
Women Land Ownership and Participation in Decision Making About Housing Development in Oyo South-West Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *Despite the cultural challenges hindering women from ownership of land, they have continue to play a vital role in Nations building by providing shelter for the family and utilization of land resources. This study examined various issues affecting the effective participation of women in land ownership and housing development in Oyo town with the aim of addressing this numerous challenges. To research employed both descriptive and analytic techniques, these were used through the use of questionnaire survey using a case study approach, reliable data and information were gathered which provide strategic overview of the various land right and housing challenges that confronts women in this particular study area. It was discovered that that majorities of the constrain and challenges against women is centered on the traditional believes and custom practices of the people of Oyo, lack of finance as well as illiteracy. The study concluded by recommending that women be given access to land and suggested that certain cultural issues affecting their right or access to land be removed.*

KEYWORDS: accessibility, land, land tenure, woman right, housing development

INTRODUCTION

Land has been identified to be a source of power, pride, dignity, prosperity and commodity. Beside labor and capital, land is the most important factor of production as it offers space for every economic activity. Land has been considered has the major asset that reflect economic security and social prestige of individuals and families in many of the African countries (Bhaumik, Dimova & Gang, 2016). In sub-Saharan-Africa, land matters have always been a complex issue due to various factors such as historical, gender, geographical, socio-economic, political and cultural (Cotula, Toulumin & Hesse, 2004). Among others, gender issues in land ownership and participation has remained a critical factor affecting housing developmental decision in developing countries.

In developing countries such as Nigeria, women have been identified as major consumer of land services and housing developments (Filani & Asiyanbola, 2008). Sida (2015) asserted that women constitute 43 percent of agricultural land user. However, despite their involvement, their land ownership right has always been restricted by culture, land laws and gender issues

among others. Daley, Flower, Miggiano and Pallas (2013) asserted that women have most disadvantaged due to several issues of inequalities which are enshrined in discriminating laws, customs and practices. In many countries and regions of Sub-Saharan African, women's rights to land and the incidence of exercising rights have been eroded over time, Adegoke, Adegoke and Oyedele, (2016).

Women land right has been limited by the land tenure system in Nigeria, in some part of the country, women only have secondary rights to land. Their right to land usage is granted through either husband, brother or son (Kameri -Mbote, 2005). This implies that access to land is male dominated. According to Asiyanbola, (2012) local perspective is that decisions on housing development are male dominated. This assertion indicates that women are yet to take delivery of their economic autonomy in land and housing decision making process among the socio-economic classes. It is therefore crucial to establish the fact that right to property and land entitlement will be a tool for women empowerment and a march out of poverty (Basnet, 2011).

Women's land rights are fundamental to municipal growth and development (USAID 2016). The continual effort of women in producing and sustaining shelter reflect the importance of housing in their life. Housing activism by women is closely related to the braking of traditional limitations on women and a reflection of a paradigm-shift in societal structures and social norms, especially in the sub-Saharan Africa where women experience some form of oppressive conditions which place distinct limits on their activities (Basol & Morlan, 1993). Some religious and cultural laws in Nigeria also aids gender segregation and then, discrimination often set in, which then limit the roles of women in society. Inspite of the setbacks and a bit to enforce their fundamental right on access to land, women have used both legal and traditional systems to negotiate and mediate their claims to land. Massay, (2020).

George *et al* (2014), stated that Inspite of various land policies that prescribe rights to land in modern society, women remain marginalized in access to and economic utilization of land, despite their massive engagement in agriculture (above 80 percent of farmers in Africa are women).

From the foregoing, women access to land and security of tenure are key factors to be considered in order to achieve economic growth in Nigeria. This study seeks to investigate women land ownership and participation in decision making about housing development in Oyo, South-Western state of Nigeria with a view to identifying ways how there can be increased access to land by the women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, land and land rights are sensitive subject matter that have generated so much concerns in terms of emotional, spiritual and natural believes from the creation of man and the birth of civilization to the industrial revolution era. Land right stimulates efficient use of land resources as it increases the long-term investment in land management and production. In most developing countries Land rights are governed by ambiguous rules and regulations which lead to lack of security of tenure and impaired policy implementation. These have in turn affected millions of people across the world especially women (Benschop, 2004). However, the

disparities between male and female gender in land rights distribution still remain significant and have become apparent from various submissions that women have lower access to land than men and that men feature centrally in the hierarchy of land control (Wanyeki, 2003; Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003; Mabogunje, 2002). Women are systematically deprived of decision-making powers, control over how and when to use the land on which they work and risk losing land entitlements in cases of divorce, widowhood and husband's migration (Aluko & Amidu, 2006). The UN-Habitat agenda's (2003) position is that access to land is a strategic prerequisite for the progressive integration of the urban poor, income generation, food production, obtaining credit facilities and overall economic stability of any country. A number of factors underpin this inequality that women experience such as discriminatory customary and religious laws, ineffective land laws, lack of land policies implementations and a high level of illiteracy (Grown et al, 2005).

In Nigeria the Land Use Act of 1978 is the law currently guiding land administration and Section 1 of The Act vested all land in the territory of each State (except land vested in the Federal Government or its Agencies) solely in the Governor of the State who would hold such land in trust for the people. The Land Use Act did not specifically address the issue of men and women rights in accessing land however section 1 of the Act made it clear that land should be administered for the use and common benefit of all Nigerians and this includes both men and women. This therefore makes the issue of gender discrimination to be irrelevant as far as the Land Use Act of 1978 is concerned. Furthermore, Section 42 of the Nigerian Constitution guarantees the right to freedom from discrimination on the ground of sex, religion, ethnicity, and political opinion, circumstances of birth and place of origin. To have a holistic approach, factors such as inheritance system, local traditions and customs, decision-making powers, perceptions and marital status among others were identified to affect men and women access to land. By and large these factors tend to favor men while placing women at a great disadvantage since issues about women are placed secondary to the decisions (Duncan and Brant, 2004).

Housing and Decision Making

In the general dynamics of landownership and housing development, women status especially in the third world country have remain secondary as compared to their male counterpart, even though women have been considered to be the major consumer of housing services, but they are usually not consulted during the various housing development program (Bello, Aliyu & Alhaji, 2015). Women roles in housing development, principally on total control over land has not been given adequate attention so far. Cater and Trevor (1969) for example, noted that all the crucial decisions about the built structures of cities and regions were and are still being taken by males and they have constructed man-oriented geographic space. Even where women have been included in the calculations, this has been women as seen through men's eyes, women's needs as defined by men and not by women themselves (Cater & Trevor, 1989).

Although despite the many differences between First and Third World contexts, the central importance of shelter, and the need for decision-making power in the production of shelter, have been exemplified by women's actions globally. In some countries, for example Saudi Arabia, women architects have begun to participate in the design process despite cultural

restrictions which deny them access to much decision-making power. In less restrictive societies such as Canada, women have organized and gained control of their housing through cooperative ownership (Wekerle, 1988). The objective of these efforts is the same: to increase women's participation in the design and production of housing.

Gender divisions and stereotypical views of appropriate family life have played their part in debates over housing form in most sub-Saharan Africa. Adebola (2011) explained housing significant between genders, and that the perception of housing to a male is such that a house becomes a future generation asset, but for a female a house is assumed to be a place to perform a traditional obligation as a woman of the house. The focus of professionals engaged in the business of creating dwellings and dwelling environments has been on households defined and interpreted more often as household heads responsibilities, whereas women are the primary and major consumers and users of these environments. Women in developing nations continue to struggle under an overtly inequitable system. In these countries, progress toward equality of basic and equal human rights is often hampered by societal norms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was a descriptive research that sought to assess women land ownership and participation in decision making about housing development in Oyo town. Oyo town which is the study area of this research work, comprising of three (3) local government areas: Afijio Local Government, Jobele; Oyo East Local Government and Atiba Local Government. Data for this research work is gathered from two major sources, that is, primary and secondary. Primary data was collected through questionnaires administration on the respondent. Secondary data includes data collected from journals, textbooks, conference papers, academic thesis, publications of various institutions and organizations, materials from internet and other reliable data and information which provide strategic overview of the various land right and housing challenges that confronts women in this particular study area. Name and addresses of women that were actually allocated land was obtained from the Local government office (ministry of land department). This allocation fall under the two major residential schemes which is the Gbedu scheme and the Ayetoro Scheme. The Ayetor scheme has about 203 Allottee out of which 53 are women. For the Gbedu scheme, about 400 Allot tee, out of which 114 are women. Information was randomly collected from these women on the scheme. A total number of 50 Questionnaires randomly was administered to selected residence of Oyo town in collecting data.

Data Analysis**Table 1.0**

Background of Respondent	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	12	24
Female	38	76
Total	50	100
Age		
	Frequency	Percent
18-25	2	4
26-35	5	10
36-50	14	28
51-65	18	36
66 and above	11	22
Total	50	100
Occupation		
	Frequency	Percent
Student	3	6
Private Employed	13	26
Government Employed	8	16
Self Employed	21	42
Unemployed	5	10
Total	50	100

Source: Author's field survey, 2022

The analysis above as shown in Table 1.0 shows that the gender of the respondents has 12 to be male while female was 38. The percentage implication of the respondent are females with 24% and 76% female, this difference was because women were the target population for the this research so as to find out housing decision making ability of female compare to male in the study area .

The age group of the respondents also shown in Tables 1.0 reveals that about 4% falls in-between the age bracket 18 to 25 years while 10% of the respondents are in between the age range of 26 to 35 years. Meanwhile, 28% are between the ages of 36 to 50 years while 51 to 66 took 36 % of the respondent age range, the last age range which is 66 years and above has just 5 respondents which is approximately 22%. The above age analysis reveals that the age composition of the participants in the study area falls in between that active age groups of the society, this implies that most of them most have made housing choices at different phases of their life Wu (2010).

From the above analysis as shown in Table 1.0, it was also discovered that about 6% of the respondents are student whilst 26% of the respondent are privately employed; about 16% of the respondents are government employed. 42% of the respondents are self-employed, while the unemployed is about 10%. The analyses above reveals that majority of the respondents are self-employed in terms of running their own businesses on an entrepreneurial, contractual or consultancy basis. This group of people might have more tendencies to make housing choice based on their status for business or their important uses according financial capability.

Table 2.0**Other Socio-economic factors of Respondent**

Income Level	Frequency	Percent
18,000 and below	10	20
19,000-50,000	20	40
51,000-100,000	15	30
100,000 and above	5	10
Total	50	100
Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	9	18
Married	27	54
Divorce	2	4
Widower	12	24
Total	50	100
Education status	Frequency	Percent
No formal Education	10	20
Primary Education	7	14
Secondary Education	14	28
Tertiary Education	16	32
Others	3	6
Total	50	100

Source: Author's field survey, 2022

The income level of the respondents from the above table 2.0 shows that about 20% of the respondent income level falls below 18,000 which is the assumed minimum wage benchmark in the country (Nwude,2013). 40% of the respondents also have their income level between 19,000-50,000 while a total of 30 % of the respondents' income are within the range of 51,000-100,000. The last category of respondents based on income level is composed of about 10% ranging from 100,000 and above which is assumed to be relatively higher compare to others on the table. This outlines that majority of the respondents are within the average income groups. This implies that majority of the respondent who are residence in Oyo i.e. the women are not financially buoyant; nevertheless we can also say poverty level is also low. Most of the women respondent wish to own a landed property. Thus, conforming with Boumeester, (2004) which highlighted that income is a key factor among the socio-economic factors which determines land ownership and housing development participation.

From the above analysis as shown in Table 2.0, it shows the marital status of the respondents. 18% of them are singles, a total of 54% of the respondent are married and also just about 4% which is of a little significant is divorce while 4% are widower. This aspect of household socio-economic characteristics is of much significant in housing participation in respect to space demand. The larger the family size the larger the space demand.

Table 2.0 Revealed that about 20% percent do not have any form of formal education and that only 14% of the respondent obtained primary-education, whereas about 28% of the respondents obtained secondary education and 32% obtained tertiary education, while others fall under

vocational training, this implies that most of the respondents are well educated and culturally and traditionally informed. For the religion of the respondent, it was discovered that majority the respondent practice Christianity, the percentage sum up to about 75 percent, while 9 percent chose Islam and while the other percentage practice traditional.

Table 4.0: Women Land Ownership and Barriers

Property Acquisition	Frequency	Percent
Inheritance	13	26
co-own	12	24
Cash purchased	16	32
others	9	18
Total	50	100
Women land access barriers	Frequency	Percent
Tradition & custom	13	26
Male dominance	4	8
Illiteracy	15	30
Finance	18	36
Total	50	100

Source: Author's field survey, 2022

The table 4.0 about show that about 26% of the property acquisition were inherited, while outright cash purchase too the larger percentage which is 32%, 24% were co-own or jointly own mode. Other forms of ownership were less predominant among residence in Oyo compare to the first three mode of property acquisition. It also denote that women also acquire property for them self, despite the stereotype and challenges in acquiring landed properties. Subsequent discovery from the field survey show that it's a lot challenging for women to acquire land in Oyo.

The table above shows that majorities of the constrain and challenges against women is centered on the traditional believes and custom practices together with financial issues of the people of Oyo, illiteracy is also discovered to be another issues. From this study poverty is another serious challenge that have prevent women from active participation in land and housing development over the years

This research also revealed that most of the respondent requires consent to acquire or sell their property, this required consent was discovered to be from the husband who is supposed to be the head of the family according to tradition and cultural believes.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

The study was carry out in order to find out women participation in housing delivery and land ownership in the study area, It has been established through the findings of these studies that women faced a lot of discriminations in terms of access to and control over land.it was discovered that the common perception of women is that housing delivery are that the responsibilities of providing housing belong to the male heads of households as building activities were viewed more as men's job. Discovery from this research give an understanding

that women's level of knowledge about the critical aspects of their household housing development especially the design and planning is very poor environment. So therefore active participation of women should be encourage thru the society holds onto the traditional beliefs about the involvement of women in housing development, with the level of education and civilization in the society some of this believes are likely to be a thing of the past.

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