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GENDER ANALYSIS OF LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF HOUSEHOLD HEADS IN RURAL AREAS OF OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Livelihood strategy is a function of livelihood assets, access to productive resources and opportunities available to a set of people. Given that female headed households (FHHs) tend to be more vulnerable than their male counterpart owing to greater difficulties in accessing productive resources such as land, labour, credit facilities, amongst others, this study analyzed the livelihood strategies of household heads in rural areas of Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, it described the personal characteristics of household heads, determined their accessibility to productive resources and identified constraints inhibiting accessibility to productive resources. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select 252 respondents for the study. Structured interview schedule and Focus Group Discussions were used to elicit relevant information. Mean, standard deviation and one way ANOVA were used for data analysis. Results show that 60.0 per cent and 66.7 per cent of Male Heads of Households (MHH) and Female Heads of Households (FHH) aged between 31 and 60 years respectively, while 73.5 per cent and 80.8 per cent, respectively, had below 6 years of formal education. Also, more FHH (69.2 %) engaged in small/micro enterprises than male (32.6 %). Contrarily, more MHH engaged in skilled activities and wage labour as livelihood strategies. Furthermore, the study established a gap in accessibility to productive resources ($F = 6.605$, $p = 0.01$). However, there was no significant difference in constraints limiting the accessibility by males and females ($F = 2.227$, $p = 0.113$). Poor access to resources was found to be a general phenomenon of rural households, and lack of adequate funds, rather than gender discrimination was responsible for this. It was concluded that, despite the gap in accessibility to productive resources, both categories of households engaged in a variety or mix of activities as livelihood strategies.

Key words: Livelihood strategy, productive resources, constraints, rural households, gender analysis

Introduction

Traditionally, men are known to be heads of households in the African setting, but certain studies of social and economic trends suggest significant increase in the number of households headed or principally maintained by women in rural areas of many developing countries (Folbre, 1991; Tripathy, 2005). Factors responsible for this, according to the UN (1995) include marriage dissolution and

widowhood; sex-specific migration where men migrate from rural to urban areas in search of better employment opportunities, low average life-span among men due to chronic sickness, as well as civil conflicts. In his own contribution, Ekong (2003) noted that lack of opportunities to earn ready cash income during slack seasons in the farming calendar which engender migration among male rural dwellers, also result in emergence of female heads of households.

Agriculture plays a very significant role in rural livelihoods, and men and women alike engage in agriculture as a primary means of sustenance. In fact, women are assuming increasingly prominent role in agriculture. Their responsibilities are no longer limited to the traditional weeding, harvesting and processing of farm produce; they now engage in full time farming activities like their male counterparts. Also, due to tight economic condition, women have, overtime, come to assume the basic role of fulfilling economic responsibilities of other family members.

Generally, it is believed that men and women have different assets, access to resources and opportunities (Ellis, 1998). In appraising the Nigerian situation for instance, Ekong (2003) submitted that rural women rarely had direct rights to land ownership except through their marriage to land owning husband or through borrowing on annual basis; and that being female, women have no traditional rights to land by inheritance. Despite the provision of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Land Use Act of 1978, recent studies in Osun state by Adereti (2005) and Deji *et al.* (2005) affirmed that women still rarely own land; a basic resource for livelihood sustenance in rural areas, and also have limited access to and control over other productive resources. Consequently, female headed households (FHHs) tend to be more vulnerable as they dominate the 'very poor assets' class owing to greater difficulties in accessing productive resources such as land, labour, credit facilities, mechanized equipment, chemicals, amongst others (Handa, 1994). Since livelihood strategy is a function of livelihood assets, access to resources and opportunities available to a set of people, then, given the foregoing, it may not be out of place to posit that FHHs may engage in different livelihood strategies compared to their male counterpart.

While the previous studies cited in preceding paragraph established difficulties in accessibility to productive resources by focusing on female alone, the approach of this study was a comprehensive and comparative analysis of rural households' heads'

livelihood strategies and accessibility to productive resources from a gender perspective. This is aimed at exposing the different conditions which male and female heads of households face, thereby providing a basis for facilitation of gender balanced and equitable developmental policies and welfare programmes aimed at overall improvement and better empowerment of rural households.

Purpose of the study

The general objective of the study was to examine rural households' heads' livelihood strategies on gender basis. The specific objectives were to:

1. Describe demographic and socioeconomic attributes of rural household heads,
2. Determine their accessibility to productive resources, and
3. Identify constraints inhibiting their accessibility to productive resources.

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were formulated for the study as follows:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference between male and female heads of households' accessibility to productive resources.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference in the constraints limiting male and female heads of households' accessibility to productive resources.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Osun State situated in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. The State comprises six administrative zones namely: Ikirun, Ilesha, Ede, Ile-Ife, Osogbo and Iwo zones. multistage sampling procedure was used to select the 252 respondents for the study. At first stage, the most rural Local Government Area (LGA) was purposively selected from each administrative zone to give a total of six

LGAs. Secondly, proportionate sampling was used to select five percent of the total number of communities in each LGA as follows: 5 out of 100 communities from Odo-Otin LGA in Ikirun zone, 7 out of 140 communities from Obokun in Ilesha zone, 4 out of 80 communities from Egbedore in Ede zone, 7 out of 140 communities from Ife-North in Ile-Ife zone, 8 out of 160 communities from Orolu in Osogbo zone and 11 out of 220 communities from Ayedire in Iwo zone, making a total of 42 rural communities. Finally, six household heads, comprising female and male, were selected in each community for interview using snowballing technique. Data was obtained through the use of structured interview schedule and conduct of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The interview schedule was designed to obtain quantitative information on demographic and socio-economic attributes of household heads, gender accessibility to productive resources, and constraints limiting female and male headed households' accessibility to productive resources. FGD was used to elicit qualitative information from the respondents in three of the six LGAs sampled.

Measurement of variables

The dependent variable of the study was livelihood strategies employed by household heads. It was measured as a function of diversification between agricultural and non-agricultural activities/choices adopted by households' heads. The varieties of activities people engaged in were grouped into two major livelihood category options (agricultural related and non-agricultural related). Each group was further categorized, for ease of analysis, into sub-groups as follows; for agricultural related category: annual food crop, perennial cash crop, poultry production, small ruminants and piggery, cattle rearing, fisheries, beekeeping. For non-agricultural related category: small scale and micro enterprise (including processing and marketing of agricultural produce, food vending, hawking, weaving, mats dyeing, etc), skilled activities (including *Okada* riding business,

'mechanic', 'blacksmithing', teaching, etc), wage labourer (including farm labourers, casual labourers, migrant labourers), claims against family members and relatives (i.e. remittances) and finally, claims against the state (i.e. pension). Respondents were asked to indicate which of the agricultural and non-agricultural activities, under the livelihood category options provided, they engaged in. Each option taken was scored one point. With twelve options provided under the livelihood category, total maximum score obtainable was twelve points, while minimum was one.

Independent variables, such as age, household size, years of formal education and farm size were measured at ratio level, while others such as sex, marital status, religious affiliation and method of land acquisition were measured at nominal level. Accessibility to productive resources was measured by requesting respondents to indicate how conveniently they have access to certain productive resources. The options 'easily accessible', 'accessible', 'hardly accessible' and 'not accessible' were scored 3, 2, 1 and 0 respectively. Total score was then obtained by summing up the points obtained by each respondent. Constraints inhibiting accessibility to productive resources was measured by requesting respondents to indicate the constraints hindering their accessibility to the certain productive resources. The options gender discrimination, inadequate fund, lack of collateral and any other constraints specified were scored 1 point each, to obtain total constraint score.

Results and Discussion

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics

Sex: 52.4 per cent male heads of household (MHH) and 47.6 per cent female heads of household (FHH) were sampled for the study. The results indicate the presence of large proportion of female heads of household in the study area, although, there were more male heads. This finding agrees with Saito *et al.* (1994) and Tripathy *et al.*

(2005) both of whom reported increase in the number of households headed by women in the rural areas of many developing countries. The implication is that, due recognition has to be given to this category of the rural inhabitants, particularly in view of their triplicate roles of productive, reproductive and community service, in sustaining the rural populace.

Age: Majority (60.6 per cent MHH and 66.7 per cent FHH) of both households' heads were aged between 30 and 60 years . While about 30 per cent MHH and 33 per cent FHH were above 60 years old, few (9.1 %) MHH and very few (0.8 %) FHH were below 30 years old. The mean age of MHH was 54.4 years with a standard deviation of 13.9, and that of FHH was 56.5 years with a standard deviation of 11.0. Contrary to the findings of Saito *et al.* (1994), *the study revealed* that women heads of household were relatively older than men in that position in the study area. This finding, again as above, underscores the need for special attention for the female heads of households, as ageing would lead to decrease in their vibrancy and quest for a better livelihood.

Religious affiliation: Majority (64.4 % and 62.5 %) of MHH and FHH, respectively were Muslims, while 35.6 per cent and 30.8 per cent were Christians, respectively. The results also show that all the respondents had one religious affiliation or the other. The inference is that religious affiliation of household heads could be a useful indicator in identifying them through religious groups and denominations they belong to, in event of development programmes aimed at improving people's livelihoods.

Marital status: Majority (97.0 %) of MHH was married and still live with their wives; while very few (3.0 %) were widower. However, few (13.3 %) of FHHs were married and still live with their spouses. While 9.2 per cent and 12.5 per cent FHH were previously married but now divorced and separated, respectively, majority (65.0%) were widowed. The results indicate that

widowhood accounted mostly for the emergence of female headed households. The results further show that some women, mainly from polygamous family, assumed position of headship, being fully responsible for fulfilling economic responsibility of their children. These findings agreed with that of Koster (2008) who asserted that female headship of household in rural areas arose or emerged due to widowhood ('widow-headed household'), single female parenthood ('divorcee-headed household') and co-wives from polygamous household fulfilling substantially financial and economic responsibilities of their children.

Years of formal education: Majority (73.5 % MHH and 80.8 % FHH) had less than six years of formal education. While about 18 per cent MHHs and 13 per cent FHHs had between seven and twelve years of formal education, respectively, few (8.3 % MHH and 5.8 % FHH) had above twelve years of formal education, respectively. The mean year of formal education was 4.47 for male HH and 3.41 for female HH. The inference is that FHHs had less years of formal education compared to their male counterparts. This finding is consistent with that of Saito *et al.* (1994) and Babulo *et al.* (2008) who averred that women heads of farm households, in general, have less education than men.

Farm size and land acquisition: About 52 per cent MHH and 46.7 per cent FHH had below 1 ha farm size. While about 14 per cent MHH had between 1 2 ha, 45 per cent of FHH was in this category. Conversely, about 34 per cent MHH had above 2 ha, with very few (7.5 %) FHH in this category. The mean farm size for MHH was 1.7 ha with a standard deviation of 1.2, while that of FHH was 1.1 ha with standard deviation of 0.7. While about 46 per cent of MHH acquired land through inheritance, majority (86.7%) of FHH cultivated inherited land. About 39 per cent MHH got land through lease, with 12.5 per cent female HH in this category, while few (12.1 % MHH and 10.0 % FHH) got land through purchase.

These results indicate that male heads of households had larger farm size than their female counterparts. Also, female heads of households mainly had access to land through inheritance. The implication of these findings is that female heads of households may have difficulty in improving their livelihood, because they may be faced with higher risk of loss of ownership over such lands through divorce, or faced with higher risk of land fragmentation, through widowhood, particularly those from polygamous background. In addition, the results signify that age long tradition whereby women do not inherit land is gradually waning. This is further buttressed by some excerpts from the FGDs, as below.

A female participant at Awo, Egbedore LGA stated as follows:

For a deceased man's wife, after death, the land given to the husband by the Alawo (King) while alive still belongs to the wife and none has a superior right over it, so she inherits the land from her husband. No family member of the deceased's husband has control over such land.

Another female participant at Ibokun, Obokun LGA averred:

You see, females do not inherit except in her husband's house; property, land inclusive are distributed with respect to the male children from the wives of the deceased, but if all the children of the deceased are females, the land will be given to the eldest amongst them, who will in turn share it among her sisters...

A male participant at Ile-Ogbo, Ayedire LGA also asserted as follows:

*You see, in the olden days, women did not have right over land through inheritance, but now, with the advent of civilization, women now inherit land; those times, when this cultural influence was strong, our father used to strengthen their position with an adage “**a i k u okunrin l'on mu obinrin j'ogun ada**” (women can only have share in inheritance in the absence or death of male children).*

Source: Excerpts from FGD sessions (2010).

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by their demographic and socio-economic characteristics

Variable	MHH (N = 132)		FHH (N = 120)		Total (N = 252)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Sex	132	52.4	120	47.6	252	100.0
Age (Years)						
Below 30	12	9.1	1	0.8	13	5.2
31 – 60	80	60.6	80	66.7	160	63.5
Above 60	40	30.3	39	32.5	79	31.3
Mean	54.4		56.5		55.2	
Standard deviation	13.9		11.0		13.4	
Religion						
Christianity	47	35.6	37	30.8	84	33.3
Islam	85	64.4	75	62.5	160	63.5
Traditional religion	0	0.0	8	6.7	8	3.2
Marital status						
Married	128	97.0	16	13.3	144	57.1
Divorced	0	0.0	11	9.2	11	4.4
Separated	0	0.0	15	12.5	15	6.0
Widow/widower	4	3.0	78	65.0	82	32.5

Variable	MHH (N = 132)		FHH (N = 120)		Total (N = 252)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Years of formal education						
Below 6	97	73.5	97	80.8	194	77.0
7 – 12	24	18.2	16	13.3	40	15.9
Above 12	11	8.3	7	5.8	18	7.1
Mean	4.47		3.41		4.00	
Household size						
Below 5	14	10.6	41	34.2	55	21.8
6 – 10	69	52.3	64	53.3	133	52.8
Above 10	49	37.1	15	12.5	64	25.4
Mean	10.21		7.04		8.69	
Standard deviation	4.93		3.64		4.63	
Farm size (Ha)						
< 1	68	51.5	56	46.7	125	49.6
1 – 2	19	14.4	54	45.0	73	29.0
> 2	45	34.1	9	7.5	54	21.4
Mean	1.7		1.1		1.1	
Standard deviation	1.2		0.7		0.8	
Land acquisition*						
Lease	52	39.4	15	12.5	67	26.6
Purchase	16	12.1	12	10.0	28	11.1
Inheritance	61	46.2	104	86.7	165	65.5
Gift	10	7.6	16	13.3	26	10.3

Source: Computed from field survey, 2010

MHH Male heads of households, FHH
Female heads of households

*Multiple responses

Accessibility to productive resources

Results in Table 2 show that weighted mean scores of accessibility to productive resources for the male headed households were higher than that of their female

counterpart for all the resources included in the study. The results indicate that male headed households comparatively, had easier accessibility to these resources. However, closer scrutiny of the mean scores obtained reveal that the values were generally low for both households, where maximum score obtainable was 4. The implication of this finding is that the rural households generally had low access to productive resources required, with women being the worst affected.

Table 2: Distribution of household heads by mean scores of accessibility to certain productive resources

Variable	Weighted mean scores	
	MHH	FHH
Resources		
Tractor	1.42	0.98
Improved seeds/seedling	1.55	1.38
Chemicals for seed-dressing	1.44	1.41
Pesticides	1.46	1.42
Herbicides	1.42	1.38
Fertilizers	1.28	1.09
Livestock parent stock	0.63	0.40
Livestock feed	0.59	0.43

Source: Computed from field survey, 2010

Constraints to accessing productive resources

Results in Table 3 show that 71.2 per cent MHH and 51.7 per cent FHH attributed their inability to have access to tractors and procurement of improved seed/seedlings to inadequate fund. While very few (5%) of the female headed households indicated gender discrimination as responsible for their inaccessibility to tractor use, no male heads of household had this opinion. On the other hand, just 0.8 percent of both households attributed gender discrimination to uneasy access to procurement of improved seeds/seedlings. The other productive resources, namely, chemicals for seed-dressing, herbicides, fertilizers, livestock parent stock, and livestock feeds, exhibited the same pattern.

These results imply that lack of adequate fund was the greatest constraint indicated by both female and male heads of households as responsible for inadequate accessibility to productive resources. The results also indicate that, inadequate accessibility to productive resources attributed to discrimination between the male and female gender was minimal. The implication of these findings is that, poor accessibility to productive resources was a general phenomenon of rural households, and lack of

adequate funds, instead of discrimination between male and female gender, was primarily responsible for this. Although previous studies, like those of Deji *et al.* (2005), Adereti (2005) amongst others, had established that women and female headed households have poor access to productive resources, and had linked this to status of women, however, these findings reveal that this occurrence is not peculiar to them alone. Some excerpts of participants' responses at FGD session buttressed this point.

A female participant at Ile-Ogbo, Ayedire LGA stated as follows:

Male and female have equal access to resources available in the community; take tractor for example, there is no discrimination between male and female in getting access to it, except someone who does not have money to hire it from the government.

A male participant at Ile-Ogbo, Ayedire LGA also declared as follows:

Tractor is not sufficient for use, we all queue to get it, no discrimination between male and female, you get it if you have your money...

Source: Excerpts from FGD sessions (2010).

Table 3: Percentage distribution of respondents based on constraints inhibiting accessibility to productive resources

Variable	MHH (N = 132)	FHH (N = 120)
Resources/ Constraints	Percentage	Percentage
Tractor		
Gender Discrimination	0	5.0
Inadequate fund	71.2	51.7
Seeds/Seedling		
Gender Discrimination	0.8	0.8
Inadequate fund	84.1	87.5
Chemical for seed dressing		
Gender Discrimination	0.8	0.8
Inadequate fund	87.9	87.5
Herbicides		
Gender Discrimination	0.8	0.8
Inadequate fund	87.9	87.5

Variable	MHH (N = 132)	FHH (N = 120)
Fertilizer		
Gender Discrimination	1.5	2.5
Inadequate fund	81.1	75.0
Livestock parent stock		
Gender Discrimination	0.8	0.8
Inadequate fund	35.6	25.0
Livestock feed		
Gender Discrimination	0	0.8
Inadequate fund	30.3	23.3

Source: Computed from Field survey, 2010

Livelihood strategies of household heads

Majority (91.6 % MHH and 98.3 % FHH) depended on production of arable crop as livelihood strategy. This was followed by 83.3 per cent MHH and 81.6 per cent FHH who depended on proceeds from tree crops. While about 41.0 per cent MHH and 53.0 per cent FHH engaged in poultry production, respectively, about average (44.6 % MHH) and few (28.3 % FHH) engaged in small ruminants/piggery production, and few (6.9 % MHH) and very few (1.7 % FHH) depended on fisheries. Similarly, few (4.5 % MHH) and very few (0.8 %) FHH engaged in bee keeping, while very few (0.8 % MHH) and none FHH engaged in cattle rearing. Furthermore, the overall results show that majority (94.8 % and 82.5 %) of the respondents depended on cultivation of arable and tree crops, respectively, as livelihood strategy. While about average (50.4 % and 46.4 %) of the total respondents engaged in poultry and small ruminants/pig productions, respectively, few (4.4 % and 2.4

%) depended on fisheries and bee keeping, respectively, and very few (0.4 %) depended on cattle rearing. The results imply that both households, in order to make ends meet, engaged in combination or mix of livelihood activities as strategy for survival. With agriculture as primary occupation of rural households, they seek livelihoods by engaging in non-farm activities too.

The findings concur with Adejobi's (2004) findings that, engagement in crop and livestock productions, small and micro enterprises, wage labour and reliance on claims from state (pension) and claims from family members and relatives (remittances) form part of livelihood strategies of rural farming households. The findings also support submissions of Ellis (1998) who maintained that rural households choose such pattern of diversification so as to achieve best possible standard of living, complement income from agricultural activities especially during the off season, and also to exploit opportunities in the non-farm sectors.

Table 4: Distribution of household heads by livelihood strategies

Variable	MHH		FHH		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Strategy*						
Agricultural related						
Arable crop production	121	91.6	118	98.3	239	94.8
Tree crop production	110	83.3	98	81.6	208	82.5
Poultry production	54	40.9	63	52.5	117	50.4
Small ruminants/Piggery	59	44.6	34	28.3	93	46.4
Cattle rearing	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	0.4
Fisheries	9	6.9	2	1.7	11	4.4
Bee keeping	6	4.5	1	0.8	7	2.8

Variable	MHH Freq.	%	FHH Freq.	%	Total Freq.	%
Non- agricultural related						
Small and micro enterprises	52	39.4	82	68.4	134	53.2
Skilled activities	23	17.4	9	7.5	32	12.7
Wage labour	27	20.5	16	13.3	43	17.1
Remittances	20	15.2	41	34.1	61	24.2
(Claims against family member)						
Pension	16	12.1	6	5.0	22	8.7

*Multiple responses

Source: Computed from Field survey, 2010.

accessibility to productive resources in rural environment than males.

Results of hypotheses' testing

The ANOVA result (Table 4) reveal a significant difference between male and female headed households' accessibility to productive resources ($F = 6.605$, $P = 0.01$). This result, in conformity with earlier findings of this study, implies a gap in accessibility to productive resources between male and female HHs, and may strengthen the assertion that, women and female heads of households had less

However, no significant difference ($F = 2.53$, $P = 0.113$) was found in constraints limiting both male and female HHs' accessibility to productive resources. This finding indicates that both categories of households were equally faced with difficulties limiting their accessibility to productive resources. This finding again supported the earlier assertions that, inadequate fund, rather than gender discrimination, mainly accounted for inhibiting both households' accessibility to productive resources.

Table 4: Results of one way ANOVA for test of difference in accessibility to productive resources by male and female headed households

Variable	Mean scores		F – value	p-value
	MHH	FHH		
Accessibility to productive resources	10.58	8.71	6.605**	0.01
Constraints to accEssibility to productive resources	5.09	5.20	2.527	0.113

Source: Computed from field survey, 2010

**Significant at $p \leq 0.01$

Conclusions

It could be concluded from the findings of the study that both categories of households engaged in a variety or mix of activities as livelihood strategies, although the degree of dependence and proportion of MHH and FHH involved in specific livelihood activity varies. For instance, more FHH depended on small/micro enterprises than male, while more MHH engaged in skilled activities and wage labour as livelihood strategies,

compared to female. Also, there was a gap in accessibility to productive resources between male and female heads of households, with male heads, comparatively, having better access; however, inadequate funds, rather than gender disparity, was found to be the main constraint to accessing productive resources.

Recommendations

1. There is need for integration of a gender perspective approach that recognizes the different roles, constraints, and access to land and control over productive resources,

- between men and women in agriculture and rural development.,
2. Provision of credit facilities could provide a promising intervention to help rural poor and marginal households, therefore, there is need for a generalized approach to credit delivery to poor rural households, ensuring that women's access to, and control over such facilities, are equally guaranteed with those of their male counterparts.

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