

## Determinants of Participation of Rural Women in Off-farm Economic Activities in Obafemi Owode Local Government Area of Ogun State

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### ABSTRACT

*The role of women in the agricultural economy of rural farming households can never be over-emphasized, particularly in developing Africa. This role has implications for the poverty status of the rural farming households. The factors that determine whether or not the womenfolk, in the rural farming households, would participate in off-farm economic activities, was investigated. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to obtain primary data from a cross-section of 200 rural farming households. Structured questionnaire was used, of which 195 were found amenable for data processing. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Logit regression model. Major findings showed that women educational attainment ( $\beta=0.321$ ) and rural household's total income ( $\beta=-0.71$ ) were significant determinants of women participation in off-farm economic activities.*

**Key words:** participation, women, off-farm activities

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### INTRODUCTION

Women the world over play prominent roles in the home economics of most households, especially in rural areas where work opportunities are as limited as the imagination permits and as narrow in spectrum as economic means are available. Usually, the role of women in most rural areas are relegated to activities that are mostly reproductive in nature with little vista to serve as help mates for mostly non-remunerative, otherwise economic activities (International Centre for Research on Women, 2008). As Oniang'o (2002) posited, gender inequality hinders a woman's chances of employment, education, access to decision making, affecting not only her but also her household's food security. The inequality in gender relations with respect to economic means and other means of empowerment erode so much from the household in terms of her ability to contribute meaningfully to household subsistence. This stems from limited access to land, education, information, credit, technology and other decision-making forums (Oniang'o, 2002).

Agrawal (2008) stated that on a global scale, women cultivate more than half of all the food that is grown. This is by no means a small feat and a testament to the immense contributions of the womenfolk, the world over, to the survival of the human race. The works of Quisumbing *et al.*

(1995) and Ukeje (2006) establish women as the critical link in the chain of food and nutritional security. The roles of women are as varied and multifaceted as to include, producers of food, managers of natural resources, income generators and care providers for their families. Findings from the work of Agrawal (2008), suggest that poorer families tended to depend on the economic productivity of its women. The implication of these findings is enormous if one considers a scenario where such women have better and more economic options in keeping with an enhanced skill set/training. It cannot be overemphasized that the economic welfare, food and nutritional security of such poor households would improve markedly.

A wider array of economic activities and options from which households and their women can pick, is a requisite condition for securing better welfare especially in rural agrarian areas where agriculture is the mainstay. Income diversification activities become explorable means of augmenting uncertain farm income which are usually subject to the vagaries of weathers and inconsistent government policies. It could serve to ameliorate the inclement rural household economic atmosphere. Haggblade *et al.* (2010) indicated that non-farm income accounted for between 35% and 50% of total income of

rural households in developing countries. This puts non-farm income sources as a veritable means of increasing household income base and by implication improve rural household welfare as well improve rural household food and nutritional security. Ogbanje *et. al.* (2016) determined the effect of socio-economic characteristics and farm financial characteristics on the probability of off-farm income's share invested in farming in North central Nigeria. They found out that education, household size and operating profit margin significantly increased the probability of off-farm participation. By implication household specific socio-economic characteristics determined the participation of its member in off-farm activities.

Chang and Mishra (2008) pointed out in their work, the sparseness of information available on the linkages between off-farm income and food/nutrition of households, given the attendant higher incomes and possibly better food access. They also argued the plausibility of a flip side to the "better income/food access" scenario, arguing that working off-farm could potentially reduce food availability due to the competition for family labour between on farm and off farm work. Earlier works (Damite and Negatu, 2004; Woldenhanna and Oskam, 2001) tended to argue that larger farm sizes and farm outputs had negative relationships with farming household's participation in off-farm activities. The implication was that if the farming households were actually making enough to sustain their subsistence and maintain a reasonable standard of living, they were unlikely to pursue employments in off-farm activities, thus debunking the argument of competing demand for household members' labour.

The participation of the womenfolk in off farm economic activities is of particular interest, particularly so when one considers the fact farming may not always have a predictable and sustainable level of income required to have guaranteed household food security. Ackah and Kolawole (2015) maintained that in the face of present economic realities, an increasing number of households depend on two earners (the man and the woman) to secure a suitable standard of living. In fact, Ackah and Kolawole (2015) quoted Anyanwu and Etonyeaku (2009) as positing that women have successfully invaded the previous male dominated social and economic spheres where men were the sole bread winner. This is true both in the rural as well as urban areas, developing and developed economies alike.

Higher household income is necessary for household food security, at least to a large extent. Economic reasoning suggests that consumption is a function of income (Jhinghan, 2010). Food poverty is a severe/strict measure of poverty and it deals with deprivation of the household members on the basis of access to requisite food to guarantee household food security. Investigating the link

between women participation in off farm activities and food poverty could help to ascertain among rural dwellers, the impact or otherwise of such off-farm activities on the welfare of rural households.

Therefore, the objectives of this study are to determine what factors influence the odds in favour of women, from rural households, engaging in off farm economic activities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was carried out in Obafemi Owode LGA of Ogun State, Nigeria. The LGA is bound in the north by Odeda LGA and Oyo State, in the east by Sagamu and Ikenne LGAs and in the south by Ifo LGA and Lagos state. It has a land mass of 104,787.07 ha of largely agricultural land and is proudly referred to as the land of OFADA RICE (ogunstatebiz.tripod.com, 2015). The LGA has 203 Community Development Areas (CDAs) with 1204 towns and villages between them (akeran.town.ng, 2015). Its people are predominantly farmers of arable crops, cash crops and tree crops while some engage in livestock and fisheries.

Obafemi Owode LGA is politically divided into three political zones of 4 wards each. These zones are

- i. Owode Zone: Owode, Ajura, Ofada and Mokoloki
- ii. Obafemi Zone: Alapako-oni, Kajola, Obafemi and Ajebo
- iii. Oba Zone: Egbeda, onidundu, Moloki-asipa and Oba

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to obtain a total of 200 respondents for the research. The sample frame consisted mainly of all rural farming households in Obafemi Owode LGA. Firstly, a random sampling technique was used to select wards from each of the three political zones. Of Oba zone being the smallest in size and in number of CDAs, only one ward was randomly selected, while from each of Owode and Obafemi Zones, two wards were randomly selected. This makes a total of five wards randomly selected. These wards are Ofada, Mokoloki, Kajola, Ajebo and Onidundu. Thereafter, 40 rural farming households were randomly selected from each of the selected wards using a list of farming households supplied by agricultural extension agents in the area. After this, a structured questionnaire was administered to the primary care-giver within the household who is saddled with responsibility of food preparation and food sharing, in most cases the mother of the house, who answered mostly from memory recall. Of the 200 questionnaires administered, 195 were found useful while 5 was found to be lacking in the requisite information for the purpose of analysis. The logit regression model was stated to determine which

factors increased or decreased the odds in favour of women participating in off farm economic activities. The model was stated as follows as

$$Y = \text{Log} \frac{p(x)}{1-p(x)} = \beta_0 + B_i X_i$$

Y=1 is women participation and Y=0 is women non participation in off farm economic activities  
i= 1, 2,.....,7

X<sub>1</sub>= Household size

X<sub>2</sub>= Level of education of women

X<sub>3</sub>= gender of the household head (male=1, female=0)

X<sub>4</sub>= household head's educational qualification

X<sub>5</sub>= Total farm income from the previous production year

X<sub>6</sub>= Access to credit (access=1, no access= 0)

X<sub>7</sub>= Farm size

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that majority of the rural farming households (70.7%) are male headed. This makes it more possible for the households to have access to assets since most of this rural communities are male favoured with respect to family resources than the female folks.

**Table 1:** Frequency distribution of rural household's socio-economic characteristics

	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Sex of household head</u>		
Female	57	29.23
Male	138	70.77
Total	195	100
<u>Age of household head</u>		
Below 30 years	12	6.16
31- 40 years	58	29.74
41- 50 years	78	40
51-60 years	42	21.54
Above 60 years	5	2.56
Total	195	100
<u>Household size</u>		
1-3	27	13.85
4-7	124	63.59
8-11	38	19.49
12-15	4	2.05
Above 16	2	1.02
Total	195	100
<u>Women engaged in off-farm activities</u>		
Not engaged	31	15.9
Engaged	164	84.1
Total	195	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Only about 24.1% of the rural farming households interviewed had household heads older than 50 years of age. This percentage, about a quarter of the total population interviewed, had household head that are more toward the less productive portion of the population interviewed.

This household heads are more likely to have lesser productivity which in turn could lead to reduced income and inadvertently lead to household food insecurity. About 63.6% had household size ranging between 4 and 7 household members while 3.7% had household size above 12 household members. The larger proportion of the women interviewed, participated in other off farm economic activities (84.1%) while the remaining did not.

Table 2 shows the types of off-farm economic activities that rural women engage in besides farm work. A very large number of the women participated in off-farm economic activities to support farming income (84.1%) i.e. 164 women as is shown in Table 1.

**Table 2:** Frequency distribution of types of off- farm economic activities women participate in rural area

	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Farm based economic activities</u>		
Cooked food vending	14	7.2
Processing of agricultural products off farm gate	22	11.3
Sub Total	36	18.5
<u>Forest based economic activities</u>		
Herb trading	34	17.4
Fuel wood gathering and sales	32	16.4
Hunting and sales of venison/wildlife	18	9.2
Sub Total	88	43
<u>Non-forest/farm-based activities</u>		
Tailoring	13*	6.7
Surrogate caregivers/nannies/domestic helps	3	1.5
Trading in non-agricultural/forest products	13*	6.7
Beauticians	10	5.1
Low level civil servants	3	1.5
Middle level civil servants	0	0
High level civil servants	0	0
Others	2	1
Sub Total	44*	

Source: Field Survey, 2015. \*multiple responses indicative of multiple enterprises is responsible for the high figure

Three broad categories were used to group these activities; farm based economic activities which included activities participated in outside of the farm gate but which added in some ways to adding value to agricultural enterprise e.g. sales of cooked food, processing of agricultural (milling

services for fee, packaging) etc., forest based economic activities such as sales of herbs, gathering and sales of fuel wood, sales of captured wildlife. The third category was the non-forest/non-farm based economic activities. Less than a fifth of the women interviewed participated in economic activities that added to the value chain system of the agricultural system (18.5%). The forest provided alternative economic opportunities for about 43% of the rural women interviewed through fuel wood gathering and sales, sales of wild and medicinal herbs as well as sales of wild animals captured through traps and gins. Another 22.6% were involved in other forms of economic activities besides farm based/ forest based economic activities. They were involved in this case in multiple enterprises for which reason the figure seems to be on the high side.

**Table 3:** Logit regression analysis of determinants of rural women participation in off-farm economic activities. Convergence achieved after 3 iterations

Variable name	B	T-values
Household size	0.265* (-0.14)	1.89
Educational attainment of women	0.321** (-0.14)	2.26
Gender of household head	-0.14 (-0.25)	-0.54
Educational attainment of household head	0.20* (-0.12)	-1.62
Rural farm household income in previous year	-0.71** (-0.29)	-2.45
Access to credit	0.6 (-0.2)	0.3
Farm size	-0.12 (-0.27)	-0.43
Constant	-0.21 (-0.54)	-0.39

Source: Field Analysis, 2015 \*significant at 10%, \*\*significant at 5%  
Scale factor= 0.398, Cragg-Uhler R-Squared= 0.12652

Table 3 presents the factors that increase or decrease the odds in favour of women participating in off-farm economic activities. The model explains about 13% of the total variation in the odds of women participating in off-farm economic activities. Household size ( $\beta=0.265$ ), educational attainment of women ( $\beta=0.321$ ) and educational attainment of the household head ( $\beta=0.20$ ) significantly increased the odds of women engaging in off-farm economic activities. On the other hand, increasing rural household farm income decreased the odds in favour of women participating in off-farm economic activities significantly ( $\beta=-0.71$ ).

## CONCLUSION

The sheer proportion of the women who participate in off-farm economic activities is huge. As much as 84.1% of the interviewed women participate in off-farm economic activities thereby bearing testament to the fact that reliance on farm income only for the subsistence of rural households

seemed to proving difficult. Off-farm economic activities that add to the value chain of the agricultural sector and forest based economic activities are the most utilised categories of off-farm economic activities engaged in. This is possibly due to the low educational requirements and financial needs required for such enterprises, hence are seen to have little restrictions to entry and participation among the womenfolk.

With respect to the womenfolk, educational qualification was a significant determinant of participation in off-farm economic activities. The odds of participation increased as the educational qualification increased. This confirms the submission of IFAD (2006) that to better integrate women into the socio-economic life of Nigeria, education and employment opportunities must be improved for women. Increasing household size was also found to increase the odds in favour of women participation perhaps as a result of the resultant strain on household limited money income to cater for household needs. Better educated household heads also increased the odds in favour of women participation, while falling farm incomes was also found to increase the odds in favour of women participation.

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