



**THE ROLE OF CO-OPERATIVES IN ENHANCING
THE PRODUCTIVITY AND PARTICIPATION OF
RURAL NIGERIAN WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to the countless girls and women out there who steadily strive to be appreciated by societal 'norms', this is to your potential living.

I also dedicate this work to all boys and men, this is to your appreciated understanding of the issues girls and women in your community face; but know that you are not to blame.

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Firstly, I thank God, my Father, for your gracious goodness towards me. I acknowledge that without your love and the help of your Spirit in me, I am nothing.

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian agricultural sector experiences low levels of participation and productivity of rural women farmers, even though women contribute more agricultural labour than men do. These low levels of participation and production of women farmers in the country results from gender-specific roles determined by the society. In a bid to understand the challenges that women face, the researcher derived data from secondary sources, making use of comparative methods and the liberal feminist approach. The researcher, in analysing the contributions of co-operatives in improving women's status in Tanzania and Uganda found positive cases. However, co-operatives have limited capabilities in ensuring gender equality. Therefore, the researcher recommends that gender sensitive laws and policies be enacted, and strategies for gender sensitisation of the public be adopted.

Keywords: agriculture; gender inequality; co-operatives; Nigeria.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AGRA:	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AGRF:	African Green Revolution Forum
AMCOS:	Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Society
EFInA:	Enhancing Financial Innovation and Access
FAO:	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
FCC:	Federal Cooperative College
FMARD:	Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development
ICA:	International Co-operative Alliance
IFAD:	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO:	International Labour Organisation
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
NBS:	National Bureau of Statistics
NCAA:	The National Coalition on Affirmative Action
NPC:	National Population Commission
RCS:	Registered Cooperative Society
SACCOS:	Savings and Credit Cooperative Society

SAOS:	Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SSA:	Sub-Saharan Africa
UCA:	Uganda Cooperative Alliance
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
WFP:	World Food Programme
WIA:	Women in Agriculture

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

A particular phenomenon African countries at the south of the Sahara (commonly referred to as sub-Saharan Africa) are known with is '*potential*'. Countries referred to as *sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)* (see Figure 1) have always had great potential, ranging from the political scene to its ever-evasive socio-economic prosperity, and development experts have posited that African governments can be successful in exploiting this potential through industrial and agricultural development (KPMG, 2013). The current President of the African Development Bank, and former Nigerian Minister of Agricultural and Rural Development, Dr Akinwumi Adesina, recognises this potential, but he notes that “*Africa cannot eat potential*”, thus indirectly calling on African leaders to take serious, matters that concern the development of the region (Adesina, 2015).

Having much potential, the economies of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), including Nigeria, still suffer retarded growth due to their vast untapped potentials (Oxford Business Group, 2013). It is believed that agriculture, a much neglected economic sector of sub-Saharan Africa, accounts for about two-thirds of livelihoods in the region (The Africa Progress Panel, 2012). This underdeveloped state of African agriculture perpetuates the poor living and working standards of small-scale farmers who dominate the agricultural environments of these countries, leaving the female farmers at a greater disadvantage than the male farmers (Azih, 2008). Amongst the small-scale farmers in sub-Saharan Africa are the women farmers

who are mostly engaged with low-paying agricultural jobs, like weeding and harvesting. Small-scale farmers in the region contribute about 90% of agricultural production in the region (Azih, 2008).

Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009) discovered that in subsistence agriculture in Africa, food production is mainly done by women, with fewer efforts and contributions from men, yet the contributions they make remain unrecognised and unacknowledged. From an assessment of the Heluo community in Kenya, their findings show that the percentage of work done by women farmers far outweighs that of men. Further studies carried out by Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009) revealed that small farms owned by women provide about 80% of the total food production in Ghana, 87% of the rural female farmers contribute significant quotas to food production in Tanzania, and female farmers contribute about 80% of agricultural labour for household crops in Zambia. These are countries located in the sub-Saharan Africa region (see Figure 1.1).

A major portion of Nigerian agricultural production is at the level of small and family farms (Azih, 2008; Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009), and in some Nigerian communities, women are encouraged to solely focus on producing food crops for sustaining the family, leaving men in control of the production of cash/export crops, like cocoa (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2013b; Mtsor and Idisi, 2014). It is ironic, however, that though women contribute up to 60-80% of the labour force to agriculture and rural development, such contributions mostly go unnoticed and undocumented (Azih, 2008, p. 39; Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009, p. 28). In spite of their major contributions to the agricultural sector, female farmers play little or no role in

the decision-making process regarding agricultural development in Nigeria (The National Coalition on Affirmative Action [NCAA], 2006; Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). This makes it evident that gender inequality remains a dominant factor that hinders the development of the Nigerian agricultural sector, and indeed many other sectors.

The 2007 National Gender Policy developed by the Nigerian government to engender gender equality shows the contributions of female farmers in agriculture and their unreasonable lack of access to productive facilities (NCAA, 2006). The document shows that women are responsible for 70% of agricultural labour, 50% of animal husbandry, and 60% of food processing activities, but only have access to 20% of available agricultural resources (land, credit, and improved seeds). This suggests that men enjoy greater favour and benefit from public and private support for farmers than their female counterparts (NCAA, 2006).

These issues, Azih (2008) contends in his study, slow down the productivity of female farmers more than the male farmers who mostly dominate the decision processes that determine agricultural investments and production. According to Azih (2008), the plight of the Nigerian female farmer is as a result of various issues including inadequate land access, relative poverty, poor farmer education/skills, an ageing workforce, and other cultural barriers to women's acquisition of productive assets. He contends that the difficulty in accessing land is the major challenge faced by female farmers in Nigeria, and blames it for leading to the incidence of prevalent poverty amongst female farmers (Azih, 2008).

In view of the risks to which female farmers are facing nationwide, some specific programmes were designed for the benefit of women, towards equal gender participation. These include the Women in Agriculture (WIA) programme, but such programmes have been holistically ineffective in ensuring women empowerment as women remain marginalised (Azih, 2008). This reveals the need for more sustainable approaches to be adopted across the Nigerian agricultural sector to represent and meet the needs of female farmers who are prone to agricultural marginalisation, and to eventually resolve gender marginalisation.



Figure 1.1: Map of sub-Saharan Africa.

Source: Tes Lessons¹.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

Poverty is one prevalent issue that is usually and very easily associated with sub-Saharan Africa, and Nigeria is not excluded in any measure from the plague of poverty. According to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Scorecard, Nigeria regressed in its contributions towards eradicating poverty and hunger within its borders due to several factors including poor agricultural productivity (The Africa Progress Panel, 2011). Studies on gender issues and agriculture, however, claim that the prevalence of poverty is as a result of the unaccounted, unrecognised, and undeveloped agricultural capabilities of female farmers in the country (NCAA, 2006; Azih, 2008; Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009).

Women produce up to 80% of the food in Africa, but they have been recorded to receive only 7% of agricultural extension services, less than 10% of agricultural credit available to small-scale farmers, and own only 1% of the land (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2012). Babatunde, Olorunsanya, and Adejola (2008) and Olawuyi and Adetunji (2013), from studies on household poverty in South-western Nigeria, reveal the significant levels of rural household poverty engendered by gender inequality in agriculture. Poverty rate remains higher and more prevalent among women small-scale farmers and those who do not belong to any farmer group. Such is due to low agricultural productivity levels reported to be more prevalent among them because rural women have less

¹ A map of Africa showing Nigeria, amongst other countries in the south of the Africa Sahara – commonly referred to as sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (https://www.tes.com/lessons/xfvrjvw_tba2CQ/world-regions).

access than men to the resources and opportunities they need to be fully productive in agriculture (Babatunde, Olorunsanya, and Adejola, 2008; Olawuyi and Adetunji, 2013).

Gender constraints have greatly hindered the full participation of women in agricultural development in Nigeria, and even in most sub-Saharan Africa countries. Gender inequality in agriculture, especially food production, has grave socio-economic repercussions for Nigeria at household, community and national levels (Food and Agricultural Organisation [FAO], International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], and World Food Programme [WFP], 2012).

1.3 Aim of Research

Agricultural productivity is at very low levels in Nigeria, and female farmers have lower levels of productivity than their male counterparts (Azih, 2008). The Africa Human Development Report 2012 estimates the gap between male and female productivity in Nigeria to be around 40%, to the disadvantage of the female farmers. The report also states that if efforts are made to close the gender divide, agricultural productivity could be enhanced (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2012).

The researcher embarked on this research with the aim of attaining insight on the issues surrounding low participation and insufficient productivity of Nigerian women in agriculture, and to assess the viability of the co-operative model as an essential instrument in bridging the gender divide and in enhancing the productivity and participation of rural Nigerian women in agriculture. With gender equality haven been stated as a global

development goal by the United Nations (see Box 1.1) renders this study a timely endeavour in a bid to increase and sustain the participation, productivity, and efficiency of female farmers (Azih, 2008).

Box 1.1

Sustainable Development Goal 5

Goal: to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Targets (relevant to this study):

1. End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
2. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
3. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

Adapted from UNGA (2015, p. 18).

1.4 Research Questions

In the course of this study, the researcher endeavours to uncover the answers to the following probing questions:

1. Why are there such low levels of productivity and participation of rural women in agriculture in Nigeria?
2. How entrenched is gender inequality in the Nigerian agricultural sector?
3. What significant roles can co-operatives play in sustainably bridging the gender divide in the Nigerian agricultural sector?

1.5 Justification for the Research

Agriculture is a key driver of economic growth, poverty reduction, human security and social development of

African societies (The Africa Progress Panel, 2011), and Azih (2008) contends that the support of the Nigerian agricultural sector is a necessary element if Nigerian government is to achieve its policy goals. However, the underdeveloped state of the country's agricultural sector is largely due to the marginalisation of female farmers and little attention which has been given to the agricultural sector over the years (Azih, 2008).

The International Labour Organisation estimates that globally, half of women's productive potential is underutilised, compared to one-fifth of men's potential (ILO, 2010), and this further disempowers women in their own communities and families (Learner, 2016). Hence why improving the productive potential of small-scale female farmers in Nigeria is the essence of this research.

1.6 Scope and Research Method

The researcher is focused on understanding issues surrounding gender disparities in agricultural participation and productivity in rural Nigeria, and the marginalisation of women. Therefore, the research is limited to issues concerning gender inequality, and not necessarily family farming or small-scale farming in general.

In order to carry out this study so as to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives, qualitative techniques were employed and data was sourced from academic journals, articles, online libraries, and data sets prepared by international development organisations (like the United Nations), and seminar papers.

The research study was approached from a liberal feminist perspective, with the researcher adopting

descriptive and comparative methods of analysis. These methods guided the researcher in making inferences from success stories of agricultural co-operatives in Tanzania and Uganda, both of which have similar political, cultural, and socio-economic histories and milieus as Nigeria.

1.7 General Overview of Chapters

This section briefly outlines the structure and central contents of the six (6) chapters embedded in the research study. The roadmap of this research will be as follows:

Chapter 1 (Introduction) presents a general introduction to the research: highlighting the background of the research study; adequately stating the problem the research investigates; outlining the questions serving as guiding principles for the research; bearing the reasons why the topic is a research-worthy endeavour; and defining the scope of the research and methods employed during the research process.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review and Theoretical Framework) proceeds to make an academic review of standard existing literature bearing thoughts on areas relating to gender inequality, agriculture, and co-operatives; and it also considers the theoretical standpoint from which the researcher approached the research study.

Chapter 3 (Methodology) contains a more detailed assessment of the analytical methods – qualitative and comparative methods – adopted by the researcher in the analysis of data collected.

Chapter 4 (Findings) reveals the findings discovered by the researcher during the research process and bears the propositions made as a result of the findings.

Chapter 5 (Analysis and Discussion) outlines the researcher's analysis of findings made during the research, and discussions on relevant factors influencing the research variables.

Chapter 6 (Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations) consists of the summary of major findings per study chapter, the researcher's conclusion on the research topic, and recommendations proposed based on the researcher's findings during the course of the research study.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter of the research study will set the context of the research by exploring relevant literature on gender marginalisation, agricultural co-operatives, and rural agricultural development. It also states the gap in the literature that it intends to fill, which is to show how the marginalisation of women in agriculture is a reflection of societal, political-economic, and local constitutional behaviours towards women, and the limits of farmer groups in addressing gender inequality.

This chapter also addresses the theoretical approach employed by the researcher in the research study, whilst making clear some basic concepts like “gender equality”, “small-scale farming”, and “co-operatives”.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Trends in Small-scale Agriculture in Nigeria

The Nigerian agricultural sector is dominated by family farming and small-scale agriculture, as about 90% of agricultural output is accounted for by farming households (Abdulquadri and Mohammed, 2012). Most staple and cash crops are cultivated by small-scale farmers – cocoa (Cadoni, 2013); cassava (Asante-Pok, 2013); maize (Cadoni and Angelucci, 2013a); and rice

(Cadoni and Angelucci, 2013b). However, small-scale agriculture in Nigeria is plagued with gender inequality.

Olomola (2013) defends the notion that small-scale farming in Nigeria is characterised by unequal access to key resources and low levels of investments. This shows that not only is the Nigerian agricultural sector dominated by small-scale farming, but male and female farmers do not have equal access to necessary productive resources. It, however, becomes necessary to understand what small-scale farming entails.

2.1.1.1 Definition and characteristics of small-scale farming

Small-scale farming refers to productive agricultural activities usually carried out on small plot size lands of up to 2 hectares of land, and most small-scale farmers have limited access to agricultural resource materials, low technologies, and are largely dependent on household members for most of the labour inputs (Prášková, 2014). Pinto (2009) indicates that 85% of the 460 million farms in the world are small-scale farms. This, thus, suggests that small-scale farmers make up a larger proportion of the world's farmers.

2.1.1.2 Small-scale farming in Nigeria

According to recent studies, including a report by the Nigerian government, there are an estimated 14 million farmers in Nigeria, of which 80% are small-scale farmers (National Bureau of Statistics, 2013a; Mgbenka and Mbah, 2016). This shows that the Nigerian agricultural system is largely small-scale and household food and nutrition security relies heavily on rural food production.

Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009) make similar argument contending that little over 90% of agricultural output is accounted for by households with less than 2 hectares, with most small-scale farmers residing in rural Nigeria.

2.1.2 Agricultural Gender Inequality in Nigeria

In a study carried out in Gombe State, Nigeria, Fabiyi et al. (2007) show clearly that women are major contributors to both domestic activities and on the farm. Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009), in a study in northern Nigeria, involving the Jukun people and the nomadic Fulfude women and Kulka women farmers, also state that about 70-80% of agricultural labour force is represented by women, with men contributing fewer efforts.

This, however, is not a predominant case in the north only but is also experienced in other regions, as Adamu and Idisi (2014) assert that rural Nigerian women in the North, South East, and South West handle most of the household tasks and contribute more labour input in agriculture than men.

Mukasa and Salami (2015), in explaining why women farmers are poorer than male farmers in spite of the fact that they contribute more efforts to productivity than men, claim that there are more women engaged in informal and/or unpaid employment than those gainfully employed in agriculture in Nigeria.

Rahman (2008) argue that gender inequality is a function of the gender division of labour in rural agricultural activities and elsewhere. Hence, the issue of gender inequality does not just affect the agricultural sector alone, but several others as well (see Figure 2.1).

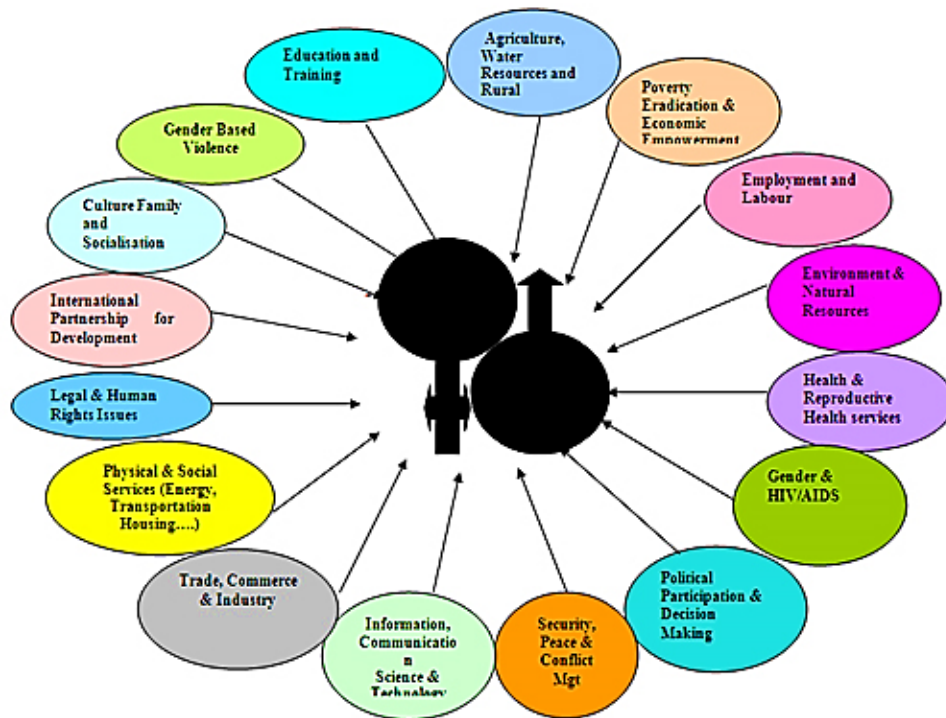


Figure 2.1: Sectors characterised with, and issues caused by, gender inequality in Nigeria.

Source: Extracted from the Nigerian National Gender Policy document² (NCAA, 2006).

But how then can one fully understand the extent to which gender inequality exists in the agricultural sector? How can one gain insights to the disparity that cripples the Nigerian agricultural sector? A possible place to start is understanding the factors that perpetuate gender disparity by addressing the constraints hindering the participation of women farmers in gainful agricultural activities.

² The unfair and unequal treatments between the sexes, which is largely in favour of men, is an issue that transcends the agricultural sector in Nigeria, making it a global concern.

2.1.3 Constraints Hindering the Productivity and Participation of Rural Women in Agriculture in Nigeria

The state of food and agriculture in Nigeria remains at poor levels because the system does not cater for the local food producers, especially the women whose vast contributions have gone unnoticed and undocumented.

The challenges limiting the productivity and full participation of rural Nigerian women in agriculture include a lack of adequate access to productive inputs (e.g. land, improved seeds, fertilizers, etc.), limited access to financial credit facilities, continued use of crude agricultural tools (e.g. hoes and cutlasses), burdensome workload, exploitation by extension service providers, amongst others (NCAA, 2006).

2.1.3.1 Gender and access to land

Gender inequality has made women's access to land very challenging in Nigeria because land is a source of life, culture and identity in African communities, transcending far beyond just an economic factor of production (Odebode, 2012).

National Population Commission (NPC, 2013), cited in Adamu and Idisi (2014), show that about 15% of women farmers own land in Nigeria, compared to the 34% of men farmers who own land. Women own about 4% of agricultural land in Nigeria (Mukasa and Salami, 2015). Olomola (2013) also notes that men are 5x more likely to own land than women in Nigeria. These statistics reveal the extent of the land ownership disparity between the sexes.

Adamu and Idisi (2014) contend that women only have access to land through male relatives or through marriage rights. This limited access to land inevitably excludes women from participating in and benefitting from many available agricultural development schemes (Rahman, 2008).

In addressing this challenge of land ownership disparity, Mtsor and Idisi, (2014) report in their study that women in patriarchal societies, like Nigeria, do not have independent land rights. 'Independent' in the sense that women do not have rights, of themselves, to own land. For a woman to own land, it has to be an inheritance from either her father or late husband (as a widow).

Another cause for the recorded low levels of land ownership, as made clear by Odebode (2012) and Prášková (2012), is the ongoing case of Africa's land-grabbing by foreign governments, agribusiness companies and foreign investors. In Nigeria, over 100,000 hectares of land have been reported to be grabbed by the Nigerian government using foreign capital (Prášková, 2012). And these are instances that were recorded, and there might be several more instances of land grabs in the country that have gone unreported.

Land deals as these further aggravate the gender disparities between men and women because the lesser the lands available to rural small-scale farmers, the lesser the lands that are available to rural small-scale female farmers (Maritzová and Prášková, 2012).

Since access to productive inputs like land offer greater opportunities to farmers, a study by FAO, IFAD, and WFP (2012) propose that agricultural productivity could improve and the number of hungry people in Africa

reduced if women have the same opportunities as men. Another report by ILO (2012) opine that with women having equal access to productive resources as men, they could increase their farm yields by 20–30%, and this would not only empower them but could result in a further reduction of hungry people in the world by 12–17%.

O’Sullivan (2014), however, asserts that just merely equalising access to productive inputs for both males and females is not enough to increase the agricultural productivity of female farmers. In defending his stance, O’Sullivan (2014) notes how female farmers in northern Nigeria produce 46% less per hectare than male farmers, while female farmers in southern Nigeria produce 17% less per hectare than their male counterparts. Oseni et al. (2015) posit that even if women in the north have equal access to productive inputs as men, there will be no significant differences between both sexes.

The major challenge stems from Nigeria’s poor land ownership system (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010) which does not support rural female farmers, mostly due to their inadequate access to financial capital to acquire land. Mgbenka and Mbah (2016) contend that this inadequate access to financial credit is another major challenge for the farmers.

2.1.3.2 Inadequate access to agricultural credit

The Africa Progress Panel (2011) clearly states that a major setback to the agricultural development of Africa is a lack of access to necessary financing across the agricultural value chain, but most especially amongst small-scale female farmers.

Rahman (2008) argues that women farmers in Nigeria do not have adequate access to agricultural credit facilities, and he notes this as a major factor limiting the productivity and participation of Nigerian women in agriculture.

Concerning having access to agricultural credit, Mtsor and Idisi (2014) contend that female farmers are the most disadvantaged group due to their inability to provide collateral security which is a necessary requirement to obtain loans from financial institutions.

2.1.3.3 Limited access to input and output markets

Olomola (2013), in addressing women farmer's limited access to markets, claims that men have twice the access to inputs and extension services than women. This unbelievable lack of access persists due to the high cost of farm inputs (Mgbenka and Mbah, 2016), and also as a result of socio-cultural and physical isolation many married women are subjected to by their husbands (Kagbu and Issa, 2015).

Adamu and Idisi (2014) contend that women have limited access, not only to input markets but to output markets as well. Output markets are where farmers sell their agricultural produce for money, and Adamu and Idisi (2014) claim that women's access to these output markets is constrained due to certain factors, including variance in standards between markets, unreliable transportation to output markets, and the high cost of the trading permit at output markets.

NCAA (2006), however, notes the support programmes established by the Nigerian government to aid small-scale farmers in obtaining productive inputs. These efforts have

taken the form of distributing government-subsidised inputs to small farmers. However, a major flaw of this public endeavour, as contained in the gender policy, is that these inputs are only distributed to members of farmer groups and co-operatives, and female farmers tend to have limited membership to these farmer groups as well.

2.1.3.4 Inadequate rural infrastructure and innovative technology

Scholars like Wiggins, Kirsten, and Llambí (2010) argue that infrastructural development is a key factor in ensuring agricultural growth, and is necessary so that both small-scale and large-scale farmers can benefit. However, the Nigerian government has refused to pay attention to informed consultations as this, to the peril of rural female farmers.

Such claim is put forward by Afolabi (2008) who blames the poor state of infrastructure as a major factor hindering the access of rural farmers to output markets. According to Afolabi, bad roads make it very difficult for poor farmers to transport farm produce from their farms to the food markets where such products can be sold.

Mgbenka and Mbah (2016) further note that the agricultural productivity of small-scale farmers in Nigeria is limited because of a lack of adequate access to agricultural technology. There is a continued small farmer reliance on crude tools in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010; National Bureau of Statistics, 2013a; Mgbenka and Mbah, 2016); and in most cases, rural women find it difficult to even obtain agricultural machinery due to their limited access to knowledge and

skills compared to the men (Afolabi, 2008; FAO, IFAD, and WFP, 2012).

Abdulquadri and Mohammed (2012) contend that an estimated 90% of farm operations in Nigeria are still carried out using crude tools, and huge losses of about 30-40% of agricultural produce are recorded as a result of poor storage and processing methods and facilities. This problem of poor and insufficient storage and processing facilities are mostly borne by women farmers in the country because they employ cumbersome traditional methods in the processing of cassava into 'gari'³ (Afolabi, 2008). These cumbersome traditional methods are time-consuming, and they also increase women's dependence on wood for fuel which exposes them to several health threats (NCAA, 2006; Odebode, 2012).

2.1.3.5 Insufficient agricultural extension services

Another constraint hindering the productive participation of Nigerian female farmers in agriculture is the low levels of extension services available to them. Abdulquadri and Mohammed (2012) indicate that extension services are inadequate in Nigeria, with the ratio of 1: 25,000 (1 extension worker to 25,000 farmers), and cultural practices marginalise women in getting access to these limited extension services.

Raney et al. (2011) are of the view that male farmers receive far more extension services than female farmers because the extension service agents purposely neglect female farmers. Raney et al. (2011) claim that these extension agents do this because of a strongly held notion that women will eventually benefit from the services from

³ 'gari' is a popular convenience food in Africa, and it is made from cassava (Afolabi, 2008).

their male household heads. However, the study does not show the consequences of such decisions to single and widowed female farmers who have no husbands.

Raney et al. (2011) also note that extension services benefit farmers who employ the use of modern innovations to certain extents, but rural women are largely incapable of possessing such resources and are often rid of the extension services accrued them.

The poor availability and reliability of extension workers in the country, as Mgbenka and Mbah (2016) highlight, leave women farmers at a greater disadvantage than men.

2.1.3.6 Low literacy levels

A report on the state of the past administration's 'Transformation Agenda' indicates the existence of low literacy levels among small farmers in several regions in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2013a).

Adamu and Idisi (2014) also claim that there is a high degree of inequality in literacy levels in Nigeria, and they record a 48.6% female adult literacy as against a 65.1% male adult literacy. This, Adamu and Idisi (2014) argue, serves as a contributing factor to the low levels of productivity amongst rural female farmers.

Odebode (2012) argues for the importance of education in bringing about sustainable development because it enhances participation and helps to build confidence in women, which will, in turn, help them explore their potentials. A lack of education and training in basic skills only helps maintain the status-quo of under-development, low productivity and poor conditions of the health and welfare of women (Odebode, 2012).

However, some studies have shown that getting an education does not necessarily guarantee a woman's success in Nigeria's agricultural system. According to WB, FAO, and IFAD (2009), field studies carried out by organisations in the Caribbean, Côte d'Ivoire, Jordan, Nigeria, and the Philippines revealed that obtaining degrees in agricultural education did not necessarily give women equal opportunities to benefit from work like men.

2.1.3.7 Low participation in leadership and decision-making roles

Women lack a voice and have little access to leadership and decision-making because they are usually given a lower status than men in the Nigerian society (Odebode, 2012). Odebode argues that rural women should be encouraged to form women-only co-operatives, farm focus group discussions and traditional groups which will enable them to contribute to agricultural development. However, Odebode does not consider the possibility of women influencing men to begin paying attention to gender issues through platforms created by mixed-co-operatives.

FAO, IFAD, and WFP (2012) note that the factors hindering women's active participation in agriculture are often structural and backed by socio-cultural norms at the household and community levels. These culturally-erected structures often leave women with weakened self-esteem, which prevents them from participating in decision-making roles. More disturbing, however, is that men farmers and agricultural agents seldom consult women farmers when agricultural decisions that affect both women and men farmers are to be made (see Table 2.1).

As Adichie (2014) suggests, it has become natural to equate men with leadership positions in Africa because this is how African communities have been run for centuries now. However, Majurin (2012) is of the view that even if women get to serve as elected leaders, their service will be greatly limited by time constraints as they will have to pay attention to both household and work demands.

Decision-making area	Nil (%)	Only consulted (%)	Opinion considered (%)	Final decision (%)
Land preparation	88.0	10.5	1.5	0.0
Time of sowing	78.0	17.0	40.0	1.0
Manure/Fertilizer types and time of application	81.0	9.5	7.5	2.0
Time of weeding	94.5	4.5	1.0	0.0
Number of hired labourers and wages to be paid	67.5	19.5	18.5	4.5
Time of harvesting	55.5	18.5	14.5	1.5
Storage and marketing of farm produce	11.5	18.5	46.0	24.0
Purchase and sale of farming	73.0	14.5	6.5	1.0

implements				
Purchase and sale of farmlands	80.5	11.5	5.5	2.5
Farm credit	58.5	28.5	13.0	0.0

Table 2.1: Extent of the participation of Nigerian women in decision making in agriculture.

Source: Damisa and Yohanna (2007).

2.1.3.8 Time constraints

In Nigerian communities, and largely Africa, it is usually custom for girls and women to take care of household chores (Kagbu and Issa, 2015). These household chores, combined with farm work, consume the time of rural women and limits their participation in productive and gainful activities. Odebode (2012) notes this more clearly, stating that the involvement of rural women in these domestic activities limits their ability to participate in economically productive and income generating activities.

Adamu and Idisi (2014) also argue that women's use of crude and hand-crafted tools in rural agriculture serves as another factor that wastes time. This shows a causative relationship between women's continued use of traditional agricultural tools and time wastage, which eventually inhibits their productivity to certain extents.

The gender-specific division of labour is largely responsible for the time constraints women face in Nigeria, and Olomola (2013) puts the blame on the insensitivity of the country's legal frameworks concerning gender issues.

2.1.3.9 Gender-blind legal frameworks

As the Nigerian gender policy states, the tripartite nature of Nigeria's legal system is another major constraint hindering women's productive participation in agriculture (NCAA, 2006). As the gender policy puts forward, Nigeria adopts three (3) gender-insensitive legal systems – Islamic Sharia, customary law and common law – in its six (6) geopolitical zones, and these legal frameworks aid the marginalisation of the woman-folk (NCAA, 2006).

These laws greatly affect rural Nigerian women, and with the country's federal system giving autonomy to states, adopting gender-sensitive legislations at the federal level may not reflect in gender progress at the state and local levels (NCAA, 2006). Olomola (2013) notes this unfortunate reality claiming that local customary laws in the South, and the Islamic Sharia in the North, dictate agricultural practices which keep women marginalised.

2.1.4 The Co-operative Development Model as a Solution

Having considered the various challenges plaguing Nigerian female farmers and inhibiting their agricultural productivity, this research study proceeds to assess the viability of the co-operative model being a sustainable solution to the challenges, because Kagbu and Issa (2015) claim that co-operatives can help overcome the obstacles discussed above.

Prášková (2014) makes the case that rural co-operatives are crucial for empowering women who have more limited access to opportunities than men. Prášková (2014) cites the example of Kenya and how agricultural co-

operatives dominate the coffee, dairy, and cotton markets in the country, making the case that co-operative members enjoy market access, amongst other benefits. Schwettmann (2014) also asserts that co-operatives in Africa have been successful in providing essential services like market access, storage, and transport to farmer members.

KPMG (2013) supports the development of agricultural co-operatives as agricultural co-operatives have proven to boost the productivity of small-scale farmers by enabling them pool and share resources and knowledge. Phillip et al. (2009) show that co-operatives are already achieving the same feat in Nigeria by providing members with access to land and agricultural credit, credit which is easily attainable because farmers in groups have a greater capability to meet the requirements of financial institutions.

Ban (2015) suggests that genuine co-operatives are modelled to engender the equality of gender. He notes that co-operatives are beneficial for the empowerment of women and girls because they provide access to decent employment, equal participation of both sexes in leadership and decision-making roles, access to economic and educational opportunities for women and girls, and childcare services to ease the home-office burden on women (Ban, 2015, p.7).

This research is thus concerned with assessing the co-operative philosophy and its viability in transforming gender inequality in Nigeria's agricultural sector, which will help increase women's productivity and participation in agriculture. For as the Africa Progress Panel (2011) suggests, partnerships have a sensitive role to play in

improving agricultural development and increasing access to rural credit services, productive input materials and the food market, which are some of the prevalent challenges facing rural female farmers in Nigeria.

Unlike the Africa Progress Panel (2011) argues, this research will not consider partnerships in terms of a collaboration between the private sector and international donors, but partnerships in form of rural small-scale farmers, both men and women, coming together to form co-operative businesses in a bid to bridge the gender divide in the agricultural sector.

2.1.4.1 What is a co-operative?

A co-operative, as Chambo (2009) defines it, is an organisation formed by people with a specified common problem, and the members of the co-operative pool resources together by contributing to building assets for the co-operative. The members of a co-operative are the investors and owners of the business.

Put differently, a co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise (United Nations, 1996; Ban, 2009; ILO, 2012). Co-operatives are widely accessible, promote and support entrepreneurial development, create productive employment, raise incomes, help reduce poverty, enhance community building (Ban, 2009), and are powerful vehicles of social inclusion and political and economic empowerment of their members (ILO, 2012).

Although the history of formally developed co-operatives can be traced, but the history of acts of co-operation cannot be traced. The history of co-operation is almost as old as man himself and has been found in every early human society, including African group practices like the “Ubuntu” in Southern Africa and “Umoja” in East Africa (Schwettmann, 2014). The contemporary co-operatives were informed by these early communal living human ancestors practised.

2.1.4.2 The historical development of the contemporary co-operative movement

The contemporary co-operative movement originated in Europe during the 19th century as a self-help method to counter extreme conditions of poverty. Ever since, co-operatives have played an important role in the development of agriculture in industrialised countries as suppliers of farming requisites, marketers of agricultural commodities, and providing services like grain storage and transport (Ortmann and King, 2007a).

According to Zeuli and Cropp (2004), co-operatives as we now know them were created in times and places of economic stress and social upheaval. Coherent talks in support for the establishment of the co-operative form of organisation gained momentum in the early 19th century with the idealistic writings and advocacy efforts of Robert Owen and William King in England and Charles Fourier in France. However, Dr William King, another social reformer in England, was in many respects more responsible than Robert Owen for spreading the co-operative idea and for the actual organisation of co-operatives as King was more realistic about co-operatives,

advocating and inspiring the development of consumer co-operatives across England (Zeuli and Cropp, 2004).

In the first wave of consumer co-operatives, a short-lived society was created in Rochdale, England in 1833. The Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, as they are famously known, had some ambitious member-centred goals for their co-op: to sell provisions at the store; to purchase homes for their members; to manufacture goods their members needed; and to provide employment for their members who were either out of work or poorly paid (Zeuli and Cropp, 2004).

The co-operative business model was formerly developed in 1844 in Rochdale, England, by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers (Zeuli and Radel, 2006; Ortmann and King, 2007a).

2.1.4.3 Values, principles, and characteristics of agricultural co-operatives

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, transparency, equity and solidarity, and social responsibility (United Nations, 1996). Co-operatives around the world operate based on these values which ensure that they serve their members, distinguishes them from corporations and other forms of businesses, and which shape their principles (Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society [SAOS], 2012).

Fairbairn, Fulton, and Pohler (2015) make the case, citing the example of Co-op Atlantic in Canada, that co-operative enterprises operate successfully and have done so for generations. However, they do not take into consideration the fact that business environments vary from country to country, and from region to region.

The principles of co-operatives, which agricultural co-operatives are also founded on, owe their origins to the 1844 Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers (Ortmann and King, 2007a). These co-operative principles have been formerly established by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), which is the global co-operative association, and they include: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; members' economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; co-operation among co-operatives; and concern for the community (United Nations, 1996; Zeuli and Radel, 2006; SAOS, 2012) (see Table 2.1).

According to Ortmann and King (2007a), agricultural co-operatives can be classified into 3 broad categories; marketing co-operatives, farm supply co-operatives, and service co-operatives. They also contend that agricultural co-operatives have been, and still are, established in various parts of the world for several reasons, including farmer poverty, market failure, provision of limited extension services, community development, economies of scale⁴, improving members' incomes, and enhancing bargaining power, amongst others.

⁴ 'Economies of scale' refer to factors which make it possible for large organisations to produce goods or services more cheaply than

S/No.	Co-operative Values	Co-operative Principles
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1.	Self-help	Voluntary and open membership
2.	Self-responsibility	Democratic member control
3.	Democracy	Member economic participation
4.	Equality	Autonomy and independence
5.	Equity	Education, training and information
6.	Solidarity	Co-operation among co-operatives
7.	–	Concern for community

Agricultural co-operatives are a major tool against poverty and hunger (FAO, 2012), and they represent farmers to transact business in a cost-effective manner. Co-operatives also provide local and global markets for the produce of small farmers in rural areas. Across Africa, and elsewhere, family farms and co-operatives have proven to provide food security and gainful employment. This makes co-operatives critical to general rural development (Chambo, 2009).

Table 2.1: A list of the values and principles that direct the operations of co-operatives.

Source: Kurimoto et al. (2015).

2.1.4.4 Agricultural co-operatives and rural female farmer empowerment in sub-Saharan Africa

As mutual businesses owned and run together by members who have an equal say in how the business is run and its profits used, co-operatives have been of utmost benefit to members around the world (Co-operatives UK, 2015). This has been so because co-operatives have attached great importance to maintaining stable employment, producing appropriate goods and services, and supporting long-term sustainability in their

communities (United Nations, 1996). This is because they are established by and for members, and not for capital.

Agricultural co-operatives have a history of contributing to the development of rural areas, having been successful in promoting access to input and product markets of small-scale farmers, and in providing incentives to them to improve their productivity (Ortmann and King, 2007b). And when the productivity of farmers is enhanced, food production and farmer income are improved (Ban, 2009).

Gweyi, Ndwiga, and Karagu (2013) note that co-operatives are significant to Kenyan rural communities, so much so that when the conditions of co-operatives deteriorated, there was an increased rural poverty in the country.

Women members of co-operatives, regardless of the kind of co-operative, do reap great benefits from being members of collaborative endeavours such as co-operatives (ILO, 2012). ILO (2012) notes how co-operatives contribute majorly in empowering rural women and making them financially independent of their husbands, with many cases of women members bringing financial liberation to their families as a result of loans available to them.

Co-operatives not only financially empower women, but they also strengthen women's participation by virtue of the co-operative values and principles, and in successfully giving women a voice in their communities and amongst men (ILO, 2012).

On the 25th of September 2015, the 193 member states of the United Nations convened to adopt 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to succeed the 8-millennium development goals (MDGs), among which is the goal to

promote gender equality (United Nations' General Assembly, 2015). Hence, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, regards the co-operative movement as an important partner in implementing the UN's development agenda on gender inequality (Ban, 2009). Thus encouraging the development of co-operatives towards global development.

Agricultural cooperatives play an important role in supporting small agricultural producers and marginalised groups such as young people and women. They empower their members economically and socially. To this end, Sifa (2013) documents the efforts of the Ethiopian government in creating self-help groups to support and improve women's involvement in various agricultural enterprises.

2.1.4.5 Agricultural co-operatives and rural female farmer empowerment in Nigeria

The concept of farmers' co-operatives offers a platform for small-scale farmers to collaborate and form a strong group in order to gain collective bargaining power through economies of scale (Yamusa and Adefila, 2014). This enables the groups to attain plentiful benefits in terms of creating avenues for the marketing of their farm produce at local, national, and international markets.

Co-operatives are not foreign to Nigeria as savings associations have been existent in Africa before colonialism, like the "esusu" (Gweyi, Ndwiga, and Karagu, 2013). However, co-operatives in the country, especially agricultural co-operatives, dissolved upon the implementation of market liberalisation dictated by the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the World Bank (Gweyi, Ndwiga, and Karagu, 2013). This was

because the government paid little or no attention to small-scale farmers and co-operatives due to the neoliberal policies introduced by SAP (Pinto, 2009).

Babatunde et al. (2008) argue for the relevance of co-operatives in farmer development and claim that farmer-members of co-operatives in Nigeria are better off than farmer non-members, and they suggest that forming co-operative groups will provide farmers with economies of scale.

A major challenge of the co-operative movement in Nigeria, as Enhancing Financial Innovation and Access (EFInA, 2012) states, is that many co-operatives in the country are not registered, and the co-operative sector is not properly developed due to insufficient funding.

Ban (2009) cites a case study analysis on women's participation in agricultural co-operatives in Borno state, Nigeria, which reveals that women farmers who were engaged in co-operative activities had experienced increased productivity and living standards, more than their non-co-operative counterparts. This shows that the rural women in Nigeria have already started experiencing the benefits of the co-operative enterprise model, as the survey showed.

In view of this, Chambo (2009) urges African governments not to rely on foreign direct investment for the development of African economies because FDI only contributes a mere 1% to the GDP of African countries. Rather, Chambo (2009) points out an alternative sector, the co-operative sector, which promises to foster Africa's economic growth and development.

2.2 Theoretical Framework – Feminism

Feminism, as Mikula (2008) regards it, concerns itself with the socio-economic and political experiences and status of girls and women in the society. Assessing this claim as a stand-alone proposition might suggest an understanding of a feminist as one who has no concern for the affairs of boys and men in the society. However, Adichie (2014) puts the feminist theory into perspective in describing a feminist as an individual who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of both sexes. And since it is individuals who make up institutions, then institutions may also be identified as either feminist or not.

There are various feminist approaches employed by researchers in understanding and explaining the political and socio-cultural marginalisation of women. As Mikula (2008) outlines, the popularly adopted approaches are ‘Liberal’, ‘Marxist’, and ‘Radical’ feminism, amongst others. The liberal approach, Mikula (2008) describes, explains the exploitation of women in society as arising primarily from the lack of equal rights and opportunities for women to engage fully in social and political life. Hence making it more suited for this research to aid an understanding of the unequal access of women and men to agricultural resources, to the favour of men, which inhibits women’s productive participation in agriculture. An important feature of liberal feminists is that they focus energies on changing gender-biased cultural assumptions, institutional regulatory frameworks and social practices.

In building an understanding of gender, Mikula (2008, p. 77) regards it as a culturally-engineered dichotomy between ‘man’ and ‘woman’. Mikula (2008) notes the difference between ‘gender’ and ‘sex’, with the former

being socially determined, while the latter is biologically determined. West and Zimmerman (1991) and Edgar and Sedgwick (2002) also emphasise the difference between 'gender' and 'sex'. Therefore, it can be deduced that the prevalent notion of gender in our societies can be deconstructed just as it was initially constructed. To do this, however, will be a complex and daunting task as it might call for a re-modification of existing gender-insensitive customs.

Feminists also contend from a cultural development perspective and are of the opinion that for gender equality to be a reality, it might require a cultural evolution (Hettne, 2008). They are fundamentally concerned with the social construction of female 'subjectivity' and how it is manifested in everyday life. Adichie (2014) supports the idea of a cultural evolution and argues for its plausibility when she regards culture as a product of the desired living of people. However, the lives and roles of male and female still remain dictated by cultures handed down from ancestral societies – be it either matrilineal or patrilineal.

Mlama (2007) further notes how gender approaches have advanced from 'Women in Development' to 'Gender and Development', and then to 'Women and Empowerment'. Momsen (2004) also embraces the empowerment approach as a viable tool to address gender inequality and commends development literature which regards empowerment as a method of social transformation and for achieving gender equality. The notion of women and empowerment largely informs this research study, concerning itself with the empowerment of Nigerian women farmers through agricultural co-operatives. However, there are limits to the behaviour and

participation of women in productive economic activities, which are determined by the patriarchal structures in place in Nigerian societies (Adichie, 2014).

Deeply rooted patriarchal socio-economic structures have relegated women to the background, to positions below men (Mlana, 2007, p. 222), and these cultural values and attitudes condition the society to believe and enforce the superiority of man over woman. Gender-insensitive legal and governance structures perpetuate it further.

Lorber (1991) notes that legal equality of gender does not necessarily translate to social equality which is equality of men and women in the allocation of work, wage structure, access to control of valued resources, and societal decisions and positions of power, which stem from equality in family and marketplace division of labour. In the same vein, Olomola (2013) argues that though men and women are to receive equal and fair treatments as the 1978 Land Use Act postulates, however, local customary laws and the Islamic Sharia determine land allocation in the country; and these practices marginalise women (Olomola, 2013).

Equality thus refers to equality of opportunity and access to shared valued resources which will serve as a basis for reciprocal relations between the sexes (Momsen, 2003). Momsen (2003, p.8) contends that the prevalence of gender inequality in our societies will prevent a determined exploration of human potentials, and this will adversely affect men, women, and development. Hence, if men and women are not given equal access to agricultural opportunities, then there is a risk of losing contributions that would necessarily have been made by both the

marginalised group (women) and the group which is believed to be in favour as a result (men).

Reskin (1991) seems to blame men for the inequality women are posed within the workplace. According to Reskin (1991), the main reason why women are at a disadvantage and receive lower wages than men in the workplace is as a result of men's desire to remain in leadership positions which enable them to make rules and policies to distribute resources in their favour.

Odebode (2012) further contends that understanding the difference in the needs of male and female, the different problems facing the participation of the sexes, and the various ways in which male and female do or do not benefit from available opportunities is necessary for a proper understanding of gender inequality. Gender analysis, Odebode (2012) posits, aids in perpetuating such understanding.

In consideration of approaches propounded to aid an understanding and eventual resolution of gender inequality which is promoted by the gender notion, the issue of measurement still remains convincingly vague. When questions like '*what is the measurement of gender equality?*', and '*how can we know when we achieve equality of the sexes?*' are sought to be answered, the goal of gender equality might be in reach. And since the gender-specific division of labour has been referred to as the origin of the notion of 'gender', taking steps to deconstruct the idea of 'gender-generalization' will aid the resolution of gender inequality.

Attempting to deconstruct the gender gap along these lines might require a fresh set of philosophical tools, one of which could be termed *reconstructive feminism*, and

reconstructive feminism should aid a deeper understanding of the ‘generalisation of roles’ which perpetuate gender inequality, towards a reformation of gender through the deconstruction of this generalisation.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed existing literature bordering the relationship between agricultural co-operatives and rural agricultural development. From the review, it was discovered that Nigerian women farmers have lesser access to productive resources than men farmers. The review also commends the values and principles upon which co-operatives are formed as ideal elements for improving the productivity and participation of Nigerian rural women in agriculture. However, co-operatives have encountered grave difficulties in addressing the issue of gender inequality because the challenge of gender has been established by cultures.

Therefore, the researcher’s contribution to the literature on agricultural gender inequality in Nigeria is twofold. First, he documents the marginalisation of women farmers in Nigeria, showing how woman-marginalisation in agriculture is only but a reflection of woman-marginalisation in the society, political economy, and in local constitutions.

Secondly, the researcher assesses the ‘collectivist’ idea enshrined in collaborative groups like co-operatives, and how such collective value helps improve the productivity and participation of women in agriculture.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter considers the methods of data gathering and analysis employed by the researcher for this study. The chapter also explains the justification for the selected cases analysed in the research study.

3.1 Methods of Analysis

During the course of this research study, the researcher employed certain methods to derive relevant data and to analyse the data collected. The methods of analysis used by the researcher are discussed below.

3.1.1 Qualitative Method

For this research study, the researcher derived secondary data from journal articles, books, datasets, reports, and memos sourced from reliable academic resource databases including research gate, Nottingham Trent University Library OneSearch, ProQuest Central, African Journals Online (AJOL), Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the United Nations (UN), and IndexMundi.

Data was also derived from semi-structured interviews via Skype. In order to derive varied opinions to support an objective analysis of secondary data, the researcher sent out interview invites to experts on co-operative development, small-scale agriculture, and gender inequality. However, the researcher was only able to finalise interview sessions with Mr Charles Gould

(Director General, ICA)⁵ and Mr Klaus Niederlander (Regional Director for Europe, ICA)⁶, both co-operative development experts.

3.1.2 Comparative Method

The comparative method is suitable for this research in order to aid the researcher to gain a better understanding of the causative relationship between ‘gender inequality’ and ‘female farmer agricultural participation and productivity’. The comparative method, as Moses and Knutsen (2012, p. 95) record, helps the researcher make inductions and deductions in a bid to determine the causal relations between the component parts of the world.

The researcher makes inferences from success stories of agricultural co-operatives in Tanzania and Uganda, both countries having similar political and socio-economic histories and environments as Nigeria, thus endeavouring to make valid comparisons.

Moses and Knutsen (2012) commend John Stuart Mill as the major authority on the comparative method and note that a major shortcoming of the comparative method is ‘*over-determination*’ which is man’s ability to generalise from a single observation. The researcher is able to overcome this shortcoming by studying the impact of agricultural co-operatives in the lives of women farmers in more than a single case country. Observing the status of rural women farmers through the lens of liberal feminism aided the researcher’s analysis of selected case studies which share similar patriarchal systems as Nigeria.

Justification of Case Selection

⁵ See the transcription of the interview session with Mr Charles Gould in Appendix I.

⁶ See the transcription of the interview session with Mr Klaus Niederlander in Appendix II.

As Moses and Knutsen (2012) note, a great strength of the comparative method is that cases in comparative studies are selected based on the dependent variable. The research thus considers the plight of the rural woman farmer in Nigeria, assessing the impact of agricultural co-operatives in women empowerment in Tanzania and Uganda. Tanzania and Uganda are comparable to Nigeria because societies in all three (3) countries are dictated by patriarchy (Majurin, 2012).

Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda are all former British colonies which gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960, 1961, and 1962, respectively. Having land areas of 356,669 sq. miles (Nigeria), 364,900 sq. miles (Tanzania), and 93,072 sq. miles (Uganda), all societies are highly patriarchal, with Islam and Christianity as major religions (BBC, 2016a; BBC, 2016b; BBC, 2016c).

Therefore, the selection of cases for this research is justifiable on the basis of similar political, economic and socio-cultural milieus adopted in the societies of all case countries.

3.2 Conclusion

In conducting a qualitative research in the exploration of the inequality faced by rural Nigerian women in agriculture, the researcher derived reliable data from secondary sources and semi-structured interviews. The use of comparative case studies was also employed to aid the researcher to make inferences regarding the contributions made by co-operatives in resolving agricultural gender inequality in Tanzania, Uganda, and parts of Nigeria.

CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter contains a further exploration of the researcher's findings during the course of the research. In this chapter, the researcher goes deeper into exploring the relationship between the subjectivity of Nigerian female farmers and their low levels of agricultural productivity. The reader should be able to get a deeper understanding of how co-operatives address the agricultural participation and productivity needs of women farmers in parts of Africa, and whether or not these organisations aid in the deconstruction of the 'gender' notion in the agricultural sector.

4.1 The Nigerian Small-scale Agricultural Economy

The Nigerian economy receives great human resource support from agriculture, as a huge percentage of its labour force is actively engaged in the sector (see Table 4.1).

The country's agricultural produce includes, but not limited to, cocoa, peanuts, cotton, palm oil, corn, rice, sorghum, millet, cassava and yams (IndexMundi, 2015), and a significant portion of agricultural production in Nigeria is at the level of small-scale farming, within which women farmers are most disadvantaged (Azih, 2008).

Sector	% of total
Agriculture	30.9
Industry	43.0
Services	26.0
Total	99.9

Table 4.1: A tabular representation of the Nigeria labour distribution amongst key economic sectors.

Source: Index Mundi (2012 Estimate)⁷.

Small-scale farmers in Nigeria dominate the production of most food and cash crops in all regions⁸ including cocoa production (Cadoni, 2013), cassava production (Asante-Pok, 2013), maize production (Cadoni and Angelucci, 2013a), and rice production (Cadoni and Angelucci, 2013b).

Small-scale and family farms in Nigeria consist of those that generally range from 0.2 to about 3.0 hectares of land (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009), and small-scale farming still consists over 90% of farm holding and farm employment in the sector (Azih, 2008).

Small-scale agriculture in Nigeria remains underdeveloped due to poor rural infrastructure, traditional storage and processing facilities, inefficient marketing facilities, low industrialisation levels, and

⁷ The total distribution is less than 100% because the data is incomplete. Although it is not a perfect representation of the situation, it is acceptable (http://www.indexmundi.com/nigeria/gdp_composition_by_sector.html).

⁸ See Figure 4.1 for an understanding of the distribution of states in Nigeria into regions.

inadequate access to productive inputs (Azih, 2008). Most rural Nigerian farmers are posed with risks owing to these deficiencies of the agricultural sector, and the marginalisation of women leave them most disadvantaged.

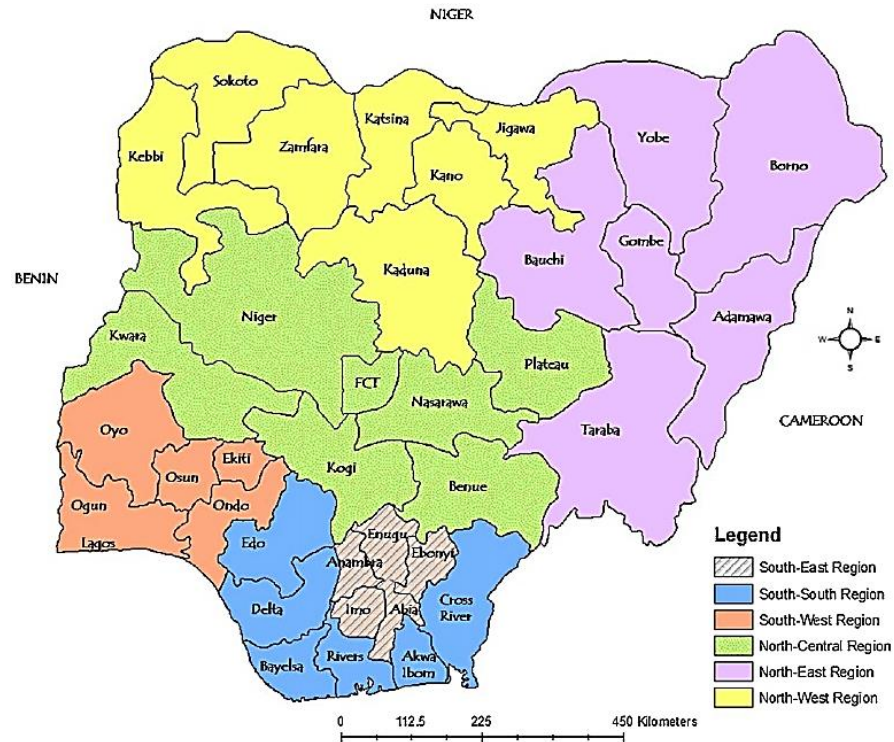


Figure 4.1: Map of Nigeria indicating the distribution of states in the six (6) geopolitical zones.

Source: Research Gate⁹.

4.2 The Plight of Rural Female Farmers in Nigeria

Upon the colonial infiltration of Nigeria in the late 19th century, the British colonial government introduced the cash crop economy in the country, making worse the gender-specified division of labour already in place before the advent of colonialism, to the detriment of women (Boserup [1979] cited in Mtsor and Idisi [2014]). Upon

⁹ The URL link to research gate –
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51795009_Spatio-temporal_epidemiology_of_highly_pathogenic_avian_influenza_H5_N1_outbreaks_in_Nigeria_2006-2008

the establishment of the cash crop economy in Nigeria which encouraged the production of exportable goods, most cash crop producers were men, leaving women to produce food crops for immediate consumption for the family. This put women at a great socio-economic disadvantage because the production of food crops was not as profitable as the production of cash crops (Mtsor and Idisi, 2014).

From practical experiences of Nigerian women, it has become evident that gender inequality, though a global challenge, evades the acceptance of Nigerian males. Countless numbers of Nigerian males are ignorant of the societal oppression of their female counterparts (Adichie, 2014). It is important to note that this ignorance is also reflected in the workplace; and with agriculture employing much of Nigeria's rural population, this perpetrates the subjectivity of rural women farmers.

As NCAA (2006) contends, gender inequality persists in Nigeria due to the male dominated culture in Nigeria which gives women an inferior position in society. And even when the Nigerian government distributes government-subsidised inputs to small-scale farmers who are members of farmer groups and co-operatives, female farmers tend to lack access to these subsidised inputs due to their limited membership to these farmer organisations (NCAA, 2006).

Though the 1978 Land Use Act (see Appendix III) gives the state governors authority over all land, local customary law in the South and Islamic Sharia in the North dictate how land rights are allocated to buyers; and these practices marginalise women (Olomola, 2013) (see Table 4.2 for a statistical presentation).

Zone	Land ownership	
	Female	Male
North-West	4.7	50.1
North-East	4	52.2
North-Central	7.9	41.2
South-West	5.9	22.5
South-East	10.6	38.1
South-South	10.9	28.3

Table 4.2: Zonal distribution of land ownership by gender.

Source: Olomola (2013).

4.3 The Role of Agricultural Co-operation in Empowering Rural Female Farmers in Africa – Examining case studies from Tanzania and Uganda.

Maritzová and Prášková (2012) express the need to provide women with access to social, economic, and educational opportunities, as well as the autonomy needed to take advantage of such opportunities, an important obstacle to poverty eradication would be overcome. Numerous examples from around the world show how taking part in producer organisations and co-operatives can socially and economically empower rural women (FAO, IFAD, and WFP, 2012).

Although co-operatives are relevant tools for the development of rural women, getting these women to join the co-operatives has been a challenge, for just as Wanyama (2014) explains, gender disparities in literacy levels, land ownership, skills, and access to credit limit women's engagement in cooperatives.

Co-operatives have been found to be very effective in empowering rural women farmers across Africa, in countries like Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, and Rwanda (Ban, 2015). However, for the sake of this research, the role of agricultural co-operatives in empowering rural women in Tanzania and Uganda was examined because data on co-operative movements are mostly available for countries in East Africa as case studies mostly emerge from that region (Develtere, Pollet, and Wanyama, 2008; Ban, 2015).

Tanzania and Uganda, both east African countries, were selected based on the political and socio-economic traits they have in common with Nigeria, and all three (3) countries also having agricultural-based economies (Mukasa and Salami, 2015).

4.3.1 Women membership in agricultural co-operatives in Tanzania and Uganda

Rural women farmers in Tanzania and Uganda have recorded great improvements in their access to productive materials upon joining agricultural co-operatives, so much so that women employees of agricultural co-operatives tend to earn more than men in Tanzania and Uganda (Majurin, 2012).

I. Tanzania

Rural women in Tanzania provide about 48% of agricultural labour and they contribute about 14 hours in labour efforts more than men every week, including household and productive activities (Villarreal, 2013). The agricultural participation and productivity of women in Tanzania are also inhibited by similar social and cultural norms. Tanzanian women farmers also have limited access to necessary productive inputs since they

own only about 16% of agricultural land in Tanzania (Mukasa and Salami, 2015).

Not all women, however, face these structural oppositions placed by the patriarchal culture in Tanzania. Birchall and Simmons (2009), cited in Mills and Davies (2013), note that co-operatives in Tanzania have made positive contributions towards improving the working and living standards of women farmers by encouraging gender equality (Wanyama, 2014).

Development institutions, like the World Food Programme (WFP), have implemented successful agricultural initiatives to improve the productivity and income of small-scale farmers in Tanzania. These programmes have greatly improved the participation and productivity of rural female farmers in Tanzania, however, only farmer groups and co-operatives are beneficiaries.

Examples of such successful projects and co-operatives in Tanzania, include:

Purchase for Progress Initiative (P4P), which was a five-year pilot initiative led by WFP, in partnership with public and private partnerships, to connect small-scale farmers to input and output markets (FAO, IFAD, and WFP, 2012).

United Peasants of Tanzania (UPT), which embarked on a project to strengthen Muungano AMCOS by improving its governance system, attracting new members, especially rural women, and by raising awareness of gender inequality (FAO, IFAD, and WFP, 2012). A change of mindset among men was also recorded, with men showing a greater willingness to encourage and support women. These efforts boosted productivity, with

the co-operative experiencing an increase in the collection of crops from 434,300 kgs to 768,872 kgs (ILO, 2012).

Mviwata is a farmers' organisation in Arusha, Tanzania, with 80% women members. Their members have been able to increase household incomes and improve food security through improved environmentally-friendly production and marketing of crop and livestock products (Pinto, 2009).

Registered agricultural & marketing co-operative societies in Tanzania include (but not limited to): Sokoni II, Mareu, Koimere AMCOS, Nronga Women Dairy, Mwika West, Marangu East, etc. (Majurin, 2012).

II. Uganda

Gender disparity persists in Uganda, just as it persists in Nigeria and Tanzania, and indeed most parts of the world (Maritzová and Prášková, 2012; Klaus Niederlander, personal communication, August 25, 2016). Female farmers and female-headed households in Uganda farm on a much smaller scale than male farmers and male-headed households (see Table 4.3 below). Therefore, they produce far smaller amounts of crops, sell smaller quantities in markets, hence earning smaller income than male farmers and male-headed households.

The participation of women in agricultural co-operatives is increasing faster than men's in Uganda (ICA and ILO, 2014), even though they own about 18% of agricultural land (Mukasa and Salami, 2015). In 2009, women's membership in co-operatives in Uganda is estimated to be 42% of total members, and Ugandan women constitute about 33% of board members, 13% of chairpersons, 12% of managers in co-operatives (Majurin, 2012).

Indicator	Female (%)	Male (%)
Population	51	49
Food Production	80	20
Planting	60	40
Weeding	70	30
Harvesting	60	40
Processing/Preparation	90	10
Access to land and other productive resources	8	92

Table 4.3: Ugandan agricultural contribution and distribution by gender.

Source: ENERGIA (2009) cited in Maritzová and Prášková, (2012).

The chief regulatory body of co-operatives in Uganda, the Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA), designed a gender policy in 2005 which provides training and taught courses on gender equality to co-operative members; encourages the involvement of both women and men in productive activities, requiring that a third of the participants in any capacity building activity should be women; encourages women leadership among its members, requiring that a third of the board members of participating primary co-operatives must be women (ILO, 2012).

Nannyonjo (2013) show that agricultural co-operatives in Uganda have been successful in engendering equal access to productive facilities for the sexes as a result of policy

commitments and actions made by the Ugandan government. The government has increased the participation of both female and male farmers in productive activities, as well as in the leadership and management of co-operatives, through training (Nannyonjo, 2013).

Development institutions, like the World Food Programme (WFP), have also implemented successful agricultural initiatives to improve the productivity and income of small-scale farmers in Uganda. Examples include the project carried out by the Organisation for Rural Development (ORUDE) (ILO, 2012).

The Organisation for Rural Development (ORUDE), with support from COOP^{AFRICA}, helped approximately 500 members to form the Sub-County Savings and Lending Cooperatives (SUSALECOs). The project also involved the organisation carrying out sensitization sessions within the rural communities on gender inequality, and thus making the case for the relevance of equality between both sexes. Women currently own 70% of the total share capital and 73% of the total loan portfolio of the SUSALECOs, and the credit facilities have helped increase the income of rural women who now have 50% access to the credit provisions (ILO, 2012).

Registered agricultural & marketing co-operative societies in Uganda include (but not limited to): ‘Buzaama’, ‘Juba Merber’, ‘Mutunda’, ‘Bomido’ Co-operative, ‘Buna’ Area Marketing Enterprise, Poverty Warriors, etc. (Majurin, 2012).

4.4 Membership Benefits of Co-operatives

Economies of scale

Farmer co-operatives help small-scale female farmers improve their productivity and income through economies of scale, by enabling them pool resources together to purchase productive inputs at cheaper rates (Ban, 2009; Kisika, 2013). The co-operatives, by improving the economies of scale of small-scale farmers, improves their bargaining power, giving them a strong voice in the community (Tripathi et al., 2012).

Member-owner economic benefits

Members of co-operatives have the freedom to participate in the economic benefits of the business, being owners of the co-operatives also. Co-operatives are also mandated to hold trainings and skills sessions for members in order to improve their agricultural production (Klaus Niederlander, personal communication, August 25, 2016).

Access to national and global network of farmers

Co-operative enterprises in developing countries also have access to co-operative international business networks (United Nations, 1996), like the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) (Chambo, 2009), and Nigerian female farmers have a lot to benefit from such networks.

Charles Gould (personal communication, September 8, 2016) asserts that for local co-operatives to have access to these global networks, they have to become part of their national co-operative associations which, in turn, guarantee them access to these international organisations. The international organisations, like the ICA, then

represent the interests of farmers who are members at both national and global levels.

4.5 Research Propositions

From the above findings of this research study, the researcher proposes the following:

1. The culturally engineered gender inequality is to blame for the recorded low levels of productivity and participation of rural women in agriculture in Nigeria.
2. Rural female farmers are being exploited, at great extents, by male counterparts who are ignorant of the needs and victimisation of the women.
3. Agricultural co-operatives are necessary tools for enhancing the participation and productivity of rural Nigerian women in agriculture. However, co-operatives are not a sustainable approach to tackling the root problem which is gender inequality.
4. Gender inequality in Nigerian agriculture can be sustainably resolved through a reconstruction of the socio-cultural preserved notion of gender roles.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher uncovered that the Nigerian agricultural sector is dominated by small-scale farmers, and women account for a significant proportion of these farmers. It was also discovered that the marginalisation of Nigerian women in agriculture hinders their participation and production.

In a search for solutions, the researcher proceeds to consider the successes of agricultural co-operatives in

improving the productivity of women farmers in few other African countries. The chapter then concludes with the researcher discovering positive findings regarding co-operatives and improved productivity of women in agriculture.

CHAPTER FIVE – ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of the researcher's constructive analysis of findings discovered as a result of the research study. The researcher then proceeds to state the limitations and constraints encountered during the course of the research.

5.1 Analysis and Discussion

The co-operative model is one which has guaranteed the empowerment of rural farmers, especially women, in several parts of Africa. Despite the advantages of co-operatives, in the majority of African countries, women remain under-represented in the organisations, as employees, members and leaders of the co-operatives (ILO, 2012).

The reason for this is the prevalence of gender inequality which hinders women's access to resources, education and training, and even information and extension services. However, co-operatives serve as platforms for gender discussions to be had, as the cooperative movement has recognised that ensuring gender equality is the right thing to do as it will aid the development of the full potentials of both sexes (ILO, 2012).

Few questions to be asked, however, is why male domination and female oppression in our societies have been allowed to thrive for countless years? Are there values that men and/or culture seek to defend by allowing

this inequality thrive in our societies? Or is it just for the sake of maintaining the status quo due to fear of women empowerment?

5.1.1 Agricultural Co-operatives and Rural Women Empowerment in Nigeria

Rural women who are members of existing agricultural co-operatives in Nigeria have experienced increases in their agricultural participation, productivity, and income. Studies on co-operatives and small-scale farmers in Nigeria do show relevant relationships between the organisations and productivity of members in various states across the Nigeria: Abuja (Yamusa and Adefila, 2014; Ajah, 2015); Ebonyi (Nnadozie et al., 2015); Ekiti (Toluwase and Apata, 2013); Enugu (Uchenna and Olabisi, 2013); Katsina (James and Joshua, 2014); and Kogi (Ibitoye, 2012).

In a study conducted in Kaduna State, Rahman (2008) discovered that the wealth and age status of a woman are major determinants of her role in farm management decision making. This reveals that though co-operatives aid the participation and productivity of Nigerian women in agriculture, they, however, have limits to their impact due to the patriarchal nature of Nigerian societies (Charles Gould, personal communication, September 8, 2016).

5.1.2 Policies and Agricultural Gender Equality in Nigeria

As a result of the many troubles faced by Nigerian women and many basic rights denied them by the Nigerian culture, one would expect that there are policies put in place to mitigate these challenges. However, the reverse seems to be the case.

The Nigerian state gained independence in 1960, and since then, it has been able to develop a regulatory framework that covers important issues ranging from health to socio-economic and political matters, but not on gender inequality. This remained the case, in spite of The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) which was adopted by the African Union, of which Nigeria is a member state.

The Charter declares in Article 18(3) that: "The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions" (African Union, 1979).

Upon the advent of the National Gender Policy which was developed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, there were differing views about it. While some were of the opinion that such a policy was very much needed, some others did not think the country was ready for such a policy (Otive-Igbuzor, 2008).

A gender analysis of Nigeria's tripartite legal system affirms that many legal instruments are gender insensitive and require a reform. A relevant instance, as Mtsor and Idisi (2014) reveal, is that although the chief legal framework of the Federal Republic of Nigeria prohibits discrimination against any citizen of Nigeria on grounds of ethnicity, sex, religion, and political opinion, the constitution does not directly address gender issues.

5.2 Limitations and Constraints of the Study

The researcher encountered several limitations in the course of this study, one of which was the minimal availability of data on gender in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in Nigeria. This seems to be a global

phenomenon, one not impeding the success of this research alone, but of several others because 84% of data on women and gender issues in Nigeria are missing (Bread for the World Institute, 2014).

The researcher found minimal recent Nigerian agricultural data and publications in the libraries and archives of relevant organisations, like the Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development (FMARD) and Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The researcher was also unable to receive first-hand information from the supposed subjects of the research – Nigerian female farmers – through interviews and/or questionnaires due to time, travel, and financial constraints. However, relevant information was collated through secondary sourcing from academic journal articles, online libraries, and data sets prepared by international development organisations, etc.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher further reveals reasons why gender-specific division of labour is a major perpetrator of gender inequality in agriculture. The researcher affirms that the negligence of the Nigerian government, in regards to insufficient laws and policies addressing gender issues, serves as a catalyst for the societal marginalisation of girls and women in the country.

The researcher also notes factors which limited the research process: the absence of sufficient data on gender in Nigeria limited the research process, and time, travel and financial constraints.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher endeavours to come to a seasonal conclusion on the topic being considered in this research study. The chapter contains an analytical conclusion on the topic, and the researcher's informed recommendations on improving gender relations in all sectors of the economy, not just agriculture.

6.1 Conclusion

Small-scale farmers in Nigeria are key players in the country's food production, and these farmers mostly reside in rural communities. Although small-scale farmers dominate food production in Nigeria, they, however, experience low levels of production, and this is due largely to insufficient access to productive resources.

Most rural farmers, both men and women, are constrained by these limitations. However, the culturally approved marginalisation of women, stemming from the society's notion and expectations of gender roles, limits women's access to the few available resources.

This inequality adversely affects the participation and production of rural women in agriculture in Nigeria, and much of Africa. However, there are documented cases of the successes of co-operatives in improving women's access to productive resources in Tanzania and Uganda,

which, in turn, have increased the participation and productivity of rural women in those countries.

Despite the success of co-operatives, these organisations have limited roles to play in tackling gender issues, and this is because gender inequality is a result of gender-based division of roles in society. Co-operatives do play significant roles in advancing gender equality, but the task transcends the structural might of these organisations.

Overcoming gender inequality in Nigeria's agriculture, although a challenging feat, remains essential if both men and women are to operate at their full potentials towards an agricultural and rural development in the country. Care should be taken, however, not to pursue gender equality to the detriment of boys and men.

6.2 Recommendations

I. Availability of Data on Gender

About 84% of data is missing on women and gender issues in Nigeria (Bread for the World Institute, 2014). This absence of data hinders the conduct of thorough research on gender issues in Nigeria, especially for researchers not resident in the country.

Therefore, the researcher urges the Nigerian government to pay significant attention to developing reliable measure to make data on gender available for research and academic purposes. Such data sources should also be monitored in order to be updated periodically.

II. Industrialise Small-scale Agriculture

From the 5th to the 9th of September, 2016, African leaders, businesses and representatives of major development

agencies convened in Kenya for the 2016 African Green Revolution Forum spearheaded by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) (African Green Revolution Forum [AGRF] Team, 2016). During the convention, US\$30 billion was pledged to boost agricultural production and income for small farmers in Africa over the next ten (10) years.

It is important to note that this is a very significant agricultural funding, and sums of the funds being accrued to Nigeria should be allocated towards small-scale industrialisation in order to provide support for small-scale farmers, of which rural female farmers dominate.

The researcher contends that ensuring the industrialisation of small-scale agriculture and equal farmer access to education will help deconstruct the gender-based division of labour and make it based on literacy and skill levels, rather than gender and physical strength.

III. Co-operative Development

The state, as Bijman et al. (2013) note, can play a strong role in helping farmers establish successful co-operatives, while supporting the education and training of farmers. The Nigerian government should enact laws and policies to support enabling business environments for co-operatives to thrive.

The Nigerian government should also take proactive steps in strengthening its national co-operative agencies which are subsets of the Federal Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development (FMARD).

Co-operatives are survival tools (Klaus Niederlander, personal communication, August 25, 2016), and in this current economic downturn Nigerians are experiencing,

co-operatives should be effective in cushioning the adverse effects on rural farmers, especially the women.

IV. Gender Education

Towards a reconstruction of the perception of gender roles and behaviours, there should be an established strategy for gender education of the society. This strategy, however, should be a product of a thoroughly conducted research on gender and culture in Nigeria. The Nigerian government should encourage and work with relevant development agencies like FAO, IFAD, WFP, and AGRA to allocate significant funding towards cultural research endeavours for a deeper insight into the socio-cultural dimension of gender disparity in the country.

In educating the Nigerian public on gender issues, the government can also train and sensitise its youths engaged in the obligatory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme, in a bid to deploy the trained youths to sensitise rural communities on gender inequality issues.

6.3 Further Investigation and Research

Due to time and financial constraints, the researcher was unable to carry out thorough investigations on the underlying factor responsible for gender inequality in agriculture. The researcher agrees with the argument that gender inequality is perpetrated by society's notion and expectation of gender roles, and that a reconstruction of such idea is important if gender equality is to be attained in all ranks of the economy.

Hence, research studies on gender and culture, specifically on how to reconstruct the idea of gender in our societies, should be conducted. Also, much needs to

be done reconciling female subjectivity with gender equality from the religious perspective.

Given sufficient time and appropriate funding, the researcher hopes to explore this subject matter further, due to his interest in the area.

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**APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES
GOULD (TRANSCRIPT)**

Research Topic: The Role of Co-operatives in Enhancing the Productivity and Participation of Rural Nigerian Women in Agriculture.

Location: Skype.

Interviewer: Luther-King Ekama (LE).

Interviewee: Mr Charles Gould (CG).

Date: 8th September 2016.

LE: What does it take for local co-operatives to become part of the ICA?

CG: Historically, the members of the ICA have been the national associations. The idea was that the movements in the different countries would come together to define what it means to be a co-operative and agree on how to advance their agenda and promote the development of co-operatives. And the idea was that the local co-operatives would be members of the national groups.

Now, we do have members who are not in the national associations, but they all have a national scale, or at least a large geographic group in order to participate at the global level. Recently, though, we began a new body inside the alliance called 'The Co-operative Roundtable', and this is a group that consists of local co-operatives that do want to engage on a global level; and they are able to join that separate body that we have established.

We look for the local co-operatives to become involved in their national associations, and then for the national associations to represent them at the global level.

LE: About the Co-operative Roundtable, is it organised locally?

CG: No, it is a global body, and it is open to local co-operatives around the world, up to 100 members, we want to limit the size of it. We started this last year and have been adding a few members at a time, so we have 20 now. And they tend to be well-established, successful local co-operatives that want to participate at a global level. And we've asked them to identify projects that we could support, that we could take on, and that would benefit co-operatives globally. And so, for example, they are working on a global marketing campaign now with the co-operative brand.

LE: I was wondering; how does the ICA help improve the functioning of local co-operatives?

CG: Well, a lot of what we do is representing them at the global bodies. So, the United Nations and the Food & Agricultural Organisation in Rome, and the International Labour Organisation in Geneva, at the G-20 meetings. And it is primarily around ensuring that the co-operative model is understood, that it remains on the agenda of these global groups. Now, that in turn then is useful in shaping national policy and national legislation because they often look to the UN and these other bodies for direction. So, it's a little derivative in terms of how it directly affects the local co-operative. So it's about ensuring that the co-operative model is understood and respected and supported, and that that has benefits at the

national level and hopefully that then rebounds back to the local level.

We also work to make sure that there is good coverage in the media of co-operative successes. So we look for local stories that we can publicise, and help ensure that the public understands what the co-operative is, and understand that this is an option when they are looking at creating a new business or solving a local problem.

LE: It is a very interesting model, but I was also wondering; how different is the co-operative model from farmer organisations and farmer associations?

CG: Well, the advantage of the co-operative is that it is owned by the members, and they conduct business through it. Now, there are different kinds of associations, different kinds of business models. But the associations tend to represent a particular interest and try to advance that interest. So the alliance, the International Co-operative Alliance, is an association. We are not a place where individuals conduct their business, but the co-operative is, and so the co-operative is an opportunity for individuals to come together and combine their resources to solve a problem or create greater efficiencies than they have individually.

So the co-operative is not trying to make money at the co-operative level, it is not trying to see what it can maximise, it is trying to make sure that it is serving as a vehicle for those individuals. So in the case of farmers, it is allowing farmers to bring their products to market without going through a middleman, it is allowing them to get better prices on fertiliser or on seeds and other products that they can come together to get better purchasing power for.

And it is a way, really, for small business owners like farmers to really have the advantage of larger scale.

LE: Right! So concerning gender inequality, I notice it is more of a cultural problem, cultural issue. But what roles do you think co-operatives can play in engendering gender equality?

CG: Well, it is an important part of our agenda, since the very beginning of co-operatives, even before women had rights to vote in any of the countries where co-operatives were established, they had the right to vote inside the co-operatives; they were considered equal members. So, it is an important grounding of the co-operative model, this idea of equality.

It is an issue in many businesses, for a lot of reasons, in different countries, and part of that I think does have to do with historical biases about the roles of men and women, and I think in agriculture, quite often that's true as well, that farmers tend to have been viewed quite often of as being men. But doesn't come back to reality anymore, and in many places we are seeing women taking a more assertive role in co-operatives, in agricultural co-operatives, as they have always in other co-operatives as well.

We have a number of studies that we produce, we work with a group called COPAC, C-O-P-A-C, which is a committee on the promotion and advancement of co-operatives; and we are a member of that, along with the United Nations, and the FAO, and the ILO, and the World Farmers' Organisation, and we have done some gender work with them in that as well.

What we find is that, compared to other business models, we have a good record of women being more involved in

leadership positions, and we do make that a priority; but there is a long way to go. And historically, the co-operative was a model where people who weren't able to have all the advantages that the community was offering could come together and get those advantages. And so it's often in a place where they are coming out of the industrial revolution, for example, where people who felt they were being taken advantage of by merchants were able to develop their own producer co-operative, or their own consumer co-operative. And it is as a result of that very well designed for people who are not being treated equally in the society. So women, or other such people, can find it to be a good model because coming together like that creates a certain strength.

LE: Sorry for cutting you short, but are you saying that the advantage of the co-operative model is the collective effort?

CG: That's right! I mean I think that one advantage is that it is a way that people come together and that there's a collective strength in that. Other models do that too, but, so that's just one of the advantages.

The other is that it is owned by the people it serves. So if you look at the corporate model, for example, it is owned by the shareholders. There's nothing wrong with that, but the shareholders don't have the same emotional attachments to the product, to the service, to the industry. And if the profits aren't there, there are likely to just take their money out and put it in another share in some other company, which again is okay, but it's just not the same emotional attachment to the business.

So in the co-operative, these are the people who are very vested in the outcome. They are from the community,

they care how the co-operative is run, they care about the practices, they care about the effect and the impact on the community. And so they are emotionally connected, and so they engage, they make decisions, they pay attention to what's happening at the business level, more than is true in other models where they are apt to say "well, let's just hire management to help run it". In the co-operative they care, they are doing business with it.

Now the case of women in agriculture, I don't think that is primarily a situation of getting women farmers together in a separate co-operative. I think it is primarily the question of getting women into the agricultural co-operatives along with the men, and having an equal voice and having the same access. It's just the nature of farming in the community, it needs to be, I think it needs to be an integrated model. But the key is to make sure that women have the voice in these co-operatives, equal to that of the men.

LE: Okay, and what do you think is the major obstacle hindering women having an equal voice with the men in co-operatives?

CG: I think it's, in some ways, the challenges that women have in co-operatives are the same that they have in other business models because we're dealing with the same world, with the same cultural effects, and the same upbringing, and the same roles, stereotypes and so forth, and that doesn't change just because you form a co-operative.

On the other hand, the co-operative has these strong principles and values and history so that we can minimize that; but it's still a question of the women feeling that they can engage; the women seeing that this is an opportunity;

the women taking that opportunity; the men who are voting to be willing to vote for women to take leadership positions.

This is less and less and less of a challenge year after year, and certainly, we've seen a huge breakthrough in recent decades. And we have a good track record of how co-operatives have been successful in this, well depending on the part of the country, or the part of the world. In some countries, farming, in general, is dominated by men for a number of reasons; and that is going to be reflected in the roles of the numbers of women who are in the co-operative. And the goal isn't necessarily to change that, it isn't necessarily to have more women in agricultural co-operatives, if they are not in farming already. But to the extent that they are in farming, or they want to be in farming, then they ought to have an equal voice in the co-operative, they ought to have an equal opportunity to leadership.

**APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW WITH KLAUS
NIEDERLANDER (TRANSCRIPT)**

Research Topic: The Role of Co-operatives in Enhancing the Productivity and Participation of Rural Nigerian Women in Agriculture.

Location: Skype.

Interviewer: Luther-King Ekama (LE).

Interviewee: Mr Klaus Niederlander (KN).

Date: 25th August 2016.

LE: What would you say are ‘agricultural co-operatives’?

KN: A co-operative is an enterprise, a legal form of an enterprise. It is different from classic shareholdings in the sense that it is owned by its members. It follows a set of co-operative principles, like one-member-one-vote, unlike the shareholding companies characterised by one-dollar-one-vote.

Secondly, what is also important is the type of members. Usually, the members of agricultural co-operatives are the producers – the farmers, which are independent entrepreneurs. They come together and create a company to either market their products or jointly purchase fertilisers and things like that (productive inputs); and agricultural/producer co-operatives are very different from consumer co-operatives, like the Co-operatives UK, that are owned by the consumers.

So traditionally, it is the farmers who are the members of agricultural co-operatives. In that sense, they are

knowledgeable about their sector, unlike consumer co-operatives when you are shopping in there, you do not know much about retailing; when you are sitting in the governance, you do not know much about the business, whereas the farmers, they know it quite well. This is why agricultural co-operatives have a better chance of being run properly because the people understand the business. The members are actually the farmers, and they elect their governance, their board, which supervises the company. I think that this is very important, as it is not the shareholders but the farmers themselves.

LE: So that essentially brings to play the ‘one-member-one-vote’ principle you mentioned earlier?

KN: Exactly! There are seven co-operative principles, actually, and in getting all seven together, it is not quite easy actually; but if you put it into 3 elements: the economic element which is about economic participation. So if you become a member of a co-operative, you are participating in the economic benefits of that co-operative, you would be doing a business with the co-operative and you are getting a return for that; the other one, like I told you is democratic governance, so it is one-member-one-vote; then there is the open and free membership, any farmer can possibly join co-operatives in order to leave it again, so there’s no restriction in that, which can be interesting when it comes to your question of gender, for example; then there is the element of training and informing the members. The co-operative has the mandate to educate its farmers that they improve their agricultural production over time, and the co-operative would provide them with necessary information.

Co-operatives are also a part of the community, that is also important. As a share of the community, a co-operative is not this company which would try to maximise profit. They operate in a social environment and are part of the 'give-and-take' nature of the society.

There's also a sustainable development element in the co-operative principles as well. They cater for the community and for the environment. However, at the same time, there's hardly a co-operative which fulfils all principles fully. You need to build a business which functions, which works, which is profitable, you know where it makes losses it will die. It is important to understand this; however, with the way it is run, is in a way that it benefits its members and the community around.

LE: So from your experience, like you just mentioned that no co-operative really expresses all principles, what do you think are the reasons for that?

KN: Well, of course, human beings and the organisations they form are not perfect. I think it is more of an aspiration, so many different levels of the principles are very general in a sense. They are basically a first translation of the co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility and solidarity, into some more concrete ways of implementing those values. But then, the next step after that comes that you will have to implement it in your own environment: in your business environment, in agriculture, in banking, in consumers. Of course, there are constraints in these environments which might hinder you to fulfil all of these aspirations in time.

It is like a child, as a child, you are not born straightaway walking, talking, and all that, it is a learning process. And I think that is how it should be seen.

LE: So the principles are like the goals of the organisation?

KN: Well there is this whole hierarchy; the values are on top, then comes the principles, and then comes the objectives and goals of that co-operative, and out of that you define your strategy, action plan and implementation. That is kind of the whole structural setting of it.

Principles are more general goals, if you like, but are also action tools. And then that depends on your co-operative, what is it? Are you a vegetable co-operative, people who want to commercialise together their vegetables in order to get a better price, or jointly buy your fertiliser so you get them cheaper? It is very simple economics at first.

Co-operatives, when they were created, were means of survival because little farmers in Europe were exploited by the large retailers, and only together could they survive, and their slogan was “*provide quality food at affordable prices*”. So it is very simple where they started from, it is a survival tool. But then eventually, of course, it can evolve over time and become a sustainable development tool; but that depends on many aspects, you know wherever people are together, there is a lot of trouble.

LE: Yes, definitely! But how has been your experience promoting the co-operative model in Africa?

KN: When I worked in Africa, I worked in the cotton sector, and was in Western Africa – Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and a certain number of structures were already in place there, you know, local farmers being put together in regional organisations and national organisations. So there was some adherence to collaboration, and I think, to some extent, it is in the DNA of Africans to collaborate together because you are living

in a very rather hostile natural environment and also human environment. So you have to collaborate to survive. At the same time, these co-operatives were obviously not fully democratic because they were already dependent on the large cotton buying companies which were usually national companies in Mali and Burkina, so that is only one buyer, and that does not provide them with a lot of freedom.

As a starting point is what we worked on was to develop a fair trade cotton, and in fair trade, you actually enter some of the co-operative aspects of democratic governance, and actually the gender issue is very important in there, that there is no discrimination between man and woman in there, and that on your board, you have to have equality between man and woman, or at least proportionally; if you have 60 male farmers and 40 female, well then that needs to be represented as such on the board.

So there are some additional tools which helped to develop the co-operative model further there. And there is a local initiative in there, very small, but what it lacks in comparison to Europe is that Europe has a long history of 150 years of regional and national structures which are actually very strong. If you look at agriculture in Germany, the agricultural co-operatives in Germany dominate 60% of the market in marketing agricultural products. The same is recorded in France, even in the UK, it is quite strong, and they also have market power. You have very small co-operatives, but you also have very large co-operatives, multi-billion euro agricultural co-operatives. It creates other problems of course, but they actually created a whole system which did not stay local but became national and grew certain functionings and

transformed into the regional and national level in order to become more efficient and effective.

If you buy for your members from a national level, well you are going to get more market power and much better prices, of which no agricultural co-operative at the local level will do that. It is a lot of common sense really. If you are the small man and say “well, I have to collaborate with others to become bigger like the big fish, and I can compete with it”. Really, in the end, it is as simple as that.

LE: Yes, so it is more like a person-centric partnership?

KN: Absolutely! Exactly. You know, the word ‘co-operative’ is actually quite an old word and is somehow tainted as well. If you are coming from a former communist country, for example, they will relate it to state-dominated and not the old, free and democratic. In Western Europe, and if you talk to people in the UK for example, they will say “oh yeah, my grandfather did that”. It is kind of an old saying, it is coming back now with the economic and financial crisis, and people are forced to collaborate much more again. We call it much more a people-centred business. It is not the money which is the main focus, but it is the people’s needs, and it could be various as it could be economic, cultural, and the basics like food, shelter, clothing, whatever.

LE: True! So talking about ‘cultural’, during my research, I found out that gender inequality is more of a cultural problem. So how do you think co-operatives can solve such culturally-ingrained issues as gender inequality?

KN: Well, of course, I mentioned to you the fair trade principles; that’s first of that. Then, in a sense, you can say that it is market-driven. If you are exporting to certain countries, like into Europe, and they request that, then you

are forced to do it, and that would be sort of an external pressure. A co-operative can have this internal pressure because it is based on one-man/woman-one-vote, and whoever is a member of a co-operative, the co-operative is blind to gender, it does not matter because each one has one vote. And I think that is very different from a family company.

You know, the patriarchal system is just driving everybody else like slaves to extreme extents. But here, no! Each one as a member has the same vote and when they vote for a president or a board, it is all equal. And so I think that is the most important thing in overcoming inequalities is giving people a voice, an equal voice where there is no distinction; so in that sense, it is an interesting model. And it is an enterprise, so it is about economics, it is about the basic things in life that people need a job, that people need food, need shelter. Who cares about gender? What we need is to survive together or to have better quality products, and each one brings in their competencies and knowledge in order to do that.

So I think in that way, of course, it requires support and teaching, it does not happen like that if you are in an environment where culture is very male dominated, it will take some time. But hey, gender inequality exists all over the world, it still exists in Europe as well. We have come a long way to improving things but still, women get paid less than men on average and among other things. So I think it is a struggle which we will have to fight for a very long time, and the co-operative model can be one model in the economic field to overcome that. But I think you also need the civil society and the political movement as well to do that. But it is often easier to start with economics than with the political part of it.

APPENDIX III: EVOLUTION OF AGRICULTURAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA

Agricultural Policy	Objectives
The National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) (1972)	To raise farmers' income, accelerate the rate of diffusion of new agricultural technology, and serve as a medium for testing and adopting agricultural research findings in on-farm conditions.
Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) (1975)	To promote integrated rural development by providing facilities for intensive extension services, modern input supplies, and distribution system and rural infrastructures.
Livestock Development Projects (1976)	To commercialise beef production by establishing large-scale public breeding ranches to encourage small-scale private ranches development of grazing reserves, and to provide credit for small-scale schemes.
Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) (1976)	To curtail massive food importation into the country, meet the acute shortage in food supply, and restore some respectability to farming with the view to stemming the movement of youths from the rural areas to the cities.
Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (1977)	To mobilise funds from the banking sector to guarantee loans granted by commercial banks for specific agricultural purposes, like the establishment or management of plantations for the production of cash crops, animal husbandry, and farm machinery hires.
The Land Use Act (1978)	To facilitate an effective utilisation and exploitation of the land resources for agricultural purposes.

Green Revolution (1980)	To address agricultural production from a fully mechanised and capacity upgrading perspective.
Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) (1986)	To make the sector commercially competitive and remunerative, and to redress Nigeria's defective mono-economic imbalance through a diversification programme to reduce dependence on the oil sector and on imports.
The National Agricultural Policy (2001)	To create a macro-environment that will stimulate greater private sector investment in agriculture.

Appendix III: An overview of agricultural policies adopted in Nigeria.

Source: Azih (2008).