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WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING AMONG FARM FAMILIES IN YEWA NORTH AREA OF OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

A. AGBELEMOGE

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology,
College of Agricultural Sciences, Ayetoro.
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.
E-mail adeyanjuagbelemoge@yahoo.com Tel: +2347066349201

ABSTRACT

The study investigated women's participation in decision making among farm families in Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. A simple random sampling technique was employed in the selection of 105 respondents from registered female group farmers in the eight(8) cells as classified by the Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme (OGADEP). Structured interview schedule was used to collect data. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentages while inferential statistics such as chi-square was used to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed that all the respondents were married; majority had formal education, various types of decisions were made by women ranging from nutrition, education, social, planning and budgeting. Women's attitude towards decision making was favourable. motivational factors that could enhance women's participation were achievements, educational, economic occupational statuses, personal interest, responsibility and recognitions, e t.c., Problems militating against rural women's participation in decision making were studied. and socio-economic characteristics were not significant statistically, but household characteristics, such as, family size, ($\chi^2=34.26$), no of wives ($\chi^2=15.36$), position as wife ($\chi^2=21.50$), and problems ($\chi^2=27.95$) were found to be significant at 0.05% with their level of participation in decision-making..

Keywords: Women's participation, decision-making, farm families.

INTRODUCTION

Women have been found to play active role in agricultural production in Africa and are visibly integrated into various productions and income earning activities as farm managers and wage labourers, however, consideration of their roles has not yet been integrated into research and technology development (FAO, 1996). The involvement of women in decision making among farm families is of importance in other to influence attitudes of one or more members of the family towards targeted goals. Decisions

could be made on activities such as economic, social and political among others. (Siyanbola, 1995).

Participation of women in decision making in socio-political process and economic development of the farm families and community will improve their capacity to make right choices and decisions (Disu, 1998a). The participation of women in decision making has been considered essential to impact knowledge, give advice or suggestions, express a belief or opinion, making a decision

on behalf of the family and providing necessary assistance in times of need. (Disu, 1998b). Also due to the inability of man alone to cope with the requirements of the development process, women have been found to be helpful in nature as a good source of information required for developmental initiatives (Anyanwu and Agu, 1996).

Women are constrained by their immediate physical environment than men. In Nigeria, traditional institutions have men leading them and women are largely prevented from belonging to the inner caucuses of these institutions. (Disu, 1998a). Over the years, traditional institutions have been involved in policy formation and involving only males in the exercise. As a result, issues affecting women were seen through the eyes of these men who were deeply rooted in culture and tradition (Disu, 1998b). Thus, as far as the traditional sphere is concerned, women were not permitted to exercise any significant role in family matters and developmental issues that women continued to be excluded intentionally and unintentionally in matters affecting them (Disu, 1999).

Jibowo (2000) posited that in Nigeria and most developing world, the fathers are key actors in the rural family decision-making process but the mother influences, approves or at least agrees with these choices before it could be pursued with cooperation of the family members.

Solomon and Adekoya (2006) in a research in Osun State found out that older women participated more in household decision-making and in communities where women were denied participation, they would eventually participate as they get older though, this is inversely related to household size.

A study of socio-personal characteristics of women who participated in decision making along with their husbands in farming operations revealed that women also belonged to able bodied group, had formal education with small size holdings and having frequent urban contact who were members of individual type families and with high social participation, participated in decision making than others (Omokhudu, 1999).

Studies showed that when women are fully involved in decision making, families are healthier and better fed; family incomes, savings, and re-investment go up (Anan, 2003). Decision making position will not necessarily be given to someone but one needs to want to influence decisions (Sornes, 1993). The broad objective of this study is to investigate women's participation in decision making among farm families in the study area.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives are to;

1. investigate the personal and socio-economic characteristics of women participating in decision making among farm families in the study area.
2. examine the types of decisions women participated in making in the family.
3. determine the level of women's participation in the decisions made in the family.
4. identify the problems militating against the participation of rural women in decision making.
5. ascertain the motivating factors which stimulated women to participate in decision making.

Hypotheses of the Study

The Hypotheses formulated for testing in the study are:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between the characteristics of the respondents and their level of participation in decision making.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between the problems militating against the respondents and their level of participation in decision making.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State. The area was formerly Known as Egbado North Local Government Area with its headquarter in Ayetoro. The study made use of registered rural women groups in 8 cells under Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme (OGADEP) involved in agricultural production practices in Yewa North Local Government Area. The population of the women was 210

Sampling Procedure

A simple sampling technique was used to select 50% of the women farmers by picking every other name on the list of women farmers, hence 105 respondents were successfully interviewed and used for the study.

Data Collection /Measurement of variables

Data were gathered with the use of interview schedule divided into sections;

Section A: Personal and socio-economic characteristics

Personal and socio-economic characteristics of respondents which include:

Age was measured in chronological age in years but were grouped for analysis.

Marital status as nominal scale of: married, single, widowed or divorced.

Religion as Christian, Muslim, traditionalist or free thinker.

Education as the highest attained formal education such as: No formal Education, Standard six, Primary, Secondary school; OND/NCE/HSC; B.Sc/B.A/B.Ed/HND.

Occupation as in farming tailoring, trading, basket weaving, craftwork, etc.

No. of wives the husbands have in numerical figures but were later grouped into intervals...

Position of wife in household in nominal scale as: first wife, only wife, second wife, third or fourth wife.

Family size in numerical figures but were also grouped into intervals

Wives monthly income in naira but later grouped into intervals.1,000-5,000, 6,000-10,000.11,000-15,000, 16,000-20,000.

Section B: Participation of women in decision making

Participation of women in decision making was measured by asking them the types of decisions they participated in making in the family such as nutritional, religious, educational, family planning and budgeting, socio-cultural; they were listed for them to pick the ones in which they participated.

Section C: Level of participation

For level of participation they were asked the stages of their involvement such as planning, implementation, supervision, and monitoring evaluation stages, the frequencies of their participation were recorded.

Section D: Motivating factors

Motivating factors were measured by listing such factors and they were asked to indicate to what extent each motivated them on a scale of not motivating, fairly motivating, and strongly motivating.

Section E: Women attitude to decision making

Attitudinal questions were presented to them on a five point scale of strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree and strongly agree.

Section F: Problem Encountered

Lastly they were asked to state their greatest problem encountered in the course of participation in decision making.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency distribution were used to analyze the personal and socio-economic characteristics. Inferential statistics (chi-square) was used to test the hypotheses set.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents Characteristics

From Table 1, it can be inferred that majority of the women were below 50 years of age, the modal age range was 30 – 39 with 42.9%, 6.7% were within the age range of 50-59, while 5.7% were within the range of 60 and above. Based on these findings most of the women were within the ages 30 and 49years-which is the able and agile people.. In some cases, the older women made decisions for the family or probably leave decision making to their oldest male or female child.

All the women were married (100%), but one was divorced and another one widowed. Being married could afford them the

opportunity to participate in decision making in the family. About Fifty percent (50.5%) of the respondents were Christians while about 49.5% were Muslims. This implies that both Christians and Muslims participated in decision-making in the family.

Forty one percent of the respondents had primary education, about 24.7% had secondary while 14.3% had tertiary education, and 20% had no formal education. It is expected that the educational level of the respondents should enhance their participation due to the knowledge they have acquired. Fifty eight percent of the respondents earned between N500- N1,000 as their monthly income, 24.8% earned between N5,001- N10,000, while only 17.1% earned between N0,001-N20,000. This depicts that the respondents earned low income per month and this could limit their ability to participate in certain decisions in the family, most especially financial and economic decisions, hence their economic status may be a factor of their participation. Majority of the respondents were farmers and traders with 49.5 and 27.6% respectively. Other respondents were into hair-dressing, tailoring and mat weaving with 17, 5 and 1%, respectively. Majority of the respondents had secondary occupation they engaged in, with 49.5%, 11.4%, 4.8% for farming, craftwork and tailoring but 10.5% were into other occupations, respectively. About 24% had no secondary occupation meaning that they were full-time farmers. This suggests that they will be with their husbands most of the time and this affords them ample time and opportunity to participate more in decision-making concerning farm and family.

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

Variables	Frequency	percentage
Age (yrs)		
20-29	12	11.4
30-39	45	42.9
40-49	35	33.3
50-59	7	6.7
60-69	6	5.7
Religion		
Christianity	53	50.5
Islam	52	49.5
Educational level		
Primary	43	41.0
Secondary	26	24.7
Tertiary	15	14.3
None	21	20.0
Monthly income (Naira)		
1001-5000	26	24.8
5001-10,000	61	58.1
10,001-20,000	18	17.1
Primary occupation		
Farming	52	49.5
Trading	29	27.6
Hairdressing	18	17.1
Tailoring	5	4.8
Mat weaving	1	1.0
Secondary occupation		
Farming	52	49.5
Craftwork	12	11.4
Tailoring	5	4.8
Others	11	10.5

Source: Field survey

Respondents` Household Characteristics

Majority of the respondents (69.5%) had a family size of 6-10. About twenty two per cent (21.9%) had a family size of 1-5. This suggests that there is the need to introduce family planning programme to families in the study area in order to enhance the improvement in their standard of living and quality of life. About 60% of the respondents had one wife, hence are the only wife in their families, 23.8% had two wives, 13.3% had three wives while 21.9% had five wives. This suggests that in farm family with only one wife, women`s participation in decision making could be better enhanced than those that have more than one wife, 26.7% were first wife, 11.4% were second wife while about 1.9% were fifth wife.

This could suggest that women that were the only wife to their husbands may have more access to participate in family decision making, so also first wives, On the other hand, last wife may be closer to the husbands, thus may have more influence than other wives who may not be consulted on most decisions in the family. More so, if they do not live under the same roof. A large proportion of the respondents (88.6%) claimed child bearing and education as their achievement. A few percentages of them 5.7% were able to achieve cooperation and harmony within the family, while 5.7% also claimed they were able to start their personal businesses. They claimed that these achievements had enhanced their participation in decision making in the family.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by their household characteristics

Family size	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	23	21.9
6-10	73	69.5
11-15	9	8.6
No. of wives		
One	63	60.0
Two	25	23.8
Three	14	13.3
Five	3	2.9
Position as wife		
Only	63	60.0
First	28	26.7
Second	12	11.4
Fifth	2	1.9
Achievements		
Child bearing	93	88.6
Cooperation and harmony	6	5.7
Personal business	6	5.7

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents according to types of Decisions made in the family

Decisions made in the family	Frequency	Percentage
Nutritional	104	99.0
Educational	101	96.0
Family planning	15	14.3
Family budget	51	48.6
Religious	36	34.3
Socio-cultural	85	79.0
Decision makers		
Husband only	38	36.1
Husband and wife	64	61.0
Husband, wife and children	3	2.9
Level of participation		
Low	23	21.9
Medium	12	11.4
High	70	66.7
Frequency of influence		
Frequently	64	61.0
Occasionally	34	32.4
Seldom	7	6.7
Attitude (Category)		
Unfavourable	18	17.1
Indifferent	36	34.3
Favourable	51	48.6

Participation in decision making

It can be deduced from Table 3 that about 99% made decisions on nutrition, 96% made decisions on education such as enrolling their children in school or learning a particular trade, paying school fees, as well as supplying other needed school materials. 14.3% made decisions on family planning like number of children to bear and cater

for. 48.6% made decisions on family budget, which involves managing financial activities within the family. 34.3% made decisions pertaining to religion, while 79% made decisions on socio-cultural activities. This depicted that most of the decisions made by women were on nutrition, education, and socio-cultural activities. Respondents have less participation on family planning and religious

activities. Decisions in the family were mostly made by husband and wife in sixty one (61%) cases. In 36.1% cases were decisions made by husbands alone while only in 2.9% cases were decisions made by husband, wife and children. This may suggest that children were grown up and no longer live with their parents or they were too young to make decisions. It could also be a factor of the husband's flexibility or liberal view.

Majority of the respondents (90%) frequently participated in decision making, 6% participated less frequently, while 5% seldomly participated. There was no woman that did not participate in one form or the other but the extent frequently differed.

About 61% of the respondents influenced decision making in the family very frequently, 32.4% less frequently influenced decision while 6.7% seldom influenced decision. It could be inferred that most of the respondents frequently influenced decision making in the family. This could suggest that they were given the opportunity to do so by their husbands. It was observed that 21.9% of the respondents had low participation, 11.4% had medium participation while 66.7% had high participation. This suggests that respondents were more involved in household decision making hence their participation were high.

A total of 17.1% of the respondents had unfavourable attitude towards the various attitudinal statements, 34.3% were indifferent while 48.6% had a favourable attitude. This suggested that respondents that were indifferent may be unconcerned or uninterested as far as decisions making is concerned and this could limit the extent of their participation.

Problem militating against their participation

From Table 4, it can be deduced that the major problem militating against the participation of rural women in decision making were cultural beliefs and norms (41%) and societal attitude/disposition 21%. Other problems included religion, educational background, position in the family, ingenuity complex (feelings against one's ability to perform cleverly) and personal assessment of one's ability in participation adversely affected women's participation. .

Majority (75.2%) of the respondents suggested education, encouragement and empowerment as solutions to militating problems. This view indicated that the place of education can not be under estimated as far as females were concerned.

Factors motivating women participation

Table 5 showed that all respondents (100%) were highly motivated by economic status (financial viability), 98.1% by achievement (success and attainment); 97.1% by educational status (how enlightened or well read) and occupational status (type of profession and prestige attached to it), 96.1% by personal interest (national concern or curiosity); 88% by responsibility (duty and roles), and 82.9% by recognition (acknowledgement and attainment respect for someone), marital status (being married) by 73.4%. All these factors had strongly motivated the respondents to participate in decision making. Majority (50.1%) claimed that family beliefs, norms and values had not motivated them, hence had limited their level of participation in decision making.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by the problems militating against women participation in decision making and suggested solutions

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Cultural belief and norms	43	41.0
Societal attitude/disposition	22	21.0
Position in the family	11	10.4
Religion	10	9.5
Education background	10	9.5
Ingenuity complex	5	4.8
Personal assessment of ones ability	4	3.8
Suggested solutions		
Education, encouragement & empowerment	79	75.2
Cooperation and harmony in the family	14	13.3
Avoiding gender bias/ingenuity	7	6.7
Dialogue and advice from elders	5	4.8

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by motivational factors enhancing their participation in decision making in Percentages

Motivational factors	Not motivating	Fairly motivating	Strongly motivating
Economic status	---	---	105 (100.0)
Achievements	---	2 (1.9)	103 (98.1)
Educational status	---	3 (2.9)	102 (97.1)
Occupational status	---	3 (2.9)	102 (97.1)
Personal interest	1 (1.0)	3 (2.9)	101 (96.1)
Responsibility	---	12 (11.4)	93 (88.6)
Recognition	---	18 (17.1)	87 (82.9)
Marital status	---	27 (25.7)	78 (74.3)
Family belief, norms & value	53 (50.5)	35 (33.3)	17 (16.2)

Test of Hypotheses

H_{o1}: there is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and their level of participation in decision making.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between the problems militating against rural women and their level of participation in decision making.

There were significant relationships between some socio-economic characteristics of women and their level of participation in decision making since the calculated value were greater than the tabulated value at 0.05 significant levels. It can be inferred statistically that family size, position of wife, number of wives had by husband had affected the respondents' level of participation in family decision making while age, religion, education level, marital status, occupation and income were not significant hence did not affect participation level (Table 6).

There was a significant relationship between the problems militating against rural women and their level of participation in decision making, since the calculated value was greater than the tabulated value at 0.05 significant level. Statistically, it can be inferred that cultural belief and norms, societal attitude/disposition, ingenuity complex, personal assessment of one's ability had affected the respondents' level of participation in decision making (Table 6)

Table 6: Relationship between socio-economic characteristics of respondents and their level of participation in decision making

Variables	X cal	X tab	D f	Decision
Age	10.73	15.507	8	Not Significant
Religion	2.46	5.99	2	Not Significant
Education	12.13	12.59	6	Not Significant
Marital Status	8.31	9.488	4	Not Significant
1 ^o Occupation	12.03	15.507	8	Not Significant
2 ^o Occupation	10.87	18.307	10	Not Significant
Family Size	34.26	21.026	12	Significant
No. of wives	15.36	15.507	8	Significant
Position as wife	21.50	12.59	6	Significant
Income	2.68	9.488	4	Not Significant
2.Problems	27.95	21.02	12	Significant

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Women have been found to participate in one form of decision or the other. They participated in decisions concerning household activities. Factors such as; personal interest, marital status, educational status, occupational status, economic status and achievement, responsibility and recognition, to a large extent, had motivated women to participate in decision making. They nevertheless, frequently influenced decision making processes in their families. Cultural belief and norms were the major problems militating against the participation of rural women in decision making. It is therefore, recommended that higher educational achievement is a good basis for effective participation of women in decision making. Women should aspire to participate in decision making by seeking information and knowledge to learn the act of decision making, since decision making position will not be given to anyone unless one aspires for it. By so doing, they will strive to make themselves relevant in decision making processes.

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