic recession, which may consequently influence their potential to respond and develop effective coping strategies. However, people's perception is psychological and it may not be objective enough to adequately measure the impact of economic recession like when human development indicators are employed. This may account for the reason why the result is contrary to the finding of International Labour Organisation (2018) that females are the most vulnerable to economic shocks.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by their perceived effects of economic recession

Perceived effects	Male		Female	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Reducing the purchasing power of money	3.87	1 st	3.82	4 th
Increasing economic pressure on household heads	3.85	2 nd	3.75	8 th
Increasing rural household debt	3.85	2 nd	3.68	11 th
Leading to poor health conditions	3.83	4 th	3.73	10 th
Leading to high unemployment rate	3.83	4 th	3.82	4 th
Increasing number of people who are vulnerable	3.82	6 th	4.38	1 st
Increasing price of goods and services	3.82	6 th	3.88	2 nd
Causing many people to go back to farming	3.82	6 th	3.80	6 th
Increasing crime rate	3.80	9 th	3.85	3 rd
Affecting small scale rural business negatively	3.72	10 th	3.80	6 th
Increasing wage demand of farm labourers	3.68	11 th	3.75	8 th
Reducing quality and quantity of food	3.63	12 th	3.47	12 th
Inability to pay for public utilities	3.43	13 th	3.18	15 th
Leading to high incidence of friction among household members	3.35	14 th	3.43	13 th
Leading to rural-urban migration	3.15	15 th	3.33	14 th

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 4. Distribution of male and female respondents by level of perceived effects

Level	Perception score	Male		Female	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Weak	below 55.45	16	26.7	25	41.7
Strong	55.45 and above	44	73.3	35	58.3
Mean		55.45		56.68	

Source: Field survey, 2018

Coping strategies adopted during economic recession

The results in Table 5 shows the rank means of the male and female respondents' coping strategies adopted during economic recession. Based on the cut-off point of 1.5, the coping strategies mostly adopted by both genders include: prioritizing spending (mean=2.80 for males, 2.52 for females), followed by selling farm produce (mean=2.33, 1.67), working for longer period of time (mean=2.15, 1.98), skipping meals (mean=2.12, 1.82) and processing of farm products (mean=2.00, 1.65). Other strategies, such as selling farm waste (mean=1.82) and accepting a low paying job as a short-term solution (mean=1.62) were typical for the males while operating a household-based enterprise (mean=2.40) and petty trading (mean=2.35) were typical for the females. The findings disagree with Noko (2016), who reported that coping strategies commonly adopted by men in response to economic recession are selling properties and renting out productive assets, cultivating more land and borrowing money from family and friends. The findings also disagree with the results of Akeweta et al. (2014) that women engage in labour intensive work typically consisting of crop cultivation and livestock rearing to cope with economic recession.

Level of male and female adoption of coping strategies

Table 6 shows that the level of adoption of the coping strategies to combat economic recession is high for almost equal proportion of the female and male respondents (45% and 43.3%), while the adoption level was low for a larger percentage of both males and females (56.7% and 55%). This implies that the rate at which many household members (irrespective of gender) adopted the identified coping strategies during economic recession was low in the study area.

Table 5. Distribution of male and female respondents by adopted coping strategies

Coping strategies	Male		Female	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Prioritizing spending	2.80*	1	2.52*	1
Selling farm produce	2.33*	2	1.67*	6
Working for longer period of time	2.15*	3	1.98*	4
Skipping meals	2.12*	4	1.82*	5
Processing of farm products	2.00*	5	1.65*	7
Selling of farm waste	1.82*	6	1.20	10
Accepting a low paying job	1.62*	7	1.22	9
Acquiring more land for cultivation	1.43	8	0.85	16
Borrowing money from family and friends	1.33	9	1.38	8
Outmigration to look for a job	1.25	10	1.08	13
Engaging in indigenous jobs	1.23	11	0.95	15
Depending on gifts and remittance	0.98	12	1.13	12
Operating a household-based enterprise	0.95	13	2.40*	2
Purchasing food on credit	0.93	14	1.18	11
Selling of firewood	0.82	15	1.07	14
Petty trading	0.75	16	2.35*	3
Selling property and personal assets	0.70	17	0.42	18
Withdrawing children from school	0.45	18	0.52	17
Fish farming	0.28	19	0.18	20

Cut-off point = 1.5; * Mostly adopted strategies; Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 6. Distribution of respondents by level of adoption of coping strategies

Level	Adoption score	Male		Female	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Low	below 26.12	34	56.7	33	55.45
High	26.12 and above	26	43.3	27	
Mean		26.12		25.95	

Source: Field survey, 2018

Difference in the effects of economic recession on male and female respondents

The results in Table 7 show that there was no significant difference between male and female perception of the effects of economic recession ($t = -0.19$; $p > 0.05$). The male respondents had the mean score of 55.45, while the female respondents had the mean score of 55.68; the mean difference between the male and female respondents (0.23) was not significant. Hence, the hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the effects of economic recession on the male and female respondents was accepted. It can therefore be concluded that similar effects of economic recession were experienced by the male and female household members in the study area.

Table 7. Results of independent sample t-test showing significant difference in the effects of economic recession between male and female respondents

Effects of economic recession	Male		Female		T	P
	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.		
Encouraging many people to go back to farming	3.82	0.50	3.80	0.55	0.17	0.86
High unemployment rate	3.83	0.42	3.82	0.50	0.19	0.84
Affecting small scale rural business negatively	3.72	0.52	3.80	0.51	-0.88	0.38
High incidence of friction within households	3.35	0.89	3.43	0.81	-0.53	0.59
Inability to pay for public utilities	3.43	0.81	3.18	0.93	1.57	0.12
Reduction in quality and quantity of food	3.63	0.71	3.47	0.97	1.08	0.28
Reducing the value of local currency	3.87	0.47	3.82	0.50	0.56	0.57
Leading to rural urban migration	3.15	0.94	3.33	0.88	-1.10	0.27
Increasing of wage demand of farm labourers	3.68	0.73	3.75	0.54	-0.57	0.57
Increasing of price of goods and services	3.82	0.47	3.88	0.37	-0.86	0.39
Increasing of crime rate	3.80	0.58	3.85	0.48	-0.52	0.61
Increasing of rural household debt	3.85	0.40	3.68	0.59	1.79	0.07
Leading to poor health conditions	3.83	0.49	3.73	0.55	1.05	0.29
Increasing of economic pressure on household heads	3.85	0.36	3.75	0.44	1.37	0.17
Increasing the number of people who are vulnerable	3.82	0.54	4.38	0.47	-0.93	0.36
Total effect of effects	55.45	5.83	55.68	7.02	-0.19	0.84

** Significant at $p \leq 0.01$; * Significant at $p \leq 0.05$; Source: Field survey, 2018

Difference between the coping strategies of male and female respondents

The results in Table 8 show that there was no statistically significant difference in the overall coping strategies adopted during economic recession between the male and female respondents ($t=0.115$; $p \geq 0.05$). However, significant differences were found between the male and female respondents in adopting strategies like operating household-based enterprise ($t= -7.110$; $p \leq 0.01$), acquiring more land for cultivation ($t= 2.793$; $p \leq 0.01$), petty trading ($t=-7.964$; $p \leq 0.01$), selling farm products ($t= 2.967$; $p \leq 0.05$) and selling farm waste ($t= 2.459$; $p \leq 0.05$), but since they were not strong enough to bring about statistical differences in the overall coping strategies of the male and female respondents, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 8. Results of independent sample t-test showing significant difference between the coping strategies of male and female respondents

Coping strategies	Male		Female		T	P
	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.		
Receiving government intervention	0.167	0.493	0.383	0.804	-1.779	0.078
Borrowing money from family and friends	1.333	1.052	1.383	0.976	-0.270	0.788
Accepting a low paying job as a short-term solution	1.617	1.194	1.216	1.043	1.954	0.053
Operating household-based enterprise	0.950	1.213	2.400	1.011	-7.110**	0.000
Skipping meals	2.117	1.026	1.817	1.065	1.571	0.119
Selling property and personal assets	0.700	1.062	0.417	0.869	1.599	0.113
Engaging in indigenous jobs	1.233	1.430	0.950	1.268	1.148	0.253
Outmigration to look for a job	1.250	1.035	1.083	1.062	0.870	0.386
Acquiring more land for cultivation	1.433	1.198	0.850	1.086	2.793**	0.006
Working for longer period of time	2.150	1.132	1.983	1.097	0.819	0.414
Depending on gifts and remittance	0.983	1.081	1.133	0.999	-0.789	0.432
Prioritizing spending	2.800	0.658	2.517	0.911	1.952	0.053
Selling farm products	2.333	1.068	1.667	1.373	2.967*	0.040
Withdrawing children from school	0.450	0.909	0.517	0.983	-0.386	0.701
Purchasing food on credit	0.933	0.861	1.183	1.214	-1.301	0.196
Petty trading	0.750	1.114	2.350	1.086	-7.964**	0.000
Selling farm waste	1.817	1.396	1.200	1.350	2.459*	0.015
Processing of farm products	2.000	1.207	1.650	1.338	1.504	0.135
Fish farming	0.283	0.715	0.183	0.651	0.801	0.425
Selling of firewood	0.817	1.255	1.067	1.376	-1.040	0.301
Total coping strategies	26.11	7.746	25.95	8.091	0.115	0.908

** Significant at $p \leq 0.01$; * Significant at $p \leq 0.05$; Source: Field survey, 2018

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that poor economic planning was perceived by both male and female members of the rural households in the study area as the root cause of economic recession. While the males perceived reduction in purchasing power as the leading effect of economic recession, the females perceived increase in the number of vulnerable people as the most serious effect. Prioritizing spending, selling farm produce, working for longer period of time, skipping meals and processing of farm products were the most adopted coping strategies by the male and female respondents while their adoption of these strategies was at a low level. The study concluded that there is no significant difference in the coping strategies adopted by male and female members of rural households in the study area. It is therefore recommended that the policy makers should plan and formulate adequate policies that can boost the growth of Nigeria economy and liberate the nation out of recession through substantial and incremental budget allocation to agriculture, rural development and employment generation; donor agencies should also assist in providing gender-responsive palliative measures such as provision of soft loans that will cushion the effects of economic recession on the rural households; and finally, both NGOs and government should provide capacity building and empowerment programmes for the rural population on various off-farms and non-farm enterprises to enhance their coping capabilities during economic recession.

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