

Empowering Women in Agri-Business and Agri-Preneurship: The Dialectics of Socio-cultural Impediments on Economic Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Women in agri-business and related entrepreneurship ventures are household identities of majority of the Nigerian rural and urban dwellers. Yet, full empowerment of women and the girl-child in most Nigerian rural communities is often faced with the dialectics of social and cultural impediment which has hitherto retarded the economic developments of the Nigerian rural dwellers. The objectives of the study are to correlate the implications of these cultural and social norms on the development, training and empowerment of women and the girl-child and their attendant effects on the fortunes of the Nigeria national economy and how they negatively affect Africa development as a whole. A descriptive survey method was used and conducted amongst women in agri-businesses in different markets of two (2) states; Benue and Taraba the highest agricultural productivity in Nigeria. Oral interview was conducted amongst 50 female entrepreneurs who are in Agri-related and other business ventures in the markets surveyed to determine the extent to which dialectics of cultural norms influence their success or failure in choice of business or careers. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to measure these associations and our findings revealed that the socio-cultural norms negatively affect empowering women in their choice of career, business, trade and politics in Nigeria. Despite large number of women entrepreneurs that outweighed the males in all the markets surveyed, it was discovered that women are the bread winners of most families in Nigeria, cultural beliefs do not support empowering women beyond certain levels in most Nigerian communities. The study recommends a multilevel approach that would provide equal recognition to women and the girl-child against their male counterparts at the grass root – nuclear level in terms of formal and informal training and development, business, career placement and politics as the only way to grow a self-sustaining economy.

Keywords: Agri-Business, Agri-Preneurship, Cultural Norms, , Dialectics of Socio-Cultural, Groups, Rural-Dwellers

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a nation that is naturally endowed with talented and gifted people. Most of these people include both men and women who have distinguished themselves in several aspects of human endeavours. The Nigerian human resources ranked one of the best in the world and the country has been ranked among the first five nations with the highest number of doctoral degree holders in the women, (World Bank Amongst these groups of PhD holders, women are not left behind. A study by Ukpata and Olukotun (2008) of student's performances in the Nigerian universities shows that, amongst the five federal and state universities studied, female students have the best performances in most of the

undergraduate programmes being run in those universities. Careful observation reveals the same high performance by women in nation's sport industry with the female super Falcons and Falconess teams ruling the African female soccer. Correlating this to our present study, we discovered that in all of the ten local markets surveyed in the two states – Benue and Taraba States of the federation, women completely dominate trade and commercial activities. While we saw, aged and young women and girls in different lines in the market selling all kinds of farm produce – sitting under the hot sun till the end of the market session, most of their men folks are seen in shades and shops drinking palm-wine, eating and discussing non-business, non-market and non-entrepreneurial activities. This underscores the fact that Nigerian women are most likely better entrepreneurs that if properly sensitized, mobilized and empowered would play a significant role in turning around the fortunes of the national economy.

As the Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajiya Zainab Maina quoted by Onyedika (2012) posits that, her Ministry is committed to women empowerment- economically, socially and politically, adding that the empowerment of women is key to the Transformation Agenda of the present administration. She further states that:

...the ministry was presently focusing on the ongoing constitution amendment to put forward proposals that would promote the development of women in the country. "We need to enhance women empowerment and gender equality in the country. We need your input and support as well in the development of a framework for the review of the National Gender Policy to ensure the full participation of women in all aspects of national life.

More importantly, there is a general concern that women in Africa should be given in-depth support to enable them develop and expand their agribusinesses and agri-preneurship capacities this will undoubtedly breed three interlocking developmental concepts that would lead to Africa's economic emancipation. These concepts hinged on, first, the creation and development of cognitive group of African women entrepreneurs that will be able to drive the African development dream from the grass-root, second, the braking away from gender dichotomy created through the dialectics of African cultural norms that have hitherto retarded the sub-regional political and economic development and thirdly, the full blown empowerment and development of women in agribusiness through government supportive skill training and capacity building. These concepts are central in the general aims of the Women in Agribusiness in Sub-Saharan Africa Alliance (WASSAA).

The Women in Agribusiness in Sub-Saharan Africa Alliance (WASSAA) is a grouping of entrepreneurs from sub-Saharan countries with a focus on creating a strong and reliable network of women and young people in the agribusiness sector. WASSAA particularly wants women in all walks of life in the sub-region to reach economic independence and bring back the honour and dignity to the African family. WASSAA is operational in twelve countries. The organization aims to increase women's participation in agribusiness; to assist women to graduate from micro, medium to large scale entrepreneurship; to grow skills and knowledge related to business through training, mentoring and creation of partnerships.

In line with WASSAA objectives, and as part of measures to address food security and address poverty, Oxfam Nigeria Ltd has articulated plans to partner with the Federal Government in the empowerment of women farmers nationwide in Nigeria. As stated by Onyedika (2012) quoting the Country Director of Oxfam Nigeria Ltd - "we want to fast-track the development of vulnerable groups in Nigeria especially women in the areas of agriculture and political leadership. We are working on a standalone programme on women leadership towards the 2015 General Elections to scale up the number of women in elective positions in the country."

Problem Statement

This research is however confronted with the very age-long problem of the dialectics of socio-cultural norms which featured in all Nigerian community settings; not only is this problem akin to the rural communities but also a common features of both the urban and rural communities in Nigeria; a popular culture which prevent women and the girl-child from active participation in commerce and trade. In some culture like the Igede in Benue State for instance, the women are prohibited from planting what is called (*ehi nyi-ewu*) "front-of-the heap" on the cultivated heap. But must plant what is called (*ekpe-nyi-ewu*) "back-of-the-heap". And such specie of yams to be planted must not be the same with men's own but a particular one called "**water-yam**" (*ichuo*) which is not commonly eaten by majority of people; meaning that the women must be at the back of the man when carrying out farming activity or any trade. And after the harvest, she must not take the produce to the market for sale without the permission of the man.

In most of the cultural settings surveyed, if the woman makes any money from her trading, she must declare it immediately to the husband or else, it is believed one member of the family could die if the woman failed to do so. And in all the markets surveyed, the women are seen sitting under the hot sun selling all kinds of farm produce while most men in the market sit in groups to drink their palm-wine and discuss non-economic issues.

Adoko (2012) captured similar problems when he states:

In some societies, either for religious or cultural reasons, wives are not accorded political power while their sons if they were of age were vested with such responsibility. At the community level, in most traditional societies in Nigeria, a representative was and is appointed to represent each of the families that make up that community when decisions that concern the community are to be taken. In most cases, these representatives are men of high standing, usually, the heads of the families. In event of unavoidable absence of such male figures, a woman no matter how capable she may be was not considered as a substitute in a case of temporary absence or replacement in case of death, rather a male-child in the family would be called upon to perform that role. This child may never, make any contribution.

This patriarchal structure operates in all Nigerian communities and is a common characteristic of all social and political cleavages that has failed our system over time and is still failing us. It is an outright discrimination against the ability of women or the girl-child to demonstrate their God-given business, economic, political and entrepreneurship prowess in directing the affairs of their societies. And in recent past, this patriarchal structure operative in Nigeria has received very severe agitation from different women groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the international community.

The problem of this discrimination against the girl-child or the women has its root to the nuclear family as far as

the Nigerian case is concern. For instance, in most family set-up, one would found out that, the girl-child is used as domestic labour machine for cooking meals, sweeping and cleaning the surroundings, fetching water from the streams, family laundry works, baby-sitting, washing dishes etc., amazingly the boys are seen playing games and football even early in the morning and doing nothing of value. More astonishing, some parents will tell you certain schools, businesses and trades are reserved for their male children who are to succeed them and not for the girl-child who will leave them to husband's homes.

This research is therefore set to address these multi-dimensional problems of the dialectics of socio-cultural impediments on economic development in Nigeria with particular reference to how these problems have negatively retard women development and empowerment in agribusiness and agri-preneurship and other related ventures

Study Objective

The overall objective of this study is an empirical analysis of the dialectics of socio-cultural impediments on economic development in Nigeria. And how these cultural norms impinged negatively on empowering women in agri-business and agri-preneurship.

The specific objective therefore is, to determine if there is correlation between women development and empowerment in agri-business and agri-preneurship in Nigeria and the dialectics of cultural norms and beliefs across the multi-ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Development

In the emerging campaign for women economic and political empowerment versus social integration, one would had believed that one of the eight goals of "the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is directed towards women empowerment which the Federal Government of Nigeria has articulated its specific programme through the introduction of National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) at the national level which gave birth to State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS) at the state levels and the Local Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDS) at the grass root local government levels. Therefore, it is assumed that women have actually been adequately given the necessary tools for economic and political empowerment in Nigeria. As Adoko (2012) quipped, "following the elimination of all forms of discriminations against women in 1985, one would think that as years progresses, women would be better off but this is not turning out to be as events are still a little far from it."

Adoko's hypothesis proposes that women lack confidence and courage in them and that they feel they cannot do it, that is, they cannot lead as men do. This lack of confidence translates to lack of trust for other women too. The women will rationalize, "I cannot do it so how does she think she can?" As a result, they stop short of encouraging themselves. He also states that, most women, though not to be seen as cowards, lacked the courage to confront their male counterparts in contest. They are also afraid of losing and in the end also lose so much money.

From the above theoretical and academic thinking one would not conclusively hold unto the above propositions without considering other concrete and empirical evidences that could account for acceptance or rejection of the hypothesized relationship between women empowerment in economic and political matters in Nigeria. As other factors could play host or inversely related to the issue of women development and empowerment generally.

In the present study therefore, we proposed a "null" (H_0) hypothesized relationship that there is no correlation between women development and empowerment in agri-business and agri-preneurship in Nigeria and the dialectics of cultural norms and beliefs across the multi-ethnic groups in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The State of Women in the Nigerian Development Paradigm

The continued and unrestrained marginalization of women and the girl-child in the African traditional societies – especially, the Nigerian environment is no longer acceptable by the international community and as a result effort have been made by the international government and non-governmental organizations to put an end to such practices and beliefs that have hitherto retarded economic and political development of the African continent and Nigeria in particular. For example, some pragmatic efforts geared towards elimination of these discriminative practices include, the Agenda 21 in 1992 UN "Earth Summit with emphasis on adoption of the Convention on Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women", the 1993 Human Rights World Conference and recognition of inalienable rights of women and the girl-children as parts and parcel of universal human right. Similarly, there was, the 1994 Cairo Conference on population and development with emphasis on the women empowerment for equitable development which dictates one of the major milestones in recognizing women position in business, trade, economic, politics and other social matters that surround their environment. Following this conference was the advent of the 1995 Beijing World conference which declared a call to end all barriers to gender equity. This was supported by the 1995 World summit for social development – recognition of

gender equity as the core strategy for economic development and environmental protection.

On a related development, Uzuegbunam (2009) posits that, the Nigerian gender analysts have in their own part informed the policy makers, government and development agencies about the need to consider the issue of women in development planning and policies as a result of women's innate potentials in nation building. It is therefore of immense importance to consciously identify what significant contributions women and the girl-children have made to development of immediate family setting and to institutional development in Nigeria and Africa at large.

For example, in Uzuegbunam (1999) study of 'Feminism in Decision-making in Igbo land', observed that women's participation in immediate family decisions, marriage decisions, modern society politics, religious and church decisions, family's economic income and spending etc is minimal when compared with their male counterpart. On this note she stressed the dire need to appreciate women's talents, not only by the society but also by the women themselves. This will enhance the full realization and development of women's capabilities. This is in harmony with Adoko's (2012) earlier position that if women have confidence and courage in themselves, it would be shown by the way other women would give them leadership support and would no longer be seen as cowards before their male counterparts.

Eneh (1997) states that, neglect of the women powers behind the successful men as mothers, educators, and disciplinarians from cradle to adulthood will seriously jeopardize the Nigerian's Vision 2010 development. Eneh mirrored women as the major source of all developments. Supporting Eneh's position. Mbanefo (2001) suggests amongst other things, socio-cultural areas like health, population and family planning, female genital mutilation, persistent discrimination against the girl-child and violation of the rights of the girl-child, education issues, economic areas and as well as political issues to form areas of priority research towards effective national development. While Abdullahi (2000) adds that, women of great substance existed in Nigeria even before the colonial era. She identified some great women such as, Madame Tinubu of Lagos, Madam Ajalorugin of Warri, Queen Daura and Queen Amina in the north who made significant contributions to the peace and development of their communities. In this direction, what the women now need is the economic, social and political empowerment to prove their worth in resolution of crisis (Uzuegbunam (2009). She further adds that, the case of Margaret Thatcher, Onhie Mandele and Dora Akunyili respectively highlighted female gender potentials in managing situations at workplace like men in labour force and yet, remain effective home makers at family front.

The Dialectics of Women in Traditional Politics in Nigeria

In traditional Nigerian societies, women are known to be a knife with two-edge. One edge as agent of peace and the other symbolizes an agent of war. It is a truism that women are known to be peace makers when you encourage them to give peace and women at some other times could spur out revolutionary crisis when they are seemingly caged in an unfriendly environment. This has reflected outburst of crisis of the Aba Women riot of 1929 which was against the colonial administration for the introduction of high taxes on citizenry. In the Igede traditional practice system in Benue State of Nigeria, women are used for peace-keeping operation when inter-clannish war/fights persisted and become fierce. For instance, a woman of substance must be used to lead the warring men (Troop) with a particular leave called (*Upu-Utu*) meaning peace leave on her hand while the men raise peace song following her. Signifying that no more war but peace. This cultural practice by the Igede people in Oju Benue state has strong affinity with the name of their traditional king known as the *Ada-Utu* (father of peace).

Before the advent of modern politics in Nigeria, which started with political activism in the build-up to independence, and matured in 1960 at independence, Nigerians had not been without political leadership. Traditional political structures had always existed and through them, the people had always got political leadership. In the centralized

states, among the Hausa and Yoruba, the women's place in political leadership was prominent. Similarly, in some decentralized societies, especially among the Igbo of South-East Nigeria, the women also had a place in politics (Adoko 2012). Right from the pre-independence political state of Nigeria, several of the roles of women leadership positions could be seen among major ethnic groups across the country. For example in the Hausa land, a female monarch arose as a legendary Queen Amina of Zauzau (Zaria) and rose to prominence as a renowned military and political leader. According to Adoko (2012), during her days, through her successful battles and military conquest, she made Zaria the strongest Hausa State and by that, she extended her leadership beyond the borders of Zaria to other lands and she actually ruled both men and women (Mohammed 1985). Similarly, among the Yoruba, the place of the women in decision-making is equally prominent. Yoruba women are equally credited for the active roles in social, political and economic spheres of their various communities. For instance, it is noteworthy to assert that, women had ascended throne as Obas in Ile-Ife – Oyo kingdom, Ilesha and ondo (Fasheke 1991).

Below, is the record of some selected prominent Nigerian women who have ruled as paramount rulers in their

various domains and communities? Though, the list is just a selection of few one with historical account of their activities and leadership.

Table 1. Statistics of Women Traditional Rulers in the Pre-Colonial Days

S/N	Name	Towm Or Village	LGA	State	Type Of Rulership	Date/period
1.	Luwo Gbadiaya	Ife	Ife Central LG	Osun	Ooni of Ife	Pre-colonial days
2.	Iyayun	Oyo	Oyo LG Oyo	Alaafin		Pre-colonial days
3.	Orompoto	Oyo	Oyo LG Oyo	Alaafin		Pre-colonial days
4.	Jomijomi	Oyo	Oyo LG Oyo	Alaafin		Pre-colonial days
5.	Jepojepo	Oyo	Oyo LG Oyo	Alaafin		Pre-colonial days
6.	Queen Amina	Zauzau	Zaria	Kaduna	Emir	Pre-colonial days
7.	Daura	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
8.	Kofono	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
9.	Eye-Moin	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent/ Monarch	Pre-colonial days (1705-1735 AD)
10.	Ayo-Ero	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent/ Monarch	Pre-colonial days (1850-1851 AD)
11.	Gulfano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
12.	Yawano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
13.	Yakania	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
14.	Walsam	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
15.	Cadar	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
16.	Agagri	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
17.	Queen Kanbasa	Bonny	Bonny LG.	Rivers	Queen	Pre-colonial days

SOURCE: Olasupo, F.A. 2006 (cited in Adoko, O. E. 2012). Obstacles to Equitable Participation of Nigerian women in Politics: A way forward. *Journal of Development Studies*, College of Management and Social Sciences, Kwara University, Wujari, Nigeria.

However, according to Okonjo (1988), among the Igbo, the power of women is reflected in the dual traditional system. A political structure that was equivalent or parallel to those of men existed for women. The villages and towns were ruled jointly by the Obi (the, male ruler or chief) the Omu (the female equivalent of the Obi). The Omu was not the wife of the Obi or related to him in any way. The Omu ruled in conjunction with the Obi (Okonko 1975). There seems to clear division of functions between them and none is superior to the other. The Omu ruled the women while the Obi ruled the men (Adereti 2007).

Our present debate here centered round the hypothesis that whether the existence of women traditional rulers in the pre-colonial era represents a fair recognition of women development and empowerment in social, political and economic matters amongst multicultural ethnic cleavages in Nigeria. In another hand; whether it is a patchy selected window-dressed representation of few ethnic origins as majority having the political and economic power? At whatever angle taken on the debate it is conjectural and need empirical validation.

Women in the Traditional Farming and Weaving

The pre-occupation of over 75% of the Nigerian population is farming, and virtually, majority of communities are mainly into framing, weaving, fishing, hunting, carving etc. amongst this large segment of the farming population, women are in the majority doing the real labour-intensive farming work. While the male farmers often time hire women to do the manual labour such as making heaps, ridges, weeding and harvesting of different types of crops and gathering them into bans. It is equally a truism that even the buying and selling of the harvested farm produce in all the Nigerian markets especially the two states surveyed, are being carried out by women. This is also a very common characteristic of most small businesses in Nigeria and Africa at large that women dominate the scene. A UNIDO report on Africa also confirms this assertion as, women were reported to be in charge of majority of business and economic activities in Africa (UNIDO, 2008). Bardase et al; 2007: World Bank, 2007, Aderemi 2008, Egwu 2011.

Egwu (211) posits that, these findings show that women own and operate around one-third of all businesses in the formal sector, and represent the majority of businesses in the informal sector.

Egwu (2011) posits that “women involvement in entrepreneurship has resulted in the economic growth and development of society in the past 20th century. It has witnessed monumental changes for women as income earners and assets to their societies. Given the dynamic nature of women, a number of changes have emerged including the recognition of the potentials of women and their contributions to the economy. Chinonye et al, (2010) and Emordi et al, (2010) observe that traditional roles occupied by women in the family are changing as

a result of changes in the family configuration and setting which have allowed women to undertake more practical and functional roles within the society. However, despite this changing scenario, women involvement in practical advanced business is heavily restricted to manual agriculture and buying and selling of farm-produce, weaving and knitting. The table below is a reflection of number of women traditional farming and weaving selected, Ukpata (2010) in similar research conducted “women in traditional enterprises in Nigeria” which covered the delineated areas of our current study.

Table 2: Women in Traditional Farming and Weaving

S/N	Name	Marital Status	Sate Of Origin	LGA	Nature Of Business
1.	Ichiko Ogbu Grace	Married	Benue	Oju	Rice farming
2.	Adiya Mercy Edeh	Married	Benue	Oju	Rice farming
3.	Ukpata Alice Eke	Married	Benue	Oju	Yam/Cassava farming
4.	Comfort Idah Ehi	Single	Benue	Oju	Weaving/knitting
5.	Orehi Egbiri Peace	Married	Benue	Oju	Beans/groundnuts
6.	Naomi Ijale Onahi	Single	Benue	Oju	Poultry farming
7.	Ebeibi Janet	Single	Benue	Otukpo	Maize/cassava
8.	Grace Akpa Ene	Married	Benue	Otukpo	Cassava groundnuts
9.	Ene Umoru	Married	Benue	Otukpo	Yams/Beans
10.	Elizabeth Idoko	Single	Benue	Otukpo	Poultry/piggery
11.	Mbur Kator	Married	Benue	Makurdi	Piggery/vegetables
12.	Becky Adams	Married	Benue	Makurdi	Poultry
13.	Erdoov Vande	Married	Benue	Makurdi	Fishery/ vegetables
14.	Helen Saidu	Married	Taraba	Wukari	Yams/maize
15.	Attabai Florence	Married	Taraba	Wukari	Maize
16.	Tsokwa Waze	Married	Taraba	Wukari	Maize
17.	Tsokwa Glory J.	Married	Taraba	Wukari	Maize
18.	Paulina Matsai	Married	Taraba	Ibi	Maize/Groundnuts
19.	Rth Debeer	Single	Taraba	Wukari	Yams/Groundnuts
20.	Catherine Debeer	Single	Taraba	Wukari	Yams/Groundnuts

Source: Ukpata (2013)

Egwu (2011) maintains that, changes in the family structure and functions which resulted from the process of rapid urbanization had brought women into the mainstream of the Nigerian and business world. In the traditional society men are seen as the providers and protectors of the family but now, most women are involved, operating as de-factor heads of households and a number of these women are involve in entrepreneurship and business management in order to provide income for the family upkeep.

Socio-cultural Impediments to women Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria

Generally speaking, the Nigerian society is a very complex one due to its multicultural diversities. In most cultural norms around Nigeria tribes, women are restricted from participating in so many formal and informal business activities. And if they will there must be express permission from their husbands to do so. For instance, Egwu (2011) states that, female entrepreneurs face host of problems and many of the problems reported against the developed countries are common to those face by African female entrepreneurs (Parish, 1987). The report on the work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on Women Entrepreneurs in small and Medium Enterprises held in Paris in 1997 and 2000 point out clearly that, “a situation where women are discriminated against in business has negative economic, social and political consequences for any country, (OECD 1998, 2000). Women are not given equal opportunities for empowerment (Muntax, 1995). The inequality stems from the traditional structure of gender that severely constrains women’s productivity by the fragmentation of their time, their dual, and triple and multiple responsibilities and their lack of access to essential inputs including knowledge (Egwu, 2011). This proposition is in harmony with the view of Stephen (1995) who opines that, “most women’s work day is longer than men’s and many women have reached the limit of endurance in stretching their day.” The discriminatory reality entails that women are likely to do unremunerated work, work in low-wage jobs, earn less than men for same work, gain a smaller share of household income and be responsible for family basic needs (Corner 1997). As a whole, women spend their labour in less remunerative or unpaid work, as much of the rural women’s work is not captured in official statistics (Egwu, 2011).

Furthermore, in any culture where there exist prejudices and stereotypes regarding the role of women in the male dominated economy, there is the demand for socioeconomic rights; and policy advocacy (South Africa Economic Policies Analysis, 2000; Khosa, 2000; Miller, 2003).

Socio-cultural constraints have limited women's access to a meaningful business experience (Cromie and Hayes1988). And most are led by careers interrupted by family obligations (Kaplan, 1988). Women are prevented from running competitive businesses by their relatively low and skill level because of culture. Similarly in the views of Kitching and Woldie (2004), in the African tradition, women are regarded as subordinates to men regardless of their age or education status. In Nigeria, even when their women gain access to managerial career like their male counterparts, they face additional problems such as not heading sensitive positions (Obbe, 1980). In agreement with this view, Family responsibility is barrier acting against women entrepreneurship. Pressure to run a home, look after and care for the husband, family limit women. Negative economic development also impact negatively on women as they have to cope with taking care of the children, often as single parents (Morris and Brenan, 2003, Ndu 1997).

Finally, research from the United States in (2010) indicates that women are much more likely to turn to business ownership than men to accommodate family responsibilities. Responsibilities associated with their business have left them stripped for time.

Study Methodology

Area and Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in two of the highest agricultural producing states in Nigeria – Benue and Taraba states that share common boundary with Cross-Rivers, Enugu, Nasarawa, Kogi, Ebonyi states and the Republic of Cameroon. The choice of the area was informed by the fact that the two states are highly endowed with varieties of agricultural products and possess the highest number of farmers in Nigeria.

Design and Population

A survey method was adopted through the use of oral interview conducted amongst 50 female entrepreneurs who are in Agri-related and other business ventures in the markets surveyed to determine the extent to which dialectics of cultural norms influence their success or failure in choice of business or careers. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to measure these associations and our results and findings are presented below. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) and t- test will be used to test the research hypotheses.

The formula is given as:

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - \sum X\sum Y}{\sqrt{N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2} \sqrt{N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2}}$$

- Where:**
- r = Sample Correlation coefficient
 - X, y, = Sample data or scores
 - Σ = Greek sigma for summation
 - N = the number of paired observations (that is, the number of Subjects measured on both variables).

Results and Findings

To analyze this, statement, in line with our specific objective which is, to determine if there is correlation between women development and empowerment in agri-business and agri-preneurship in Nigeria and the dialectics of cultural norms and beliefs across the multi-ethnic groups in Nigeria; section one of the questionnaires in appendix A was used in collecting data for the frequency distribution.

The researchers have calculated following sample mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (σ) and percentage of respondents' perceptions of how cultural norms affect women empowerment in Nigeria. These are provided in table 3 below.

Table 3: The mean, standard deviation and percentage of Perceptions of respondents Of How cultural norms affect women empowerment in Nigeria

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Population mean	Standard deviation	Calculated mean	Sample standard deviation
Favourable 75-100	17	34%				
Unfavorable 0-74	33	66%	75	10	73.1	6.5
	50	100%				

Source of data: Field Survey 2013.

From the table 3 above; the population mean (μ) and standard deviation (σ) 75 and 10 marks. However, the calculated sample mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (s) are 73.1 and 6.5 marks.those of the population, the sample mean is lower ($73.1 < 75$). This means that there is correlation between women development and empowerment in agri-business and agri-preneurship and the dialectics of cultural norms and beliefs across the multi-ethnic groups in Nigeria;. Although the standard deviation of 6.5 marks only show that the dispersion

about the mean of the respondents marks which is minimal, the unfavorable response is indicated by 33% constituting 3 respondents unfavorable response.

Out of the 50 respondents studied, only 17 scored above the population mean of 75 marks, thereby representing 34% of the number of respondent's favorable response about effects of cultural norms on women empowerment, development and training.

Based on the aforementioned, the researcher infers that the dialectic of cultural norms and beliefs on general women development in Nigeria is unfavorable and therefore negatively affecting women in agri-business, agri-preneurship and sustainable economic development in Africa and Nigeria in particular.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the "null" (H_0) hypothesized relationship that there is no correlation between women development and empowerment in agri-business and agri-preneurship in Nigeria and the dialectics of cultural norms and beliefs across the multi-ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Table 4: summary of the test result for Perceptions of respondents Of how cultural norms affect women empowerment in Nigeria

Degree of freedom (v) n-2	Level of significance (a)	Values of t tabulated	Values of t calculated
48	0.05	1.68	-3.39

Source: Field Survey 2012

From Table 4 above, and Appendix B, the value of *t calculated* is -3.39, which is below and on the opposite side of the value of *t tabulated* (1.68). This means that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and accepting the alternative hypothesis (H_1), that, there is correlation between women development and empowerment in agri-business and agri-preneurship in Nigeria and the dialectics of cultural norms and beliefs across the multi-ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Discussions

The result presented a clear indication of socio-cultural impediments on the education, training of women and the girl-children in Nigeria and Africa at large which over time have retarded the sustainability of the development of our economic and political system. This stems from the fact that, the multi-faceted African culture is extremely difficult to be clearly understood and seemingly impossible to manage. The complexities of the so-called African rich cultures are rooted and anchored on the beliefs that there were primordial and ancestral and therefore, only the gods that can interpret and manage them. These situations worsen the conditions of women in Africa especially in Nigeria to openly participate in civil activities such as commerce, agriculture, politics etc.

While, the aboriginal beliefs in most Nigerian communities and elsewhere in the African continent are amoral to the civil society their attitudes to the cultural primordial society are emotive and this has constituted a very major setback for the women in Africa to have equal right in civil issues with their male counterpart. There was evidence received through oral interactions and explanations from some of the women selected for this study, "that some of their husbands exclaimed that it was a taboo for their wives to have collected research questionnaire and filled by expressing opinion to an outsider without their knowledge. Also their failure to obtain permission from their husbands before filling the forms amounted to committing some crimes against the gods which must be appeased through sacrifices". This scenario is no difference with even the highly educated women in Nigeria who have excelled in their chosen careers as either managers, Unit or departmental Directors or even as Chief Executives Officers as men often resist working under these women as subordinates. One of the women interviewed bitterly explained that while she was still in service as a Bank Manager, one of her security Officers quickly resigned claiming that it was culturally a taboo and a great insult for him to be opening the entrance gate for a woman to drive in to the premises and as such, he better sit down at home without a job. Such cultural beliefs amongst the Nigerian rural communities are menace to economic and political development of a strong civil society like Nigeria and therefore demand a radical attention for economic, political and cultural integration. As Nsofor and Ackaayar (2012) put it, "expectedly, policies and legislation that would improve the situation are what we look forward, owing to unfavorable signs of cultural attitudes which will hinder women from active participation in the development of the country."

Conclusion

In our concluding remarks for this study, we are apt to state that it is an indubitable fact to say that women have unavoidable roles to play in the development paradigm of the Nigeria's economic, political and social system. Overwhelming evidences abound from both the current study and the previous studies of scholars such as Adoko, (2012); Nsofor and Ackaayar (2012), and Ukpata and Onyeukwu (2012) that women contributions to the development of commerce, industry, agriculture, politics and the economy are irrevocable achievements that cannot be ignored in the annals of Nigerian history and the global history as a whole. The result of this study therefore should serve as a springboard for policy development at both levels of the three tiers of government in

Nigeria. In view of the above therefore, the study has advanced the following recommendations.

Recommendations

In other to overcome the obstacles or the dialectics of socio-cultural impediments on economic development in Nigeria and reposition the women for active participation in politics, and empower them in agri-business and agri-preneurship, the following recommendations have been generated:

1. The government to introduce a multilevel approach that would provide equal recognition to women and the girl-children against their male counterparts at the grass root – nuclear level in terms of formal and informal training and development, business, career placement and politics as the only way to grow a self-sustaining economy.
2. Legislation that would compel Nigerian rural communities to harmonized some of their very major cultural norms and empowers all local chiefs through paramount rulers to repeal all cultural beliefs and norms that are repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience – especially those that directly and indirectly prohibit women and girl-children from exercising their fundamental human rights.
3. To build in each state capital, center for research in cultural integration and women empowerment that would be responsible for critical examinations and studies of cultural norms of all known tribes in Nigeria with core objective of harmonizing and integrating them.
4. Finally, introduction of curriculum study in women agri-preneurship in all secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Nigeria that would be unique to women and distinct from the orthodox “entrepreneurship study” hitherto being canvassed only in tertiary institutions.

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