

**MICROFINANCE CREDIT AND EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN IN
NYANZA, RWANDA**

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ABSTRACT

This study was an investigation on microfinance credit and empowerment of rural women in Nyanza, Rwanda. This was guided by the following objectives: i) to determine the relationship between education loan and rural women empowerment in Nyanza district, Rwanda; ii) to establish the relationship between business loan and rural women empowerment in Nyanza district, Rwanda; and iii) to determine the relationship between agriculture loan and rural women empowerment in Nyanza district, Rwanda. This study employed descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The study population was 5600 participants. The sample size of 373 was determined using Solven's formula, however, 289 respondents participated. The main data collection instruments were questionnaires and interviews. Data was analysed using frequency and percentage tables; mean and standard deviations; and regression analysis; while qualitative data was descriptively analysed. The study found a positive, moderate and significant relationship between education loan and rural women empowerment. Similarly, the study found a positive, moderate and significant relationship between business loan and rural women empowerment. In addition, the study found a positive, moderate and significant relationship between agriculture loan and rural women empowerment. The study concluded that microfinance credits are important in promoting rural women empowerment economically and socially. The study made the following recommendations: microfinance institutions should try to extend more credit facilities to clients to expand their businesses; microfinance institutions should provide training programs to rural women to improve women's entrepreneurial skill and reduce the problems which hinder their access to microfinance; microfinance institutions should conduct usual meeting with the beneficiaries to make them aware about the use of loan in proper business; and microfinance institutions should ensure that they monitor their clients to find out if the money given to them is been used as intended. The contribution to new knowledge by this study is that education loan, business loan, and agriculture loan significantly affect rural women empowerment.