

PERCEPTIONAL EVALUATION OF GENDER ACCESS TO FARM INPUTS IN ABUJA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality is one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and access to production resources is one of the key issues discussed. The realization of this goal in different parts of the world is very necessary for sustainable development hence, this study perceptually evaluated gender access to farm inputs in Abuja, Nigeria. The main objective is to verify how male and female farmers generally perceived their access to farm inputs. A multi-stage technique was adopted for sample selection while semi-structured questionnaires were used for data collection. A total of 142 respondents made up of 71 male and 71 female small-scale farmers were used for the study. An independent t-statistics was used for data analysis and it was tested at 5% probability level. Results showed that there were no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) in the gender access to land, loan, fertilizer, improved crop varieties, insecticides, labour, processing equipment, storage equipment and tractor services. This implied that both male and female farmers perceived their access to the farm inputs as the same. On the contrary, there were significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in the gender access to herbicides and rodenticides with male farmers on the advantage. Judging from the mean responses, only land was *highly accessible* to both male and female farmers while the least accessible farm inputs were loan and tractor services. Based on the findings, the paper concluded that, apart from access to rodenticide and herbicide, there was no significant difference in gender access to farm inputs in the study area.

Keywords: Farm Inputs, Gender Perception, Mean Responses, Relative Access, Sustainable Development, Gender Access, Small Scale Farmers

INTRODUCTION

Gender refers not to women or men per se but to the relations between them, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. The study of gender in sustainable agriculture and rural development is very important because it is a central organizing principle of societies and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution. Gender roles are the socially ascribed roles of women and men, which vary among different societies and cultures, classes and ages, and during different periods in history. Gender-specific roles and responsibilities are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, and specific impact of the global economy, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions (FAO 2011, Goetz, 1992; FAO, 1995; Ekong, 2003). Sustainable agricultural development has a lot to do with gender because all the cultural operations involved in agriculture are carried out by both the male and female farmers in all parts of the world.

In agriculture, the pivotal role of gender in sustainable agricultural development has continued to provoke debate among scholars resulting in so many researches. One of the reasons according to Sigot (1995), is that agriculture is a source of interaction between men and women in the society especially, rural societies. One of the most controversial issues is (gender) access to farm inputs and this issue has triggered off a lot of debate. Presently, there is an apparent consensus that female farmers are marginalized compared to their male counterparts and this is contrary to the social concept of sustainable development that emphasizes gender equity in spheres of (Harris, 2000). There are evidence (FAO, 2011, 2009, 2003) indicating that women are marginalized in their quest to access farm inputs for production purposes. Evidence abounds, not only in some part of Nigeria, but in other countries of the world. For example, in the Nigerian National Gender Policy (2006), it was categorically stated women faced numerous challenges within the agricultural sector including lack of control over land, capital and even their own labour. Other challenges according to the paper include lack of access to appropriate technologies, lack of time, exploitation by marketers or service providers and lack of access to productive opportunities. Also, Dunmade (1990) stated that, women experience considerable difficulties in securing access to agricultural services such as extension, provision of agricultural inputs, credits, market facilities and technical assistance. Similarly, Agbo (2004) stated that many forces work against women's agricultural productivity, thus against Nigeria's food sufficiency and self-reliance. According to him, women farmers are faced by poor access to official resources, channels of information, credit, inputs and access to markets. Research conducted by Akpabio *et al.* (2002) in Akwa Ibom State Nigeria revealed that one of the major constraints faced by Akwa Ibom-Women Cooperative Association was inadequate fund to achieve their objectives. This is discouraging because FAO (1998) stated that for sustainable agricultural development to take place, farmers need short-term credit to buy improved seeds, fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides and to hire farm labourers to work the fields and help with post-harvest operations. They need long-term credit to invest in more efficient technologies like irrigation, labour-saving tools, implements and transport – and to set up new enterprises if conditions are favourable (FAO, 1998). Further evidence of women marginalization was cited by Thrupp and Green (1995), who reported that women represented only 11 per cent of the total extension staff in Africa. The author further added in the report that women were not only under-represented as extensionists, but they also tended to be neglected by male extortionists at the farm level. Technologies for agricultural development according to the report were generally targeted for male producers and infrequently serve women's needs.

based on some of the above evidence, feminists and gender scholars have consistently argued that men have more access to farm inputs compared to their female counterparts and by implication, does not give room for sustainable agricultural development. Judging from evidence available in other parts of the world, one may conclude that women in Nigeria are marginalized in terms of access to farm inputs compared to their men-folk, but there is need to find out how both the male and female farmers generally perceive their access to farm inputs. The research is very necessary because gender equity and women's empowerment has continued to be central themes in global treaties, covenants and declarations. Promoting gender equity is now globally accepted as a development strategy for reducing poverty levels among women and men. The attainment of gender equity especially in the agricultural sector is not only seen as an end in itself and human right issue but a prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development (National Gender Policy, 2006). Again, closing the gender gap in agriculture according to FAO (2011), would produce significant gains for society by increasing agricultural productivity, reducing poverty and hunger and promoting economic growth and sustainable development. In view of the importance of gender roles in sustainable agriculture and rural development, the questions are: How do the male and female farmers generally perceive their access to farm inputs in Abuja, Nigeria? Are there significant differences in gender access to farm inputs? Which input is the most accessible or least accessible to the farmers?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) determine female farmers' access to farm inputs in relation to their male counterparts
- 2) determine the most accessible farm input(s) to both the male and female farmers
- 3) determine the least accessible farm input(s) to both the male and female farmers,
- 4) determine the gender socio-economic characteristics in the study area.

HYPOTHESIS

Ho: There is no significant difference in gender access to farm inputs

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Abuja, Nigeria that is located between latitudes $8^{\circ} 25'$ and $9^{\circ} 25'$ North of the equator and longitudes $6^{\circ} 45'$ and $7^{\circ} 45'$ East of Greenwich. The population for the study comprised all the small-scale farmers in Abuja. For effective coverage of the study area, a multi-stage technique was adopted for sample selection while semi-structured questionnaires were used for data collection. The area has been delineated down to cells by Abuja Agricultural Development Programme (AADP). Presently, Abuja has four agricultural (4) zones – Central, Eastern, Northern and Western Zones with twelve (12) agricultural blocks and ninety three (93) cells. In the first stage, all the four (4) agricultural zones were chosen. In the second stage, all the twelve (12) agricultural blocks were chosen. In the third stage, six (6) cells from each of the 12 agricultural blocks were randomly chosen given a total of 72 cells. Out of this 72 cells (fourth stage), two (2) small-scale farmers (male and female) were randomly selected and interviewed in 71 cells giving a total of 142 farmers (71 males and 71 females). The farm inputs considered were land, labour, loan, improved crop varieties, herbicide, insecticide, rodenticide, fertilizer, tractor services, storage equipment and processing equipment. In the questionnaires, the male and female farmers were asked to state how they generally perceived their access to each of the above farm inputs using very highly accessible (4); highly accessible (3); fairly accessible (2); very low access (1) and not accessible at all (0). An independent t-statistics was used to compare the responses in line with

the method adopted by Andy (2005), David (2004), Fredrick and Wallnau (2004), and Shah and Madden (2004). SPSS 15.00 was used to run the analysis and it was tested at 5% probability level. The socio-economic characteristics of the farmers (respondents) captured during data collection include: cooperative membership, age (years), marital status, years of farming experience, household size defined by NPC (2006) as a person or group of persons living together usually under the same roof or in the same building/compound, who share the same source of food and recognize themselves as a social unit with a head of household, and literacy status (no formal school education, primary school education, secondary school education, post secondary school education).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the results of the independent t-statistics carried out to compare gender access to farm inputs in Abuja. The results indicated that there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in gender access to land, improved crop varieties, insecticides, labour, fertilizer, processing equipment, storage equipment, loan and tractor services. The implication of the results is that both the male and the female farmers perceived their access to the farm inputs as the same and this is in line with the concept of gender equity and sustainable development. This is contrary to the report by FAO (2011) which stated thus: "Women are farmers, workers and entrepreneurs, but almost everywhere they face more severe constraints than men in accessing productive resources, markets and services". Although the mean access values for the male and female farmers were not the same but it does not mean that there was a serious gender gap in access to farm inputs in the study area as documented by FAO (2011). On the contrary, there was significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in gender access to rodenticides and herbicides. In other words, there is significant difference in the mean responses of the male and female farmers regarding access to rodenticides and herbicide. The application of t-statistics to compare gender access to farm inputs in this study is very important because it did not only show the mean access values but also indicated the level of significance.

Table 2 shows gender mean responses on access to farm inputs. The mean responses indicated that the male farmers had relatively more access to land (3.22) than the female farmers (2.83). This is in line with the apriori expectation and agrees with the findings of FAO (2011) which indicated that women control less land than men and the land they control is often of poorer quality with insecure tenure. On the other hand, female farmers had relatively more access (2.61) to improved crop varieties than their male counterparts (2.52). Apart from access to land, the mean access to improved crop varieties (2.61) is relatively encouraging because Spore (2008) reported that one of the constraints faced by farmers, among other things, was inadequate access to improved seeds. Looking at labour, the mean responses revealed that the male farmers had relatively more access to labour (2.66) than the female farmers (2.25). This agrees with the finding of (FAO, 2009) which revealed that males often dominate the control of labour at the household's level. Again, male farmers had more access to herbicides (2.52) than the female farmers (2.19) and the difference is significant ($p < 0.01$) implying that there is a serious gender gap in access to herbicides with the male farmers on the advantage. This calls for a serious attention because female farmers participate actively in weeding and herbicides are needed to augment manual weeding. Similarly, the male farmers had more access to rodenticides and the mean values were significantly different from each other. This also needs to be critically addressed because report by Nigerian National Gender Policy (2006) showed that women are more involved in the processing of farm produce. Inadequate access to rodenticides which are used to kill or prevent rodents could constitute a serious obstacle to the storage of farm produce (example cereal grains) before processing. On fertilizer, the mean responses indicated that there was marginal difference in access to fertilizer

between the male and the female farmers. The mean response for the male farmers was 1.59 while it was 1.66 for the female farmers. This agrees with Peter (2008) who stated that fertilizer has become more and more unaffordable to the smallholder farmers who are at the center of response to the world food crisis. Access to fertilizer is very important because the study conducted by Ibrahim *et al.* (2008) on the effects of fertilizer on rice production indicated that fertilizer use was positive and statistically significant implying that fertilizer has a positive and significant effect on farm output. But this significant effect on output is only true for farmers that have access to fertilizer. Marginal difference also existed between the male and female farmers in access to processing equipment. The mean response for the male farmers was 1.56 while it was 1.55 for the female farmers. The observed marginal difference is an indication that both the male and the female farmers perceived access to the farm inputs as almost the same. Information on access to processing equipment is vital because the dearth of processing and storage facilities can lead to heavy losses of farm products. Looking at the mean access to storage equipment, the mean values indicated that female farmers had relatively more access (1.80) to storage equipment than the male farmers (1.56). This is in line with the apriori expectation because reports (FAO, 2003) have indicated that female farmers are more involved in storage and processing than their male counterparts hence, they should have more access to storage equipment to do the work. Gender access to loan also revealed that the male farmers had relatively more access (1.09) to loan than the female farmers (0.91). Although the use of farm inputs in farm production is not mutually exclusive but access to loan should be given serious attention because it is used to hire the services of other farm inputs, purchase other farm inputs and service debts incurred in the previous production periods, Finally, the male farmers had relatively more access (1.09) to tractor services than the female farmers (0.83). Access to tractor services has been a major problem to both the male and female farmers but this study had shown that the male farmers were relatively more favoured. Auta *et al.*, (1992) reported that large families are self-sufficient in labour needs and would therefore not adopt labour saving devices such as ploughs, tractor services and even chemical fertilizer but the mean value for access to tractor clearly indicated that tractor services is one of the least accessible farm inputs in the study area.

Looking at the mean values (Table 2) in relation to the response options given to the farmers, it can be seen that none of the farm inputs was *very highly accessible* (4) to both the male and female farmers. Specifically for the male farmers, the mean values indicated that apart from land (3.22), access to improved crop varieties (2.52), insecticide (2.58), labour (2.66), herbicide (2.52) and rodenticides (2.50) tended towards *highly accessible* (3) while access to fertilizers (1.59), processing equipment (1.56), and storage equipment (1.56) tended towards *fairly accessible* (2). In addition, access to loan (1.09) and tractor services (1.09) indicated *very low access* (1) which connotes poor access as well. For the female farmers, the mean values indicated that only access to land (2.83) and improved crop varieties (2.61) tended towards *highly accessible* (3) while access to insecticide (2.47), labour (2.25), herbicide (2.19), rodenticides (2.14), fertilizers (1.66), storage equipment (1.80) and processing equipment (1.55) fell under *fairly accessible* (2) farm inputs. On the other hand, access to loan (0.91) and tractor services (0.83) indicated *very low access* (1) which as well connotes poor access. Based on the mean values, it is very clear that the most accessible farm input to both the male and female farmers was land while the least accessible inputs were loan and tractor services. Poor access to loan is discouraging because Adeyemo (1990) stated that the existence of differential access to production resources such as capital hinders farmers' participation in agricultural development. Again, Poor access to farm inputs does not give room to sustainable development because it would affect efficient resource allocation during production process.

Table 3 shows the gender socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. The marital status indicated that majority of both the male (90.14) and female (67.61%) farmers were married. The distribution of the marital status indicated that it is relatively easier to find women who are divorced or widowed than men in the study area. Only (9.86%) of the male farmers were single, divorced, separated or widowed while 32.39% of the female farmers were widowed, divorced, separated and single. The household distribution indicated that greater proportions of the male (87.32%) and female (85.91%) farmers had household size greater than 4 persons implying that they had relatively large households. The age distribution of the respondents indicated that majority of the male and female farmers fell within the age group of 31-40 years implying that the farmers were still in their active and dynamic age and can perform manual work. Espig (1992) argued that productivity decreases with advancement in age but maintained that it is within the age range of 60 years and above. Understanding the age distribution is important because Gul Unal (200) stated that old age might pose a problem in agriculture because most of the work is physically demanding. Looking at years of farming experience, greater proportion of the female farmers had between 1 to 10 years of farming experience while the male farmers had between 21-30 years of farming experience. On education, 66.19% of the female farmers had at most primary school education while only 33.51% of them had at least post secondary school education. On the contrary, 49.29% of the male farmers had at least primary school education while 50.71% had at most post secondary school education. This shows that the male farmers were more educated than the female farmers. Again, greater proportion of the male farmers were members of cooperative societies while the reverse is the case for female farmers because greater proportion of the female farmers were not.

CONCLUSION

Globally, the role of gender in agriculture and sustainable rural development has been noted but controversies on gender access to farm inputs and related issues in developing countries like Nigeria have persisted. There are strong feelings that female farmers are marginalized in access to farm inputs compared to their male counterparts. This feeling of marginalization has attracted a lot of attention and debate hence to contribute to the knowledge gap, a study was conducted to determine how male and female farmers generally perceive their access to farm inputs in Abuja, Nigeria. The study has a lot of implications in sustainable agricultural development because both men and female farmers are involved in agricultural production and access to farm inputs is one of the factors that affect production. Results showed that there were no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) in the gender access to land, loan, fertilizer, improved crop varieties, insecticides, labour, processing equipment, storage equipment and tractor services. On the contrary, there were significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in the gender access to herbicides and rodenticides with male farmers on the advantage. Generally, none of the farm inputs was *very highly accessible* (4) to the farmers but looking at the mean values, it is very clear that the most accessible farm input to both the male and female farmers was land while the least accessible inputs were loan and tractor services. Based on the findings, the paper concluded that, apart from access to rodenticide and herbicide, there was no significant difference in gender access to farm inputs in the study area. It was therefore recommended that government and non-governmental organizations should device strategies to make sure that farm inputs like loan and tractor services, among other ones, are accessible to the farmers – male or female. Again, similar research should be conducted in other areas to determine if similar conditions exist.

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Table 1: Results of the independent t-statistics on gender access to farm inputs

Farm inputs	t - statistics results
Access to land	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = 1.25, p = 0.21$
Access to improved crop varieties	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = 0.41, p = 0.69$
Access to insecticides	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = 0.59, p = 0.56$
Access to labour	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = 1.71, p = 0.09$
Access to herbicides	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = 3.15, p = 0.00$
Access to rodenticide	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = 2.20, p = 0.03$
Access to fertilizers	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = -1.08, p = 0.28$
Access to processing equipment	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = -0.77, p = 0.44$
Access to storage equipment	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = -1.21, p = 0.23$
Access to loan	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = 0.65, p = 0.52$
Access to tractor services	$t(\alpha_{0.05}, 140) = -0.16, p = 0.88$

Source Field data, 2012

Table 2 Gender mean access to farm inputs

Farm inputs	Gender mean responses	
	Male	Female
Access to land	3.22	2.83
Access to improved crop varieties	2.52	2.61
Access to insecticides	2.58	2.47
Access to labour	2.66	2.25
Access to herbicides	2.52	2.19
Access to rodenticide	2.50	2.14
Access to fertilizers	1.59	1.66
Access to processing equipment	1.56	1.55
Access to storage equipment	1.56	1.80
Access to loan	1.09	0.91
Access to tractor services	1.09	0.83

Source Field data, 2012

Table 3 Gender Socio-economic characteristics

Socio-economic characteristics	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	percentage
Marital status				
Married	64	90.14	48	67.61
Widow/widower	0	0.00	15	21.13
Divorced	0	0.00	4	5.62
Single	6	8.45	3	4.23
Separated	1	1.41	1	1.41
Total	71	100	71	100
Household size				
1 – 2	6	8.45	3	4.23
3 – 4	3	4.23	7	9.86
5 – 6	20	28.17	25	35.21
7 - 8	25	35.21	15	21.13
> 8	17	23.94	21	29.57
Total	71	100	71	100
Age (years)				
≤ 20	1	1.41	1	1.41
21 - 30	11	15.49	17	23.94
31 - 40	24	33.80	29	40.85
41 - 50	23	32.40	15	21.13
> 50	12	16.90	9	12.67
Total	71	100	71	100
Years of working experience				
1 – 10	17	23.94	36	50.70
11 – 20	17	23.94	22	30.99
21 – 30	24	33.81	9	12.68
> 30	13	18.31	4	5.63
Total	71	100	71	100
Literacy status				
No formal education	12	16.90	30	42.25
Primary school	23	3.39	17	23.94
Secondary school	20	28.17	14	19.72
Post secondary	16	22.54	10	14.09
Total	71	100	71	100
Cooperative membership				
Yes	40	56.34	26	36.62
No	31	43.60	45	63.38
Total	71	100	71	100

Source Field data, 2012