

Women and Power Transformation in Rural Households in Saki West Local Government Area of Oyo state

Adekoya A. E., O. E. Adelokun and Pipy O. Fawole

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

Rural women contribute significantly to the national economy by their activities in terms of agricultural production, marketing, processing and domestic work. It is ironical that their contribution either have no or minimal part in the decision making power regarding agricultural development and household activities. The study presents the past and current trends in household power sharing in Saki West Local Government Area of Oyo state, Nigeria. Data were collected using structured questionnaires from 140 respondents. Results show that majority of the respondents (69.4%) were within the ages of 35-42years, 45% were illiterates, 51.5% were 15-20years in marriage, while 90.8% had 3-8 household size. The current trend is that women are making decisions on their land, children, when to have sex, and type of family planning to use. Women will be able to have more power with her level of education ($p=0.035$). Number of wives ($p=0.123$) and children ($p= 0.316$) had no effect on power transformation. Changes are occurring in women's economics status since they are in control of their finances and these are impacting their decision making power within household. Women should be empowered educationally and be more enlightened on the need for reduction in child bearing in order to reduce poverty rate.

Keywords: Power transformation, Decision making, Rural women, Rural household

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of gender relations since the beginning of the 20th century is one of the most rapid profound social changes in human history. For more than 7,000 years of human history since settled agricultural early states emerged, male domination has characterized the gender relations in these societies and their successors (Solomon and Adekoya, 2006). Even at the beginning of the 20th century, men and women were generally viewed as occupying sharply different roles in society. A woman's place was in the home as wife and mother; the man's place was in the public sphere. Men had legal powers over the lives of their wives and children and while wife beating was never strictly legal in the United State, its practical legal status was ambiguous and perpetrators of domestic violence rarely punished. In the family, gender roles restrict male participation in domestic chores and child-rearing while limiting women participation in decision making (Siyanbola and Adetowubo, 2004). While both men and women are income earners and agricultural producers, women also process and prepare food, and use their income for their children's benefit (Thomas, 1997). Women also provide the majority of care for their families, take their children to health services, and ensure a healthy environment – the very components of good nutrition (Levin et al,

1999). Yet women make these critical contributions with limited access to necessary resources, to decisions on allocation and use of those resources, and to the derived benefits (Johnson-Welch, 1999).

The gender gap that exists between men and women in rural household is an indicator that has negative impact on the overall development especially as it influences decision making and consequently, activities that may be undertaken on several issues. Women's low decision making power is more pronounced at rural household level especially in the developing countries. Men make decisions like type of house to build, number of children to have and when to have them, education of the children, reproductive health, finance, type of food to eat at home, even when men are talking women must keep quiet and women are not allowed to plant permanent crop. Gender based inequalities deprive women of their basic rights.

In Nigeria, local customs, traditions and tribal laws restriction often limit women to benefit from production initiative like financial incentives, land accessibility and credit, even though they contribute significantly to the national economy by their activities in terms of agricultural production, marketing, processing and domestic work.

Due to the roles of women towards development, promotion of gender equality is now globally accepted as a development strategy for reducing poverty among women and men, improving health, living standard and enhancing efficiency of public investment. Similarly the trite expression that when you educate a woman, you educate a nation has engendered the special attention being given to the women folk across the globe today (Simeh, 2008). Likewise Overseas Development Authority (1994) reported that supporting stronger networks of women will contribute to economic growth, improves child survival and is a helpful to overall family health. The attainment of gender equality is not only seen as an end itself and human right issues, but as prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development (National Gender Policy, 2006).

With the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals by the United Nations in year 2000 more interest has been generated and a better attention paid to the pursuit of gender sensitive policies at both global and national levels. Specifically, the third goal, which is aimed at achieving gender equality and women empowerment, is both of intrinsic value and at the same time at the heart of the attainment of all the other goals (Kelly, 2013).

It is in line with this that the study assessed the role of women in the exercise of power in making strategic household decisions and access to productive resources in the past (before the adoption of MDGs) and present (after the adoption of MDGs) in rural communities of Saki West Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Saki West Local Government Area of Oyo State. Multi stage sampling technique was used in selecting respondents. The first stage involved the purposive selection of seven wards that are noted as rural areas out of eleven wards that made up Saki West LG. The following wards were considered as rural wards; {Igbooro}, {Eko kan}, {Ogidigbo}, {Oke-sebe}, {Okere}, {Sangota}, {Sepeteri}. Three villages were randomly selected from each ward to make a total of 21 villages. Systematic sampling was used to select 20 households from the three villages to give a total of 140 respondents. The target audience was women in rural households in Saki West LGA of Oyo State. Respondents were asked to indicate with yes or no their past and current experiences on decision making in their households. Their

level of satisfaction on decision making in the past and current trend was also determined. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents were Muslims (45.7%), about 38.6.0% were Christians while 15.7% were traditional worshippers. It further reveals that 45% of the respondents had no formal education while 35.7% had primary education. This implies that there is need to introduce adult education for rural women in order to improve their level of education, because high level of illiteracy can be traced to high level of poverty and inability to make decision among rural women in Nigeria. Enete *et.al* (2002) reported that educated women may be more aware of their rights and responsibilities in the household and may be more assertive about them than uneducated ones. . Majority of the women (51.5%) had spent 15 to 20 years in their husband's house while 24.3% had spent 8 to 14 years. Duration of marital union determines the depth of experience and access to decision making in the household. It is also evident in the table that majority of the respondents (51.5%) had 2 to 3 wives in their households which is polygamous household while 24.3% of the respondents were the only wife in their households. The polygamous households have effect on decision making power of individual wife because the most loved wife takes decision that concerns the household. As most rural households in Saki practise polygamy, the respondents have different positions in their households. Also majority of the respondents were first wife (62.1%) while 21.4% of the respondents were second wife. These positions could affect their access to decision making and productive resource in their household. Majority of the respondents had 3-8 children (90.8%) while 4.2% of the respondents had 9-10 children. This is one of the factors facilitating poverty in rural households because when there is little resources and too many children definitely the available resource will not satisfy everyone and this could lead to chronic poverty. It is also observed that majority of the respondents (72.1%) took farming as their primary occupation, while 15.7% engaged in artisanship and about 10.0% engaged in trading.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on personal characteristicsn = 140

Characteristics	Freq	Percentage
Religion		
Christianity	54	38.6
Muslim	64	45.7
Traditional	21	15.7
Education		
No formal education	63	45.0
Primary education	50	35.7
Secondary education	21	15.0
Tertiary education	3	2.1
No response	3	2.1
Length of marriage		
8-14	34	24.3
15-20	70	51.5
21-26	20	14.2
Above 27	16	11.3
Number of wives		
1	34	24.3
2-3	72	51.5
4-5	27	19.3
6-7	6	4.3
No response	1	0.7
Position of wives		
First	87	62.1
Second	30	21.4
Third	15	10.7
Fourth	3	2.1
Fifth	4	2.9
Sixth	1	0.7
Number of children		
1-2	4	2.8
3-4	36	25.7
5-6	54	38.6
7-8	37	26.5
9-10	6	4.3
No response	3	2.1
Primary occupation		
Farming	101	72.1
Trading	14	10.0
Artisan	22	15.7
No response	3	2.1

Past and current trends on power transformation

Table 2a and b compares the past and current trends of decision making powers of rural women in households in Saki West Local Government. Majority of the respondents indicated that decisions on control of family land (82.9%), political party to belong (75.0%), when to visit in-law (66.4%) and finance (47.1%) were made by men in the past while in the current trend as suggested by majority of the respondents, decision on finance (55%) was controlled by the wife. However, decision making on number of children to have (70.0%), when to have sex (59.3%) and when to have children (58.6%) was

agreed on by both man and wife. The study reveals that there is a significant change in the past and current trend as most decisions were made by men in the past while the current trend shows that most decisions were taken by both husband and wife. Past studies have demonstrated that when women’s power is increased, they use it to direct household resources toward improving their caring practices (Thomas, 1997; Kishor, 2000; Smith et al, 2003; Smith and Byron, 2005). This implies that there is likelihood that women’s participation in household decision-making increase the family well being, self-sufficiency and enhance their productivity.

Perception of respondents to power transformation

Table 3 presents data on perception of respondents to power transformation. Result shows that majority of the respondents (63.6%) were satisfied with the control of land, about 70.0% were satisfied with the control of finance and 90.0% were satisfied with the type of family planning they are using. According to current trends which indicate that men are still in charge of land control, women are in charge of their finance, but they both take decisions on type of family planning to adopt. Most women said they were satisfied because husband is the head of family. They depend on the portion of land given to them in their households.

A large proportion of the respondents (65.7%) were satisfied with decision on where to treat children, 75.0% were satisfied with decision on where to treat wife, also majority of the respondents (78.6%) were satisfied with decision on when to have sex. Majority of the respondents (70.7%) were satisfied with decision on number of children to have, 87.9% were satisfied with decision on when to have children, 86.4% were satisfied with decision on children school fees and 78.6% were satisfied with decision on children school. The current trends indicate that they both take decisions on the above and they were satisfied because they can not do it alone without their husband’s idea.

Majority of the respondents (62.9%) were satisfied with decision on political party to belong, 62.1% were satisfied with decision on who to vote for, 90.0% were satisfied with decision on type of house to build and 78.6% were satisfied with decision on payment of house rent. The current trend reveals that it is only husband that determine political party to belong, who to vote for but they both determine type of house to build and payment of house rent.

Majority of the respondents (79.3%) were satisfied with decision on type of crop to plant, 75.7% were satisfied with decision on type of food to eat in the house, also 65.7% were satisfied with decision on when to visit in-law or relatives.

About 55.7% were satisfied with decision on permission to plant permanent crops, 79.3% were satisfied with type of clothes to wear. Also, 75.0% were satisfied with decision on type of friends to associate with.

Table 2a: Distribution of past trends on power transformation

Decisions	Husband		Wife		Both	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Controls of family land	116	82.9	0	0	24	17.1
Finance	66	47.1	62	44.3	12	8.6
Type of family planning	80	57.1	15	10.7	45	32.1
Where to treat children	70	50.0	12	8.6	58	41.4
Where to treat your self	86	61.4	18	12.9	36	25.7
Number of children to have	47	33.6	4	2.9	88	62.9
When to have sex	60	42.9	8	5.7	71	50.7
When to have children	41	29.3	15	10.7	83	59.3
Children school fees	88	62.9	5	3.6	47	33.6
School for children	85	60.7	7	5.0	48	34.3
Political party to belong	105	75.0	10	7.1	25	17.9
Who to vote for	98	70.0	10	7.1	32	22.9
Type of house to build	77	55.0	4	2.9	59	31.4
Payment of house rent	87	62.1	3	2.1	44	31.4
Type of crop to plant	81	57.9	8	5.7	49	35.0
Type of food to eat	76	54.3	17	12.1	45	32.1
Visit in-law or relatives	93	66.4	16	11.4	30	21.4
Planting of permanent crops	112	80.0	2	1.4	26	18.6
Type of clothes to wear	67	47.9	28	20.0	45	32.1
Type of friends to associate with	83	59.3	21	15.0	36	25.7

Table 2b: Distribution of current trends on power transformation

Decisions	Husband		Wife		Both	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Controls of family land	101	72.1	7	5.0	32	22.9
Controls of finance	47	33.6	77	55.0	16	11.4
Type of family planning	29	20.7	48	34.3	63	45.0
Where to treat children	50	35.7	24	17.1	65	46.4
Where to treat your self	49	35.0	32	22.9	54	38.6
Number of children to have	30	21.4	11	7.9	98	70.0
When to have sex	47	33.6	10	7.1	83	59.3
When to have children	22	15.7	35	25.0	82	58.6
Children school fees	58	41.4	16	11.4	65	46.4
School for children	52	37.1	10	7.1	75	53.6
Political party to belong	79	56.4	14	10.0	43	30.7
Who to vote for	75	53.6	19	13.6	42	30.0
Type of house to build	55	39.3	8	5.7	77	55.0
Payment of house rent	59	42.1	8	5.7	67	47.9
Type of crop to plant	40	28.6	44	31.4	55	39.3
Type of food to eat	36	25.7	42	30.0	57	40.7
Visit in-law or relatives	56	40.0	35	25.0	46	32.9
Planting of permanent crops	97	69.3	13	9.3	30	21.4
Type of clothes to wear	37	26.4	58	41.4	45	32.1
Type of friends to associate with	50	35.7	51	36.4	39	27.9

Table 3: Perception of respondents to power transformation

Decisions	Satisfied		Undecided		Unsatisfied	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Controls of family land	89	63.6	1	0.7	50	35.7
Controls of finance	96	70.0	3	2.1	39	27.9
Type of family planning	126	90.0	5	3.5	9	6.4
Where to treat children	92	65.7	9	6.4	39	27.9
Where to treat your self	105	75.0	17	12.1	18	12.9
Number of children to have	99	70.7	21	15.0	20	14.0
When to have sex	110	78.6	4	2.9	26	18.6
When to have children	123	87.9	1	0.7	16	11.4
Children school fees	121	86.4	5	3.6	14	10.0
School for children	110	78.6	2	1.4	28	20.0
Political party to belong	88	62.9	12	8.6	40	28.8
Who to vote for	87	62.1	15	10.7	38	27.1
Type of house to build	126	90.0	4	2.9	10	7.1
Payment of house rent	110	78.6	4	2.9	24	17.1
Type of crop to plant	111	79.3	6	4.3	21	15.0
Type of food to eat	108	75.7	10	7.1	24	17.1
When to visit in-law or relatives	92	65.7	7	5.0	41	29.3
Planting of permanent crops	78	55.7	6	4.3	55	39.3
Type of clothes to wear	111	79.3	4	2.9	25	17.9
Type of friends to associate with	105	75.0	11	7.9	24	17.1

Test of hypotheses

Relationship between the personal characteristics of the women and power transformation

From table 4a, the chi-square analysis indicates that in the past trend education and religion do not have influence on power transformation while there is significant relationship between education and power transformation in the current trend as revealed in

table 4b. This implies that education has effect on decision making power because the more educated a woman is in her household, the more likely she makes reasonable decision and contribution to the home. Education increases the upward socio-economic mobility of women; creates an opportunity for them to work outside the home; and enhances husband-wife communication.

Table 4a: Past Index Category

Variables	χ^2	Df	p-value	Remark	Decision
Religion	4.079	4	0.317	NS	Accept
Education	10.772	6	0.070	NS	Accept

Table 4b: Present Index Category

Variables	χ^2	Df	p-value	Remark	Decision
Religion	6.516	4	0.156	NS	Accept
Education	11.494	6	0.035	S	Reject

Pearson analysis on personal characteristics and power transformation

The result of PPMC analysis of personal characteristics of rural women and power transformation in table 6a showed that there is significant relationship between number of wives, number of children and power transformation in the past, this implies that number of wives, position of wife and number of children were very important and it determines the decision making power of the woman. The study agrees with the

findings of Adekoya (2006) in which number of wives in the household contributes significantly to her participation in decisions on the number of children to have. The result in table 6b showed that there is no significant relationship between number of wives and power transformation in the current trend, so also the number of children and power transformation. This implies that the number of wives and number of children do not have effect on power transformation.

Table 6a: Past Power Index

Variable	r-value	p-value	Remark	Decision
Wives	-0.257	0.002	S	Rejected
Children	-0.154	0.031	S	Rejected

Table 6b: Current power index

Variable	r-value	p-value	Remark	Decision
Wives	0.131	0.123	Ns	Accepted
Children	0.086	0.316	Ns	Accepted

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study compared the past and current trends of decision making power of women in rural households. It establishes that there are changes between the past and current decision making power of women. The current trends revealed that women are satisfied with the decision making power in their households indicating that decision making power of women has increased. It is clear that changes are occurring in women's economics status since they are in control of their finances and these are impacting their decision making power within household. The intra-household relationships are being reshaped and redefined. Nevertheless, men are still in control of some decisions and they are the heads of households and major decision makers.

The following recommendations are made from the findings of the study.

- The adult literacy class should be taken more serious in the rural area especially among the rural women because the level of education of a woman will determine the level her decision making power in her household.
- There should be improvement in women's access to basic economic resources such as land and they should be allow to plant permanent crops especially cash crops.
- Empowering rural women to have more access in decision making that relate to politics, also, women should be allowed to vote for any aspirant of their choices. Husbands should not dictate political party to belong and who to vote for.

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