



CONSTRAINTS RURAL WOMEN FACE IN THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES OF OVIA NORTHEAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE, NIGERIA



*Aigba, Grace Akhere¹ & Ighoro, Alex².

¹Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension Services, Benson Idahosa University.

²Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Dennis Osadebay University Asaba.

Corresponding author: gaigba@biu.edu.ng

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Abstract:

The role of rural women in agricultural development globally has continued to attract global discourse. They are known for their contributions to family revenue, community as well as nation development. The study focused on the constraint rural woman faced in agricultural development in Ovia Northeast Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria with a view to unraveling their specific contribution to this important sector of the Nigerian economy. Primary data were obtained from 120 women with the aid of validated questionnaire, and it was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviation. Findings revealed that a significant proportion of rural women surveyed are married and fall within the age range of 33 to 48, reflecting the active demographic in agricultural pursuits. While the majority possess secondary school certificates, a notable percentage have formal education. Christianity emerges as the predominant religion among respondents, and agricultural engagement primarily revolves around planting activities. The study accesses the challenges rural woman face in the study area which include, Cultural practice that perpetuates male dominance illiteracy, lack of credit facilities such as loans, lack of access to improved technology, lack of infrastructural amenities and insecurity. In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of tailored interventions to address the diverse needs and realities of rural women. By leveraging their strengths and addressing underlying constraints, policymakers and stakeholders can empower rural women to enhance their economic prospects and contribute meaningfully to sustainable rural development in the study area.

Keywords:

Agricultural development, constraint, rural women, and programmes.

Introduction

There is growing interest in research globally on the contribution of women to national development. In addition, mainstreaming gender in global politics have taken nuanced formations as both global and local bodies and groups advance the course of women in contemporary political economy. However, as the wave of gender inclusion in the mainstream politics gets hotter in developed societies, it appears reeling in the African political discourse (Omored, 2014). This is essentially given that there is a dearth of research amid structural constraints conserving patriarchal system and arithmetically recognizing women's role due to pressure from international bodies such as the United Nations (World Bank, 2001, Akyeampong and Hippolyte, 2012). It is in this context that the role played by rural women is always under-reported even though the ratio of rural areas to urban areas in developing countries is way too high. Thus, it is expected that the bulk of women folk are concentrated in these rural areas. The major challenge facing developing nations like Nigeria is economic development, a term that conforms to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is equally clear that for the vision of economic development to be achieved all persons must join hands including women in general. Thus, the place of women, including rural women cannot be questioned. (SOFA Team and Cheryl Doss, 2011), highlighted the deluge of roles rural women are expected to shoulder in spite of neglect from the society as follows: women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. According to FAO 2011, women make essential contributions to agriculture and rural economics in developing countries and the roles they perform in agriculture activities vary considerably between and within regions. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending

animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. Many of these activities are not defined as "economically active employment" in national accounts but they are essential to the wellbeing of rural households (SOFA Team and Cheryl Doss, 2011). In Nigeria, the role of rural women cannot be anticipated anytime more than now given the rise in food prices and agricultural services occasioned by insecurity, recession, climate change, lack of adequate attention to agriculture, decrease in land spaces due to rapid industrialization, corruption, mismanagement and disease that cuts across every state of the country (Egbejule, 2021; The Guardian, 2021) while it has been established that women play useful roles in agriculture, there is need to examine the challenges they face. The main objective of the study is to examine the constraints rural women face in agricultural development in Ovia Northeast Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are:

- i. To describe the socio-economic characteristics of rural women in Ovia Northeast Local Government Area.
- ii. To examine the economic effect of rural women's role in agricultural production and marketing
- iii. To ascertain the constraints of rural women in performing their role' in the study area.

Description of Study Area

Ovia Northeast Local Government Area is one of the 18 Local Government Areas (LGA) in Edo state, located in the South-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The local government headquarters is located in Okada town. The LGA is made up of 21 major communities and 123 villages including camps, it occupies a total area of 2,301 square kilometers and has an average temperature of 28 degrees centigrade. The LGA witnesses two distinct seasons which are the dry and the rainy seasons with the average humidity level in the LGA put at 52 percent and average annual rainfall of between 1500mm and 3500mm. Agriculture is an

important economic activity in the study area with crops such as oil palm, banana, plantain, sugarcane, cassava, maize, etc. The Ovia Northeast Local Government also hosts industries, hotels, banks, privately owned institutions as well as government owned establishments. Other important economic activities in the study area include trade, lumbering, and crafts making.

Sampling Techniques

A multistage sampling procedure was used in selecting respondents. The first stage is the selection of eight (8) communities out of the 21 major communities in the LGA. The second stage was a random selection: fifteen (15) respondents from each community actively involved in agriculture, giving a total of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents for the study.

Primary data for the study were obtained from 120 women involved in agriculture by means of an interview schedule.

Measurement of variables

Respondent socio economic characteristics and various agricultural activities were measured using simple descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentages, mean. The economic effect and constraints were analyzed using average mean. The significant mean is determined by taking the mean of the Likert scores viz $\frac{5+4+3+2+1}{5} = 3$. Therefore, any mean equals to or greater than 3 is significant.

Results and Discussion

Socioeconomic characteristics

Results in Table 1 show that 10 women representing 8.3 percent are single, 71 women representing 59.2 percent are married, 9 respondents representing 7.5 percent are divorced and 30 respondents representing 25.0 percent are widowed. Thus, respondents who are married participated the most in the survey. The results of the survey according to age distribution of the respondents showed that 29 respondents representing 24.3 percent are between the ages of 18 and 32, 55 respondents representing 46% are between the ages of 33 and 48. 21 respondents representing 17.5% are between the ages of 49 and 64. 15 respondents representing 12.5 percent fall within the age range of 65 and above. Thus, respondents between the age of 33 and 48 participated the most in the study. This could be that the age bracket reflects the active years of farmers in most rural communities. The results of the survey according to the educational qualification of the respondents shows that 6 respondents representing 5.0 percent do not have any school certificate, 12 respondents representing 10.0 percent have primary school certificate, 57 respondents representing 47.5 percent are possess SSCE/GCE certificates, 21 respondents representing 17.5 percent are possess OND/NCE certificates, 20 respondents representing 16.7 percent have BSC/HND certificates while 4 respondents representing 3.2 percent possess postgraduate certificates. Thus, respondents with SSCE/GCE (Secondary school certificate) participated the most in the survey. This result is not surprising given that most rural women are still victims of patriarchal society that attaches premium to male education more than female education. 17 respondents represent 14.2 percent practice Islam, 101 respondents representing 84.2 percent practice Christianity while 2 respondents representing 1.7 percent practice traditional religion. Thus, respondents who practice Christianity participated the most in the survey. The agricultural engagement of the respondents shows that 64 respondents representing 53.3 percent are involved in planting, 7 respondents representing 5.8 percent are involved in

harvesting, 1 respondent representing 0.8 percent is involved in processing while 48 respondents representing 40.0 percent are involved in sales. Thus, respondents who are involved in planting participated the most in the survey. This result reflects typical occupational domain of rural women who are predominantly farmers. This is in consonance with the a priori expectation and findings of Omorede (2014).

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of Rural woman

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Martial		
Single	10	8.3
Married	71	59.2
Divorced	9	7.5
Widowed	30	25.0
Age		
18-32	29	24
33-48	55	45
49-64	21	17.5
65-above	15	12.5
Educational level		
No formal education	6	5.0
Primary school	12	10.0
SSCE/GCE	57	47.5
OND/NCE	21	17.5
BSC/HND	20	16.7
Postgraduate	4	3.2
Primary Occupation		
Farmer	77	64
Trader	36	30.0
Civil Servant	7	5.8
Secondary occupation		
Valid Farmer	45	37.5
Trade	73	60.8
Civil Servant	2	1.7
Religion		
Islam	17	14.2
Christianity	101	84.2
Traditional	2	1.7
Agricultural activity		
Planting	64	53.3
Harvesting	7	5.8
Processing	1	0.8
Sales	48	40.0

Source: Computed from Field survey data, 2022

Table 2 shows the economic effect of rural women in agricultural marketing which have the various means greater and equals to 3 (≥3) except for items 2 and 5 whose means are less than 3. As a result, items 1,3,4,5,6 and 7 whose

means are 4.03,4.15,3.64,3.68 and 3.77 respectively. Majority of respondents (62.5%) agreed that taxes levied on rural women have contributed to the local government area, while 22.5% strongly agreed. Only 10% were undecided or strongly disagreed. The mean score for this item is 4.03, indicating a generally positive perception of the contribution of taxes from rural women to the local government area. Hence, it can be concluded that taxes levied on rural women's community have contributed to Ovia Northeast Local Government Area. This agrees with a priori expectation and findings of Akpomuvie (2018). Responses to this statement (contribution of rural women to the revenue of Ovia Northeast Local Government Area has attracted the presence of government in my community) are more varied, with 55% agreeing that rural women's contribution to local government revenue has attracted government presence. However, 23.3% disagreed, and 4.2% strongly disagreed. The mean score for this item is lower at 2.19, suggesting some uncertainty or disagreement regarding this aspect. This is however at variance with the a priori expectation and findings of Egbejule (2021) but may be explained by apathy on the part of the respondents; thinking that government inadequacies could better be expressed by inaccurate responses. A significant majority (66.7%) agreed that income generated from rural women's agriculture marketing

supports children's education and household expenses. The mean score of 4.15 indicates strong agreement with this statement. Over half of the respondents (52.5%) agreed that rural women's involvement in agriculture has increased food supply. However, 21.7% were undecided or disagreed. The mean score of 3.64 suggests moderate agreement with this statement. A majority (60%) agreed that rural women's role in agriculture has reduced food prices, but there is significant variability in responses, with 11.7% strongly disagreeing. The mean score of 2.39 indicates somewhat mixed perceptions regarding this statement. The majority of respondents (74.2%) agreed that rural women's involvement in agriculture has reduced hunger and starvation. However, 15.8% were undecided or disagreed. The mean score of 3.68 reflects overall agreement with this statement. A large majority (84.2%) agreed that rural women's involvement in agricultural marketing has increased household income. Only a small percentage (2.5%) disagreed with this statement. The mean score of 3.77 indicates strong agreement with this aspect. This implies that women's role in agriculture including marketing of agricultural produce has led to more revenue in the study area.

Table 2: The economic effect of rural women's role in agricultural marketing

ITEMS	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided or disagree	or strongly	₦	Mean	Std.D
Taxes levied on rural women. community have contributed to. Northeast Local Government Area	27 (22.5)	75 (62.5)	12 (10.0)	6(5.0) -	120	4.03	0.73
The contribution of rural women to the revenue of Ovia Northeast Local Government Area has attracted the presence of Government in my community.	5(4.2)	15 (12.5)	6(5.0)	66 (55.0) 28 (23.3)	120	2.19	1.06
The income generated by the rural women's agriculture marketing has helped in paying fees and bills. for the children in the community	33 (27.5)	80 (66.7)	-	6 (5.0) 1 (0.8)	120	4.15	0.73
The role of rural women in agriculture has led to an increase. in food supply in the community	15 (12.5)	63 (52.5)	26 (21.7)	16 (13.3) -	120	3.64	0.87
The role of rural women in: agriculture has led to a decrease. in food prices in the community	4 (3.3)	19 (15.8)	11 (9.2)	72 (60.0) 14 (11.7)	120	2.39	1.00
The role of rural women in agriculture has led to a reduction. in hunger and starvation in the community	9 (7.5)	89 (74.2)	-	19 (15.8) 3 (2.5)	120	3.68	0.92
Rural women's role in agricultural marketing has increased the household income. of families in the community	3 (2.5)	101 (84.2)	1 (0.8)	15 (12.5) -	120	3.77	0.69

Source: Computed from Field survey data, 2022

Constraints of Rural Women in Performing Their Role in the Study Area

It could be seen from table 3 that all the clustered items for objective 3 have their various means greater and equals to 3; (≥ 3). As a result, items 1,2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 whose means are 3.57, 3.05, 3.96, 4.12 ,3.86 and 4.25 respectively are statistically significant. Several studies have reported the

Table 3: Constraints of rural women

ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	N	Mean	Std.D
Cultural practice that perpetuates male dominance	10 (8.3)	76 (63.3)	11 (9.2)	18 (15.0)	5 (4.2)	120	3.57	0.99
Illiteracy	2 (1.7)	59 (49.2)	9 (7.5)	43 (35.8)	7 (5.8)	120	3.05	1.08
Lack of credit facilities such as access to loans	5 (4.2)	108 (90.0)	4 (3.3)	3 (2.5)	-	120	3.96	0.42
Lack of access to improved technology	20 (16.7)	96 (80.0)	2 (1.7)	2 (1.7)	-	120	4.12	0.49
Lack of infrastructural amenities	7 (5.8)	98 (81.7)	7 (5.8)	7 (5.8)	1 (0.8)	120	3.86	0.64
Insecurity	68 (56.7)	35 (29.2)	3 (2.5)	7 (5.8)	7 (5.8)	120	4.25	1.14

Source: Survey Data (2022)

Conclusion

Rural women play vital roles in agricultural development in the study area as they are involved in different agricultural activities such as planting, harvesting, processing and marketing/sales. They are however faced by several constraints such as cultural practice that perpetuates male dominance over land, illiteracy, lack of credit facilities such as access to loans and improved technology, lack of infrastructural amenities and insecurity. Despite all the challenges, women have great roles and potentials for sustaining agricultural development if given all adequate incentives and gender equity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in the study, the following recommendations are hereby made.

1. Male dominance of lands in the communities should be completely discouraged. Adequate legislation from the government will assist in this regard to make lands available to rural women without undue incessant interference by male folks in the communities.
2. Insecurity is ubiquitous in the communities visited as women are deterred from going to farms or going to farms in groups so as to deter marauding herdsmen from attacking them. Security should be beefed up in local areas to protect these vulnerable women who mostly shoulder family responsibilities given that their husbands' earnings cannot be sufficient to run family responsibilities.
3. Proper sensitization, training and re-training of rural women on the basics of agricultural practices including how to access loans and make use of modern communication devices such as phones

need for credit among rural farmers in Africa (Bolarinwa and Oyeyinka, 2015, Ekwere and Edem, 2014; Olagunju and Adeyemo, 2008). The implication is that all the listed items constrain rural women from effectively performing their roles in agricultural productivity in Ovia Northeast Local Government Area.

and social media platforms should be encouraged by both the Local and State Governments. This will help improve agricultural yields in both short and long terms.

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