

Gender differentials of participation in political activities among farming households in Oke-Ogun region of Oyo state, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated gender differentials of participating in political activities among farming households in Oke - Ogun region of Oyo state. In all, a total of 135 farming households were sampled, with 54 female-headed households and 81 male-headed households sampled using multi-stage sampling procedure. Data was analysed using percentages, mean, correlational analysis and t-test at 5% level of significance. There was marginal difference in the prominent political activities participated in by both male and female respondents, these activities were voting during elections ($\bar{x}= 1.37$, $\bar{x}= 0.90$), registering under a political party ($\bar{x}= 0.73$, $\bar{x}= 0.55$), sponsoring and supporting candidates ($\bar{x}= 0.58$, $\bar{x}= 0.55$). The male respondents identified engagement of community members in politics ($\bar{x}= 1.89$) and the ability to serve as pressure groups ($\bar{x}= 1.43$), while the female respondents identified that the present system accommodates female engagement in governance at local, state and/or national level ($\bar{x}= 2.36$) as factors motivating participation in political activities. There was favourable perception of politics by male (74.1%) and female (59.3%) gender. Inverse relationship ($r= -0.216$, $p=0.014$) was established between limitations to participation in political activities for the female respondents. Significant difference ($t= 21.784$, $p= 0.000$) was established in participation in political activities across gender. In view of the foregoing, the study recommends gender peculiarity in the design of political activities in a bid to accommodate and enhance gender participation.

Keywords: Farming households; Gender differentials; Participation in political activities and Oke-Ogun region.

INTRODUCTION

Political participation is significant in rural communities as it provides rural dwellers with the opportunity to express their views and concerns. Rural communities face unique challenges such as access to healthcare, education, and infrastructure, and political participation provides them with the opportunity to voice their concerns and influence policy decisions (Ezeibe & Anoliefo, 2018). Political participation also promotes civic engagement, social capital, and community development, which are essential for the development of rural communities (Barreto *et al.*, 2014). One significant impact of political participation on rural development is the ability to influence local policies and decision-making processes. Through political participation, rural residents can advocate for their interests and push for policies that support local economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social justice. For example, in India, rural communities have used their collective political power to influence government policies and secure better access to resources such as water, electricity, and education (Roy & Bose, 2018).

According to the United Nations, more than half of the world's population lives in rural areas, with the majority residing in developing countries (UNDP, 2019). Rural dwellers, particularly in developing countries, face several challenges that can hinder their

participation in political activities. The rural people are either predominantly illiterate or have low educational levels and are ignorant of new ways of improving their lives. Factors such as poverty, ignorance, disease, high rate of illiteracy and lack of basic infrastructure keep rural people stagnant (Naveed and Anwar, 2014). However, despite these challenges, rural dwellers have demonstrated a keen interest in political activities, considering that they have significant impact on rural development.

Collaboration and partnership among different stakeholders, including government officials, non-profit organizations, and community members, can promote political participation in rural areas. Collaboration can help to build trust, share resources and expertise, and leverage collective power for positive change. For example, in India, the Rural Communities Program brings together government, non-profit organizations, and community members to develop and implement community-driven development initiatives (Swain & Wallentin 2016). Furthermore, the engagement of communities in civic activities is identified as a potent tool for promoting political participation in rural areas. These activities can help to build social capital, increase community cohesion, and mobilize rural residents around shared interests and goals. Community engagement in civic activities can also help to identify and address local

issues that may be overlooked by mainstream political processes (McMahon & Wilson, 2019).

Female inhabitants in rural areas may have limited access to political information, such as candidate platforms, policy proposals, and voting procedures, due to limited access to technology, media, and civic education programs (Hogg & Gilmour, 2017). In contrast, their male counterparts are more inclined to have more access to political information, as they have more resources and opportunities to engage in political activities. Furthermore, social networks and community norms have been found to differ in their influence on political participation. In rural areas, social networks may be more homogeneous and exclusive, which may limit political participation for marginalised groups (Swain & Wallentin, 2016). The findings above portends that there will be significant variations in political participation in rural areas across gender lines.

Moreover, community norms may be more conservative and traditional in rural areas, but their effect across gender lines varies in principle and practice. The roles played by women are often underrepresented in political processes in rural areas, yet they represent a significant portion of the population. The active engagement of women in political activities, such as voter registration drives, leadership development programs, and community organising, can increase their participation and representation in decision-making processes (Batliwala & Pittman, 2017). Moreover, it is essential to engage marginalized groups and create more opportunities for political participation to promote equity and inclusivity in the political process. Acknowledging that political participation is an important aspect of democracy and understanding the similarities and differences between male and female respondents in its activities can help to promote more equitable and inclusive political processes.

Recently, policy initiatives, advocacy campaigns, and academic research have increased interest and prompted participation in political activities in rural areas. However, research has not shed light on the dichotomy that exists in political participation across genders. In reference to the foregoing and in a bid to examine the issues identified, the study conceived the following objectives:

- (i) assess participation in political activities across gender;
- (ii) identify factors motivating participation in political activities across gender;
- (iii) determine the limitations to participation in political activities across gender;
- (iv) assess the perception of politics and its activities across gender.

Hypotheses of the study

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between factors motivating participation in political activities and participation in political activities across genders.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between limitations to participation in political activities and participation in political activities across genders.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between perception of political activities and participation in political activities across genders.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in participation in political activities across genders.

METHODOLOGY

Oke-ogun region of Oyo State is the study area. It is one of the five geo-political regions in Oyo State; others are, Ibarapa, Ogbomoso, Oyo, and Ibadan. It covers an area of about sixty-three percent of the total landmass (15, 193,320 km²) of the state. It is located within latitude 7070' and 90' N and longitude 2060' E to 4020' E. The vegetation prominent is derived savanna with a rainfall range between 25°C – 37°C. The area is endowed with a wide expanse of fertile land suitable for the cultivation of yam, millet, guinea corn, cassava, cowpea, maize, sorghum, etc. The population of the area comprises ten (10) local government areas, they are: Itesiwaju, Atisbo, Saki East, Saki West, Iseyin, kajola, Iwajowa Oorelope, Irepo and Olorunsogo.

The target population of the study was all farming households in the Oke-Ogun region of Oyo State. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used in the selection of sample subjects for this study. In the first stage, there was a purposive sampling of 50% of the Local Government Areas in the region owing to the presence of more farm clusters. The second stage involved the sampling of fifty percent of the communities in the farm clusters under the local government areas earlier sampled. In the third stage, the listing of female and male-headed households in the communities sampled was carried out. The final stage involved the use of a proportionate sampling technique to sample thirty percent of the households generated in the previous stage of the sampling procedure. In all, a total of 135 farming households were sampled, with fifty-four (54) of the farming households representing the female respondents.

Variables assessed were participation in political activities, factors motivating participation in political activities across genders, limitations to participation in political activities across genders, and respondents' perception of politics and its activities across genders. Participation in political activities was measured by presenting a set of activities that reflect participation in politics. The extent of participation was operationalized as do not participate, passively

participate, and actively participate. Scores assigned were 0, 1, and 2, respectively. The average weighted mean was used to isolate the political activities they participated in from the pool of the political activities provided. Factors motivating participation in political activities were determined by presenting respondents with plausible factors that could motivate their participation in political activities. Respondents had response options of not being considered, moderately considered, and fully considered as a motivating factor. Scores of 0, 1, and 2 were assigned, respectively.

The average weighted mean value was used to isolate the political activities they participated in from the pool of the political activities provided. The limitation to participation in political activities was elicited by presenting some identified factors that act as limitations to participation in political activities. Respondents adjudged these limitations from the set of response options of not a limitation, moderate limitation, severe limitation, and very severe limitation with scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3 assigned, respectively. The average weighted mean value was used to identify the limitations to participation in political activities. The perception of the respondents of political activities was elicited by presenting a set of questions (positive and negative) that reflect their perception of politics and its activities. A Likert-type scale strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree were response options presented. The perception index was generated from the pooled score. Using the mean value, perception was categorized as favourable or unfavourable. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 25 analytical software at a 5% level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Participation in political activities

Data presented in Table 1 reveals that voting during elections ($\bar{x}= 1.37$), registering under a political party

($\bar{x}= 0.73$), sponsoring and supporting candidates ($\bar{x}= 0.58$), and canvassing for people to register with a political party ($\bar{x}= 0.57$) were political activities that were participated in by the male respondents, while the female respondents identified voting during elections ($\bar{x}= 0.90$), registering with a political party ($\bar{x}= 0.55$), and sponsoring, and supporting candidates ($\bar{x}= 0.55$) were the political activities they participated in. The statistics above show that there is a marginal difference in the activities participated in by both male and female. It further reflects that there is a shift from the norm to a noticeable involvement and participation in political activities irrespective of gender. It is established that involvement in political activities includes voting during elections. Voting during elections is considered a crux in political participation as most political activities intend to achieve this, it is regarded as a common form of political participation. This view is consistent with the assertion of Holt and Stokes (2016) that voting behavior is one of the common forms of political participation in rural areas.

It is also expressed that participating in political activities transcends voting during elections to include having a stake as members of registered political parties. This guarantees identity and shows an affinity for the process and procedure. This notion is supported by Ryan and Niedzwiecki (2013), having a sense of identity and belongingness are core objectives that are provided by party membership of political parties. Sponsoring and supporting candidates is also a noticeable index of participation in political activities by both genders. These activities reveal sufficient commitment of resources (time, money, material, etc.) to enhancing the emergence of their preferred candidates during elections. However, the distinguishing index was canvassing that people get registered with a political party by the male respondents. Their ability to meet the demands associated with this activity is responsible for this. It suffices that the female may not have ample time to commit to this activity owing to family commitments compared to the male.

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by their participation in political activities

Political activities	Male (Weighted mean)	Female (Weighted mean)
Registering under a political party	0.73*	0.55*
Contest for elective positions	0.24	0.17
Vote during elections	1.37*	0.90*
Sponsoring and supporting candidates seeking for elective positions	0.58*	0.55*
Draft petitions or protest letters against a competitor	0.21	0.18
Campaigning and political rallies	0.26	0.27
Canvassing for people to register with a political party.	0.57*	0.27
	*≥ 0.55 (Weighted mean average)	*≥ 0.41 (Weighted mean average)

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Motivating factors for participating in political activities

Data, as shown in Table 2, reveals that religious organisations, mobilisation strategies adopted by political parties, an opportunity to effect change in the community, and transparency of the stakeholders were factors motivating participation in political activities that were common to both male (\bar{x} = 1.79, \bar{x} = 1.42, \bar{x} = 1.42 and \bar{x} = 1.52) and female (\bar{x} = 2.18, \bar{x} = 2.64, \bar{x} = 2.09 and \bar{x} = 2.09) genders, respectively. However, the male respondents identified the engagement of community members in politics (\bar{x} = 1.89) and ability to serve as pressure groups (\bar{x} = 1.43) as factors motivating participation in political activities, while the female respondents identified that the present system accommodates female engagement in governance at local, state and/or national levels (\bar{x} = 2.36). It is acknowledged that religious organisations serve as agents of social engineering and are instrumental in the actualisation of social change. These organisations serve as legitimisers of change-induced activities. Political activities are one of the avenues of government through which increased consciousness and acceptance is being reflected through religious platforms. This serves as a source of motivation irrespective of their gender. The penetration of internet connectivity has further widened the span of reach for the persistent presentation of information on political activities. With this, prospective participants of political activities are kept abreast of political activities. This includes but not limited to the form of activities to take place, time, venue, and agenda among others. All these foster participation in political activities irrespective of gender.

The viewing of participation in political activities as an opportunity to effect change further strengthens the resolve of both genders to engage in these activities. Through participation, their interest in these activities and the influence they exert will be increased. By this, they are further guided on the procedures to adopt and the processes to follow to make their interest known and have it addressed. The challenges faced by rural communities are enormous, ranging from healthcare, education, and infrastructure, however, through active political engagements they have ample opportunity to voice their concerns and influence policy decisions (Ezeibe & Anoliefo 2018). Transparency in political activities and its attendant processes will shape the

thoughts of the participants as trust in the former will be strengthened. Through transparent activities and processes, resources (material, human financial, etc.) will be committed to the course of these political activities. With this, inclusion and ownership which are instrumental to sustaining these activities will be put to productive use in attaining development. Political participation also promotes civic engagement, social capital, and community development, which are essential for the development of rural communities (Barreto *et al.*, 2014).

The community members' engagement in political activities spurs others to take up the process. Acknowledging that community members' engagement in political activities serves as legitimiser of these activities, hence fostering acceptance and giving credence to them. With this in place, other members of the community who were hitherto indifferent, will have a change of thought, lend their voice, resources and be positive about their sustained engagement in political activities. Through this, other members of the community will have detailed information on the direction and dynamics of these activities, thereby giving room for others to subscribe to them. With the frequent flow of information among the citizenry, the acquisition of knowledge is guaranteed, and this is likely to enhance participation in political activities (Ezeibe & Anoliefo). Ascribing the ability to serve as a pressure group as a motivation for participation by the male attests that it is only through participation that there can be active engagement. By this, they can have a voice that will reflect their interest and convey the same to policymakers. Through active participation, stakeholders' interest is aroused, ability to influence and effect change is further increased.

On the other hand, the female gave credence to the present system increasingly accommodating female engagement in governance at the local, state, and/or national level. The increased consciousness to engage women in governance at all levels and the practical reflection of such engagement across various strata and levels of governance is having a multiplier effect on participation in political activities by the female. It further establishes that the promises of increased inclusion of women in governance have been matched with actions. Because of this, the female is motivated to sustain their participation in political activities.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by the factors motivating factors for participation in political activities

Motivating factors for participation in political activities	Male (Weighted mean)	Female (Weighted mean)
Political activities are becoming more is transparent	1.10	1.90
Less cumbersome nature of political activities	1.05	1.54
Attainment of career goals	1.21	1.63
Engagement of community members in politics	1.89*	2.00
Religious organizations	1.79*	2.18*
Mobilization strategies adopted by political parties	1.42*	2.64*
Opportunity to effect change in our community	1.42*	2.09*
Transparency of the stakeholders	1.58*	2.09*
The present system accommodates female engagement in governance at local, state and/or national level	1.26	2.36*
Ability to serve pressure group	1.43*	1.74
	*\geq 1.42	*\geq 2.10 (Weighted mean average)

Source: Field Survey: 2023

Perception of politics and political activities

Data in Table 3 reveals that a significant proportion (74.1%) of the males had a favourable perception of politics and political activities. Similarly, a notable proportion (59.3%) of the females also had a favourable perception of politics and political activities. The favourable perception across genders can be ascribed to the increasing awareness and acknowledgment of the role and influence of participation in politics and governance. This includes the following but is not limited to government policies, reforms, and societal transformation. The pattern and dynamics with which these activities are run are also plausible reasons for the favourable disposition of

perception recorded. Recently, the clamour to shun violence which has characterized politics and political activities in the past is a major objection that most political parties and their stakeholders are upholding. Furthermore, the increased inclusion and the reflection of the thoughts and demands of the populace can also be ascribed as a reason for the favourable perception of rural households to politics and political activities across genders. Political instability along with failed promises on the part of the political class have made political participation in rural areas a more dramatic issue of concern for both scholars and technocrats, until recently where social inclusion is reshaping the narrative (Ojo, 2014).

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by their perception of politics and political activities

	Favourable f (%)	Unfavourable f (%)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Male	60 (74.1)	21 (25.9)	26	68	54	5.8
Female	32 (59.3)	22 (40.7)				

Source: Field Survey: 2023. F= Frequency, % = percentage

Limitation to participation in political activities

Data presented in Table 4 reveals that there are distinctions across genders concerning the limitations to participation in political activities. Inadequate financial resources (\bar{x} = 1.63), poor governance (\bar{x} = 1.74), and disapproval by spouses were identified as limitations peculiar to the male respondents. The female respondents identified alienation from some of the activities by stakeholders (\bar{x} = 2.55), poor access to information (\bar{x} = 1.99), lack of ideology by the political parties (\bar{x} = 2.27), inability to keep to terms of agreement at local, state and/or national level and cultural convictions (\bar{x} = 2.09). However,

comparatively both male and female identified long hours of political activities (\bar{x} = 2.11, \bar{x} = 2.00) and long distance to venue of meetings (\bar{x} = 1.97, \bar{x} = 2.04) as limitations to participation in political activities. Engagement in political activities comes with some commitments and demands, among them is financial resource. This resource is utilised for the execution of the schedule of activities outlined by the political parties and their allied institutions, hence the inability to make these resources available is a potential drawback to participation by the male gender. According to a study by Smale and Amanor-Boadu (2015), rural communities often lack the resources and funding needed to support political campaigns and

participate in political activities. This can limit their ability to advocate for their interests and influence local policies.

The inability of the government to match words with actions by keeping to the promises made to the populace is considered a huge impediment to participation as ascribed by the male. This is observed in poor governance across the three tiers of government which include but are not limited to weak economic indices, infrastructural deficit, and poor service delivery by government agencies, parastatals, and institutions. Considering that there are impediments in the nature and dynamics of political activities, engaging in them comes with some risks. Because of this, disapproval by spouse was also considered as an impediment to participation in political activities by the male. Without appropriate support from spouses, the active engagement of the male in political activities will be hindered as full attention to these activities and the commensurate commitment to them is not guaranteed.

On the other hand, their alienation from some of the activities by stakeholders will give room for exclusion, and the attention of the females will waver. This will further lead to passive participation in political activities as mobilization and utilisation of resources (human, material financial, etc.) that will portray and reflect a commitment to the course of these activities will be withdrawn. Furthermore, this will breed rancor among the members, which will further weaken and threaten the cohesion of political groups. Poor access to information concerning these political activities leads to distortion of thoughts by the members of the populace. With this in place, the female will generally perceive that they are excluded in the scheme of things. Denying them access to vital information will

further shrink their sense of belonging. A transparent and democratic political system encourages political participation among rural dwellers (Martin and Zachary, 2023).

The lack of ideologies and inability to keep to the terms of the parties in government are huge setbacks as the tendency to renew commitment is further weakened by such practice. With this, they will not place a premium on these political activities nor will they take part in them. Respect for culture plays a huge role in the participation in political activities by the female. Premium is placed on cultural values, hence the female holds these convictions dear to their hearts and as such will not engage in practices that negate their convictions. This view is consistent with the finding of Martin and Zachary (2023) that women are less likely to participate in political activities than men due to cultural and social barriers. The attention required of its members by political parties is huge, hence it serves as a setback to effective participation in political activities. It is acknowledged that most rural households are engaged in on-farm and off-farm activities as their primary income-generating source, hence they cannot afford the luxury of time demanded by these political activities, hence further acting as a limitation to their participation in these activities.

Notably, political activities are conducted across locations that may not fall within the catchment area of the participant, with this in place, extra cost is incurred by the prospective participant. This further hinders commitment and threatens participation in these political activities. According to a study by Pilon and Kestila-Kekkonen (2018), distance can also increase the cost of political participation for rural residents, making it harder for them to attend events and engage with political parties and organizations.

Table 4: Limitation to participation in political activities

Limitations	Male (WM)	Female (WM)
Alienation from some of the activities by stakeholders	1.05	2.55*
Lack of trust for principals of political parties	1.32	1.36
Inadequate financial resources	1.63*	1.73
Poor access to information	1.22	1.99*
Poor governance experienced	1.74*	1.45
Lack of ideology by the political parties	1.32	2.27*
Long hours of political activities	2.11*	2.00*
Most political party activities are gender insensitive	1.33	1.73
Alienation from some of the activities by stakeholders	1.22	2.55*
Disapproval by spousal	1.78*	1.55
Inability to keep to terms of agreement at local, state and/or national level	1.39	2.09*
Cultural convictions	1.28	2.09*
Long distance to venue of meetings	1.97*	2.04*
	*≥ 1.49 (Weighted mean average)	*≥ 1.95 (Weighted mean average)

Source: Field Survey: 2023

Hypothesis

Table 5a reveals that factors motivating participation in political activities had a positive and significant relationship with participation in political activities for males ($r=0.460$, $p=0.041$) and females ($r= 2.113$, $p=0.003$). The table also reflect that perception of politics, and its activities was significantly related to participation in political activities for both male ($r=0.614$, $p=0.000$) and female ($r=0.614$, $p=0.000$) respondents. However, an inverse relationship ($r= -0.216$, $p=0.014$) was established between limitations to participation in political activities for the female respondents. It is appreciated that certain indices drive both the males and females to partake in political activities. This spans from personal benefits and group benefits to community benefits. This depicts that these motivating factors have prominence and are ingredients to effective and efficient participation in political activities. Agreeably, the disposition of the genders towards a course will reflect the attention and commitment given. The favourable perception

ascribed to politics and political activities must have shaped the thoughts of the farming household toward participating in political activities. The favourable perception further drives the commitment of time, material, and other resources to enhance effective and efficient participation in political activities. An increase in limitations to participation in political activities will inhibit the female from participating in political activities. Conversely, these limitations are of no effect on the participation in political activities by the male respondents Suffice that they are likely to overcome these limitations to participate in these political activities.

Furthermore, Table 5b reveal that a significant difference ($t= 21.784$, $p= 0.000$) existed between the male and female respondents in their participation in political activities. This infers that there are variations in the extent to which both genders get engaged in political activities. The limitations ascribed to participation in political activities among other facts can be ascribed to the variation experienced.

Table 5a: Relationship between isolated variables and participation in political activities

Variable	Male		Female	
	r	p	r	p
Factors motivating participation in political activities	0.460	0.041	2.113	0.003
Limitations to participation in political activities	0.321	0.584	-0.216	0.014
Perception of politics and its activities	0.614	0.000	0.423	0.000

r: correlation coefficient, p: probability

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 5b: Test of difference in participation in political activities across genders

	Mean	df	p-value
Participation in political activities	21.784	134	0.000

df: Degree of freedom

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that there was a difference in political activities participated in by both male and female respondents. The engagement of community members in politics and their ability to serve as pressure groups are factors that motivate the male respondents to participate in political activities, while the female respondents identified that the present system accommodates female engagement in governance at the local, state, and/or national level as a prominent factor that motivates their participation in political activities. Both male and female respondents had favorable perceptions of politics and political activities. Inadequate financial resources, poor governance, and disapproval by spouses were identified as limitations to participating in political activities peculiar to the male respondents, while the female respondents identified alienation from some of the activities by stakeholders, poor access to

information, a lack of ideology by political parties, the inability to keep to terms of agreement at the local, state, and/or national level, and cultural convictions. Participation in political activities was significantly different by gender. In view of the foregoing, the study recommends considering gender peculiarities when designing political activities to engage in and accommodate gender mainstreaming across its activities.

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