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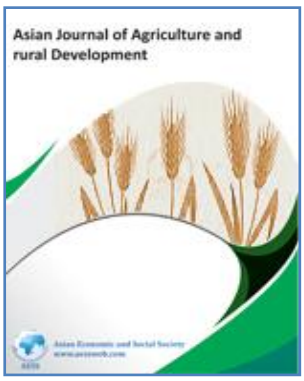

Gender Participation in Economic Activities and Decision Making in Keffi Area of Nigeria

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Gender Participation in Economic Activities and Decision Making in Keffi Area of Nigeria

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Abstract

The study assessed gender participation and decision making role in economic activities using data collected from 120 respondents. The results revealed that female participation was frequent in crop post-harvest activities and poultry management while male participation was frequent in crop pre-harvest operations only. Female respondents participated occasionally in home gardening, goat rearing, hair dressing and food processing. Educational level, years of experience, personal income and credit obtained significantly influenced the level of gender participation in economic activities. The Males always made decisions on selection of crop variety, spending money, saving money, buying of necessities, and children's education, while females always made decision on types of food for home consumption only. Age and income of respondents were the significant factors that influenced the level of gender involvement in decision making. Provision of credit facilities, sensitization on the importance of women involvement in decision making and mobilization of farmers to form co-operative societies are necessary impetus for improving women participation in economic activities and decision making.

Keywords: Gender, participation, economic activities, decision making, likert scale, Keffi

Introduction

There are at least three different but interrelated schools of thought as to why gender matters can be identified in current development studies. These are equity approach, the developmental approach and the efficiency approach (Malena, 1994). The equity approach argues that any meaningful development strategy must actively attempt to correct gender inequalities between men and women. The developmental approach merely asserts that if development is aimed at helping the poor, and if a majority of the poor are women, then development means helping women. The efficiency approach focuses on the need for improving the labour productivity of both men and women in any economic system (Malena, 1994). Gabriel (1991) reported a 16 hour working day for African farming women, while Whatmore (1991) pointed out that no matter what the extent of women's agricultural activities, there is little variation in the extent to which domestic labour is shared by other members of the household. However, women still face formidable obstacle to their potential role as a major economic and social force in the development of the agricultural sector (Rahman and Haruna, 1999). Women participation in management and production decisions varies according to geographical location, culture and religion. In northern Nigeria, women predominate crop processing and storage, Fulani women are famous for the rearing of sheep, fowls, cattle and processing of milk. Middle-belt women are generally involved in land clearing, preparation and marketing of farm produce. In south eastern Nigeria, women are engaged in land preparation down to weeding and harvesting. In the reverie areas, women gather and process fish caught by men (Audu and Onoja, 2005). The feature of women's status in developing countries like Nigeria is essentially that of marginalization which is best explained within the context of productive relations. Women in Nigeria form an active and reserved labour force but they rarely own means of production (Rahman *et al.*, 2004). They make a significant contribution to food production and to the processing of food stuff. They also provide about 60-80 per cent of agricultural labour and are responsible for 80 percent of food production (Ingawa, l999; Mgbada, 2000). Women across the developing world are disadvantaged relative to men. Under male-dominated social structures and political systems, women are denied equal access to land, technology, education and resources, As a result, rates of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and premature death are significantly higher among women and girls than they are among men and boys (Horenstein, 1989). In Nigeria, the division of labour in rural agricultural activities is gender specific. There are variations among different social groups in their participatory roles in agricultural production. It is commonly believed that in the Muslim dominated community in northern Nigeria,

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the obligations of men and women are clearly defined. The men provide food, water, firewood, house-keeping money and shelter for the family while secluded Muslim women do no farm work (Jackson, 1986).

Statement of the problem

Despite the important role women play in farm and household production, they have not been given due recognition in the agricultural sector. There has been a great disparity between women and men in the size of land holdings (Quisumbing, 1994). Women interest and involvement in economic activities are limited. The limitation has a lot of implications for women access to and control over resources of their own (Morna, 1990; Rahman and Alamu, 2003). Though women are playing very important roles within and outside the home, disparities still exists between men and women in education, health, employment, income opportunities, control over assets, personal security and participation in the political process (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2002). According to the United Nation's Gender-related Development Index (GDI), women are under privileged and less empowered and this undeniably restricts the ability to achieve full potentials of developing countries (United Nations Development Programme, 2006). There is also lack of quantitative and qualitative data on gender involvement in economic activities in terms of participation and decision making in Nasarawa State and Keffi area in particular. Based on the foregoing, the objectives of the study was to; describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, compare the level of gender participation in economic activities, identify the factors influencing the level of gender participation in economic activities, determine the level of gender participation in decision making and identify the factors influencing the level of gender involvement in decision making.

Justification for the Study

In Nigeria, women are often marginalized in their access to economic, political and social resources compared to men rendering them relatively poorer than their male counterparts (Oseni, 2003). This study will provide information on the involvement of women and men in economic activities and decision making process. It will also provide recommendations that will lead to improvement and equalization of gender participation in economic activities. The study will also assist government and policy makers in designing subsequent programmes that will improve gender participation in economic activities.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Keffi Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. It lies between latitude 7^0 and 9^0 North and longitude 7^0 and 10^0 East. The area has a mean temperature ranging between 25^0C in October to about 36^0C in March with mean annual rainfall of about 1500mm. The major occupation of the population of the area is farming and the dominant tribes are Hausa/Fulani, Gwandara, Gbagyi and Afo. Keffi has one extension block with six cells namely; Angwan Jaba, Bagaji, Gauta, Keffi, Kafin Shanu and Yarkadde. Ten men and ten women farmers were randomly selected from each cell, making a total of l20 respondents for the study. Primary data was used for the study and were collected with the aid of structured questionnaire that was administered to the respondents by trained enumerators. Data were collected on socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, economic activities and decision making roles. Data were collected over a period of two weeks. A four-point Likert scale was used to measure the level of participation in economic activities by gender. The respondents were asked whether the frequency of their participations was frequently, occasionally, rarely or never. Points were awarded for each response with scoring of 'frequently' to 'never' having scores of three, two, one and zero. Ranges for responses of the respondents in different economic activities were specified as follows; 0.00–0.75 = never, 0.76 –1.50 = rarely, 1.51–2.25 = occasionally and > 2.25 = frequently. Two separate regression models were used to identify the factors influencing the level of gender participation in economic activities and involvement in decision making respectively.

The models were specified as follows:

Regression model for gender participation in economic activities

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + b_7X_7 + U \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (1)$$

Where:
Y = Participation index of respondent
X_1 = Age of respondents (years)
X_2 = Level of education (No. of years in school)
X_3 = Years of experience
X_4 = Extension visit (so. of contacts in a year)
X_5 Co-operative participation (years)
X_6 = Personal income (₦)
X_7 Amount of credit obtained (₦)
b_1-b_7 = Regression coefficients
a = Constant term
U = Error term

Regression model for gender involvement in decision making:

$$D = a + b_1X_1\ b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + U \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (2)$$

Where:
D = Number of activities respondent is involved in decision making
X_1 = Age (years)
X_2 Education (years)
X_3 = Personal income (₦)
b_1- b_3 = Regression coefficients
a = Constant term
U = Error term

Results and discussion

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

A close look at the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents (see Table 1) revealed that majority of the respondents (33 per cent) were within the age of 39-40 years. The mean age of the respondents was 34 years. Majority (86.7 per cent) of the respondents were married while. This implies that married men and women were more involved in various economic activities in the study area. The respondents had one form of education or the other implying that a significant proportion of the respondents were literate. The table further revealed that majority of the respondents do not belonged to any co-operative society. The respondents had different years experience in various economic activities. Majority also had between 0.5-1.5 hectares of implying that majority of the respondents cultivated small plots of land.

Respondents' level of participation in various economics activities

The respondents participated to some extent in various economic activities (see table 2). The participation by women was frequent in post-harvest activities (mean = 2.88) and poultry management (mean = 2.48). Women participation was occasional in home gardening (mean 1.58), local food processing (mean = 2.06), goat rearing (mean = 1.86), trading (mean = 1.97) and hair dressing (mean = 1.72). The above finding agrees with that of Mahmuda and Yoshihito (2008) that women's participation is higher in livestock management related activities than in crop production. Rahman (2008) also reported that women handled processing activities such as threshing, winnowing, grinding, smoking, salting and drying. Okitoi *et al.* (2007) also reported that ownership of poultry is shared among the different categories but is predominantly owned by women and children. The Table also showed that the men frequently participated in pre-harvest operations (mean = 2.95). This may be due to the labour intensive nature of activities such as ploughing, harrowing, ridging and weeding. This finding agrees with that of Rahman *et al.* (2007) that men do much of the land clearing, ridging and weeding in various farming operations. The men occasionally participated in poultry management (mean =2.18), and goat rearing (mean = 1.88). The table further revealed that both men and women never participated in aquaculture activities, tailoring and cattle rearing. Men never participated in activities such as local food processing, food hawking and hair dressing while women on the other hand never participated in activities such as commercial motorcycle riding and vehicle driving.

Factors influencing gender participation in various economic activities

Several factors influenced gender participation in various economic activities in the study area (see Table 3). The Table revealed that 62.4 per cent of the variation in the respondents' participation in various economic activities was explained by the independent variables included in the model. Educational level, years of experience in various economic activities, personal income and credit obtained positively and significantly influenced gender participation in various economic activities. The age of respondents and extension visits had a negative but significant relationship with participation in various economic activities. The negative sign for age implies that the older the respondent, the lesser the tendency to participate in economic activities. This finding agrees with that of Mahmuda and Yoshihito (2008) who reported that age is negatively related with extent of participation in economic activities. The significant coefficient for educational level means that participation in economic activities increases with education. This finding disagrees with the view of Mahmuda and Yoshihito (2008) that highly educated persons are not likely to participate in hard physical work. The positive sign of the coefficient for credit implies that access to credit enhances the respondents' participation in economic activities. The positive sign of the coefficients for years of experience and personal income also implies that increasing either of the two, will lead to greater participation in various economic activities.

Respondents' level of participation in decision making

The respondents' level of participation in decision making varies across gender (see Table 4). Activities such as selection of crop variety (93.3 per cent), saving money (95 per cent), crop, cattle, goat and poultry selling (60 per cent), spending money (93.3 per cent), buying of necessities (9l.7 per cent), children's education (85 per cent) and family budgeting (65 per cent) were mostly decided by men. This finding agrees with that of Farhana *et al.* (2009) that husbands were the main decision makers in family matters and education of children. Also, supporting this view is Okorji (1991) who observed that on crop enterprise to be produced, men take major decisions although women decide on what crops to grow on own their fields. The Table further revealed that women sometimes make decision on selection of crops (26.7 per cent), home gardening (36.7 per cent), crop, cattle, goat and poultry selling (28.3 per cent), buying of necessities (30 per cent) and family budgeting (40 per cent). The implication of these findings can be seen in the report by Rahman *et al.* (2007) 'that women had below 50 per cent involvement rate for selection of enterprise, input procurement, input allocation and selling of produce'.

Factors influencing the level of gender involvement in decision making

The factors that were hypothesized to influence the level of gender involvement in decision making (see Table 5) explained 94 per cent of variation in the dependent variable.

Age and income level of respondents were positive and significant. This implies that the older the respondents, the higher the tendency to participate

more in decision making process. Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009) posited that older respondents participated more in decision making than their younger counterparts. In the same vein, the higher the income of respondents, the more they tend to participate in decision making process. The implication is that the richer the respondents, the more they get involved in decision making process compared to their poor counterparts. This is obviously due to their stronger economic position. Education of respondents was positive but not significant. This finding disagrees with several studies such as Gage (1995); Meekers and Oladosu (1996); Oyediran (1998) that decision making is influenced by education, place of residence, employment status among others.

Conclusion

The study has shown that women participated more in economic activities while men were more involved in decision making. Educational level, credit obtained, years of experience and personal income were the significant factors that influenced gender participation in various economic activities. The level of gender involvement in decision making was influenced by age and income level of respondents.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
17-27	30	25
28-38	39	32.5
39-49	40	33.3
50-60	11	9.2
Total	120	100
Marital Status		
Single	7	5.8
Married	104	86.7
Divorced	4	3.3
Widowed	5	4.2
Total	120	100
Educational Status (yrs)		
Primary	36	30
Secondary	34	28.3
Tertiary	5	4.2
No formal education	45	37.5
Total	120	100
Membership of Co-operative Society		
Yes	29	24.2
No	91	75.8
Total	120	100
Years of Experience (yrs)		
10-Mar	51	42.5
18-Nov	34	28.3
19-26	24	20
27-34	8	6.7
35-42	3	2.5
Total	120	100
Farm Size (Ha)		
0.5-1.5	96	80.7
1.6-2.6	21	7.5
2.7-3.7	3	2.5
Total	120	100
Personal Income (₦)		
5000 – 23000	69	57.5
24000 – 42000	38	31.7
43000 – 61000	7	5.8
62000 – 80000	5	4.2
81000 and above	1	0.8
Total	120	100

Table 2: Respondents' level of participation in various economic activities

Activities	Mean (Male)	Mean (Female)
Crop production (pre-harvest activities)	2.95	1.36
Crop production (post-harvest activities)	0.23	2.88
Home gardening	0.68	1.58
Poultry management	2.18	2.48
Goat rearing	1.88	1.86
Cattle rearing	0.45	0.12
Aquaculture activities	0.28	0.3
Local food processing	0	2.06
Food hawking	0	0.99
Marketing activities	0.98	0.95
Wage labour	0.88	0.15
Trading	0.86	1.97
Hair dressing	0	1.72
Commercial motorcycle riding	0.92	0
Commercial vehicle driving	0.72	0
Tailoring	0.41	0.45

Table 3: Factors influencing the level of gender participation in various economic activities

Variable	Coefficients	Standard Error	t-value
Constant	1.436	0.305	4.702***
Age (yrs)	-0.011	0.004	- 2.487*
Education (yrs)	0.043	0.024	1.782*
Years of Experience (yrs)	0.022	0.006	3.932***
Extension Visit (No. of contacts)	-0.287	0.973	- 1.957*
Co-operative Participation (yrs)	0.006	0.019	0.300NS
Personal Income (₦)	0.065	0.172	3.772**
Credit facilities	1.89E-05	0	5.650***

R^2 = 0.624, *, **, *** = significant at 10, 5 and 1 per cent levels respectively

Table 4: Respondents' level of participation in decision making

Activities	Always				Sometimes				Not involved			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Selection of crop variety	56	93.3	9	15	3	5	16	26.7	1	1.7	35	58.3
Home gardening	0	0	23	38.3	23	38.3	22	36.7	32	53.3	15	25
Cattle, goat and poultry rearing	33	55	28	46.7	13	21.7	18	30	14	23.3	15	25
Crop, cattle, goat and poultry selling	36	60	22	36.7	11	18.3	17	28.3	13	21.7	21	35
Spending money	56	93.3	14	23.3	1	1.7	19	31.7	3	5	27	45
Saving money	57	95	15	25	1	1.7	13	21.7	2	3.3	30	50
Buying of necessities	55	91.7	18	30	5	8.3	18	30	0	0	25	41.7
Children's education	51	85	13	21.7	0	0	19	31.7	8	13.3	28	46.7
Family budgeting	39	65	22	36.7	17	28.3	24	40	4	6.7	14	23.3
Types of food for home consumption	14	23.3	54	90	14	23.3	4	6.7	32	53.3	2	3.3

Table 5: Factors influencing the level of gender involvement in decision making

Variable	Coefficients	Standard Error	t-value
Constant	1.643	0.208	7.893**
Age (yrs)	0.008	0.005	1.669*
Education (yrs)	0.031	0.055	0.892NS
Personal Income (₦)	9.59E-06	0.208	3.405**

R^2 = 0.624 *, ** = significant at 10 and 5% levels respectively

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the followings are recommended;

- The Federal and State Governments should provide adequate credit facilities to individuals in order to encourage their participation in different economic activities.
- Sensitization for individuals should be regularly conducted on the importance of women involvement in decision making.
- Individuals should also be mobilized to form co-operative societies that will also facilitate the provision of credits and relevant information to them.
- Government at all levels must invest more in the area of farmer education and employment creation in order to increase participation in different economic activities.

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