

Effects of Food Insecurity among Rural Women in Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study was carried out in Agricultural Development Project (ADP) Zones in Kaduna State. The broad objective was to identify the effects of food insecurity among rural women in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Structured questionnaire was administered to 112 women in four Local Government Areas of the State in 2014. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. It was revealed from the results that most (59.8) of the women were within 31-35 years, 94% were married, highest formal education was primary school (51.8%) and 79% were farmers. The effects of food insecurity among women, include: malnutrition, buying of food on credit, lack of food at home and children not going to school. The analysis identified months of most experienced food shortage and identified their coping strategies. It was recommended that to reduce food insecurity among women, there is need to give financial support to the women by both government and NGOs to enable women diversify their economy through small scale business.

Keywords: *Food Security, Food insecurity, Effects, Women, Rural, Coping Strategy*

Introduction

Food security is defined in terms of supply of food ‘‘assuring the availability and price stability of basic foodstuffs at international and national level’’ FAO, (2006). Women play key roles in maintaining all four pillars of food security: as food producers and agricultural entrepreneurs; "gatekeepers" who dedicate their own time, income and decision-making to maintain food and nutritional security of their households and communities; and "managers" of the stability of food supplies in times of economic hardship. Gender inequality is one of the primary driving force 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 (Otaha, 2013). 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 (African Development Bank (ABD), 2013). The role of women in ensuring adequate land use, as well as food production, processing, distribution and marketing cannot be over emphasized. Unfortunately, women are often deprived of access to agricultural assets, inputs and service when compared to men. According to (Otaha, 2013), if women were to have 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.

Food insecurity exists when people are undernourished due to physical unavailability of adequate and safe foods, lack of social or economic access to adequate and poor of utilization (Webb and Rogers, 2003). Food insecurity is also the inability to acquire food in a socially acceptable way (Frongillo et al, 2006). Food insecure people are those individuals whose food intake falls below their minimum calorie (energy) requirements of 2,100 per day (United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2016) Studies have shown a direct relationship between food insecurity and malnutrition (Nalty, 2013; Sean, 2012). Limited income causes people to restrict the number and quality of meals they eat, reduce dietary variety, and look for inexpensively processed food which are usually low in essential nutrients and high in fats with empty calories (Nagataab, 2012; Sharkey, 2012). The Federal Government of Nigeria in collaboration with states and Local Governments as well as external agencies such as World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and African Development Bank (AFDB) has initiated several programmes and projects like the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), National Special Programme on Food Security (NSPFS), National Fadama Development Programme (NFDP) and Root and Tubers Expansion Programmes (RTEP) to mention a few in order to assist farmers by providing enabling environment for their production activities. By sponsoring these

programmes and projects, government and donor agencies aimed to achieve food security by ensuring that all the residents in the country have physical and economic access to sufficient food at all times. Despite these efforts, the food security situation in Nigeria has slightly improved, though the progress is slow (Bonat, 2015). Ironically, the Agricultural Promotion Policy [APP] (2016 - 2020) reveals that the federal government has allocated only 2% of the 2016 capital budget to agriculture. This is the lowest allocation to agricultural sector by the Nigerian government since 1990s. Consequently, in rural communities, training opportunities to improve skills, productivity and livelihoods in agriculture are very few or they focus on programmes that do not prepare women, children and youth for productive work in agriculture (Yakubu, et al 2016).

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 are often victims of hunger. They also have a crucial role to play in defeating hunger. A work of World Food Programme (WFP) (2009) gave some reasons why empowering women is important. It reports that protracted crises undermine food security and nutrition. Women are more likely than men to be affected, and their access to aid can be undermined by gender-based discrimination (FAO, 2014). It also shows that yields for women farmers are 20-30 percent lower than for men. This is because women have less access to improved seeds, fertilizers and equipment (FAO, 2011). In some countries, tradition dictates that women eat last, after all the male members and children have been fed and when a crisis hits, women are generally the first to sacrifice their food consumption in order to protect the food consumption of their families (FAO, 2011). Yakubu (2015) in a study in Kaduna State

found that women, both old and young, were involved in agriculture and they form 65 percent of the production force. They were involved in planting, weeding, sowing, harvesting, processing and marketing of agricultural products. Women's role in agriculture covers all facets of agrobusiness, food production, livestock production, fishing and as well as farm management mirage without well-nourished and healthy people (Akerle, et al, 2013). Food insecurity puts individuals at risk of the use of coping strategies that are either risky or not sustainable. When there is limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in "socially acceptable ways," a variety of coping strategies may be used. These can include withdrawal of children from school, a decrease in the intake of certain foods, the sale of assets to purchase food, theft, or exchange of sex for food or money Weiser, (2007). In his work, Weiser et al (2007) showed that food insecurity was associated with high-risk sexual behavior among women in Botswana and Swaziland. In Lagos, Nigeria, a survey of 320 female commercial sex workers showed that 35% identified poverty and difficulty accessing food daily as their reason for joining that industry Oyefara, (2007). Women's indispensable role in agriculture adds to their quality of life in rural areas. In view of the food shortages that is being experienced in many homes in Nigeria the study tried to identified the effects of food insecurity among rural women and also identified the coping strategies being adopted by the women in Kaduna State.

METHODOLOGY

Study Location

The study was conducted in Kaduna State, located in the Northern Guinea Savannah ecological zone. The State is located between latitudes 9° N and 12°N and longitudes 6°E and 9°E of the prime meridian. It occupies an area of about 48,473.2 square kilometers (FOS, 2006), and had a population of 6,066,562 people (NBS, 2007). The population projection as at 2018 is 8,762,731 at a projected rate of 3.05% per year

(www.population.city/nigeria/adm/kaduna)

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A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for this study. In the first stage, Maigana, Samaru, Birnin Gwari and Lere Agricultural Development Project (ADP) zones were purposively selected. In the second stage, four Local Government Areas were purposively selected. In the third stage, two villages were randomly selected from each of the four LGAs. Lastly, 14% of the women in each of the eight villages selected were randomly selected because the farmers were homogenous in terms of production pattern and this percentage can represent the whole population. A total of 112 women were used for the study. The data required for this study were obtained using structured questionnaire administered in 2014. The design of these instrument was guided by the general and specific objectives of the study. The data were collected by the researcher with the help of trained enumerators (who could speak the local dialect). The data collected included: socio-economic variables such as age, marital status, educational level, period of food shortage and coping strategies. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Results in Table 1 show that majority (59.8%) of the women were 31-35 years. The results supports the findings of Ekong (2003) that most respondents involved in active farming activities were below 50 years and are in their active productive and age. Majority (86.2%) of the women were married. The results show that being married is an attribute that is associated with family responsibilities and the supply of family labour. The results further show that more than half (51.8%) of the women had secondary school education. Education is considered very important in the adoption of new farm practices. About (70.5%) of the women reported farming as their major occupation. Farming is generally the major

occupation of rural areas and also a major source of livelihood.

This shows that yam farmers in the study area were still active and virile and this is expected to influence their production positively.

The very high percentage of the married yam producers could be attributed to the fact that respondents require helping hands to carryout tedious process of yam production. This is also an indication that most farmers depends on family members as cheap source of labour.

The farmer's educational level is expected to have a positive influence on the adoption of improved technologies such as farm mechanization, fertilizer usage, agro-chemical, high yielding seeds variety which should have high potentials to increase farm productivity

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to socio-economic characteristics (n=112)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
	2	
Below 21	43	1.8
21-30	112	38.4
31-35		59.8
Total		100.0
Married	94	86.2
Single	18	13.8
Separated	0	0
Total	112	100.0
Koranic	9	8.0
Primary school	20	17.9
Secondary school	58	51.8
Tertiary	25	22.3
Total	112	100.0
Farming	79	70.5
Civil servant	10	8.9

Business/trading	17	15.2
Artisan	3	2.7
Others	3	2.7
Total	112	100.0

Months of severe food shortage

Results in Table 2 show that women experience serious food shortage at the

months of July to September. At this period all crop are yet to be matured for harvest.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to period of food shortage (n=112)

Period	Frequency	Percentage
January-March	0	0.0
April –June	18	13.8
July –September	94	86.2
Total	112	100

Effects of food insecurity

Results in Table 3 show that food insecurity had some effects on the women ranging

from lack of food, malnutrition, falling sick more often, feeling weak and children not going to school.

Table 3: Distribution of effects of food insecurity on respondents

Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of money	9	8.0
Children don't go to school	31	27.7
Beg for food	5	4.5
No food at home	79	70.5
Malnutrition	54	48.2
Fall sick more often	54	48.2
Feeling weak always	45	40.2
Complications at pregnancy	35	31.3
Buy food on credit	31	27.7

Coping Strategies

The results in Table 4 show that 70.5% of the women reduce the quantity of food consumed in the family, 48.2% reduce the quality of food consumed while 48.2% become laborers in order to provide food for the household as strategies for coping with food insecurity. When food crisis is severe the adults restrict themselves or forgo the entire meals. Also the results show that women sell their personal items, sale livestock and buy food on credit. This findings is in agreement with the findings of Katona *et al.* (2008) which found that when there is limited or uncertain ability to

acquire acceptable foods in “socially acceptable ways” a variety of coping strategies are employed such include a decrease the intake of certain foods, the sale of assets to purchase of food. FAO, 2011 found that when there is food crisis women generally sacrifice their food consumption, in order to protect the food consumption of their families. Uddin, 2012 reported that the marginal farmers in Bangladesh affected by food crisis showed compromising the frequency and amount of food to be the most common coping strategy implemented and nearly 80% of the household primarily preferred borrowing money to circumvent poverty and food insecurity.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to their coping strategies

Coping Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Beg for food	9	8.0
Reduce adult food intake	31	27.7
Skip whole day's meal	5	4.5
Reduce quantity of food being processed	79	70.5
Reduce quality of food eaten	54	48.2
Sale of labour	54	48.2
Sale personal items	45	40.2
Sale livestock	35	31.3
Buy food on credit	31	27.7

CONCLUSION

Food insecurity remains a key public health problem in Kaduna State, with women suffering food shortages for an average of one quarter of the year. The study found that the women were between ages 31-35, majority (94%) were married and 58% had primary school education while 78% had farming as major occupation. From the

findings it was revealed that the women experience serious food shortage at the months of July, August and September. The results further showed that the major effects of food shortage on the women were lack of food, malnutrition, feeling of weakness falling sick more often and complication at pregnancy. Food coping strategies vary from one family to another in terms of frequency, severity. The results show that as coping

strategies the women reduced the quantity and quality of food consumed, sell their labor for income, sale personal belongings, sale livestock, reduce adults food intake and buy food on credit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Support by government, NGOs and other institutions such as microfinance provide financial assistance to women to start small business and establish trading cooperatives as a contribution to food security in the study area.
- ii. To stave off the worst effects of the global food crisis, it's important for all women--not just female farmers--to get better access to land, capital and technology.
- iii. Increased access to productive assets for the poor such as land and water, credit and education, extension and public health services
- iv. A multifaceted approach is needed. This should include both short-term assistance to women with food insecurity, and longer-term development of strategies that will improve livelihoods, address behavioral and coping strategies, and acknowledge the mental health components of food insecurity, and that also attempt to ensure that women have the same economic opportunities, access to land, and economic power as do men.
- v. Small-scale activities such as micro-enterprises throughout the food chain may provide women, in particular, with opportunities for generating income and accessing fresh and nutritious food, thereby facilitating

their integration into urban economic and social life.

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