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COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN FARMERS' STATUS IN JAPAN
AND NIGERIA

*TIJANI S. A. AND **YANO IZUMI

*Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development,
Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, NIGERIA
Email: tsarafat@yahoo.com, Tel.: +234-80-51370802.

**Graduate School of Biosphere Science, Faculty of Applied Biological Science
1-4-4 Kagamiyama, Higashi Hiroshima University, 739-8528 Japan
Email: yanoizm@hiroshima-u.ac.jp

ABSTRACT

The research compared the status of Japanese and Nigerian women farmers. The study was conducted in Sera Chuo, Hiroshima and Ohnan Chuo, Shimané prefecture, Chugoku region of Japan and Southwestern part of Nigeria covering three locations (Omi-Adio, Ijaye and Kila) within the suburban area of Ibadan metropolis. Purposive sampling was used to select direct farmers market (DFM) while random sampling was employed to select respondents from each market. Total sample size of 234 was obtained and data collection was done through structured questionnaires. The result revealed that both women farmers were into agriculture through marriage and they were both marginalized in terms of land resources. Japanese women farmers were not participating in the marketing of agricultural products in the past. DFM is being operated as indoor type in Japan while opposite is the case in Nigeria. More than half of Japanese sell their vegetable, rice cake, rice bread and cookies in DFM but only few sell rice in the same market. In contrary, most of the Nigeria women farmers produce were marketed in DFM. Both women were empowered in all indicators but Nigerian women were more empowered than Japanese except on mobility. However, autonomy of decision making regarding borrowing or lending remains low. Both women farmers judged their present status to improve compared to the past.

Keywords: Women, empowerment, direct farmers market, Nigeria, Japan

INTRODUCTION

It is evident that women are the key to development in any parts of the world; hence, the only way to unlock a country's potential is through women empowerment (Lopez-Claros, (2004), UNDP, (2004), (2004)). Recent World Bank research shows that disempowerment of women in the developing countries inhibits economic growth. It was also established that correlation exists between gender discrimination and poverty, slower economic growth, weaker governance, and a lower standard of living of the people. Hence, women empowerment throughout the world promises significant contribution to the development.

Women play a pivotal role in agriculture and rural development in most countries. They play an indispensable role in improving the quality of life in rural areas (Takahashi. 2000). Also their role in household food security through agricultural food production cannot be over emphasized. Women are also responsible for processing, storing, fetching water and firewood for the family (Prakash, 2003). Women also engaged as family labour

in agriculture as well as wage labour in other income-earning activities. In Africa, three-quarters of the agricultural activities are carried out by women while in Asia, Latin America and the Middle-East; women comprise half of the agricultural labour force (Prakash, 2003).

Since 50s in Japan, women account for more than 60% of the population that engaged in agricultural production and forestry (MOFA, 2002). However, remarkable development and advancement in technology couple with industrialization led to reduction in agricultural population. Despite the decrease, female farmers still constitute more than half of the total workforce in agriculture (Nakamichi, 2000, Otomo, 2000). Japanese women participation in agriculture is not limited to a particular operation, thus advancement in technology has increased their participation actively in all levels of agricultural activities Prakash, (2003), Booth, and Protais, (2000).

Meanwhile, African region has been regarded as female farming per excellence represents 30% to 90% depending on the area and socio-economic conditions (Adekanye, 2002). The division of labour between food crops (female specialization area) and cash crops (male specialization area) is never a clear cut division as women often help their men-folk in cash crop production (Olawoye, 2002). Also, the gender-based division of labour according to task is gradually declining as women are increasingly undertaking tasks (land clearing activities) previously done by men. Agricultural production is primarily women domain (70% of agricultural labour force, 60% of agricultural production and 80% of food production (Kabeer, 2001)). The study by the UNDP ascertained that Nigeria women make up 60 to 80% of the agricultural labor force depending on the region, and produce two-thirds of the food crops. In traditional peasant agriculture in Africa, women are the prime mover of domestic economy. Mies, (1999) noted that women engagement in trade lead to significant low child mortality rate, particularly in the West African compared to other parts of the African continent.

However, throughout the history and in many societies, inequalities of women and men characterized male-dominated culture such as Japan and Nigeria. Women farmers in both countries are operating under patriarchy dominated societies. Regarding ownership of land, access to market and services, women farmers in both Japan and Nigeria do not enjoy equal rights despite all their activities in agricultural production. There is no doubt that rural women in Japan and Nigeria are faced with a number of constraints. However, they are trying to liberate themselves through participation in income generating activities "direct farmers' market" (DFM). Hence, the need to undertake a comparative assessment of their level of empowerment based on the background information. The study assesses the empowerment status of women farmers in both countries using empowerment indicators. It also ascertained their area of similarities and differences as well as highlighting the characteristics of the women farmers in each country. It was assumed that empowerment status of Japanese women farmers' will be higher than their Nigeria counterparts irrespective of the style of operation of the direct farmers' market (DFM) in both countries.

Although there are several studies on comparative assessment of gender issues between developed and developing countries (World Economic Forum, 2004, 2006; UNDP, 2001, World Bank, 2001) however, little is known about the use of rural areas, women farmers and participation in local marketing of agricultural products (DFM) in the comparative assessment. Therefore, the research interest is to feel the knowledge gap.

METHODOLOGY

The study conducted in Japan was based on the primary data collected from women farmers in Sera Chuo and Ohnan Chuo, Hiroshima and Shimane prefecture respectively, Chugoku region of Japan. The area is mountainous in nature and is being regarded as one of the less favoured areas for agriculture in Japan. Many villages in the area were concentrated on the mountain with steep small farmland for vegetables along with paddy production. Women farmers in these areas are actively involved in agriculture and agricultural related activities. The survey for Nigeria study was conducted in southwestern part of Nigeria covering three different locations within the suburban area of Ibadan metropolis which is the capital city of Oyo State. Two locations (Omi-Adio and Ijaye markets) are directly under the administrative control of Oyo State, the third location (Kila market) is located in the border between Oyo and the neighbouring Ogun State to the south. The study area is characterized by tropical humid climatic condition with annual rainfall of 1200 to 1500[^]mm. The vegetation is derived savannah. In general, agriculture is the main primary occupation of the people with production of cash crops (cocoa, coffee, palm trees, kola nuts, banana etc) and food crops (yam, cassava, maize, sorghums, cowpea, vegetables etc) within the suburban area; for subsistence and sales in the metropolis of Ibadan.

In both Japan and Nigeria, purposive sampling was used to select DFM and all the women in the selected markets were targeted. Random sampling was used to select respondents from different women farmers groups in the market (vegetable women farmers, processors and handmade products group). Total sample size was 234. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and interview schedule; with statement questions on empowerment based on universal measurement of empowerment by Malhotra, et al., (2002). Data analyses and evaluation involved the use of various descriptive and inferential statistical tools.

RESULTS

The following highlights the main characteristics of the respondents in Nigeria (as a developing country) compared to Japan (as a developed country).

From the table 1, selected demographic characteristics of respondents revealed large percentage (60%) of Japanese respondents to be old while majority of Nigerian women farmers (84.6%) were still in their active age. Higher proportion were married in both countries (89.2% Japanese), (90.5% Nigerians) while low percentages (1.2 - 6.2%) of respondents were divorcee and separated in both groups. Almost all (98.4%) Japanese women farmers were educated with least qualification being junior high school (15.4%) and they are by far ahead of their Nigeria counterpart where majority (60%) was not educated. Large household is favoured in most of the rural society hence the observed results of nine members among Japanese respondents and as much as twelve members among Nigerian respondents.

Table 1: Selected Personal Characteristics and Farming Activities of Respondents

Variables	Japan	Nigeria	Variables	Japan	Nigeria
Age	%	%	Marital status	%	%
35 – 59	36.9	84.6	Married	89.2	90.5
60 – 84	60.0	15.4	Divorcee	1.5	1.2
Average	60.7	43.0	Separated	6.2	1.2
Education	%	%	Household member	%	%
Elementary	---	29.0	1-3	43.1	10.7
Junior High	15.4	3.6	4-6	43.1	47.3
High School	55.4	5.9	7-9	12.3	29.6
Tertiary Insti	27.6	1.2	10 above	---	12.4
Non-educated	---	60.4			
Land (ha)	%	%	Engagement	%	%
0.1-5.0	78.5	76.9	Full-time	41.3	71.6
5.1-10.0	1.5	0.6	Part-time	24.6	26.6
10.1- 15.0	1.5	0.6	Hobby	23.1	1.8
Enterprise	%	%	Quantity/Product	Consumption	
Rice/Maize	67.7	68.0	50% or < R/M	66.1	66.9
Vegetables	75.4	70.4	50% or < Veget.	27.6	74.6
Processing	33.8	29.6	Quantity/Product	Sale	
Others/Tubers	12.3	53.3	50% or < R/M	16.9	20.2
			50% or <Veget.	41.6	15.4

Land is a crucial factor in agricultural production and in all patriarchal society; it is the dominant resource with which women are marginalized. The size of land (0.1-5ha) possessed by the majority (78.5% and 76.9%) of women farmers in both countries as shown in table 1 also buttressed the marginalization of women with regards to land resources. On the source of technical information for production, Japanese respondents exploit all information sources for their activities with highest sources of their information being agricultural cooperative and private extension while Nigerian respondents depend on farmers' market as well as media particularly radio for their information.

Large percentage of Nigerian women farmers (71.6) specialize in agricultural production or agricultural-related activities as their main occupation. In Japan however, availability of employment in other sector of the economy had resulted in majority of farmers changing from full-time engagement to part-time and hobby farmers. The results also revealed that large percentage of respondents consume at least ¼ of their products. More than half of Japanese women farmers sell their vegetables in direct farmers' market. Rice is the Japanese main agricultural product and agricultural cooperative have been playing important role in the marketing of agricultural produce, particularly rice since its inception. In addition, agricultural cooperative deal in wholesale market, thus farmers need to sell large quantity of their produce as much as possible through this outlet. Also important is the fact that majority of women farmers were sub-member of the

cooperative, thereby benefiting only in sales of their farm produce. Therefore, large percentage s(53%) of rice produce were marketed through the agricultural cooperative society. Twenty percent of respondents sell almost 100% of their produce through the outlet while none sells less than 1/4 through the society. However, they often sell quarter or less of their rice produce as well as processed rice products such as rice cake, rice bread and cookies in direct farmers' market.

Nigerian respondents on the other hand, specialize mainly in staple food production. Most of the women farmers produce is marketed in direct farmers' market after meeting the household requirement. Furthermore, the majority of Japanese respondents (93.2%) transport their produce to the market using personal vehicle or farm truck, while the majority (64.7%) of Nigerian respondents uses commercial bus or taxi service to transport their farm produce. Hence, it can be inferred that the Japanese women farmers are more self sustained in terms of mobility compared to the Nigerian women farmers.

DISCUSSION

The result on age is a confirmation to a number of previous reports of aging problem in farming household in rural Japan (MAFF, 2000, Tijani, and Yano, (2007). Higher proportion of married women among respondents could be attributed to the fact that majority of women farmers' in both countries (developed and developing) were into agricultural through marriage (Pini, 2007) while low percentage of separated and divorcee might imply similar cultural values and sharing of unacceptability of the concepts in both countries. However, other reasons for shunning the concept by Japanese women farmers do exist such as lack of access to husband's pension and hence inability to survive financially (Kenyon, 2006). In terms of the educational attainment, the observed lack of education or low level of education among female farmers particularly in Nigeria is consistent with the study of Lopez et al., (2004) that women still constitute 2/3 of the world illiterate particularly in the rural areas of most developing countries. Meanwhile, education is the most fundamental prerequisite for empowering women in all sphere of society without which accessibility to well paid jobs in the formal sector, advancement in job, career as well as political influence are impossible. Above all, such scenario implies that ill-preparation of the next generation is imminent.

Furthermore, agriculture is the backbone of many developing nation's economy and family contributes most of the labour needed, hence large household is favoured in Nigeria to supply labour for farming activities. Also, studies had shown that nuclear household models are not applicable in many developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria). Therefore, a household with as large as twelve members among Nigeria respondents could be said to depict typical African setting. In addition, in almost all rural areas of the Africa countries, large household is seen as a sign of richness and wealthy status. Meanwhile, large household with as many as nine (9) members among the Japanese respondents also depicts typical rural society in Japan with cultural or traditional means of passing over the farming activity to the first son of the family (*ie* system). Furthermore, it also depicts the responsibility of second generation couple within the household towards the first generation aged parents, which is typical of rural Japan (Takahashi, 2000). The result of small land holding by women also buttressed the marginalization of women with regards to land resources (Pini, 2007). On the other hand,

it can be attributed to the fact that women farmers' enterprises are always focused on food crops and vegetables which may not need large expanse of land.

Evolution and Activities of Direct Market

The historic role of women in food-production and marketing system cannot be under-estimated even in a society based on traditional hierarchical structures. Japanese women were not participating in the marketing of agricultural products in the past due to the system of marketing being used. Evolution of direct marketing did not change women's position and farmers' market was not common among the Japanese women farmers at that time until recently. Most of DFM in Japan are being operated as indoor type (Tijani, and Yano, 2007). Farmers drop the products in the market with the market manager in the morning and come back in the evening. The reasons for the increasing emergence of the DFM among others include complex structure of the main distributing channel, less or non use of chemical, consumer's preference for fresh products, opportunity to fix price, old age of farming household, and women factor (Tijani, and Yano, 2007).

In Nigeria however, due to the favourable weather and climatic condition coupled with favourable vegetation, marketing of agricultural products right from inception are divided into two: a.) Direct marketing of perishable and staple food items such as vegetables, grains, pulse, tubers etc. b.) Indirect marketing through produce marketing board especially for cash crop such cocoa, coffee, oil-palm, rubber etc. However, DFM in Nigeria is being operated as an "open market" system whereby each producer has to stay with their respective farm products, in contrast to the Japanese "indoor operated" type. Meanwhile, emergence of farmers market in Nigeria can be attributed to poor or bad road networks with consequent poor transportation connections between the rural and urban areas. This usually makes the evacuation of produce from farm (place of production) to the town or city market for sale difficult. Consequently, the rural women farmers are left at the mercy of local produce merchants (Locally known as *Alarobo*) who move around the farms to buy the produce at a very low price for re-sale at exorbitant prices to retailers in urban centers.

The apparent marginalization or exploitation by these groups (agricultural produce traders/buyers), with attendant low profits for the rural farmers and the drive to end such marginalization led to the establishment of DFM. This initiative does not only remove or curtail the exploitation but also enhance the bargaining power of the rural farmers for the sales of their products. In addition, the drive to open up the rural area for development, most of the direct farmers' markets nowadays are being established by the local government administrations to boost the rural economy as well as to encourage local farmers to remain in the farming business. Consequently, farmers markets eventually turn to be local markets in the vicinity of rural agricultural areas where the farmers can offer their produce for sale to retailers, consumers and merchants alike thus breaking the sole monopoly of the produce merchants. In addition, most of the farmers markets are not daily operated markets like Japanese case; rather some are fortnightly, weekly, three days interval or four days interval cycles.

Participation of Japanese rural women in marketing started through by-passing agricultural cooperative where only male is recognized and the motive for the establishment of DFM was the needs for self reliance, demonstration of intelligence and

capability level of women; against inferior view and domination by men (Tijani, and Yano, 2007). The consequence is the independence of women and driving force for status improvement as well as rural development through revitalization of agricultural products. Nigerian women farmers, however, have been in the marketing for several decades and surplus produced was usually conveyed to the market by women despite the patriarchal system. It was reported that Nigerian women dominate the local market economy (NISER, 2003). Nonetheless, the Nigerian rural women farmers' involvement in the DFM is to support the family (household expenses). The extent of involvement in terms of number of years revealed that Nigerian women have been in marketing up to 50 years, though the majority's participation (94.7%) span between 1-30 years. This is a confirmation of the study of Mies, (1999) that revealed long years of involvement of Nigeria women in marketing of agricultural products. In contrast, 77% of Japanese women farmers' involvement span between 1-10 years which is also consistent with the previous studies that the majority of the DFM emerged in the last 10 years (Nakamichi, 2000). Majority of Nigerian women farmers (69%) got aware through friends while their Japanese (40%) counterpart got aware mostly through city offices in their localities. Media also serves significant purpose in active advertisement and creating awareness about the market particularly "Oyinladun radio programme of broadcasting corporation of Oyo State" in Nigeria. Other sources of awareness are through founders of the DFM and those living in the proximity of the market.

Majority of women in both countries joined as a result of the nearness of the market to their house. Thus, the tendency of women's management of enterprise close to home as reported by Nakamichi, (2000) does not limit to Japan but cut across the whole world. The need for quick sale, high profit as well as the perishable nature of products of women farmers were also crucial reasons that make them to participate in the DFM. Also, the establishment of the market for women constitutes another major reason for Japanese women farmers whereas it was the least reason for Nigerian women farmers. Unlike Japan, there is no wholesale market in Nigeria; hence not meeting requirement and the need for high commission were not among the factors/reasons that made Nigeria women farmers to participate in DFM.

Empowerment Status of Respondents

Empowerment is a process which enables individuals or groups to change balance of power through exchange of experience and diffusing innovative technique for strengthening self-reliance. One of the most important instruments for empowering women is to allow them equal access to and control over productive resources such as land, capital, technology, credit as well as marketing outlets, information, education, training etc. Many development efforts are increasingly recognizing that policies such as incentives cannot be fully successful in stimulating agricultural production if the institutional arrangements prevent women producers from getting the right benefits.

Consequently, a number of empowerment indicators were employed to assess the status of women farmers in both countries by the way of comparison. These are presented below:

Economic and Social Empowerment

There is substantial evidence that in many rural settings women have less access and control over economic resources such as land, machine, capital etc compared to men (Shortall, 1999, Takahashi, 2000, Pini, 2007). The result with a score of 72.5% for Nigeria against 62.7% for Japanese (Fig 2&1) indicates that the women farmers in both countries were economically empowered though Nigeria women farmers were more empowered than their Japanese counterpart. Women are found to be in charge of the decision making relating to where the produce should be sold, constituting about 93% and 52% for Nigerian and Japanese respondents respectively. However, women do occasionally receive advice from husband on the pricing. It should be noted that while women performed very well in most of the items used to measure the economic empowerment, however, the score in respect of autonomy of decision making regarding borrowing or lending remains low with only 49% and 15% for Nigeria and Japanese respondents respectively.

Meanwhile, as stated by (Olawoye, 2002), what women are unable to do or achieve as individuals is possible through group or associations. Thus, one of the potential avenues for women empowerment is through their participation in group activities. Integration of women into local or village groups, association's events, program and activities inculcate sense of belonging, commitment, accountability, mutual understanding and building of trust among women groups. Social empowerment of women farmers was considered based on the participation in the aforementioned group events in the community as well as awareness; the study however, revealed Nigeria respondents with scores of 76.5% (fig 2) against 71.1% (fig 1) for the Japanese women. Awareness and attending group/association's events as well as community events were the top area of women empowerment in this indicator. The result however, contradicts observation of Mayoux, 2001 that engagement in economic activities has negative impact on social empowerment of women.

Familial empowerment

Rural women are usually firmly connected to the domestic realm and family life (Little, 1997a; 2002). Here women familial empowerment was considered from autonomy perspective to freedom from violence and participation in the decision making of the household. The obtained score of 76.7% for Nigerian respondent is 0.2% higher than it obtains in social empowerment while Japanese score 61.3% is less by way of comparison. Top on the familial empowerment indicator are the women cordial relationship with their husband, acceptance of women's advice by spouses and non-discrimination between male and female children. All these could be attributed to women engagement in income generating activities, which always serve as helping hands for household expenditure (IIPS 2000). Hence, women with such opportunity in any African setting will always be in good term with their spouses. Though, African men have preference for male child however, they are more contented with mixture (male and female) children. The difference with Japanese preference/value for son(*ie* system) is that, being a male child in Africa is not a pre-requisite to sole farm estate inheritance, rather farm estate is shared (land tenure i.e fragmentation) among all the children including female. Ability to divorce as one of the items used to measure familial empowerment attracted low score which could be attributed to cultural unacceptability of

the concept though it often serves as the last option for most rural women in Nigeria. Meanwhile, Japanese divorce wife has no legal rights to her husband's pension and would usually be unable to survive financially should they decide to part ways as explained by Kenyon, (2006). However, respondents' empowerment in this indicator supports Takahashi, (2000) that rural women rarely express their dissatisfaction. Instead, they restrain their emotion and avoid confrontation because the idea of how they should act is formed only by their relation with males in the society

Legal empowerment

Women are frequently relegated to the status of second-class citizens in that their rights are dependent on their husband or other male relatives. Independent women are less likely to have access to productive resources such as land, hired labour or financial services because access to resources usually depends on a woman's link to a man. Women's experience in claiming or defending their rights is affected by the explicit assumption that the men in the household are the spokespersons for the collective household and by social and cultural processes that deny women authority and rights. This study examined legal empowerment of women based on the right to inherit husband property, getting wage for the work done within the husband farm, awareness of where to channel complaint if maltreated by the husband, right to participate in economic activity etc. Interestingly, the results show that Nigerian respondents were more legally empowered with 79.0% score compared to all the scores obtained in other indicators.

Japanese respondents were also legally empowered with 64% score but lower than what was obtained under social and mobility indicators. However, high literacy level of Japanese generally and rural women in particular have increased respondents awareness of their right. However, being aware of the right might not be as difficult as being able to claim it; especially in the rural areas. From the findings, it was revealed that wage payment law to household member who works on family farm has not been implemented in many agricultural household including greater percentage of household in the current study. Meanwhile, Nigerian women farmers were more legally empowered due to favorable right to property ownership. For instance, Nigerian women have more right to own land compared to the Japanese women. Also, the use of local customary court in settling dispute between husband and wife also gave the Nigeria women more advantage, thus their high performance in knowledge of place to channel violence case.

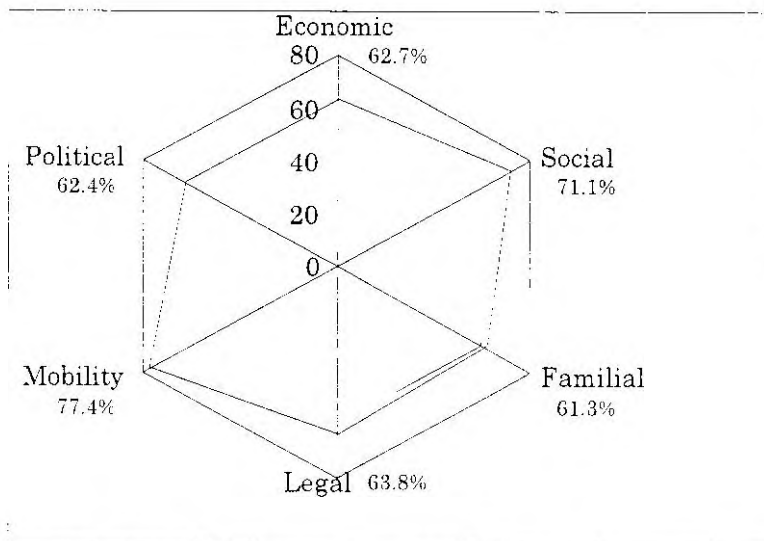


Fig 1: Status of Japanese Women Famers in Empowerment Indicators

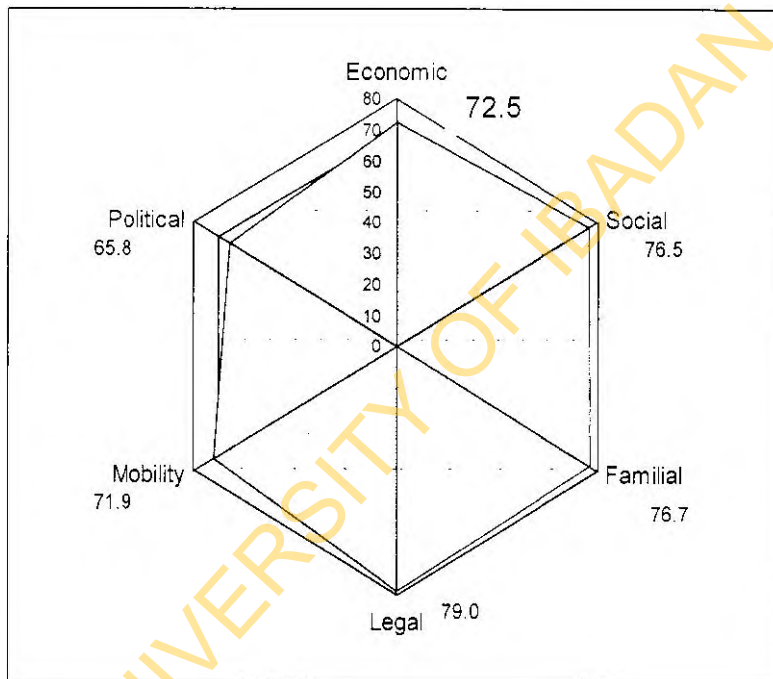


Fig 2: Status of Nigeria Women farmers in Empowerment Indicators

Source: Field survey 2007/2008

Mobility empowerment

Freedom of movement is another common indicator of women empowerment especially where women’s presence in the public sphere is often severely constrained. In some circumstances, freedom of movement could be an empowerment source or an enabling factor for women’s empowerment in other sphere of life. However, working outside the home or going out alone to an important place like hospital could be seen as a

form of empowerment in a setting where female confinement is the norm. For the Nigerian respondents, the mobility indicator score is 71.9% (fig 2) while that of Japanese is 77.4%. Such high mobility assists women in knowing a number of places and gives them the opportunity to visit friends and family both within and outside their community. Nonetheless, Slight increase in Japanese mobility score compared to their Nigerian counterpart could not be unconnected with advancement in technology, good and viable economy as well as egalitarian society of Japanese which is very scarce if not totally absent in Nigerian society. For example, favorable level of education afford the Japanese respondents the opportunity to go out alone and transact business in places like bank while the Nigerian counterpart may find it difficult to go near such places not to talk of making any transaction.

Political empowerment

The most effective way to create an enabling environment for the promotion of women empowerment is through a process of incorporating gender perspectives into all facets of society. The most direct method is representational affirmative action which guarantees that women are represented in any societies that are politically oriented. Affirmative action seeks to redress a political process that has marginalized women by exclusion or hindered their ability to address issues affecting women. Recently, regulations is being introduced by the United Nations that requiring political parties to put forward a minimum number of female candidates in all elections. Civil service affirmative action programs could also improve the participation of women in governance and administration.

In this study, political empowerment of respondents was considered based on the awareness of political activities in their community, freedom of participation, inclusion in decision making, even listening to political speeches, ever participating in protest movement etc. The result revealed score of only 65.8% (fig 2) which is the least among all the empowerment indicators for the Nigeria respondent and 62.4% (fig 1) for the Japanese. The observed result for Japanese confirm Meguro, (2006) that more women are participating in decision making but the proportion of the whole they represent remains unsatisfactory. However, the topmost area of both Nigeria and Japanese respondents in political empowerment indicator is their freedom in voting candidate of their choice during elections.

Level of Women Empowerment

In this section, the level of empowerment of women farmers was computed for categorization based on indicator scores and in order to assess the extent of need for more affirmative actions. Table 2 presents the outcome which shows that the majority in both groups were relatively (Japanese and Nigerian respondents) empowered based on economic, social, familial and mobility indicators. Areas of low empowerment in both groups were few, the percentage of moderately empowered respondents in terms of legal and political indicators were more than those in lowly and highly empowered categories. Thus, it can be inferred that the level of empowerment within both groups follows similar pattern for all the indicators.

Table 2: Level of Empowerment on Indicator Basis

Indicators	Mean		Low		Mod		High	
	JAP	NGN	JAP	NGN	JAP	NG	JAP	NGN
Economic: Low 1-9, Moderate 10-18, High 19-25	15.91	19.8	4.6	1.8	26.9	24.3	65.4	74.0
Social: Low 1-8, Moderate 9-16, High 17-24	15.91	13.9	2.3	0.6	30.8	30.8	65.4	68.6
Familial: Low 1-20, Moderate 21-40, High 41-54	32.94	18.6	7.7	0.6	11.5	46.7	77.7	52.7
Legal: Low 1-5, Moderate 6-10, High 11-15	9.9	14.5	17.7	1.2	<u>72.3</u>	<u>55.0</u>	0.8	43.8
Mobility: Low 2-7, Moderate 8-14, High 15-21	16.62	17.5	2.3	0.6	22.3	39.1	66.9	60.4
Political: Low 1-12, Moderate 13-26, High 27-35	21.73	16.0	7.7	2.4	19.2	<u>55.6</u>	2.4	42.0

The computation of overall status of women farmers in both countries becomes imperative for the reader to know the extent of women farmers' empowerment at a glance. Fig. 3 presents the result of the overall empowerment of women farmers in both countries. From the aggregation of the scores, it was found that the percentages of those that are highly empowered among Japanese are more than their Nigerian counterpart while averagely empowered women farmers was higher among Nigeria respondents.

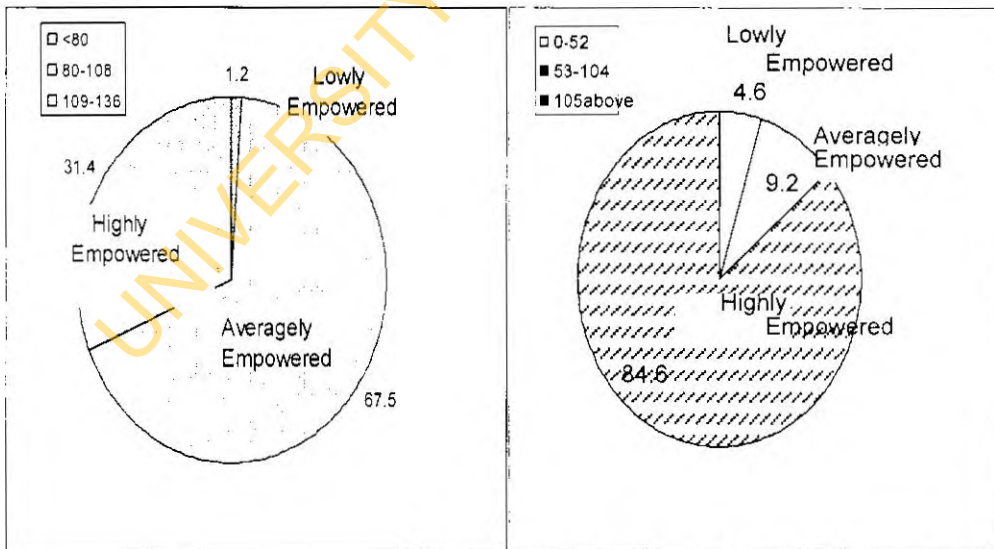


Fig 3: Composite Empowerment of Women Farmers in Both Countries

Furthermore, the score obtained through the descriptive statistics analysis was further subjected to inferential statistics for further evaluation and interpretation as presented in table 3. The t-test revealed that status of both women is different with Nigeria women farmers being empowered more than Japanese women. This might be attributed to long year of Nigerian women farmers' involvement in direct farmers market and open or face to face operational type. Furthermore, empowerment needs to be assessed and validated from the respondent's view of their status. Hence, women farmers in both countries (63% Japanese and 75% Nigerian) judged their present status to improve than the way it was. Comparison with women in other jobs however revealed greater percentage of Japanese respondents to believe that their status is similar (64.6%) while 1/5 even judged their status to improve better than women outside agriculture. This may be attributed to the relatively good and high standard of living in Japan as a developed country. However, few (24.3%) among Nigerian respondents have perception of similar status with women in other sector of the economy while more than half (61.5%) believe that their status improved more than their counterpart in other area.

Table 3: Test of difference between Japanese and Nigerian women farmers

Variables	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Remark
Economic NGN– Economic JPN	2.436	60	0.018	S
Socio NGN – Socio JPN	-7.912-	62	0.000	S
Familial NGN – Familial JPN	20.856	58	0.000	S
Legal NGN – Legal JPN	9.451	59	0.000	S
Mobility NGN- Mobility JPN	.370	61	0.713	NS
Political NGN – Political JPN	-7.243	59	0.000	S
Total NGN – Total JPN	-4.526	63	0.000	S

Specific Area of Disempowerment and Empowerment of Respondents

There are number of areas where Japanese women were empowered but for which Nigerian women were disempowered and vice versa. Women farmers in both countries were however disempowered in ability to divorce even if the situation is unpalatable. The reason for this could not be unconnected to the value attached to culture and traditions in both countries. They were also disempowered in terms of participation in political movement and human right protest. However, women farmers in the two countries were highly empowered on freedom of voting, attending group meetings, visiting friends and strong relationship with the husband. This could be apparently due to the fact that they engaged in income generating activities (DFM) with which they can assist on household expenses. In addition, they both have access to household income as well as inheritance right to their husband properties. Engagement of both women farmers in income generating activities also leads to improve mobility. Although, women farmers in both countries are struggling to liberate themselves from patriarchal domination and marginalization/exclusion but, global survey revealed that no country of the world has ever able to eliminate the term gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2004) thus as Japanese women faced profit problem, their Nigeria counterpart needs more place to market their product. Both however need capital to expand their business from small scale to large scale; hence, they still have area of disempowerment. Correlation analysis between the demographic characteristics of women farmers and their empowerment

status revealed negative and weak relationship between education and four empowerment indicators (Social, Legal, mobility and political) while age, marital status and size of household have positive but weak correlation with some empowerment indicators. It can be inferred that as women farmers advance in age, their empowerment will increase even though, the strength to carryout some activities might have reduced but there would not be restriction on their movement any longer. As women farmers are getting old, definitely there would be little engagement thus more free time would afford them the opportunity to participate in some political activities. People may even count on their experience as an elder by putting them in position of authority/leadership thereby increasing their commitment to the position being occupied. Through marriage women will have access to production resources thereby making them to be economically empowered and participation in economic activities can lead to their association (social empowerment) with other women. Also, advancement in education may decrease their legal empowerment due to the fact that they would have known their right because knowledge is power. From time immemorial, mother in law has always being a problem to women's cordial relationship hence the observed result of negative correlation between staying with mother in law and women familial empowerment.

Table 4: Relationship between Empowerment Indicators and Selected Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Age	Education	Marital Status	Household	Mother-in-law
Economic	-	-	0.273*	-	-
Social	-	-0.199**	0.298*	0.196*	-
Familial	-	-	-	0.290*	-0.174*
Legal	-	-0.192*	-	-	-
Mobility	0.156*	-0.216**	-	-	-
Political	0.304*	-0.284**	-	0.270*	-

CONCLUSION

Nigerian women farmers have been participating in the local marketing of agricultural products for long against recent involvement of their Japanese counterpart. Large numbers of Nigerian women are in their active age unlike aging of majority of women farmers in Japanese's case. Nigerian women used face to face DFM with the presence of producer/processors in the market contrary to indoor type by Japanese women, thus interaction between producers and consumers increases their social relationship. More empowerment of Nigerian women farmers "a developing country" than Japanese women farmers' "a developed country" should not be astonished, this is because Japanese adherence to values and culture is high. Development program or policy that may have conflict with culture would not be adopted. Hence, the issue of women empowerment that will make them compete with their spouse (men) would not be given consideration. Japanese generally are contended; they found no benefit in neglecting their norms and culture for other people's culture.

Above all, most of the global survey such as UNDP, Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), World Economic Forum (Bridging Gender Empowerment Gap 2004 and 2006) ranked Japan low compared to Bangladesh, South Africa, Philippines and other developing countries. Thus, if the national data about Japanese women could

produce such result, how much more is the rural areas where culture and norms are prevalent, preserved and held in highest order. The idea of how women should relate with men is still being thought in the high school up till today. Hence for Japanese women to meet similar status like their fellow developed country, more time and efforts are needed. Another reason for the high or similar empowerment of Nigeria women than Japanese could be attributed to the effort of Nigerian women (developing countries) to be empowered like women in the 'developed' country which make them strive to be empowered. Whereas women in developed country (Japan) believe they are already empowered thereby making no effort to get empowered. Above all, despite the fact that literacy level, economy, technology, culture, traditions etc differ, the outcome shows similarities in the empowerment of both women. Thus, it implies that irrespective of local settings, culture, educational background etc, gender issues worldwide are the same.

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