

**FAMILY EMPOWERMENT AND YOUTH RE-ORIENTATION PATH-INITIATIVE
(FEYREP) AND LEGAL SUPPORTS FOR WOMEN IN AKWA IBOM STATE,
(2015-2024)**

By

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ABSTRACT

Women particularly widows in Nigeria and in Akwa Ibom State specifically are highly vulnerable to societal neglect and systematic oppressions following the death of their husbands. They are frequently subjected to unfounded accusations, and their legal and socioeconomic rights are often violated, leading into many cases to prolong legal disputes. Consequent upon the above, this examined Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Oriented Path-Initiative (FEYREP) and legal support, for women in Akwa Ibom State. Descriptive and survey method was used as the research design while primary and secondary sources of data were employed in the study. The population of the study was 45,000 (forty five thousand) women being beneficiaries of FEYREP programmes in Akwa Ibom State. The sampling size was 400 determined using taro yamani and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation- PPMC was used to analyze the data gathered. From the findings, the study indicates that the contributions of FEYREP has contributed greatly to the legal supports of women in Akwa Ibom state. Based on the findings, the study recommends that Akwa Ibom State Government should put up more legal supports by making barristers and legal solicitors available at all the local Government Areas of the state and at the same time create more awareness at the rural areas for the need for the rural dwellers to be aware of the legal support to widows/ women in Akwa Ibom State..

KEYWORD: Legal supports, FEYREEP, widows, family empowerment and Vulnerable.

INTRODUCTION

It has been globally noted that every policies put by the government, is for the purpose of finding sound solutions to the societal needs of the people (Onyishi, 2019). to this, the Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Oriented Path-Initiative (FEYREP), established as a socio-developmental platform in Akwa Ibom State, has played a significant role in promoting the socio-economic development of women in Akwa Ibom State since its establishment This initiative, founded with the goal of addressing family welfare, youth re-orientation, and women's empowerment, has implemented various programmes aimed at improving the economic independence, skills acquisition, and overall wellbeing of women

across the state. As noted by Atairet 2020, Eyo 2023., Government policies be it national, State, or Local Government is always for the benefits of the general masses, being the actions and inactions of Government for the vulnerable, the authors in assessing Government policies, concluded that it is the formulation process that matters but the implementation, output and outcome stage that is majorly consider, to this, the legal supports as put up by FEYREP, sees a policy for the vulnerable women of whose rights has been tempered upon. This study examines the impact of FEYREP on the socio-economic development of women within this eight-year period, exploring how its targeted interventions have influenced livelihoods, self-reliance, and gender inclusion in Akwa Ibom State. The Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-initiative (FEYREP) is a non-governmental, not for profit organization based in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Established since 2015, the organization was set up with the aim of creating a robust economic empowerment pathway for families and support widowed homes through a well-defined economic empowerment framework that is target specific and sustainable. (FEYREP, 2020).

FEYREP empowerment programmes has also been defined as an organized system of social services, programmes and institutions designed to aid individuals or groups in order for them to attain satisfying standards of life and health (Badru, 2022). The goal of establishing the empowerment programme is to fulfil the social, financial, health and recreational requirements of all individuals in a society. Social welfare seeks to enhance the social functioning of all age groups, both rich and poor (Zastrow, 2018).

Statement of the problem

In reality however, providing the needy with empowerment services are often times hampered by the following challenges: Financial constraint, the problem of finance hampers FEYREEP' capacity to implement or sustain planned empowerment programmes for the citizenry. This paucity of finance causes the large vacuum in the provision of social welfare services in Akwa Ibom State. From 2015 to 2024, the Family Empowerment and Youth Re-orientation Path-Initiative (FEYREP) in Akwa Ibom State, there have also been another challenge faced in the aspect of rendering legal support to widows and vulnerable women in the state as challenges emanates from inconsistencies with legal solicitors, overcrowding of cases, lingering court cases, to this, FEYREP's impact was constrained by the lack of consistent government policy backing and formal financial provisions.

Again, multiple systemic barriers continued to hinder progress of legal support where many women were engaged in active restrictions such as limited access to land, lack of funding, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient research and development resources of which are caused in the course of losing their husband or bread winners to death, and either families seized to allow them access to properties of self-benefits.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study was to examine the relationship between Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-Initiative (FEYREP) and legal support for women in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study which was; there is no significant relationship between Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-Initiative and legal support for women in Akwa Ibom State.

FEYREP

Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-initiative (FEYREP) is a non-governmental, not for profit organization based in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Established since 2015, the organization was set up with the aim of creating a robust economic empowerment pathway for families and support widowed homes through a well-defined economic empowerment framework that is target specific and sustainable.

FEYREP provides integrated support for female victims and survivors of various forms of Sexual and Gender Based violence including survivors of trafficking, especially female returnees trafficked for sex and related abuses of which her beneficiaries includes: women & men, children & youth, physically challenged, community based organizations, community health workers & traditional & community development associations, policy makers (Local). In the works of Elensi et al., (2024) Akpan, (2024), and Umo, & Eyo, (2025). the formulation of policies is always projected for the betterment of the people but the important aspect of it should be the monitoring of such policies to see to it that such polices are properly implemented paving way for a sustainable socio-economic development in Nigeria.

FEYREP was established as a system of programmes, policies, and services that aim to improve the well-being of individuals and communities. This often involves providing a safety net for vulnerable populations as social welfare services in Nigeria dates from the missionary era after the Second World War through the colonial times to this present day (Ering, et al., 2020). Salvation Army, Green Triangle group and the Roman Catholic Church initiated the social welfare services through their missionary groups. These philanthropists helped in the development of social welfare services by building orphanages for the poor and the disadvantaged. Social welfare activities were common in Lagos and spread to other regions in Nigeria. At that time, social welfare services and social work were located in the social department division in the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. With the creation of new states, social welfare programmes were put under the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

Aldama (2020), further highlighted some functions of welfare programmes in Nigeria as follows: Alleviation of poverty among members of the Society - The primary aim of social welfare in Nigeria is to help members of the public in alleviating poverty which is mostly directed at the disadvantaged individuals in the society. There are so many poor people and less privileged people in Nigeria especially those living in rural areas which need to benefits from the social welfare programmes.

Legal support

Women constitute one of the most vulnerable and discriminately affected groups in the workplace and even family, as such, they require legal supports for equity, security and human dignity (Ataire and Paul 2025).

According to Akande, (2000). Legal support refers to the process of giving a support to an individual as related to the perspective of law. It's important to differentiate between legal advice and legal support. This involves the application of legal principles to a specific situation, providing guidance on what actions to take. It is typically provided by qualified legal professionals, such as lawyers. Giving legal advice without the correct qualifications is often illegal. This encompasses a broader range of activities that assist individuals in navigating the legal system. The legal support includes the following providing general legal information. Assisting with the completion of legal forms. Helping to gather evidence. Connecting individuals with legal resources. Providing emotional support during legal proceedings. Legal support can be provided by various individuals, including paralegals, legal assistants, and community advocates.

Practically, legal support aims to empower individuals to understand their legal rights and options, even if they do not have access to a lawyer. They assist in helping someone find legal aid services, explaining the steps involved in a court process, assisting with the gathering of documents for a legal case. Providing information on legal rights related to housing or employment. Therefore, legal support is a very important part of helping people navigate the often complex legal systems that effect their lives (UNESCO, 2022).

Legal support refers to a wide range of legal services and resources such as legal advice, representation, documentation assistance, mediation, and advocacy offered by legal professionals, aid organizations, and institutions to help individuals understand, navigate, and assert their rights within the justice system, particularly benefiting marginalized and disadvantaged populations (UNESCO, 2022). This support may be delivered through public defenders in criminal cases, legal aid clinics for civil matters, community legal services, paralegal-led initiatives, or university law clinics, and is critical in promoting access to justice, social equity, and the rule of law (IDLO, 2022). In many jurisdictions, pro bono legal services offered by private attorneys and law firms help bridge the justice gap, especially when aligned with community needs in what is known as a justice-driven model (Reuters, 2024). Specialist legal support systems also exist to protect vulnerable populations, including women, children, indigenous groups, and people living with HIV/AIDS, as demonstrated by organizations such as the Uganda Law Society, KELIN in Kenya, and the Legal Resources Centre in South Africa (NBS, 2022).

Despite its importance, access to legal support remains uneven due to multiple challenges, including economic barriers, geographic isolation, lack of legal literacy, cultural and language differences, institutional discrimination, and underfunded legal aid systems (The Guardian, 2014). To address these issues, strategies such as increased funding, community outreach, culturally competent services, technological integration, and legal policy reforms have been proposed and, in some regions, implemented (Vanguard, 2019).

Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-Initiative and Legal Support

Legal support, as the name implies is considered as the access to legal advice, representation, mediation, and advocacy services, plays a fundamental role in fostering socio-economic development by ensuring that individuals and communities can effectively exercise their rights, resolve disputes, and access justice, which are essential for maintaining social stability, protecting property rights, and promoting the rule of law (UNESCO, 2022). by providing marginalized and vulnerable populations with legal assistance, such support

reduces barriers to economic participation, curtails exploitation, and enhances social inclusion, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation and equitable growth (World Bank, 2019). Effective legal support systems underpin transparent and accountable governance structures, which attract investment, facilitate entrepreneurship, and enable the enforcement of contracts and regulations critical to market functioning (NBS, 2022). Moreover, by addressing issues such as land tenure security, labor rights, and discrimination, legal support mitigates socio-economic inequalities and empowers disadvantaged groups, including women, minorities, and informal workers, to contribute meaningfully to the economy (NPC, 2019). In situations affected by conflict or social upheaval, accessible legal services aid in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation, further stabilizing societies and creating an environment conducive to development (Reuters, 2024). Consequently, investment in legal aid infrastructure, public legal education, and pro bono services is widely recognized as a strategic priority for inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development, reinforcing justice as both a human right and a driver of economic prosperity (United Nations, 2015; WHO, 2020).

Ireje, (2019), noted that, FEYREP- Family Empowerment and Youth Reorientation Path Initiative, provides exhaustive support to women in Akwa Ibom State by prioritizing prevention, education, and advocacy against gender-based violence through wide-ranging sensitization and awareness campaigns in churches, markets, schools, and communities (often in partnership with organizations such as the Nigerian Women Trust Fund), disseminating copies of the Akwa Ibom State Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law to empower women with knowledge of their legal rights, promoting reporting and accountability for perpetrators under the VAPP Law, implementing targeted initiatives such as the-*Girls Uphold Your Dignity*, campaign to address premarital issues, drug abuse, and personal safety among teenage girls, warning parents and children about abuse red flags, engaging religious and community leaders as advocates, and consistently referring survivors to appropriate government and specialized agencies including the Ministry of Justice's Department of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) Response Unit, Ministry of Women Affairs, NAPTIP, and Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) for formal legal action, medical care, and psychosocial support, thereby functioning as a comprehensive capacity-building and referral organization rather than a direct provider of legal representation (Ering et al. 2006).

Structural- Functionalist Theory propounded by spencer, Durkheim and Talcott Parsons in (1937)

The structural- functionalisms approach sees the system as a structure existing with some function (including distributive functions) to carry out. The theory states that institution created to perform some distributive functions targeted at providing socioeconomic functions. Functionalism has its roots in the organicism of early 19th century. Spencer and Durkheim influenced the functional anthropologist. Durkheim's timeless analysis and Webbers emphasis on social taxonomies (ideal types) began to shape modern/contemporary structural perspective while Talcott Parsons, developed the social action. The Structural functionalism is a sociological theory that attempts to explain why society, structure or institutions functions the way they do by focusing on the relationship among the various social institutions that makes up society (e.g., government, law, education, religion. etc.).

This theory sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. Eyo, et al., (2025), asserts that individual's lives are guide by social structures or institutions, which are relatively stable patterns of social behaviour. Social structures give shape to our lives for example, in families, the community, and through religious organization. And certain rituals such as a handshake or complex religious ceremonies, give structure to our everyday lives. Each social structure has social functions or consequences for the operation of society as a whole. Education for example has several important functions in a society, such as socialization, learning.

Concerning the area of interest, which is impact of FEYREEP on legal supports for women in Akwa Ibom State, and provision of social and personal well-being, the functionalist perspective, shows that FEYREEP Initiative becomes the structure through which the state can attempt to providing and distributing social services and resources to the poor women to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. The theory is applicable to this study by identifying, FEYREEP Initiative as a structure functional for legal services. The strength and the reason for the adoption of this theory to this study is that FEYREEP Initiative is seen as a structure, legally created for the purpose of creating and performing certain functions as regards social welfare services leading to socioeconomic development in Akwa Ibom State. The programme is for the vulnerable individuals as the functions perform for the purpose of this study is seen as Legal Support for women.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive research design, with a study population of forty five thousand, (45,000), being the total population of women who benefited from FEYREP empowerment programmes in Akwa Ibom State between 2015 and 2024 (FEYREEP desk office, Uyo, 2025). The sample size for this study was 400 as Taro Yamane was used to determine the sample size. The sampling techniques applied in this research was simple random sampling. This study adopted both primary and secondary source of data collection. The decision rule used in this study is stated thus; Reject the null hypotheses if the probability value (p-value) is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). Alternatively, accept the null hypotheses if the probability value (p-value) is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). This can be stated symbolically as: Accept H_0 if $P_c < P_t$, Reject H_0 if $P_c > P_t$.

In this study, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients are used in the analysis of relationships between the dependent and independent variables in this study. This is given as follows:

$$Y = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 X + \mu_1$$

Equation 3.1

Where:

Y = Dependent Variable

X = Independent Variable

α_0 = PPMCC Constant

β_1 = Regression intercept or coefficient

μ_1 = error term

These are specified in PPMCC equations for each of the research hypotheses earlier stated in this study.

Model 1:

$$FEYREP_PROGRAMMES = \alpha_0 + \beta_1LEGAL_SUPPORT_TO_WIDOWS/ WOMEN + \mu_1$$

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This chapter focused on data presentation, data analysis, and test of hypotheses and discussion of findings.

4.1 data presentation

Table 4.1: Distribution of questionnaire

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage
Returned	310	75%
Not returned	90	25%
Total	400	100%

Source: Field survey (2025)

Having collected the questionnaire from the respondents, the researcher observed that from the information gathered, that out of (400) four hundred copies of questionnaire distributed, and three hundred (310) were completed and returned to the researcher.

From the table above, it shows that out of 400 copies of questionnaire issued within Uyo metropolis, 300 representing 75% were returned and duly filled while 90 representing 25% were not returned.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-Initiative and legal support for women in Akwa Ibom State

Tables 4.2: Responses on Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-Initiative and legal support for women in Akwa Ibom State

S/N	FEYREEP Legal Support For Women/Widows	S/A	A	D	U	S/D	TOTAL (%)
1.	FEYREEP provided lawyers to represent women in court	250 (75%)	50 (25%)	5	6	-	310 (100%)
2	FEYREEP provided legal advice to widow/ women	290 (95%)	10 (5%)	3	7	-	310 (100%)
3	FEYREEP provided lawyers who defended you from your late husband's family	220 (60%)	80 (40%)	4	4	2	310 (100%)
4	FEYREEP provided you with a lawyer for your property rights	280 (90%)	20 (10%)	6	4	-	310 (100%)
5	FEYREEP provided you with a lawyer for unfair dismissal, harassment and discrimination	180 (40%)	120 (60%)	8		2	310 (100%)

From the questionnaire retrieved, it was observed that there is a higher percentage of respondents on how FEYREP Programmes enhances Legal Support for Women/Widows as FEYREEP provides lawyers who represent Women/Widows in the court, FEYREEP provides legal advice, FEYREEP provides lawyers who defend Women/Widows from their late husband’s family crisis, FEYREEP provides lawyers for the protection of Women/Widows property rights and finally FEYREEP provides lawyers for unfair dismissal, harassment and discrimination Women/Widows.

Testing of Hypothesis

The Null hypothesis indicates that there is no significant relationship between Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-Initiative and legal support for women in Akwa Ibom State. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and regression analysis was used in analysis of the above hypothesis with the examination of the responses to the questions on the relationship between Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-Initiative and legal support for women in Akwa Ibom State. The PPMC obtained for each of the responses to the questions in Table 4.2, is presented in Table 4.3

Table 4.3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients

		Legal Support (LS)	Legal Support (LS)	Legal Support (LS)	Legal Support (LS)
Legal Support (LS) 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.593**	.414**	.426**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Legal Support (LS) 2	Pearson Correlation	.593**	1	.659**	.599**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	300	250	300	300
Legal Support (LS) 3	Pearson Correlation	.414**	.659**	1	.932**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Legal Support (LS) 4	Pearson Correlation	.426**	.599**	.932**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300	300

Source: Researcher’s Computation (2025)

Table 4.3 indicates that on the statements that there is no significant relationship between FEYREP and legal support (LS). Pearson Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficients generated include 0.893, 0.414, 0.426, 0.659, 0.599, and 0.932 were found to be statistically significant at 5% level of significance. This is an indication of the significant relationship between FEYREP and legal support (LS) for widow/ women in Akwa Ibom State. However, on the nature and degree of relationship between FEYREP (independent variable) and legal support (LS) (Dependent Variable), the regression and correlation results are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Analysis Results for Hypothesis Four

LS= 4.446 + 0.091	FP
T-stat= (51.795)	(5.244)
Prob. = (0.000)	(0.026)
R= 0.141; R ² = 0.720; F-stat= 5.035; Prob. (F-stat) = 0.776	

Source: Researcher’s Computation (2025)

Table 4.4 shows that Socio-economic development will remain positive at an average of 4.446 units, if there are no changes in legal support (LS). This implies that legal support (LS) remain constant, indicating the more the unit of FEYREP, the more the level of legal support (LS), which will lead to an increase of 0.091 units change. This positive relationship is statistically significant with a computed t-statistic value of 5.244 and a probability value of 0.776 (Sig = 0.076), since the probability value obtained is less than 0.05 at 5% level of significance.

The correlation (PPMC) coefficient R-value of 0.541 indicates the existence of a positive correlation between FEYREP and legal support (LS) however, this can be said to be a high positive correlation. Also, the predictive power of FEYREP programmes (FP) to explain the changes in legal support (LS) is high given the obtained coefficient of determination (R²) value of 0.770 obtained.

Finally, given that the computed F-statistic value obtained is 5.035 and the probability (sig) value is 0.726, the relationship between FEYREP and legal support (LS) can be said to have goodness-of-fit. This implies that the relationship is statistically significant. This is an indication that the null hypothesis earlier stated will fail to hold, and is hereby rejected. This implies that a positive and significant relationship exists between FEYREP and legal support (LS).

Discussion of Findings

FEYREP and LEGAL SUPPORT

From the Null hypothesis which indicated that there is no significant relationship between Feyrep programmes and legal Supports for Women/ Widows in Akwa Ibom State. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used in testing and giving analysis with the examination of the responses to the questions on the relationship between FEYREP programmes and legal Support for Women/Widows in Akwa Ibom State. The Pearson Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficients generated included 0.982, 0.525, 0.472, 0.659, 0.487, and 0.842 were found to be statistically significant at 5% level of significance, indicating that there is a significant relationship between FEYREP programmes and legal Support (LS)

for widow/ women in Akwa Ibom State. the findings shows that legal Support will remain positive at an average of 5.446 units, if there are no changes in of FEYREP programmes (FP), indicating the more the level of support by FEYREP, the more the level of legal support (LS) for women in Akwa Ibom State as the supports ranges from financial aid, farming equipment/tools, agricultural product etc. Which is in support with conclusion of Nurudeen, (2020), social welfare services enhances legal supports for women in Nigeria.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was an examination on Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-Initiative and legal support for women in Akwa Ibom State (2015-2024). The objectives developed in the study was to examine the relationship between Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-Initiative and legal support for women in Akwa Ibom State. Survey method and descriptive research design was adopted in the study. Data was collected using research questionnaire which was administered to a sample of 400 respondents in Akwa Ibom State. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics analysis. The analysis revealed that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Family Empowerment and Youth Re-Orientation Path-Initiative and legal support for women in Akwa Ibom State.

From the findings and summary of the study, the study concludes that the contributions of FEYREP has a positive and statistically significant relationship with legal support to widows/ women in Akwa Ibom State as the FEYREP programmes makes barristers and legal solicitors to women and widows who are not financially capable of getting justice.

Based on the findings the study recommends that the Akwa Ibom State Government should put up more legal support by making barristers and legal solicitors available at all the local Government Areas of the state and at the same time create more awareness at the rural areas for the need for the rural dwellers to be aware of the legal support to widows/ women in Akwa Ibom State.

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