Journal of Community & Communication Research
ISSN: 2635-3318
Volume 4, No. 2 December 2019
Pp. 134-142

Gender Issues in Food Security of Nigeria and Implication for Curriculum Planning

Accessible at: https://jccr.sccdr.org.ng/index.php/jccr/issue/view/1

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Review Process: Received: 24/08/19 Reviewed: 17/10/19 Accepted: 25/12/19

ABSTRACT
Socio-cultural factors, such as family expectations, societal images and gender stereotypes act as key barriers to girls' and women's access to education in general. These were said to restrict access to, progression in, and the type of education that girls and women opt for. The gender issues in food security in Nigeria and the curriculum implications were addressed. In this paper, the concept of food security and its challenges, gender inequality in food security, their curriculum implications and recommendations were addressed.

Keywords: Gender Issues, Food security, implication for curriculum planning, challenges to food security

INTRODUCTION

Food security sits on the top of the list of targets of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A country is food-secure when majority of its population have access to food of adequate quantity and quality consistent with decent existence at all times (Idachaba, 2004). Food security is a human right, yet close to 11.3 % (805 million) of the world population remains food insecure (FAO, IFAD & WFP 2014). Food insecurity has not been tackled in all ramifications. This can be attributed to funding, problem of implementation or lack of focus on goal attainment. Nigeria has about 79 million hectares of cultivable land out of which 32 million hectares are cultivated. In developing countries, men and women participate in traditional agriculture performing different roles and these roles are gender specific, complementary and reciprocal in natural activities like bush clearing, land preparation, weeding, harvesting, processing and marketing as well (Brearley, 2005).There is little emphasis on agricultural development given the crucial role of agricultural production in a country that moved from a net exporter of food in the early days of independence to a net importer of food following the growing role of crude oil in the national economy. Unfortunately, the training of human resources in agriculture is often not a high priority in the development plans of countries. As a result, curricula and teaching programmes are not particularly relevant to the production needs and employment demands of the agricultural sector. In this paper, the following were addressed; concept of food security; challenges to food security; gender inequality in food

security; curriculum implications of gender issues in food security in Nigeria, recommendations and conclusions.

Concept of Food Security

The World Food Summit, 1996, agreed that food security "exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2008). From this definition, four components of food security are identifiable: availability, access, utilization and stability of food. Based on the practical guide of Food Security Information for Action, all four components must be satisfied simultaneously to meet the objectives of food security. Based on FAO (2008) and Simon, (2012) the four components can be delineated as follows: availability of sufficient amount of food which is a function of food production.

1. stability of supply overtime which depends on the ability to preserve/store produced food and supplement available food through imports if necessary
2. access to the available food which depends on income levels and its distribution and
3. food utilization which encompasses procurement, ingestion and digestion all of which are dependent in nutritional quality, education and health (Tollens, 2000).

Food security has a long history as an organizing principle for social and economic development (Maxwell and Frankenberg, 1992). The declared aim of the federal government of Nigeria's agricultural policy for vision 20:20:20 are to:

- attain food security,
- increase production and productivity,
- generate employment and income, and
- expand exports and reduce food imports thereby freeing resources critical infrastructural development and delivery of social services.

The idea of food security was first presented at the world food conference in 1974 and it is viewed solely from the perspective of having adequate availability of food on a national scale. Today, it is a condition in which all people have access at all times to enough food of an adequate nutritional quality for a healthy and active life. (Tollens, 2000). A country is food-secure when majority of its population have access to food of adequate quantity and quality consistent with decent existence at all times (Idachaba, 2004:2). What is implied in this definition is that food must be available to the people to an extent that will meet some acceptable level of nutritional standards in terms of a calorie, protein and minerals which the body needs; the possession of the means by the people to acquire (i.e. access) and reasonable continuity and consistency in its supply (Davies, 2009:4).It should be noted that availability of food alone does not seem sufficient to explain the attainment of food security in a country. Food can be available in a country because of effective agricultural policy; good harvest in a particular year or massive importation of food; or food handout (aid). Food security should not be seen only from the perspective of availability as earlier mentioned either in quantitative or qualitative terms. Food hygiene and safety should also be given important consideration in order to protect the health of the people. Food, for instance, may be available but the source from which the food is produced or processed may be unhygienic or that the chemical substances used to produce or preserve the food may constitute a health hazard. Health and safety consideration therefore becomes important in food production.

In essence, a country should be considered as food-secure when food is not only available in the quantity needed by the population consistent with decent living, but also when the consumption of the food should not pose any health hazard to the citizens (Davies, 2009). Food security refers not only to an adequate aggregate supply of food, but also means that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. This requires not just enough food to go around. It requires that people have ready access to food (Jenkins and Scanlan, 2001). It is in this context that Clover (2003:5) averred that 'no human right has been so frequently and spectacularly violated in recent times as the right to food". Food insecurity is no longer seen simply as a failure of agriculture to produce sufficient food at the national level, but instead as a failure of livelihoods to guarantee access to sufficient food at the household level (Clover, 2003:7).

Challenges to Food Security

Nigeria blessed as it is, with abundant agro-ecological resources and diversity, has become one of the largest food importers in sub-Saharan Africa. (Idachaba, 2009). It is on record that agriculture used to be the most important sector of the Nigerian economy from the standpoint of rural employment, food production and fiber, and export earning prior to the discovery of oil. Agriculture generates employment for about 70% of Nigeria's population and contributes about 40% to the gross domestic product (GDP). The neglect of agriculture due to oil boom has created disillusionment in agricultural activities that has manifested in massive rural-urban migration and this has reduced the output of food per capital, thus making Nigeria one of the least in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

The population of Nigeria is a challenge to meeting the food supply requirement of the nation as Nigeria's population as at 2011 stands at 162 million people and it is expected to be between 230 and 430 million people by 2050. Over 90% of agricultural practices in Nigeria are rain dependent which leaves them to the vagaries of the weather. Most Nigerian farmers are subsistent farmers with small farm holding, and they account for 80% of all farm holdings. Access to high quality and pest resistant seed as well as agrochemicals at reduced rate is a problem. Food production cannot match the population growth which made the population to depend on imported staple food with the attendant effect of rising import bill. Rural-Urban drift by the youths is a challenge to retain them, educate them and employ them productively. Policy somersault, i.e. frequent changes in government policies which results in starting another programme without completing the first one. People's orientation regarding agriculture as a vocation for the illiterate is also a challenge to sustainable food supply as the educated ones do not plant staple foods but for export. Farmers are not well remunerated which discourages people from going into farming. For instance, Nigeria's cassava is being exported to China, yet the effect of the income is not felt by the average farmer. Corruption has been the bane of Nigerian society and agriculture is not left out. Effect of corruption can be felt in the fertilizer contract, River Basin Authorities etc. Climate change is also a challenge facing food supply in Nigeria. This affects the volume of rainfall, temperature changes and often led to extremes in some cases as a result of global warming.

Gender Inequality in Food Security

The term "gender" refers to economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female (UN, 2001). In almost all societies, women and men differ in their activities and undertakings, regarding access to and control over resources, and participating in decision making. Gender participation is a term that describes the roles and activities of males and females according to the traditions and beliefs of a

particular culture (Olagunju, Fakayode, Babatunde, Ogunwole and Olapade (2013). In developing countries like Nigeria, men and women participation in traditional agriculture performing different roles and these roles are gender specific, complementary and reciprocal in natural activities like bush clearing, land preparation, weeding, harvesting, processing and marketing as well (Brearley, 2005). Once the contribution of men and women are taken into account equitably when allocating productive resources, agricultural production can also be on the increase. Women are involved in the production and processing of certain food crops such as sweet potato, cassava, yam etc and are also responsible for weeding, harvesting, transplanting, processing, storage and marketing of their crops (Tewe, Ojeniyi and, Abu (2003) Gender issues have been a topical issue in agricultural research and development, focusing on the differences between sexes in production. According to him, a lot of factors may lead to agricultural productivity differences between men and women in the developing world. Women are often marginalized in their families and their communities, suffering from a lack of access to credit, land, education, decision-making power and rights to work.

Given that gender roles are culture specific, it was observed that in the middle belt region of Nigeria women make ridges and mounds while in the eastern part of the country that is certainly a job for men (Olagunju *et al.,* (2013). Gender differences have implication for farming responsibilities as it influences the farming activities performed. The allocation and distribution of farm incentives are done with gender bias. The fact that women are often involved in household chores gives them little time to receive extension services, unlike their male counterparts (Okonya and Krosche, 2014).

The contribution of women to food security cannot be overlooked. There is a need for access to proper and relevant agricultural information, credit and extension services if food production is to be increased. An understanding of gender differences in accessibility may go a long way in explaining barriers to technology adoption and factors facilitating production. With respect to gender analysis of agricultural productivity, Udemezue (2017) found that the majority of studies conducted from the mid-1980s to 2014s show that female farmers are equally productive as male farmers, once inputs and other background characteristics are controlled. Gender issues in agricultural production have become an important subject of investigation, ever since questions were raised on whether women and men benefit equally from economic development. According to David and Madu (2013) gender analysis is important for the following reasons: to ensure wider impact of gender on household food security and poverty reduction and this implies that we need to understand the social system supporting food production. Little is known about gender roles and responsibilities and its analysis will aid to uncover the unknown and to bridge the strong assumption that men predominate in production and women engage in sales and processing. Gender analysis also helps to know some crops that are gender specific in some locations and gives insight about gender participation on those crops.

Gender inequality causes and is also a result of food insecurity. It is estimated that 60% of global chronically hungry people are women and girls, while 98% of them are from the global south countries (Otaha, 2013). Women face lots of discrimination both in seeking education and job and face similar fate even at home within the household, yet women are mostly responsible for preparing meals and taking care of the children. They in fact, mostly spend all or a good fraction of their income on feeding and their children's needs (WFP, 2003). Gender inequality is one of the primary driving forces of food insecurity because this is the most important concern of people who are denied access or unable to

engage in labor (Otaha, 2013). The vulnerability of women is most pronounced when assessing the effect of food crisis. They constitute the larger ratio of the poverty ridden population especially in Africa. In many parts of the world, when a woman heads a household, they are often more vulnerable to poverty and hunger than a household headed by a man. Where there is no male income earner, negative consequences on overall income are often suffered by the household since women often times lack the ability to command labor within and outside the household. Families headed by widow-are particularly at disadvantaged position (ADB, 2013). The role of women in ensuring adequate land use, as well as food production, processing, distribution and marketing cannot be over emphasized (Otaha, 2013). Unfortunately, women often deprived of access to agricultural assets, inputs and service when compared to men. Analysts, according to Otaha, (2013), have suggested that if women where to have the similar access as men to productive resources, yield would increase by 20% - 30%, boosting the total agricultural output by 2.5% to 4% in developing countries. This gain in production could have lessened the food insecurity status of most developing nations. If gender inequality is minimized and women are given better access to agricultural facilities, achieving food security will be much easier. It has been established over time by raising women's status, poverty will decline nutrition will be enhanced.

Curriculum Implications of Gender Issues in Food Security in Nigeria

Socio-cultural factors, such as family expectations, societal images and gender stereotypes act as key barriers to girls' and women's access to education in general. These were said to restrict access to, progression in, and the type of education that girls and women opt for. Girls are encouraged to take up fields of study which correspond to the stereotypic traditional household roles of women as wives and mothers. These roles are promoted and reinforced by educational institutions and family expectations, and, as a result, the uptake of, and attainment in, sciences in general and agriculture in particular among girls has been low, while enrolment in "softer" subjects is high. Mathematics, science in general, and agriculture in particular, are perceived as masculine disciplines, where women are not expected to possess the physical, mental and social capabilities to succeed, hence are further not expected to obtain as highly remunerative employment as men (Mangheni et al. 2010).

Gender disparities in enrolment in agricultural training courses was as a result of the small numbers of girls who meet requirements for admission in Universities due to fewer numbers of girls taking science subjects in high school. Women's progression to postgraduate degree level is caused by society's expectation that women should marry early, yet the University environment lacks sufficient supportive services for married female students.

Agriculture is associated with poverty, drudgery, remoteness and poor working conditions. There are also perceptions that agricultural careers involve fieldwork in remote communities, which contrast with perceptions that women should not travel in order to be close to their families to facilitate reproductive and household management roles. Female students in agriculture also experience negative attitudes from fellow students, lecturers and family members who question their choice of field, which makes it difficult for them to feel confident and take pride in their studies. Once in higher learning institutions, women are more likely to select courses within agriculture that are perceived to correspond to their gender roles and are more socially conforming, similar to the trends described at the secondary school level. Home Economics, Nutrition and Food Science

and Technology becomes their preferred courses while men are more likely to take Agricultural Engineering or Agronomy (Ibid.).

There is evidence of gender bias in the formal and informal delivery of the curriculum in agricultural higher education. The bias was traced to course content and the learning experiences that often translated into gendered attrition and retention. Classroom practices, course materials and course content reflect the underlying values of institutions and wider society, incorporating gender biases and stereotypes that hinder gender-sensitive learning. Female students receive less experience than male students in some field activities, because of the gender stereotypical view that women do not possess the physical strength or wherewithal to carry out practical tasks, such as inseminating animals or castration (Ibid.). During practical lessons, women are often asked to take notes and record findings, instead of participating in the experiment or the activity itself. It is a disadvantage to women regarding acquisition of practical skills.

Most institutional cultures, including University cultures, are not friendly to women and students from disadvantaged regions. The expression of gender stereotypes and biases are often reflected in institutional behaviour, attitudes and language used by students and staff, which can marginalize women in agricultural training programmes (Ibid.). There are instances where female staff experience gender-based stereotypes and biases during promotion procedures. Female students also feel uncomfortable with inappropriate sexual remarks by male lecturers during class, which are embarrassing. There is also evidence of higher learning institutions displaying intolerant attitudes towards pregnant students or female students who are considered to dress provocatively. This "masculine culture" in higher education creates an insecure environment for women's participation in University life (Ibid.).

Ministries of Education and institutions of higher education should create and strengthen institutional frameworks for gender mainstreaming at national and institutional levels, through development and review of gender policies that are accompanied by effective strategies, monitoring and accountability systems and adequate resources. 2. Ministries of Education, institutions of higher education and other relevant actors to (should) create a conducive and friendly environment for women and girls' education and career advancement at all levels (i.e., adequate infrastructure, curriculum, facilities, teachers, support of practical needs of women/girls, biological and social roles, etc.). 3. Ministries of Education and institutions of higher education to (should) establish mechanisms for continuous awareness-creation for girls, families, communities and teachers to motivate them toward choosing science in school and agricultural careers (Ministerial Communiqué 2010, p. 7).

Formulation of gender policies, coupled with structures and resources for implementation, is a sign of commitment to gender mainstreaming to promote gender justice and manage and prevent gender-based violence, discrimination and injustice (AAU 2006).

Effective institutionalization and implementation of the gender policies requires a robust combination of political will, technical expertise, resources, and a realistic time-frame within which to achieve measurable benchmarks, with specific persons and organs designated for implementation and regular monitoring (AAU 2006).

The objectives of the gender training programme will be as follows: 1. Raise the level of awareness and understanding of gender issues, its related concepts and language; 2. Support changes in attitudes and behavior and, strengthen the vision, capacity and processes needed to build a more gender-responsive organizational culture; and 3. Provide staff, programme/project implementers and grantees with the skills necessary to appropriately ensure the effective integration of gender issues in all stages of the programming and project cycle, thereby broadening mainstreaming efforts:

1. Employing gender-responsive strategies in admissions of graduate students in agricultural training and research. For instance, establish affirmative action quotas for admission of women and other disadvantaged groups for MSc and PhD training.
2. Providing specific scholarships for women and other disadvantaged groups at MSc and PhD levels. Such scholarships would be widely advertised, and efforts would be made to use the media accessed by the disadvantaged groups/regions, so as to attract girls and boys from those regions.
3. Providing extra tickets for female and married students in … training programmes.
4. Training scholarships to cater for gender-specific needs of married students.
5. Developing flexible PhD programmes: Funding should be targeted at encouraging people in the disadvantaged groups (particularly women) to undertake PhD programmes, including female staff at learning institutions. Pilot mainstreaming flexibility in the PhD programmes through allowing more time for completion, electronic correspondence, limited class time, etc. Scholarships for PhD should be linked with personal support through assigning mentors, and with providing administrative, professional and other personal support.
6. Strengthening skills in proposal writing for disadvantaged groups.
7. Supporting participation of women academic staff in Professional Skills Development events, in order for them to be eligible for representation to higher office and become gender sensitive.
8. Advocating for and supporting mentoring programmes for female professional staff.

Therefore, in order to promote gender-responsive graduate training programmes and practices in agricultural education institutions pledges to support mainstreaming of gender in higher education curricula, to ensure that graduates are capable of identifying and addressing gender issues in their work.

2. Advocate for the integration of female-specific issues into the curriculum for higher education in agricultural institutions; and

3. Advocate for all agricultural training institutions to have a course on gender analysis for all students. Laudable as these policy suggestions are, ought to extend these efforts to undergraduate and high school learning environments, which prepare postgraduate students.

CONCLUSIONS

Socio-cultural factors, such as family expectations, societal images and gender stereotypes act as key barriers to girls' and women's access to education in general. These were said to restrict access to, progression in, and the type of education that girls and women opt for. The gender issues in food security in Nigeria and the curriculum implications were addressed. In this paper, the concept of food security and its challenges, gender inequality in food security, their curriculum implications and recommendations were addressed.

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