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To cite this article: F F Asamu *et al* 2020 *IOP Conf. Ser.: Earth Environ. Sci.* **445** 012049

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# Gender issues and women's participation in agricultural production in Warri South Local Government area of Delta State, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** Gender inequality of women participation in agricultural production has become a worrisome discussion in the present dispensation. This is because women constitute large portion in agriculture business. The study therefore examines this issue, stressing on the extent of women's participation in agriculture. The highest frequency of women that engage in farming all year round is 48 (30.0%), 44 (27.6%) respondents engage in farming activities half a year, 35 (21.8%) engage quarterly in a year. While cultural practices 36 (22.5%) form the highest causes of gender inequality and women's participation in agricultural production in Warri South Local Government Areas of Delta State, using data collected through questionnaire interview from 160 subjects. The study reveals that gender inequality of women in agricultural participation has considerable impact on the production process.

## 1. Introduction

Women play important roles in agriculture, going through a broad sphere of activities that relates to food production, processing and marketing [1]. Women participation in agricultural production therefore cut across various agricultural processes such as planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, and marketing as well as tending livestock [2]. This necessitates their integration into planning, policies, and programs for effective and sustainable development of a nation [3]. Hence, the women's role in agricultural production in the developing nations, including Nigeria, cannot be overemphasized [4]. Agricultural production process is involving and highly demanding. Women farmers in the rural area play crucial role in food production and food security. They constitute 70% of agricultural workers, 80% of food producers, 100% are involved in the processing of essential foodstuffs and 60 to 90% undertake marketing [5]. Out of every ten agricultural workers in the world, four are women. [6, 5]. As such, the role of agriculture has been re-appraised and re-valued on its impact on industrialization and its relevance to peaceful development, political, and economic stableness with emphasis on women participation in agricultural activities. The responsiveness of Agricultural resources to market forces have being on the increase and also integrated



into the industrial interdependencies networking which is mainly shaped by technological advancement, vertical integration, marketing and consumer preferences [3]. The International Development Community (IDC) has thus highlighted agriculture as a backbone of growth and poverty reduction in countries where it is the major occupation of the larger proportion of the people. As agriculture industry has become more advanced in technology, commercialization and global integration, the developing countries must fully utilize their human resources to take advantage of the global opportunities for all agricultural producers, including improving women participation in agriculture [7].

One of the major problems women encounter is that they are not allowed the ownership of resources, they do not own the resources of their community. This is a major problem hindering contribution to Agricultural production by women in Warri South L.G.A. As major contributors to Agricultural productions, they are not given complete access to Agricultural resources because of patriarchy. Another problem in the Agricultural sector that women face is that they are sidelined, and their roles are relegated in conventional agricultural and economic analyses [8]. They are not given equal opportunity as men in all areas, even if they participate to a large extent in Agricultural production. Better still, women low access to credit facilities and income poses high challenge as some traditions confines women's co-operative societies' membership [9]. This reflects the archaic tenet that women are not the farmers but the men. This situation limits women's full participation in Agricultural production. There is also the problem to be able to acquire technological machineries for a more productive work, thereby hindering women's income generation abilities and entrepreneurship. It is extremely difficult for women to have access to credit facilities as most of them do not own assets because women do not have collateral security to show, which could be used in purchasing these technological machineries. [10].

Women who participate as farmers, workers, and entrepreneurs are confronted with more difficulties than men. In Agricultural production, there is "gender gap" which hinders their effective participation in Agriculture. They do not have access to land required for involving in mechanized farming other than the subsistence farming which is majorly practiced by women in rural areas, thereby reducing their contributions to the attainment of broader societal goals [7]. Most women are not privileged to acquire a large sector of land or are denied access to land because it is believed that the male counterparts would be better off or more productive in the Agricultural production. Women barely own land and when they do, their possessions tend to be smaller and less rich in fertility than those of men. Women who are knowledgeable and with ideas for Agricultural production cannot do much because of small or no land factor, they therefore participate in small scale farming and engage on subsistence Agriculture to feed family members and generate a low income for livelihood. Likewise, problem of Education on Agricultural production training for women hinders development generally. Majority of women has been deprived of better access to educational opportunities and healthcare due to gender inequality, therefore, the adoption of modern farm technology cannot be accessed by farmers in rural area. Deficiency in the acquisition of formal education and training in agriculture activities is a major obstacle to women's advancement in society. Most women farm and make farm produce from the old cultural farming techniques known to them. The female illiteracy in Nigeria was over 50 per cent in 2007 as compared to 38 per cent for men [11].

Therefore, this study explores the knowledge gap between men and women in Agricultural production and the benefits that most women are deprived from because of their gender.

## **2. Theoretical framework and methodology**

### *2.1. Liberal Feminist Theory*

The Liberal feminism theory of gender inequality propounded by [12] was used as a frame work for this study. The theory focuses on patriarchy as a system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on an assumption that "male supremacy oppresses women.

The Liberal feminist theory is relevant to the Agricultural sector, women especially in the rural region of Warri South, LGA do not have same access to men when it comes to some certain rights like access to land, standard education, other economic rights because of patriarchy which is common in that region. Women therefore do not persist to go beyond subsistence farming and extensions, producing beyond feeding their families. Only if these women are enlightened that they are equal to men, despite their gender,

their ideology towards Agriculture will grow beyond the level they participate in Delta State. Using fish farming or oil palm for example, as the most common type of farming practiced in Warri South L.G.A, these women do not have enough financial assistance in any form, not from government or any other corporations. Despite these, women in this region would be up as early as possible, do home chores, prepare meal for their husbands and children and still take their little children to school. Even at this, these women still engage in farming, tilling and toiling under harsh weather conditions, to feed their families.

It is expedient that the liberal principles and practices of individual freedom and rights in the lives of women should be applied. This way, women get educated and can acquire or be able to request for all they require to expand their agricultural production. Not just farming and feeding the family alone, but getting involved in mechanized farming, thereby, not only feeding those around them, but improving the gross national product (GNP) of the economy. Women should also be involved in seminars for Agricultural developments which are usually organized by Agricultural Organizations, such privileges and freedom should not be restricted to men alone. Some men might not be as hardworking as women, especially in providing food for the family, they might not have the physical abilities to toil and produce Agricultural products, but they make contributions to their best abilities, therefore, such women need to be supported, given sufficient resources needed with no gender restriction. They should have equal rights as men to access land, education, Agricultural inputs, aids and incentives for agricultural expansion and more. According to the y statement by President Buhari of Nigeria sometimes in 2017, saying his “wife belongs to the kitchen”, such statement encourages gender inequality, not only amongst those uneducated women in rural areas, but amongst the educated ones in urban areas. Such mindset should be gradually erased, especially in the Agricultural sectors, women should not only be involved in manual labour as farmers, they need equal access to agricultural facilities as the men counterpart. Patriarchy in the Warri South L.G.A is a major concern which needs to be addressed, but can only be done if these women are educated and know their rights, despite culture, custom or traditions, which is usually a force behind gender inequality.

## 2.2. Methodology

Survey research was adopted for this study. Survey research involves direct contact with the sample population. Survey was used for this study because not all the farmers (both male and female) participating in Agriculture can be studied.

The location of the study is the Warri South LGA, Delta State Nigeria. The study populations were male and female farmers. This research was carried out avoiding discrimination or bias response from only the female respondents. The target study populations therefore, are the male and female farmers of Warri South, Delta State.

The questionnaire method was adopted as the main instrument for this study. The questions covered wide areas of issues ranging from demographic variables to information on respondents opinion on their view of gender inequality and women participation in agricultural production. In all, 160 questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents. The findings of the study are based on the data obtained from the field.

The method used in collecting the data for this research work is the primary and secondary data. The primary data is the questionnaire. A well-structured and self-administered and interview form of questionnaire were given to the respondents.

## 3. Result and Discussion

This section covers the socio-demographic characteristics of one hundred and sixty farmers, traders and those involved and related in Agricultural field in Warri South Local Government Areas. (See tables in appendix).

Table 1 indicates that the age distributions of respondents ranging between 18-21 years were 21 (13.1%), respondents between 22-25years were 29 (18.1%), respondents between 26-29 years were 32 (20%), respondents between 30-34years were 33 (20.6%) and respondents between 35 and above were 45 (28.1%). This shows that a larger number (percentage) of respondents used for this study falls within the age range of 35years and above in the Warri South LGA.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
<b>Age</b>		
18-21 years	21	13.1
22-25 years	29	18.1
26-29 years	32	20
30-34 years	33	20.6
35 and above	45	28.1
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	80	50
Female	80	50
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	50	31.3
Married	93	58.1
Separated	10	6.3
Divorced	7	4.4
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
Primary School Certificate	34	21.3
Secondary Certificate	45	28.1
Ordinary National Diplomacy	30	18.8
Higher National Diplomacy	29	18.1
University Degree	22	13.8

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2018.

The sex distribution indicates that 80 (50%) out of 160 respondents used in the study were males while the remaining 80 (50%) were females. This shows an equal distribution of questionnaire between male and female respondents and this was an intentional act to avoid bias response from only one aspect of the respondents (female respondents), based on the sensitivity of the study. The respondents' marital status reveals that 50 (31.3%) respondents were single, 93(58.1%) respondents were married, while 10 (6.3%) respondents were separated and 7 (4.4%) of the respondents were divorced. This shows that more of the respondents used for this study were married.

As regarding educational qualification, 34 (21.3%) of the respondents have primary school certificate, 45 (28.1%) of the respondents have secondary school certificate, 30 (18.8%) of the respondents have ordinary national diplomacy, 29 (18.1%) of the respondents have higher national diplomacy and 22 (13.8%) of the respondents have university degrees. This depicts that majority of the respondents in this study have secondary school certificate. Table 2 shows respondents' distribution on how they engage in farming activities. The highest frequency 48 (30.0%) are respondents that engage in farming all year round, 44 (27.6%) respondent engage in farming activities half a year, 35 (21.8%) respondents engage quarterly in a year and 33 (30.6%) respondents engage in farming activities sometimes or at their leisure. From the above pie chart most of the farmers used for this study participate in farming activities all year round because it is a source of income or livelihood, while the least respondents are small scale farmers whose major occupation is not farming, thereby not actively engaged in farming activities.

**Table 2.** Respondents' Participation in Agricultural Activities.

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
All year round	48	30.0%
Half a year	44	27.6%
Quarterly in a year	35	21.8%
Sometimes	33	20.6%
TOTAL	160	100%

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2018.

Table 3 depicts respondents from category 30 (18.7%) believe roles as mothers in society hinders women from getting involved in Agricultural production. While respondents from category 36 (22.5%) believe Patriarchy hinders women from getting involved in Agricultural production and is the least filled response by respondents. Also, respondents from category 3 (21.3%) shows that unequal access to loans and grants is a challenge to women in involved in Agricultural production and 32 (20%) indicated that inadequate education causes them not to have efficient agricultural production compared to their man counterparts, while 28 (17.5%) respondents believe that lack of land ownership hinders women from agricultural production and is the most filled response by the respondents, which means the people from Warri South LGA land ownership by women as a great challenge.

**Table 3.** Causes of Gender Inequality in Agricultural Production.

CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Role as mothers in society	30	18.7
Cultural Practice (Patriarchy)	36	22.5
Unequal access to loans / grants	34	21.3
Inadequate Education	32	20.0
Lack of land ownership rights	28	17.5
Total	160	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2018.

From the data in table 4, the opinions of the respondents on the basis that men do not have much challenges in Agricultural production compared to women depicts that 29 (18.1%) of the respondents strongly disagree, 47(29.4%) of the respondents disagree, 25 (15.6%) of the respondents' undecided or were not sure, 40 (25.0%) of the respondents agree and 19 (11.9%) of the respondents strongly agree. This explains that a larger proportion of the respondents 47 (29.4%) disagree with the fact that men do not have much challenges like women in Agriculture.

**Table 4.** Impact of Gender Inequality on Women Participation in Agricultural Production

IMPACT OF FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
<b>GENDER INEQUALITY</b>	
<b>Men do not have much challenges as women in Agricultural Production</b>	
Strongly disagree	29 18.1%
Disagree	47 29.4%
Undecided	25 15.6%
Agree	40 25.0%
Strongly agree	19 11.9%
<b>Women's access to land for agriculture highly limited</b>	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	39 24.4%
Undecided	33 20.6%
Agree	34 21.3%
Strongly agree	37 23.1%
	17 10.6%
<b>Most women especially in rural areas are subsistent farmers</b>	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	28 17.5%
Undecided	34 21.3%
Agree	27 16.9%
Strongly agree	46 28.8%
	25 15.6%
<b>Women's opportunity to access agriculture loans and grants are highly limited</b>	
Strongly disagree	28 17.5%
Disagree	29 18.1%
Undecided	26 16.3%
Agree	47 29.4%
Strongly agree	30 18.8%

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2018

Also, the respondents' opinions on the notion that women's opportunity to access land for Agriculture is highly limited shows that 39 (24.4%) of the respondents strongly disagree with the notion, 33 (20.6%) of the respondent disagree, 34 (21.3%) of the respondent are undecided or not certain about their opinions, and 37 (23.1%) of the respondents agree, while the remaining 17 (10.6%) strongly agree with the notion. This explains that the highest proportion of respondents strongly disagree with this notion.

Which implies that majority the people of Warri South LGA, do not see access to farmland by women as highly limited.

Meanwhile, the ideas of respondents illustrating if most women especially in rural areas are subsistent farmers goes thus; 28 (17.5%) of the respondents strongly disagree, 34 (21.3%) of the respondents disagree, 27 (16.9%) of the respondents' undecided or not sure, 46 (28.8%) of the respondents agree and 25 (15.6%) of the respondents strongly agree. This shows that majority of the respondents affirms that most women in rural areas are subsistent farmers.

The last variable in table 4 that was examined under the impact of gender inequality on women participation in agricultural production is based on the high limitation of women's opportunity to access agricultural loans and grants. And the data reveals that 28 (17.5%) of the respondents strongly disagree, 29 (18.1%) of the respondents disagree, 26 (16.3%) of the respondents' undecided, 47 (29.4%) of the respondents agree and 30 (18.8%) of the respondents strongly agree. Therefore, the data depicts that a larger proportion of the respondents affirm to the fact that women's opportunity to access farm loans and grants in Warri LGA is highly limited.

#### 4. Conclusion

The major findings of this study are centered on gender inequality in Agricultural production in Warri South LGA. The major focus of this study is to establish the possibility of equity of female farmers' participation in Agricultural productivity in Warri South LGA. It also developed a conceptual framework of these experiences by integrating the findings gotten from field with research objective, theories, literature review; and other findings.

Based on findings of this study the researcher was able to find out that women's participation in Agricultural production in Warri South LGA is not to a very large extent. There are a few challenges women encounter such as land acquisition, problem of loans, aids and grants. The findings therefore affirms that truly, women to a large extent are sidelined as a result of cultural norms and values of the society, therefore the researcher discovered that most of the female farmers have home gardens or practice subsistent farming of which not all resources needed are made available. For more participation of women in agriculture, all resources must be made available to them in order to be productive farmers. For those women or female farmers who want to get involved in mechanized system of farming, government should be able to assist women by giving them monthly resources like fertilizers and other farming facilitators.

Furthermore, the researcher identified that there are several causes of gender inequality in Agricultural production and it varies from one society to another. It varies from lack of education, especially in the Agricultural aspect, the culture and values of the people. In Warri South LGA, where the research was carried out, women cannot ordinarily own or purchase a land or get it willed, it should be under the name of a brother or a husband whom she is subjected, that is the culture over there. The researcher also found out that women are weaker sex so are not advised or given the full approval by community to go into a large-scale farming. The literature study shows that Gender inequality is an inevitable factor in every society including the Agricultural aspects. Women are treated unequally, do not have the same opportunity as men, they are marginalized, seen as playing the roles of wives and mother sand are limited to certain activities in the society. Nevertheless, when women who are not very much trained or less enlightened in this aspect decide to go into large scale farming they have low productive output. But if they are trained, educated on a more modern form of farming, they will show a positive impact with Agricultural production in the society.

Lastly, the researcher discovered that gender inequality in Agricultural production decreases the extent of women's great role in driving the Agricultural vision of the nation. The impact of gender inequality in Agricultural production from the researcher's perspective can never be underestimated. According to findings, majority of the female farmers from Warri South LGA are deprived from basic needs they require for large scale farming. They therefore settle for subsistence farming to feed the family or get involved in trading of this Agricultural production. In the course of the study, it shows that majority of the female farmers are not recognized with their labour and contribution to Agricultural production. In relation to the



Liberal Feminist theory [12], it confirmed that women are oppressed, not treated equal, marginalized and are not meant to hold certain position in the society because of their gender. The Liberal feminist theory is all about women discriminated in the society, whereby they ought to have similar or same level of significance in the society as men do. From the study, women are denied equal access to activities and basic requirements for Agricultural production. It is rare to see a woman run a large form of farming in Warri South LGA. According to the culture there, the woman is the assisting bond and most cases must not do reasonably well beyond the man. By this women's chances in furthering their Agricultural participation is highly limited which call for attention and a restructuring of beliefs of the group of culture. Agriculture is a blessing and a privilege that everyone should participate in, and not restricting such privileges only to male counterpart.

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