

Gender and Access to Land in Bodija Market, Nigeria

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Abstract

Gender is a critical and central social construct with definitive implications for access to and control of crucial resources in human societies. Gender is therefore very deterministic relative to veritable access to power, resources and positions and ultimately influences people's life chances. Nigeria, like other African countries, is patriarchal. Nigerian societies give more chances and privileges to one gender than the other and this tends to manifest across institutions of societies with implications for national and continental development. Since gender systems and structures of Africa appear to remain immutable in demonstration and consequences, it is important to continue to interrogate their contours, implications and manifestations. It is against these backdrops that this article adopted Bodija market's case to examine how gender hinders or enhances access to land for male and female traders in the market. This article engaged the elements of intricacies of market entry and produce sales based on gender. Data were gathered through thirty-eight (38) in-depth interviews (IDIs) and data were content analysed and presented as blended narratives and ethnographic summaries. Important findings were made and presented in this article.

Keywords

Gender, land access, Bodija market, Ibadan, Nigeria, Africa

Introduction

Gender as an institution establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, and built into the major social organisations of society, such as the economy, the ideology, the family, and politics, education and general social entities (Akanle and Chukwu, 2014; Akanle and Chukwu, 2013; Lorber, 1994). Gender is used to maintain order in societies and divide roles through a system of structure and stratification (Akanle and Adebayo, 2016). Although there are changing socio-economic conditions and personal, as well as collective resistance that are gradually

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modifying cultural beliefs about gender, the core structure of the beliefs have not been eliminated and changes have been very slow (Akanle, Adesina and Ogbimi, 2016; Akanle, 2015a; Akanle, 2015b; Correll and Ridgeway, 2004). In pre-colonial Nigeria, land was neither a commodity which could be bought nor sold, nor a factor of production, but rather a partner on which the people living on the land depended (Munkner, 1995). The term *land* in the traditional Nigerian society gives an idea of the free gift of nature which is communally owned (Akanle, 2015a; Akanle, 2015b). In these societies, when land is sold, it does not give freehold rights to the buyer but grants access of use (Munkner, 1995; Akanle, 2015b). This implies that land is a communal entity, belonging to every member of the society collectively and therefore should be totally persevered as cultural and natural heritage and identity symbol.

Land tenure system in Nigeria is closely related to inheritance practices (Akanle, 2015b). Land tenure system in Nigeria reflects the values and beliefs that people attach to the use and ownership. The main determinants of land tenure are social influences, customs and traditions, economic needs, religion and public policy on land (Nwanekezie, 1996). Private property in Nigeria dates as far back in history as the colonial era (Nwanekezie, 1996). The transfer of property although still mainly through inheritance, is fast becoming a horizontal transfer- from seller to buyer and decreasingly vertical- from father to son (Bethell, 1999). According to Fabiyi *et al.* (2007), women rarely own land in Nigeria, despite their high involvement in agriculture (See also Akanle, 2015a). African culture discriminates a lot against women and girls, especially in the area of land inheritance (Fabiyi *et al.*, 2007, Nwanekezie, 1996). Women have little access to capital and other assets including trading, transport, land and technology that make agricultural production easy and profitable (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2000).

A study carried out in Bliiri local government area of Gombe state showed that 83% of women have to beg for farmlands from their husbands and relations (Fabiyi *et al.*, 2007) due to cultural dictates that control all aspects of life in such societies. Land ownership provides security for access to credit to purchase inputs for cash crops (Akanle, 2011). Land however is not freely acquired in Nigeria, it belongs to a certain set of people and transactions have to be made before land can be used. Land has to be authorised by the government, either for farming or for sale of agricultural products in markets. This makes it difficult to access land because of the long process of acquiring it. A lot of forms have to be obtained and different individuals are required to sign before land is acquired. Because of the patriarchal economic and social power relations in most African societies, access to land and agriculture space have also become gender relative (Akanle, 2015a). Access to land, to agricultural inputs, to food and agricultural commodities are mostly male dominated, and this is what Akanle (2015b) termed *gender sidelining*.

The gender relational scenarios and sidelining playing out in the society therefore find expression and accentuation in the markets. These can be seen in the structures and land access in markets as what is sold and where the sale

spaces are located are genderly determined and moderated (Akanle and Chukwu, 2013). Access to market land and structures of markets are therefore gender sensitive. For instance, regarding the sale power structure in markets, middlemen and women are very powerful in determining the products that enter the market, how products are distributed and sold and even where and how much they are sold (Akanle and Chukwu, 2013). Of particular interest is that middle men have the power to cause scarcity of commodities and determine or control commodity prices more than middle women reflecting larger gender ethos and norms (Olaoba, 2000). In the sale of food produce in Bodija market, there are three powerful forces; the producer, middlemen and women, and market overseers (often referred to as Iyaloja and Babaloja) (Olaoba, 2000) and gender plays central roles in the power blocs/forces activities. The middlemen and women are easily connected with a constant flow of information and they usually get informed sometimes without the knowledge of the market overseer and thereby control the market forces without any regulation only with recourse to gender norms (Akanle and Chukwu, 2013). Given the fact that control over land has been handed over to the state through the Land Use Act, 1978, the state therefore oversees the allocation of land to individuals in the state but informal actors working within instituted gender norms are also key in this area (Akanle and Chukwu, 2014).

An organised marketing system makes it convenient for producers to deliver produce to wholesalers and for wholesalers to deliver to retailers. Although there is a new development of integrated markets through the rising of supermarket chains, the importance of traditional wholesale marketing has still not waned (Akanle and Adebayo, 2016). According to Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) wholesale market still accounts for 50-80% of the overall trade in fresh produce in the most developing countries. The middlemen and women are easily connected with a constant flow of information as soon as producers arrive in the market. They usually get informed sometimes without the knowledge of the market overseer and thereby control the market forces without any regulation. Thus, the price of a commodity in Bodija market depends largely on whatever formal and informal systems exist (Akanle and Chukwu, 2014). Obviously the middle men and women sometimes turn out to be economic saboteurs for the producers, wholesalers and retailers, as well as the market overseer (Akanle and Chukwu, 2014; Olaoba, 2000). Women are largely responsible for selling and marketing of traditional crops in sub-Saharan Africa such as maize, sorghum, cassava and leafy vegetables in local markets. Wholesale marketing in urban markets are mostly male dominated while retail shops and open markets are usually dominated by women. Women's diversified activities in agriculture starts with growing agricultural products, processing them and the last stage is trading them (Blackden and Wodon, 2006; IndiaAgroNet.com, n.d). The challenge

however is that women are finding it hard to retain control over the production, processing and marketing of these traditional crops.

The major role of markets is to facilitate the exchange of produce between sellers and buyers. The wholesale and assembly system assist in price formation for domestic produce. Whether the farmer supplies to them or they go to buy in bulk from the farmers, determines the price they would sell to the retailers and this determines the final price to the consumers. In cases of developing economies, the wholesale and assembly system might slowly emerge. The state or government is often involved with the provision of low-cost rental facilities such as covered or street markets. Since the Land Use Act of 1978 has given the ownership of land to the federal government allocated to individuals through the local governments, however, the appropriate management of these is often not encouraging, resulting in poorly maintained markets especially in terms of hygiene, access, structure/arrangements and distribution with gender playing a role. High rental stall prices often drive traders out of the market onto the streets. Some market lands are leased out to a single entity which leads to the distortion in the structure of the market (World Farmers Organization, 2016). This article, as objective, therefore examines how land is allocated to the traders (land access) of agricultural produce in Bodija market based on gender, land been a major factor that determines market participation. This objective is engaged within the broader framework of influences patriarchal economy and social relations have an access to land in Bodija market.

The Research Process

The study that informed this article was conducted in Bodija market, in the North-East local government of Oyo state in 2016. Bodija market is among the most popular and consistently traditional agricultural markets in Africa (Akanle and Chukwu, 2014 and Akanle and Chukwu, 2013). Bodija market as one of the most prominent and popular markets in Nigeria and West of Africa is known for its wholesale and retailing of major agricultural products. The market is so popular so much that it experiences daily influx of buyers and sellers from various parts of the nation. Located in one of the fastest growing ancient city in Nigeria –Ibadan, Bodija market holds much importance to the economic growth of the Ibadan and Oyo state. This therefore shows the relevance of the market to the study. The market provided strong and relevant context for understanding gender elements of agricultural resources access and deployment given its strong enduring nature, popularity and agricultural products preponderance- agriculture been a strong sector with profound lopsided gender relations. The research adopted exploratory research design. Qualitative method of data collection was adopted. Purposive sampling system was adopted to selected interviewees. Selection was based on knowledge, availability, informed consent and experience. All interviewees were active members of the market who have operated in the market over many years. A

total of 38 in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with operatives of the market. In other words, 38 agricultural produce traders who sell agricultural produces were interviewed.

The interviews were conducted for 25 female traders and 13 male traders. More women were purposively selected to accommodate and gather more female voices around the gender issues of interest. Hence, we particularly selected more women because their experiential and existential worldviews have capacities to add important, hitherto uncaptured, perspectives to nexus of gender, agriculture, marketing and land access narratives globally and in Africa. Males were however included to balance the gender perspectives/views and serve as counterfactuals so as to have more robust and nuanced data gathered. Five agricultural produces were selected based on the peculiarity and popularity in the market. The produce lines selected included pepper, vegetables, meat, yam flower and yam. These were major produces that Bodija market is mostly known for. Purposive sampling method was utilized based on knowledge and availability of the interviewees. Inclusion criteria were primarily based on willingness to be interviewed, knowledge of the research issues and gender. Data gathered were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Content analysis was adopted in data analysis and presented as ethnographic narratives, interpretations and summaries. Ethical considerations of anonymity, non-maleficence, beneficence, right of withdrawal and informed consents were observed throughout the study.

Findings and Data Analysis: Trajectories of Gender and Access to Land

In Nigeria today, there is vibrant market lands which are informally allocated and thereby have a lot of problems associated with them. Some lands are allocated directly through government grants, but a significant number of such lands are allocated through “schemes” programs in which the state creates a development scheme, builds the needed structure, and allocates the land to those who would directly make use of it (see also OECD, 2007). The findings of this study show that land acquisition (access) in Bodija market is not always directly from the government unlikely commonly believed by observers. Most of the traders had the land/stalls rented out to them by the initial/original owners. Some do not even own stalls but display their produce on the market streets, thereby obstructing free passage of buyers, sellers and motorists. Currently, more than 70 percent of buying and selling take place in the informal parts of the market. It was observed that increase in informal acquisition has brought some problems which include unreliable land titles and transactions, and widespread fraud (see also OECD, 2007). The informal land market has supported poor documentation and planning of subdivisions of land, and disregarded the state’s collection of land charges and transaction fees.

The problem with renting shop is that you might not be able to get the shop from the person who owns the land directly. The person who rented it from the person who owns the land might decide to shift to another place and then rent the place to someone else. (IDI 12/Yam trader/Male/Bodija market/2016)

Another interviewee maintained that

The shop where I stay is owned by an old man and he had to rent it out since he cannot come to sell in the market anymore and has no need for it. (IDI 26/Pepper trade/Female/Bodija market/2016)

The arrangements observed in the market show a setting whereby most of the traders selling the same produce stay in the same section. Even those who did not stay in the section still had an allotted space in the section created by the government authority. Land in Bodija market is owned by the government and private individuals. The findings of this study show that the sections where block shops are built are owned by the government while those that are built with wood are privately owned.

According to an interviewee:

We don't own the land where we sell our produce. This is our shop, it is a transferred property. Someone might take it for the real owner, increase the money and rent it out to someone else. This land belongs to someone. They just rent out ordinary land in this place, and we constructed the wood and roofed it to protect our yams. The block shops are built and owned by the government. (IDI 18/Yam trader/Female/Bodija market-yam section/2016)

Access to land in Bodija is by knowing the land owner or someone who knows the owner. Few of the traders actually got the land from the local government. For a trader to be successful in the market or to have access to a good shop/land location, he/she has to have a good social network to connect them to the right individuals or the leaders of the government. According to Persell (2008), a social network is a set of relations, links or ties among social actors. Social network is a form of human organisation which is enduring and shows connections between individuals (Monnier, 2010). Giving details of how the market started, the Iyaloja of the yam flower traders said:

I own the place where I sell my produce. The market belongs to the government and we pay to them. I pay directly to the local government council. We were first at Orita-Merin, but there were a lot of accidents where people were killed by cars. Six (6) associations

own/govern this market and they went to the council/government to ask for the solutions. Bodija market was handed over to these six (6) associations and they distributed the land to people. (IDI 5/Yam flower trader/Female/Bodija market/2016)

Another interviewee asserted that;

We rent the land on which we sell per year. One person owns this row of lands and we rent it from them and pay yearly. It was when they first started the market that they collected some things from people, but now it is being transferred from one person to the other. So after we pay rent, they don't collect anything else from us. (IDI 10/Yam Trader/Male/yam section, Bodija market/2016)

Another interviewee is of the opinion that:

Getting land in Bodija or the shop has to be by contacting someone you know who knows the owner of the land or shop. We have a good relationship with other yam sellers, and so if I want to get a land I can easily connect with the owner of the land through other members who sell yam too. A person cannot just get a land or rent a shop without getting the help of someone who can attest to your own behaviour and convince the owner to give it out to you. (IDI 17/Yam trader/Female/Bodija market/2016)

Given the patriarchal economic and social power relations in most African societies, land and agriculture space have also been gender relative (Akanle, 2015b). However, the only requirement to getting land or a space to sell in Bodija Market is to have money. This objective was further investigated by probing into the need for the opposite gender to follow trader to get access to land. However, regarding gender and access to land in Bodija market, most of the respondents saw no need for the opposite gender following the other to get land or a shop. Most of the interviewees who said the opposite gender had to follow them to get a land are the women.

Gender is not a determinant of who gets land, as long as you have your own money. If you have money, you can rent a place. (IDI 10/Yam trader/Male/Bodija market/2016)

Another interviewee said;

If one wants to go and collect a shop, it is a man that would follow her. One cannot do anything and not tell her husband so there is no one that would follow you other than your husband. (IDI 15/Yam flower trader/Female/Bodija market/2016)

Another interviewee opined that;

A person cannot just get land or rent a shop without getting the help of someone who can attest to your own behaviour and convince the owner to give it out to you. (IDI 17/Yam trader/Female/Bodija market/2016)

The findings reveal that access to land for both genders affect their marketing of agricultural produce in Bodija market. Even though there may appear to be no overt restrictions on accessing land by particular gender in the market, systemic, systematic and strategic covert restrictions exist and these are moderated by conscious and unconscious gender norms and ethos. For instance, although a particular gender might be restricted because of systemic access to money, weak networks or lack of human resources, such restrictions are never explicitly stated in gender terms by the government. The power also lies in the hands of those who want to rent the lands or stalls out to the traders. A particular land owner might require a trader to bring along the opposite gender, thereby restricting free access to land (by purchase or rent). The tenure system in the market is the yearly payment and renewal of rent. The owner of the shop might decide not to renew the rent and give it to another trader for a higher pay. Sometimes, the character of the trader and the use of the stall determine if the rent would be renewed or not. Not all stalls in the market are built by the government, some belong to private owners. An interviewee who also doubles as a worker at Ibadan North Local Government, Mr. X said often times government builds samples of what the stalls should look like and rent the land out to traders who then build the stalls. The structure of a market is usually defined in terms of the type of competition that exists in the market. This is determined by the number of buyers and sellers of a particular product in the market. Olukosi *et al.* (2003) defined market structure as the organisation of the market which strategically influences the nature of competition in the market. There are different classifications for determining the structure of a market.

Study showed that market entry and competition in the market were not influenced by gender. A person who wanted to enter the market had to either contact leaders or put in for apprenticeship. Most of the respondents made reference to contacting someone already in the market that could connect them to the leaders of the association or the market. Although the market could be said to be an open market, a trader had to get approval before produce can be brought in and sold. Competition in the market is based on the type of

agricultural produce sold and not on gender. Bodija market could be said to be a perfectly competitive market. A perfectly competitive market is a market where both the buyers and sellers have common knowledge of the market price. There is also a uniform price among the traders for a particular produce.

To enter the market, one has to first go to the leaders of the association of what one wants to come and sell in the market. And when you are accepted to join, you would pay to the association. (IDI 23/Yam flower trader/Male/Bodija market/2016)

Another interviewee said;

Anyone who has never learnt meat selling has to learn it before coming to the market, and he or she would decide the number of years to use for the training, whether 4 or 5 years. After this the boss would free him/her and he would join the association. (IDI 32/Meat trader/Male/Bodija market/23-08-2016)

Another respondent said;

To enter the market one has to contact the people already selling that same produce in the market and they would introduce the new person to the leaders of the association, and the new person would register with them. (IDI 25/Pepper trader/Female/Bodija market/22-08-2016)

The findings of this study showed that Bodija market is a perfectly competitive market with many buyers and sellers and there is common knowledge of the price of each agricultural produce sold. Bodija market could also be seen as a wholesale and retail market. The market arrangement allows for producers/farmers to come and deliver their produce to traders in the market. The market has an arrangement of sections for each produce sold. However, traders do not follow this arrangement. Most traders want to display their produce on the street close to the main road so they can sell their produce quickly. Some of those who sell on the street have their own rented stalls while others do not.

Theoretical Orientation and Discussion of Findings

The article theoretically engaged how gender has influenced decisions to sell one type of agricultural produce or the other and access to land. Feminist and gender and development theory are two theories that believe that women's segregation or discrimination are social constructions which can be changed

since they are not biological. Both theories tried to look at women's life, while feminist theory focused on women's segregation only in three different forms for instance radical, liberal and socialist explanations for it. Gender and development looked at the emerging involvement of women in development. How the recognition of women's knowledge, work, goals and responsibility can actually aid development in a society. Both theories are of the view that when segregation exists in the society it is often as a result of gender and women are at the edge of the suffering. The two theories are made use of because while one focuses centrally on the issues of inferiority that women face, the other goes further to look at the benefits of involving women in development, getting women and men likewise to understand their roles and improve on it. Feminist theory can be said to be a theory for women while gender and development is a theory about the roles of men and women. This becomes relevant in not just considering women in the market place but also the roles both men and women play and the influence their gender has on their choices, chances and social relations.

Gender roles are identified with each gender relative to their access to resources. The importance of land or space cannot be undermined for the marketing of any type of produce. Bodija market is located in a strategic area in Ibadan city and covers a large area of land mass. This research tried to find out the accessibility of traders; both male and female, to the acquiring of land either rent or ownership. The study showed that the essential resources needed to acquire land/space in Bodija market is money and networking. Policy brief 064 (2014) showed that women tend to have less extensive networks than men, along with less available time to make social and political connections. This could account for some responses of interviewees who said that it is necessary for men to follow women before land can be allocated or stalls rented to them. According to Visvanathan (1997), a feminist, "women were prevented from conducting business without a male representative". Women therefore have to sometimes rely on the networking of men who can represent them before they acquire land.

Studies have shown that restriction of women's movement by partners places a limit on their effective participation in marketing (Susan, 2004). This is found to be true for women whose business involves travelling to buy their agricultural produce from the farm. Women who are not given this freedom would have to retail for those who go to buy in bulk and this reduces their chances for expansion. This could account for why more men sell in wholesale quantities and women sell in retail quantities. Women do not also have the luxury of freedom to meet farmers at the market gates early in the morning to purchase and so have to pay extra 10% fees (*owo ile*), for the men who are put in custody of it (Olutayo, 2005; Olukosi, Isitor and Ode, 2005). The Nigerian society has been constructed in a way that the status quo has over time been that men take leadership roles while women are only given ceremonial honours. Although the constitution allows for the political participation of women, the social construction and traditions of the society hinders it. When

some interviewees were asked why women are not taking leadership roles, they made reference to the fact that women would not be allowed. Some even backed up the statement with reference to the religion stating that the man is the head.

Women are therefore generally, even in themselves, reluctant to take leadership roles because they feel they would not be allowed to. It is however noteworthy that implicating religion as reason for poor women leadership representation in the market is only a reflection of deep subjective socio-cultural and economic preventive structures. What plays out in the market is simply a reflection of what plays out in the larger African societies and Nigeria in particular. As observed in Bodija market, a lot of women have also resigned to fate and self-fulfilling gender prophecies given years of successful negative leadership orientation, conscientization and socialization of the women in many societies across the world. Reasons for poor women's active roles in market leadership are therefore beyond religion but co-mingling forces of religion, culture, tradition, power, economy and generalized institutional interfacing with implicative gender actions.

Hence, an interviewee emphatically maintains it is not possible for a woman to become the Nigerian president, and even if a woman tries, she would not get there at the first try. Women have been used to struggling to get what they want and sometimes they just give up trying. The study revealed that the women who are allowed to participate in the association are usually very old women. Generally, positions given to women are usually honorary positions and they are often given to oldest women in the association since they do not particularly need them to work. These women are just allowed to contribute to decision making because of their wealth of knowledge and supposed influence on the women in the market. This also reveals that young traders are not allowed to participate in market politics and so the old order of how things were done still continues.

Associations in Bodija market have been very effective in price regulations and ensuring the success of their members by preventing them from loss (Olutayo, 2005). The price regulations however are adhered to base on each individual's initiative and the farm price at which each trader gets his or her produce (Olutayo, 2005). The trader could also decide to sell for less than the price limit if there is urgent need for money. The rules and regulations of each association are geared towards protecting its members. The money contributed to the association are often used to help members either through loans, gift for ceremonies or in settling disputes with authorities. Social relations analysis shows the social dimension of power hierarchy in social institutions and also its influence in determining the relative position of women and men in society (Razavi and Miller, 1995). Apart from the requirement of joining the association before one can sell any agricultural produce in Bodija market, a trader has to also go through the period of learning the trade from someone

who is an expert in it. Most of the respondents conceded to this fact. In fact, this is a required step before joining the association. According to the traders, anyone, male or female who does not undergo the learning process, is bound to fail in the first few months of business.

Conclusion

The article established that the land of Bodija market belongs to the Ibadan North local government. Part of the land was sold to some private individuals who rent it out to traders who build stalls with wood and roofing materials. The other part of the market which is government owned is built with blocks and rent is paid to the government. The tenure system for rent payment is yearly. A major requirement to getting land in Bodija market is money. Most of the current traders in the market did not originally get their stalls or shops from the local government. Some traders own shops in the market but still prefer to come onto the streets to sell their produce because of their perceived relationships between visibility and high profitable sales. The market leaders however are more interested in collecting money from preventing sellers to sell on the market streets. Apart from male meat traders, most of the traders that can be found selling on the streets are women. The study also showed that apart from money, women also need men to accompany them to rent or acquire a stall/shop. This revealed the prevalence of patriarchy in the market setting also. The article also established the importance of social capital/networking in getting a shop and getting in a good location.

The structure of Bodija market, based on entry and exit is a perfectly competitive one. The market has a lot of sellers for the same agricultural produce and they form associations where there is common knowledge of price, for instance, for every produce. Based on the quantity of agricultural produce sold, Bodija market is both a wholesale and retail market. The article showed that more men sell in wholesale quantity¹ than women while more women are involved in selling in retail quantities. The organization of the market showed cluster of traders according to type of produce sold and not necessarily by gender. The women who sell meat are in clustered setting at the market entrance far away from the space allotted to meat sellers. It can be concluded based on findings from the study that gender play crucial roles in access to land and space and marketing processes and systems of Bodija market and policy makers, and other stakeholders must appreciate this and factor it to planning and development of markets in Nigeria and Africa.

¹ This shows consequences of more deep-seated systemic and subjective gender empowerment and disempowerment. Selling wholesale requires more social networks, time, management capabilities, capita/funds and power brokerage, to mention but a few. These are vital and strategic socio-economic resources more readily available to men than women in Africa/Nigeria given the social structure of societies.

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