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Feminization, food security, and hunger eradication: A Case of Omu-Aran community in Kwara State, Nigeria.

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Abstract. A profound change of the global food and agriculture system is needed if we are to nourish today's 795 million hungry and the expected 2 billion people by 2050. Aside from hunger and malnutrition, food insecurity results in a wide range of problems such as health, environmental degradation, and a high rate of crime. When food security improves, most facets of life improve as well. While most Nigerians engaged in activities outside the agricultural sector, the country is in danger of being engulfed in a food crisis. Improving agriculture and food security (being able to produce enough food to sustain families and communities year after year), is a herculean task for the Omu-Aran community. There are no incentives for women to engage in commercial agriculture. Based on the above, this study tends to examine the role of women in proving food security and how this could help in the eradication of hunger in the Omu-Aran community in Kwara State. It argues that women have more restricted access than men to productive resources and opportunities including land, livestock, inputs, education, extension and research services, and financial services. Closing this gender gap would give an important boost to agricultural productivity and output, and in bringing agricultural yields similar to those of men, government at all levels, as well as corporate and financial establishments, must commit a large chunk of resources towards motivating women farmers. Role theory provides the theoretical framework for the study. The design for the study was both descriptive and exploratory. A two-stage sampling consisting of purposive and simple random techniques were used to select the respondents. The sample population comprises 35 food crop farming households in the Omu-Aran community. A structured interview was used to elicit information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Twenty- five in-depth interviews were conducted. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively while qualitative data was content analyses.

1. Introduction

Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural and human resources, but despite its significant natural resources, the majority of the citizens are living below the poverty line. For instance, according to World Development Indicator [1], an estimated 60% of Nigerians live on less than US\$1.25 per day. Nigeria was also ranked 91st out of a total of 104 counties on the 2015 Global Hunger Index and 153rd out of a total of 187 countries on the 2012 UNDP Human Development Index. Malnutrition and hunger which is linked to poverty have been ravaging most developing countries and affecting their productive capacity [2]. Classifying Nigeria as one of the poorest countries testifies to our failure to achieve our development policy as well as national food security. It once



more awakened the government to the realities on the ground, that is, the need to achieve the first sustainable development goal of no hunger before the year 2030. [3] estimates the population of Nigerian to above 160 million people, the largest in Africa almost accounting for 47% of West Africa's total population.

As the population increases, the country's demand for food increases, while the ability to produce food diminishes because pressures from the growing population in form of desertification, climate change, and erosion are also impacting the already diminishing resources and further threatening food production. [4], Nigeria have an energy intake of 1730Kcal and an average protein supply of 64 g capita per day far below the 2500-3400 Kcal minimum recommended daily intake per day. This shows that Nigeria is facing the challenge of an unbalanced diet leading to various deficiency symptoms. Also among the 109 countries assessed by the Global Food Security Index [5], Nigeria is 91st with 37.1 scores based on indices of affordability, availability, quality, and safety.

One of the goals of Nigerian's agricultural development policy is to ensure that there is enough food reserve at household, state and federal government levels to forestall any threat to the level of food security. Since domestic agricultural production has failed to meet up with the increasing demand for food, the government had to spend on importation to feed her teeming population. For instance, food import increased from 19.9% in 2000 to 30.6% and 22.7% in 2011 and 2012 respectively while food export is barely 5.3% of merchandise [6].

The second sustainable development goal of zero hunger incorporates the need to achieve food security and improved nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture, ending rural hunger, empowering small scale farmers especially women, ensuring a healthy lifestyle by 2030. In the course of development, women are considered secondary to male counterparts concerning opportunities and the contribution of women towards social and economic wellbeing has often been ignored. It has been proven that a society that uses the women's potential and has fewer gender disparities would benefit better than the one that does not utilize or acknowledge one half of the development potential. Although women have been identified as key to development, they experience discrimination concerning food access and distribution thus making women and girls children vulnerable to malnutrition. It is estimated that the number of those who remain hungry would be reduced if the resources provided to women becomes equivalent to those provided for men. Based on the above assertions, it is therefore important to study feminization, food security and hunger eradication with particular attention to the Omu-Aran community in Kwara State, Nigeria.

1.1 Problem

Nigeria faces huge food security challenges. About 70 percent of the population lives on less than N100 (US\$ 0.70) per day, suffering hunger and poverty. Despite its reputation as petroleum resource-dependent, Nigeria remains an agrarian economy. The sector provides over 40% of gross domestic product (GDP) with between 60 and 70% of the population productively engaged in farming. But large regional differences exist. For instance, in the southeast, 22% of the people live in rural areas with most of them engaged in non-farming activities. Nigeria has about 79 million hectares of arable land, of which 32 million hectares are cultivated. Over 90% of agricultural production is rain-fed. Smallholders, mostly subsistence producers account for 80% of all farm holdings. Both crop and livestock production remains below potentials.

Inadequate access to and low uptake of high-quality seeds, low fertilizer use, and inefficient production systems lead to this shortfall. Despite a seven percent growth rate in agricultural production (2006-2008), Nigeria's food import bill has risen. The growing population is dependent on imported food staples, including rice, wheat, and fish. Government policy should, more than in the past, consider environmental challenges and remediate poor past and present agricultural

management practices, which hinge on input support, and land resource utilization, management, and conservation. The central role of women in the agricultural economy needs to finally be recognized and reflected in the policies and measures that purport to buttress smallholders.

Most studies on the protection and promotion of food security through women's empowerment in agricultural production have always treated women as a vulnerable group; no attention is paid to the impact of Women's contribution to the eradication of food insecurity in the household as well as the women themselves evaluating the direct and indirect measures to empower themselves. This is a gap in knowledge which this study tried to fill, by examining feminization, food security and hunger eradication with particular attention to the Omu-Aran community in Kwara State, Nigeria. This paper is guided by the following questions:

- a. Are there inequalities in the agriculture sector in the study area?
- b. What is the role of women in providing food security at different levels of urban food crop farming households?
- c. Are there challenges faced by women in providing food security at different levels of urban food crop farming households?
- d. What are the direct and indirect measures put in place to empower women in providing food security at different levels of urban food crop farming households?

2. Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

This section reviews the literature on feminization, food security and hunger eradication in the Omu-Aran community, Kwara state. To enhance understanding of the subject matter, the convenient point to start the review will be from the concept of food security.

2.1 Conceptualizing Food Security

There exist a plethora of definitions of food security in the literature. [7], has this to mention about food security; food security can be as the ability of food-deficit regions or nations, or families inside those nations, to meet target levels of consumption every year. They noted that what constitutes target consumption is being referred to as two central issues of a country's food policy. For [8], 'food security can be defined truly as getting admission to using each person always to enough food for a lively and wholesome lifestyle. Consequently, [8] defined it, therefore: food security, in reality, refers back to the ability of individuals and families (particularly the rural and concrete poor) to meet staple meals needs all year spherical'. Continuing, [9], states that the above description is largely intra-generational food security in place of inter-generations to meet their food desires, at the season and off-season.

According to the [10], food security is the human being's proper to outline their very own policies and techniques for the sustainable manufacturing, distribution and consumption of food that ensures the proper to food for the whole population on the idea of small and medium-sized manufacturing, respecting their personal cultures and the range of peasant, fishing and indigenous types of agricultural manufacturing, marketing and management of rural areas, in which girls play a fundamental position.

Food security is likewise visible as a scenario in which absolutely everyone at all times has to get entry to secure and nutritious meals to maintain a healthful and energetic life [11]. [12]; [13], provides that food isn't always only a primary need; it additionally presents the physiological basis upon which other considerations and human sports are dependent. He cited that for us in Nigeria, food security is both a national objective and a project. Food security is not virtually having sufficient and adequate portions of our various staple foodstuffs however it also includes access to the whole citizenry to those food objects at low-cost charges. It, also, means that no longer best must we have interaction in mass food production, but additionally we want to make sure that maximum Nigeria has sufficient purchasing power to gather food gadgets that guarantee correct

feeding and nutrition. Food security can also be described as a condition in which every person, always, has bodily and monetary get admission to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to fulfill their dietary wishes and food options for a lively and healthy existence [14].

2.2 *Challenges of food security in Nigeria*

Attaining food security in its entirety poses a big task in a country like Nigeria, because of a huge spectrum of issues. More than ninety percent of agricultural production in Nigeria is rain-fed with approximately 79 million hectares of arable land, of which 32 million hectares are cultivated [15]. Both crop and livestock production stays beneath potentials. Despite a seven percent growth charge in agricultural production (2000 to 2008), the developing populace is dependent on imported staple meals (e.g. rice, beans) exemplified using growth inside the food import bill.

First and foremost, the primary cause of food insecurity in developing countries is the lack of ability of human beings to gain gets admission to food because of giant poverty and unemployment, which additionally inhibits purchasing electricity and forestalls assured access to food supplies.

Secondly, global food prices have risen dramatically in the last few years and are forecast to rise further or become more volatile International Assessment of [16], [17]. Food prices volatility has exerted tremendous strain on international food security, and plenty of Nigerians rely on the market for their food delivery and at risk of excessive food prices. Associated with excessive food prices is an excessive fee of input which limits yield and production tiers that many time ends in sub-most beneficial enter usage. For instance, fertilizer consumption in Nigeria is one of the lowest in sub-Sahara Africa at 71 g in line with hectare [18]; [19].

Thirdly, the inherent traits of climate that show up themselves as changes of climate over some time affect meals safety substantially in unpredictable approaches as a result of their negative effect on pests, crop illnesses, crop manufacturing, animal husbandry, and human beings. Converting climatic situations affect both the bodily and monetary availability of positive desired meals gadgets. Their impacts on earnings-incomes possibilities can affect the capability to shop for food, the provision of positive meals products, and price. Modifications in the demand for seasonal agricultural labour, consequent upon modifications in manufacturing practices, will, in flip, affect earnings-producing ability.

Fourth, farmers in Nigeria additionally have confined get admission to credit, and much less than 10 percent of irrigable land is being irrigated. Fifth, the worldwide economy is know-how-driven and food system performance is dependent closely and without delay on agricultural technological improvements and innovations in applicable sectors.

2.3 *The Nigerian Government Responses to Food Security Challenges*

The majority of the rural populace depends on Agric-related activities for their livelihood; the appraisal on the past shows that successive administrations in Nigeria had initiated programmes towards ensuring food is available and accessible for the teeming population. The sustenance of the idea is to fulfill their mandates has remained a dream. It includes Farm Settlement Scheme, National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) by Gen. Yakubu Gowon; Operation Feed the Nation by Murtala/Obasanjo administration; River Basin and Rural Development Authority; Green Revolution and World Bank-funded Agricultural Development Project (ADP) by Shehu Shagari and Babangida's Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI).

Despite these efforts, agriculture has been constrained by numerous challenges like rural-urban migration, wavering policy formulations, implementation, insufficient infrastructural support poor input distribution system, focus on oil economy; pricing system; over-dependence on rain-fed farming; poor capacity utilization, low investor's confidence; environmental degradation' poor access to funds; poor socio-economic status of farmers, insufficient technological transfer

system, corruption and poor commitment to implementation of agricultural policies. Therefore, for Nigeria to transform as one of the 20 leading economies in the world by 2020, an agricultural revolution should be the catalyst to its industrialization.

2.4 The Role of Women through Empowerment for Resolving the Problem of Food Security in Nigeria

In discussing the role of women in resolving the problems of food and general security challenges, it is useful to revisit [20] concept of “entitlement” to food whereby he observes that hunger, food security, and famine are consequences of poverty due to lack of entitlements. To him, entitlements are variables that indicate an individual’s power inside the monetary and political gadget and get right of entry to assets, i.e. universal command over matters and relevant rights and obligations. The postulation of the “entitlement” approach is that who gets to eat and who don’t eat are ultimately questions of power, particularly economic power. Thus, people’s ability to participate in the market economy is contingent on equitable distribution of power, (hence food).

However, it is an irony of fate to observe that while the current world’s food production is enough for all [21], recent FAO estimates reveal otherwise, as about 925 million people go to bed daily on empty stomach. Coupled with this is the additional global spike in the prices of food, leading to an increase in the level of undernourishment by 7%, thus driving about 100 million people into impoverishment. With an estimated 9.3 billion world population by 2050, it is expected that every one of this population will need about 70% increases in cereals supplies alone. This indeed is a critical situation that calls for pressing gender fairness and justice and the conclusion that men and women have identical rights as people, as a consequence women’s rights as human rights-as well as ending hunger are interdependent objectives. Consequently, solving the problem of food insecurity now and in the future requires a critical evaluation of the current global development paradigm that has sanctioned inequitable distribution of power in all ramifications. Gender analysis has revealed the crucial roles that women play in agricultural production. It is no longer news that women are key (major) players in the farming sector (producers, processors, cooks, servers of food, etc).

Also, in the area of food utilization, women’s role in this regard is very critical for food security, which underscores their importance in food production. Their responsibility in food preparation is essential for dietary diversity of their households, especially in the area of selecting complement stable foods like fruits, vegetables, animal source food, etc. This reveals their critical roles in food security both within the household and society at large. In the history of mankind, women have always had the major responsibility for the family’s nutrition; hence any effort at preventing hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity as well as health enhancement will to a great extent depend on women’s activities and their empowerment in all ramifications. Thus in Nigeria, empowering women for sustainable economic development is a crucial key to solving the problem of food and general security challenges.

3. Theoretical framework

In explaining Feminization, food security and hunger eradication in the Omu-Aran community, Kwara state of Nigeria.

3.1 The Role Theory

The structural role perspective is concerned with describing and understanding many complex aspects of human behaviour. The role analyst focuses on the behaviour of a given individual, on the specific aggregate of individuals, or may study particular grouping of individuals who display given behaviours. Many aspects of real-life such as the individual's appraisal of self and others, a

person's performance and how this performance affects others, how people learn to perform, and how the performance of some groups are related to those of other groups are studied [22].

For the structural role theorists, the social world is viewed as a network of variously interrelated positions, or statuses, within which individuals enact roles [23]. For each position, groups, and classes of positions, various kinds of expectations about how incumbents are to behave can be perceived. Therefore, social organization is composed of various networks of statuses and expectations [24]. Statuses are analyzed in terms of how they are interrelated to one another to form various types of social units. In terms of variables such as size, degree of differentiation, and complexity of interrelatedness, status networks are classified into forms ranging from various types of groups to larger forms of collective organization. There is a close relationship between form and content because the types of expectations that typify particular networks of positions represent one of their defining characteristics. The assumption is that behaviour of individuals is a function of the structure as well as the kinds of expectations that are inherent in these positions.

The individual is conceptualized in terms of two basic attributes: self-related characteristics and role-playing capacities and skills. Individuals in society occupy positions, and their role performance in these positions is determined by social norms, demands, and rules; by the role performance of others in their perspective positions; by those who observe and react to the performance; by individuals' particular capabilities and personality. The point of articulation between the individual and society is denoted by the concept of role. This involves individuals in their respective statuses who employ self and role-playing capacities to adjust to various types of expectations when the conceptual emphasis is placed upon the expectations of individuals in status positions. The concept of role focuses attention on the one hand on activities and one the other on expectations, which are characteristics of particular categories of people and relevant to certain contexts.

In this study, it facilitates our special aim of looking at individual women's varied positions, in particular, those of women who are farmers and associated activities of farming and expectations about providing food security and elimination of hunger in the Omu-Aran community. It provides modes of measurement for role-related phenomena and assists in description and understanding of social role systems and social change as well as individual role-playing. It is hoped that this approach can provide a comprehensive guideline that captures the various aspects of women's involvement in agriculture.

Role theory, therefore, asserts that there is various variables interplay which gives meaning to our understanding of women's participation in agriculture. The women's level of income; education and age have a relationship with their level of involvement in agriculture as well as the task they perform. The operation of the variables has to be understood bearing in mind the environmental constraints that affect the lives of the women in the community and the culture in which they exist. Based on the above assumptions, the following hypotheses are stated. It can generally be hypothesized that a farm woman performs a significant amount of farm tasks but her decision making power in the family Increases only when her resources (income, property, etc.) increase, thereby determining her level of involvement in providing food security in the community.

4. Research Setting and Procedure

The research setting of the study is Omu-Aran. Omu-Aran is a community in Irepodun Local Government Area (LGA), of Kwara state. Bounded by Osun state in the North, Ekiti state in the south, Offa local government area in the East and West respectively. It is composed of villages, e.g Ajase, Arandun, Esie, Agbonda, Omu-Aran, and Oro. The people speak the Yoruba language and a local dialect called "Igbo-na". The community has primary schools, secondary schools, and one private University (Landmark University). The inhabitants of this community are mostly

farmers because they are blessed with savannah/rain forest and vegetation, with patches of rivers and streams that help in crop farming and animal grazing.

The cultural value, of this community, is a Patrilineal and patriarchal society, in this society, the men are the heads of the households and the wives live under their domain. Landowning and land use rights are patriarchal, while the community is headed by a king (Oba) assisted by chiefs in council, consisting of old men rooted in the traditions and culture of the community. Non- women farmers (that is, those within ages 39 -41 years that are in agricultural food processes activities were equally interviewed). A two-stage sampling consisting of purposive and simple random techniques was used for a selection of 35 respondents, who are food crop farming households in the Omu-Aran community. A five structured interview was conducted to elicit information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. While 35 structured, in-depth interviews were conducted.

5. Result

5.1 Section A: Respondents demographic information

Table 1. Respondent's Demographic Data

Parameter	Frequency	Percentage %
Age		
(a) 20 – 35yrs	10	28.6
(b) 35 - 50yrs	20	57.1
(c) 50 and above	5	14.3
Total	35	100
Qualification		
(a) Primary	20	57.1
(b) Secondary/NCE	8	22.9
(c) Higher Institution	7	20.0
Total	35	100
Agricultural activities		
(a) Crop farming	5	14.3
(b) Animal farming	8	22.9
(c) Agric Extension	0	0
(d) Food processing	17	48.5
(e) Others specify	5	14.3
Total	35	100
Religion		
(a) Christianity	15	42.9
(b) Muslim	13	37.1
(c) Others	7	20.0
Total	35	100
Monthly income		
(a) ₦10,000	9	25.7
(b) ₦20,000	15	42.9
(c) ₦30, 000	8	22.9
(d) Others	3	8.5
Total	35	100

Source: Researcher's interview, 2019

The table above unfolds the demographical information of the respondents. The first is on the age distribution of the respondents. The result shows that 20 (57.1%) of the respondents are between 35-50 years of age. This suggests that more elderly women are involved in agricultural activities. Showing concerns to provide food security.

5.2 *Section B: Characteristics of Nigerian women strategy in the face of food shortage*

Second, the above table reveals the level of education attained by respondents. As observed from the table, the first category of the sampled women 20 (57.1%) has only a Primary school certificate. While 8 (22.8%) are having a secondary school certificate, and 7 (20.0%) with tertiary institution certificate. Similarly, another category of respondents is those that are involved in a specific type of farming activity. The finding shows that 5 (14.3%) of the women are involved in Crop farming, while 8 (22.8%) are interested in raising Animals. Those involve in Food processing are 17(48.5%) respondents. Agriculture extension has not been part of these women, because they do not have access to land allocation. We have the last group of 5(14.3%) that neither farm nor raise animals. The next group reveals the frequency distribution of respondents' by religious affiliations. It can be deduced from the table that 15 (42.9%) of respondents were Christians, 13 (37.1%) are Muslims while only 7 (20.0%) practice other type of religion. This demonstrates that the sampled population was dominantly Christians. Lastly, table shows that a majority (42.9%) of the respondents thought that an income of ₦20,000 could be realized in a month, 25.7% says ₦10,000 while, 22.9% says ₦30,000. To further buttress the findings; a structured interview was carried out.

5.3 *Section B: Overview of Inequalities in the agricultural sector in the study area*

When the women were asked about the various types of farming they are into, and about the gender that dominates in their line of farming. Most of them explained that they are into various types of farming ranging from Crop farming, Animal farming, food processing, etc. Findings reveals that, 50% of the respondents indicated to have been engaged in some other Agric-businesses like Animal farming and Agricultural food processing in other to make food available to their family. The majority of the crop farmers are men. The respondent says few of the women are into crop farming, but they are not members of any farmer's associations. They have opportunities for credit facilities outside farmers associations; it was also observed that the majority of respondents understood the peculiarities of their community, that women have no equal access to land allocation in the community.

When probe further, a respondent stated that:

...they have no access to loans through farmers association, but directly from the bank. This is because it is a man dominated world.

When asked if access to land by women is easy. Another respondent reveals that access to land in the community is very difficult, however for an indigene one could get, on consultation with elders or chief in the community. While for non-indigene, the piece of land has to be purchased.

5.4 *Section C: The Role of women in providing food security*

The respondents when asked, what they do to support family feeding. And if the role women play could lead to availability, accessibility, and quality of food in the community. The respondents indicated to have been involved in all forms of Agricultural businesses like Animal farming and Agricultural food processing in other to make food available to their family. As reveals in the findings, 48.5% of the respondent argues that the cultural belief of the people does not affect the contribution of women to agriculture. Majority of this respondent stated that they engaged the employment of Labourers to farm in other to feed their family.

5.5 *Section D: The Challenges faced by women in providing food security*

There are challenges as to training, and getting information on agricultural improvement seedlings, tools and fertilizer, across to women in Omu-Aran. A respondent attested to the fact that even

when the Agricultural officer comes around for training, the women will not go due to financial challenges. Another respondent refers to a lack of agricultural information, modern tools, and the illiteracy level of women in the community as a major obstacle to Agricultural activities. It was also revealed that, apart from inadequate rainfall, the majority of the respondents don't have a land to cultivate; however, the above data corroborate existing literature which viewed women as mainly involved in subsistence farming.

6. Conclusions

The result shows that 20 (57.1%) of the respondents are between 35-50 years of age. This suggests that more elderly women are involved in agricultural activities. Showing concerns to provide food security. The majority of the women (57.1%) have Primary education. Most of the women in the sampled are involved in Food processing (48.5%) as shown in the study. From the study it shows that Agriculture extension has not been part of agricultural activities in the community among the women, therefore this study suggests that all level of policymakers that are involved in agriculture should provide agriculture extension service for the women in the community and farmland should be made accessible to those women who are interested in agriculture. The majority (42.9%) of the respondents thought that they earn an income of ₦20,000 every month. This is small considering the current economic situation in the country. Therefore, for women to be involved in food security, agriculture must be seen as economically viable.

Findings indicated that the respondents are engaged in some other Agric-businesses, like Animal farming and Agricultural food processing in other to make food available to their family. In the community majority of the crop, farmers are men and few of the women who were involved in crop farming did not belong to farmers associations. This may be attributed to the fact they are not allowed to have access to farmland. There is no cultural barrier for women to be involved in agriculture and by extension; women have taken part in food security in the community, though some women engaged the services of farm labourers who are men. The findings reveal that there are challenges with regards to training, and getting information on agricultural improvement seedlings, the use of modern tools as well as the availability of fertilizer.

Finally, based on the findings of this study, women farmers in the study area are faced with a lot of challenges for involvement in food security. Some of the challenges are inadequate finances, poor access to information and training, inadequate inputs, Lack of land ownership rights, Gender inequality, Religious belief, Cultural belief, Lack of technological knowhow and High rate of illiteracy. Therefore, to facilitate effective women's involvement in food security, this study has proffered some suggestions which could increase women's involvement in food security thereby enhancing economic growth in the study area and Nigeria at large. Due to the findings of this study, the following suggestions were made:

Government at all levels should provide agricultural credit facilities and loans that will take into cognizance the peculiar nature of women in terms of collateral demands. There is a need for sensitization of rural women on the importance of education as it relates to food security. Awareness should be created the women on how they can impact positively on the economy through their involvement in agricultural activities. The local authority should collaborate with traditional rulers and other stakeholders to ensure that all cultural and traditional practices which affect women adversely in terms of access to farmland should be abolished. Adequate training of women on the use of farm inputs and technological driven machines for fast work on the farm and higher yield should be encouraged.

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