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Effect of Gender Based Violence on Women Farmers Agricultural Livelihood Activities in Imo State, Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO

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How to cite this article:

Atoma, C.N., J.U. Chikaire, A.O. Ani and N.O. Anyoha. 2014. Effect of Gender Based Violence on Women Farmers Agricultural Livelihood Activities in Imo State, Nigeria. *The Journal of Agriculture and Natural Resources Sciences*. 1(1):57-65.

Article History:

Received: 20 September 2014
Accepted: 5 October 2014

ABSTRACT

Violence hinders growth - economic and social. It retards overall development of individuals, groups and society at large. Violence no matter the form cripples activities of man and keeps them out from pursuing economic activities and otherwise. The women are a group of individuals most affected by violence the world over no matter their status. This study investigates the effects violence has on women farmers' agricultural livelihood activities. To reveal the effects, the research studies the socio-economic characteristics of the women respondents, various forms of gender based violence, agricultural livelihood activities of the women, causes of gender-based violence and effects of gender-based violence on the respondents. Using structured questionnaire to elicit information from 120 women, data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools. It was observed that majority of the women (52.5%) received primary school education and are all married. About 33% of the respondents are separated because of beating and other forms of violence. Forms of abuse and violence in the area include verbal abuse, forced marriage, genital mutilation, and denial of education. Lack of education, information, trust, poverty, culture, belief systems, weak sanction and so many others are factors fuelling violence against women in the study area. The women engage in various farm activities to survive. They produce vegetables, maize, rear animals, produce cassava, market and even gather fruits. The effects of violence are endless such as reduced income; reduce work capacity of women, loss of agricultural skills, low investment on farm, decrease productivity and others. Women should be given access to information, education, land, credit and other incentive to help them overcome shock from violence and continue to work all year round.

Keywords: Gender, violence, poverty, productivity, agriculture, abuse.

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture can be an important engine of growth and poverty reduction. However, the sector is underperforming in many countries in part because women, who are often a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy, face constraints that reduce their productivity.

Aggregate data show that women comprise about 43 percent of the agricultural labor force globally and in developing countries (FAO, 2011). In Africa, estimates of the time contribution of women to agricultural activities go up to 60-80 percent in some countries. Overall, the labor burden of rural women exceeds that of men, and includes a higher proportion of unpaid household responsibilities related to preparing food and collecting fuel and water (CARE, 2013). Despite women playing a critical and potentially transformative role in agricultural growth in developing countries, they often face persistent obstacles and economic constraints limiting further inclusion in agriculture. In some countries, women are often not recognized as farmers and face widespread restrictions on decision making about the basic resources for production i.e., land; access to productivity-enhancing inputs such as credit, fertilizer, improved seeds and extension; and control over the produce resulting from their labor and other investments. Women's ability to produce enough food is further hampered by the physically exhausting labor and drudgery associated with farming practices that have remained unchanged for generations.

By failing to close the gender gap in agriculture, the world is paying dearly. For example, opening up women's access to the resources required to produce, process and market food products could increase yields on women's farms by 20 to 30 percent, according to a recent State of Food and Agriculture report from FAO (FAO, 2011). This would raise total agricultural production in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent and reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 100 to 150 million people. Women are clearly an important part of the agricultural labor force, but agriculture and agricultural value chains are equally important to women as a source of employment. Given that gender inequalities run through agricultural systems, action is required at all levels from household and community up to national, regional, and international scales. This action will require: making research, extension, and market systems inclusive and accessible to both men and women farmers; implementing policy actions that reduce barriers to women's access to resources including land; engaging men to change gender relations, community structures and cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequalities; and programmatic interventions that integrate the multiple functions of agriculture (food, nutrition, incomes).

Gender-based violence (GBV), along with poverty and HIV and AIDS, remains among the most pervasive problems confronting women across the globe, with adverse consequences for almost all sectoral areas including agriculture and labour. GBV takes many forms-physical, sexual, emotional and psychological, and socio-economic. Harmful traditional practices are also considered a form of GBV. It is deeply rooted in unequal power relations and individual attitudes that condone violence within the family, the community and the State. As societies change, patterns of violence alter and new forms emerge (UNHCR, 2003)

GBV is even more severe and widespread during a humanitarian crises, where state and community social structures are disrupted and agriculture fails to ensure food and livelihood security of populations. Such circumstances may lead individuals to engage in sexual behaviors (e.g. sex work for food rations, safe passage and access to basic goods) that can expose them to higher risk of HIV infection. Orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs) especially girls, and demobilized or rescued child soldiers are an especially affected group within populations of humanitarian concern, due to their lack of sources of livelihoods, knowledge and skills, and thus their dependence on others.

There has recently been increased attention to the relationship between GBV, HIV and livelihoods. Gender inequality, limited access and control over land, water and other productive resources, lack of access to education and health services, food insecurity, conflict and displacement continue to fuel the vicious cycle of both GBV and HIV. GBV and food insecurity also contribute directly and indirectly to people's vulnerability to HIV and their ability to cope with the infection (WFP, 2007).

By affecting mostly the productive population groups (age 15 to 45), GBV has a devastating impact on the agriculture sector and food security: illness (including HIV) or

injuries as a result of violence reduce work capacity, productivity and livelihood assets. Many victims and survivors of GBV are stigmatized and excluded from community and social activities, and deprived of support. Risky coping strategies such as commercial sex, employed by those facing food and livelihood insecurity and humanitarian crises, often lead to further erosion of the livelihood asset base, and further vulnerability to GBV and HIV transmission.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is at epidemic proportions in countries around the world. It is estimated that at least one out of three women globally will be beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. In conflict-affected parts of the world, violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, can reach unimaginable levels (CARE, 2014).

Gender-based violence refers to any harm perpetrated against a person's will on the basis of gender—the socially ascribed differences between males and females. It is based on an unequal power between men, women, boys and girls (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2004). Women and girls are often the targets because of social norms and beliefs that perpetuate their second-class social status. GBV includes physical, sexual and psychological abuse of women and girls in the home, community and in schools; trafficking; traditional practices such as female genital cutting, forced marriage, and honor crimes; and widespread sexual violence and exploitation during and after conflicts and natural disasters (CARE, 2014).

Women and girls continue to be the main targets of gender-based violence because, throughout the world, social norms perpetuate second-class status for women and place restraints on their social power. At the same time, men and boys are encouraged to exercise power in society and to be prepared to use violent means as necessary. These disempowering gender norms and power inequalities support and reinforce one another.

GBV exacerbates poverty and thwarts development efforts. Women and girls who have been sexually violated are at risk of unintended pregnancy and contracting sexually transmitted diseases, like HIV/AIDS. They may lose access to vital support due to the stigma placed on survivors of abuse. Threats, harassment, violence or fear of violence together with social notions of honor and virtue may constrain women's and girls' mobility. This limits their livelihood opportunities, their ability to access education and health services, and to participate in political processes. As women comprise a significant part of the informal economy and are the primary caretakers of children, the ripple effects of GBV travel far beyond the survivors themselves. GBV also has enormous economic costs at both the personal and social level in terms of health services, police and legal services, and decreased productivity, which impacts family income and food security (CARE, 2014).

Psychological damage, and the threat of further violence, erodes a woman's self-esteem, inhibiting her ability to defend herself or take action against her abuser. It also represents a violation of her human rights, as detailed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1943), which at article 3 states 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person', and at article 5 reads, 'No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Izumi, 2007). In the study area, gender-based violence against women goes beyond immediate physical damage to the victim and not much has been done to unravel the situation of these rural women who face violence from certain group in the society. Due to this information gap, the study becomes necessary.

The broad objective of this study is to analyze the effects of gender-based violence on women farmer's livelihood activities in Ahiazu Mbaise Area of Imo State. The specific objectives are to-

1. Describe the demographic characteristics of the women respondents.
2. Identify forms of gender-based violence in the study area.
3. Ascertain agricultural livelihood activities of the respondent women.
4. Identify causes of gender-based violence in the study area.
5. Describe the effects of gender-based violence on livelihood activities of the respondents.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Ahiazu Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State. It is located within the South-eastern zone of Nigerian. The location of Imo State in the South east zone makes it a strategic commercial centre. The people are known for their traditional hospitality, revered as the cradle of peaceful coexistence and famed for their cultural affinity. Imo State is endowed with abundant human resources. With her central location and abundant natural resources, the State is an attractive investment center for various types of industries including agro-allied and petro-chemical companies. Education is the biggest industry in the State (IMSG, 2009). Ahiazu Mbaise Local Government Council is one of the 28 Local Governments that make-up Imo State. It shares common boundaries with Ehime Mbano Local Government Council in the north, and Aboh Mbaise Local Government Council respectively.

Ahiazu Mbaise is one of the L.G.A that has a high population density in Imo State. It has an estimated population of about 170, 824 with about 86, 326 male and 84, 498 females. Ahiazu Mbaise has a very good land for production or cultivation of crops like; yam, maize, cassava, groundnut, vegetable, coco yam okro etc. Also grown are cash crops like oil palm, cocoa, coconuts, mango etc. livestock production such as goats, sheeps, pig and birds are added high priority. Generally, education remains the biggest industry in Imo State and Ahiazu Mbaise people are not left out as all the autonomous communities in the area have one or more primary schools and many with secondary schools. Also found in the area are different types of organization both formal and informal organizations.

The two (2) main sources of data collection were used in this research include, the primary data and secondary data. The primary data were collected from the field survey/investigation while the secondary were collected from books, reports, journals, existing literature review, bulletins and information from library, monitoring and evaluation unit Imo State. Purposive random sampling technique was used in selecting respondents for the study. The population comprised all women farmers in the study area who have at one time or the other experienced violence. A list of the women was obtained from the Social Welfare Unit in the Council Headquarters. The list contains a total number of 1200 women affected by gender based violence. From this list, 10% of the total population was selected which is 120 women respondents. Data were collected by use of structured questionnaires and interview schedule. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This includes percentage and frequency distribution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 reveals the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Majority (40%) of the respondents are within the age bracket of 51-60 years. They are followed by 28.3% within the ages of 41-50 years. These individuals are adjudged active as far as farming is concerned. On education, 52.3% have primary education, while 28.3% have secondary school education. Then, 12.5% and 6.7% have no formal education and tertiary education respectively. The major occupation of the respondents is farming with 66.7%, while the remaining engages in other supplementary activities like food vending, trading and others. Again, 41.7% of the respondents have between 6-10 dependents in their families. They are followed by 30.8% who have more than 10 individuals who depend on them. All the respondents have family life experiences. The table reveals that 37.5% are married and living with their husbands, while 33.3% have separated due to physical abuse as observed during interview. Others (16.7%) are divorced women and 12.5% are widows who have lost their husbands to death. Again, 48.3% cultivate between 0.25% - 1 hectare of farm land, 25.5% cultivate 1.5-2 hectares, 20% have between 2.5-3 hectares, and lastly, 5.5% have more than 3.5 hectares of farm land. The

majority who cultivate less (48.3%) are women who lost their land title due to separation from their husbands.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondent

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
31 – 40	18	15.0
41 – 50	34	28.3
51 – 60	48	40.0
60 and above	20	16.7
Education Attainment		
No formal	15	12.5
Primary	63	52.5
Secondary	34	28.3
Tertiary	8	6.7
Occupation		
Farming (major)	80	66.7
Food vendor	10	8.3
Trading	20	16.7
Civil servant	10	8.3
Family size		
1 – 5	33	27.5
6 – 10	50	41.7
10 and above	37	30.8
Marital status		
Married	45	37.5
Divorced	20	16.7
Widow	15	12.5
Separated	40	33.3
Farm size		
0.25 – 1	58	48.3
1.5 – 2	31	25.8
2.5 – 3	24	20.0
3.5 – above	7	5.8

Forms of Gender – based violence in study area

Table 2 below shows the various forms of gender base violence faced by the respondents. The respondents face wide array of violence ranging from beating/hitting with 83.3%, to female genital mutilation with 75%. Another major and common form of violence against the respondents is verbal abuse with 69.2% response. Denial of social and economic benefits with 66.6% is also an act of violence against the respondents. The table also revealed that denial of education, with 54.2% is seen as a form of violence.

Table 2: Forms of Gender-based Violence in the study Area

Forms of violence	Frequency*	Percentage
Verbal abuse	83	69.2
Beating/hitting	100	83.3
Sexual abuse	40	33.3
Forced marriages	63	52.5
Genital mutilation	90	75.0
Denial of education	65	54.2
Denial of social/economic benefits	80	66.6

*Multiple response

These are in line with Duvvury and Galway (2012) who said gender based violence is any act or threat of harm inflicted on a person because of their gender. Gender based violence refers to an act the results in or is likely to result in physical social and psychological harm of suffering, including threat, such acts coercion, or arbitrary depreciation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It encompasses sexual violence, domestic violence sex trafficking harmful practices such as female mutilation/cutting, forced early marriages, forced

prostitution, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation, to name but a few. Again, Izumi (2007) sees property grabbing as a form of violence against women. She said property grabbing, whereby an individual is forcibly evicted from her home by other family members, traditional leaders or neighbors, and is often unable to take her possessions with her, is occurring today throughout Southern and East Africa. Although property grabbing occurs in many different forms, empirical evidence collected demonstrates that it is affecting women disproportionately, with many women being forced from their homes on the death of their husbands, and having to move from rural areas to urban slums and informal settlements in cities? As such, it represents a form of gender-based violence in itself, as well as often being accompanied by other acts of extreme violence against women, including physical abuse, harassment, and intimidation in violation of women's human rights. Customary law and practices governing women's inheritance and property rights, women's vulnerable socio-economic and political status, gendered power relations, and the new dimension brought in by HIV and AIDS, are further weakening the property rights of women who are already vulnerable (Izumi, 2007).

Factors Fuelling Gender-based Violence in the study Area

In the study area, there are factors which fuel violence against women. The first of these is belief system with 79.2% response. Poverty (75%), weak community sanctions (68.3%), attitude of men towards women (67.5%), the use of alcoholic beverages and other substances (62.5%), cultural practices (61.6%), lack of trust (55.8%). Other factors fuelling gender based violence include gender inequality (62.5%), abuses of power (52.5%), lack of access to education (47.5%), lack of access to information (40%), and low social status of women (55.8%) (Table 3).

According to FAO (2007) the abuses of power and gender inequality are the underlying causes of gender based violence. Violence, exploitation and abuse of occur when the disparity of power is misused to the detriment of those people who cannot negotiate or make decision on equal basis. Again, WHO (2005) found that lack of access to education, information and services, increases the vulnerability of people to various forms of violence. Uneducated or illiterate people are less likely to have information about gender based violence, about available social benefit. Economic inequalities and control over resources, as well as inappropriate or nonexistence policies, laws, and institutions are factors that contribute to peoples vulnerability to gender base violence.

Table 3: Factors Fuelling Gender based violence

Factors	Frequency+	Percentage
Abuses of power	63	52.5
Gender inequality	75	62.5
Lack of access to education/training	57	47.5
Lack of access to information	48	40.0
Lack of trust	67	55.8
Poverty	90	75.0
Cultural practices	74	61.6
Belief system	95	79.2
Weak community sanction	82	68.3
Attitude towards women	81	67.5
Alcohol and substance misuse	75	62.8
Low social status of women	67	55.8

+ Multiple responses

Agricultural livelihood Activities of Respondents

The respondents are farmers as revealed by table 4. The table shows that the respondents are into vegetable production as indicated by 79.2% response; they also produce maize, (65%), rear poultry birds (5.3%), produce cassava (65.2%), gather fruits (66.7%), produce cocoyam (83.3%) and also market their produce (62.5%). The above finding is in line with

FAO (2011) that women make essential contributions to agriculture and rural economic activities in all developing country regions. Their roles vary considerably among and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world where economic and social forces are transforming the agriculture sector. The emergence of contract farming and modern supply chains for high-value agricultural products, for example, present different opportunities and challenges for women than they do for men. These differences derive from the different roles and responsibilities of women and the constraints that they face (FAO, 2011).

Table 4: Livelihood activities of Respondent

Activities	Frequency +	Percentage
Vegetable production	95	79.2
Maize production	78	65.0
Poultry rearing	10	8.3
Cassava production	83	69.2
Marketing	75	62.5
Fruit gathering	80	66.7
Cocoyam production	100	83.3

+ Multiple responses

Rural women often manage livelihood households, and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food working of wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintain their (Klasen and Lamanna, 2009). Women often face gender-specific challenges to full participation in the labour force, which may require policy interventions beyond those aimed at promoting economic growth and the efficiency of rural labour markets. Policies can influence the economic incentives and social norms that determine whether women work, the types of work they perform and whether it is considered an economic activity, the stock of human capital they accumulate and the levels of pay receive, increasing female participation in the labour force has a positive impact on economic growth (Klasen and Lamanna, 2009).

Women work in agriculture as farmers on their own account, unpaid workers on family farms and as paid or unpaid labourers on other forms farms and agricultural enterprises. They are involved in both crop and livestock production at subsistence and commercial levels. They produce food and cash crops and manage mixed agricultural operations often involving crops, livestock and fish farming. All of these women are considered part of the agricultural labour force (FAO, 2011).

Based on the latest internationally comparable data, women comprise an average of 43 percent of the agricultural labour force of developing countries. The female share of the agricultural labour force ranges from about 20 percent in Latin America to almost 50 percent in Eastern and South eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2011).

Women in sub-Saharan Africa have relatively high overall labour force participation rates and the highest average agricultural labour force participation rates in the world. Cultural norms in the region have long encouraged women to be economically self-reliant and traditionally give women substantial responsibility for agricultural production in their own right.

Effects of Gender based Violence on Livelihood of the Respondents

Gender based violence have serious effects on the livelihood of women in the study area and even all over the world. Gender violence reduces the work capacity of rural women as shown by 75% response. All the respondents agreed that violence reduces the income of women farmers (100%), leads to poverty and destitution (100%), and also leads to loss of

access to land, credit and cooperative engagements and increase food insecurity and malnutrition with 83.3% respectively. Other effects of gender violence include loss of agricultural skills (65%), decrease women productivity (78.3%), low investment in time and money (70%) and reduction in physical/mental health of women with 77.5% response (Table 5).

Commenting on the consequences of GBV and Impacts on rural Livelihoods, FAO (2007) said GBV has far-reaching impacts across all sectors of society. It can lead to severe physical, psychological and social consequences, and in some cases even death. Agricultural sector and agricultural-based livelihoods are highly dependent on land, natural resources and human labour, and thus on good health status of farmers; this means that farmers are negatively affected by GBV. Social stigma and discrimination may lead to psychological trauma, Feelings of powerlessness, and inadequacy to engage in productive activities and to fully participate in community activities.

Table 5: Effects of Gender based violence on women livelihood (N= 120)

Effects of GBV	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reduced work capacity of women	90	75
Reduced income of women farmers	120	100
Loss of agricultural knowledge/skills	78	65
Increase food insecurity and malnutrition	100	83.3
Decrease the productivity of women farmers	94	78
Low investment in time and money by money	84	70
Loss of access to land and credits	100	83.3
Leads to poverty/destitution among women	120	100
Reduction in physical/mental health of women	93	77.5

In situations where people are already impoverished and social structures and the rule of law disrupted, as is the case in humanitarian settings, the impacts of GBV on rural livelihoods are even more devastating.

The health, emotional and psychological consequences of GBV may be so devastating that the victims/survivors will not be able to continue being productive. Social stigma and exclusion, loss of role and functions in a community society-with consequent deficit of income and increased gender inequalities-may as well push the persons affected by GBV into a downward spiral of poverty, preventing them from living a healthy and dignified life.

Negative impacts of GBV are particularly devastating for women and girls. Girls are forced out of school because of defilement rape and or constant sexual harassment from, for example, teachers and guardians. Others cannot build skills required for future survival because they are forced by families into early marriages or commercial sex as a way of gaining food, income and school fees, among others.

By restricting women's movements and their involvement in education and trainings, including agricultural extension services or farmer field and life schools, psycho-social forms of violence hinder their access to information and better farming practices. The result is that agricultural programmed that target 'farmers' may fail to achieve their objectives if women, who carry out the majority of farming activities, are not involved (Swaans *et al.*, 2008).

Fatal GBV outcomes may result in labour shortages and declines in productivity. Declining productivity, in turn, leads to declines in income through both decreases in the household's own production and through declines in off-farm income and remittances, which may lead to increased food insecurity and malnutrition. Social capital is critical for farmers' ability to cope with external shocks, recover from their consequences and continue normal life and work. Illness and death, emotional and psychological consequences, as well as stigma and discrimination related to Gay, disrupt people's links to their extended family and the larger community (Eghtessadi, 2008).

Violence in the households also has a strong psychological impact on children. It may lead to children dropping out of school, irregular school attendance and a general negative impact on their wellbeing. At a community level, GBV influences the socialization processes whereby boys and girls come to accept violence as a norm in family life.

CONCLUSION

Gender based violence is a global issue. It is perpetrated in different forms ranging from physical, psychological, sexual to emotional abuse. It is caused by cultural and belief system, attitude towards women, lack of education, information and other factors. It exacerbates poverty and retards development efforts. It leads to inequality, food insecurity and malnutrition.

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