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Gender Roles in Livestock Production among Urban Farming Households in Southeast Nigeria

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Abstract

This study identified different roles played by urban household members in livestock production in Southeast Nigeria. Data were collected from two hundred and ten (210) livestock keepers using interview schedule. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The mean age of the farmers was 49.1 and a majority (86.7%) had at least primary education. A greater proportion (78.1%) of the respondents kept improved chicken and the dominant rearing system was intensive. Majority (88.2%) of the respondents indicated that men were responsible for building and maintenance of house for livestock. Buying of feed was done mainly by women (56.7%) while feeding the animals was carried out by all gender groups. Men generally take care of animal health. Therefore any intervention meant to improve urban livestock production should consider the various roles played by each gender.

1. Introduction

The word gender was adopted to distinguish things about men and women that are socially ascribed part of culture as opposed to physical and biological differences which is described as differences in sex. Gender analysis in agricultural production is important for creating a level for both men and women farmers. It helps to diagnose the issues that need to be addressed in order to bring gender equality. It also, helps to identify differences between practical and strategic gender needs. Women and men often express their needs for change and improvement in terms of access to basic resources, infrastructure or income. Strategic needs area relate to the gender division of labour, control over resources, legal rights, income equality and decision making power (Hovorka, 2005). This is especially important in urban agriculture which is characterized by competition for resources (Hope, *et al*. 2009).

Urban agriculture is any agricultural activity, both growing of crops and animal, husbandry within the administrative boundary of an urban centre, (Brock and Foeken, 2006). It can also be defined as the production of food and non-food items within the urban area for home consumption and/or for the urban market. Urban agriculture provides employment, income and access to food for urban populations which together contribute to relieve food insecurity (Van Averbeke, 2007).

Livestock keeping is very common in most urban centers. Many urban families keep one or more animals, usually in their own compound behind their houses, but often also free range that is, grazing freely along the road (Foeken *et. al.,* 2004). Poultry is the most common livestock kept in South east Nigeria. Two systems of urban poultry exist: the traditional family poultry with scavenging chickens; and the backyard chicken production (FAO, 2004). The latter produces mainly for the market and keepers are ready to spend cash on feed, disease prevention and housing while the former is kept for home consumption or sale when need arises. In small towns, livestock keepers let their animals roam freely. If there are no laws, against this, the practice is economical as it enables the livestock to make use of the feed material in the environment which is otherwise waste and constitutes disposal problems (Olukosi, 2005).

Men and women's involvement in urban livestock production may be different from one context to another. The division of labour is subject to context-specific circumstances within different cities or even within households. Within the households, various tasks and responsibilities are divided between male and female members. Men and women differ strongly in their preferences and priorities in relation to their main role and responsibilities. According to Hovorka *et al.,* (2009), the tasks between men and women relating to production keeping differ according to the cultural group to which they belong. A study n Ghana found out that women and men urban farmers share many types of agricultural task, unlike rural farmers who exercised a stricter gender division of labour (Hope *et al.* 2009). The location of an activity influences the degree and type of roles men and women play in production activities (Devi and Buechler, 2009).

The main purpose of this study was to determine gender roles in urban livestock production in southeast Nigeria.

Specifically, the study:

1) Describe the socio-economic characteristics of urban livestock keepers.
2) Ascertain the types of animals kept.
3) Determine gender roles in urban livestock production.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Southeast Nigeria. This zone is made up of five states viz: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The population of the study comprised all urban livestock keepers in the area. Out of the five states, three states (Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo) were selected through simple random sampling technique. Each State has three senatorial zones. Two senatorial zones were selected from each state, giving a total of six zones. In each zone, a major urban centre was purposively selected to give a total of six urban centers. Five urban (political) wards were purposively selected from each urban centre based on their involvement in urban livestock keeping, giving a total of 30 urban wards. In each ward, seven urban families were purposively selected based on their intensity of livestock keeping, thus, a total of 210 households were used for the study. Heads of households were interviewed. Survey designed was employed for the study. Data were collected using interview schedule, focus group discussion (FED) and observation and analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentage and mean).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Personal and socio-economic characteristics of respondents

A greater proportion (40%) of respondents was between the ages of 40 and 49 years, while 31% were within the age range of 50 – 59 years. The mean age of the respondents was 49.1 years (Table 1). This implies that majority of them were predominantly in their active years and as such can adopt innovations meant to improve urban livestock production. Chah *et al.,* (2010) reported that the mean age of urban farmers in Enugu metropolis was 38.59 years implying that they were relatively young people. However, Egbuna (2008) states that most of the urban farmers in Abuja, Nigeria are youths between the ages of 13 and 27 years.

Majority (61.4%) of the respondents were female while the remaining (38.6%) were male. This implies that men dominate urban livestock production in the area. Studies by Hovorka and Lee-Smith (2006), Salau and Attah (2012), Spore (2012) and Hovorka *et al*. (2009), indicate that women dominated urban livestock production. They argue that women tend to dominate urban agriculture because they are marginalized in other forms of employment in the formal sector of urban economy. However, a number of studies have demonstrated that urban livestock productions are predominantly men. Ashebir *et al.*(2007) found a strong dominance (94%) of male farmers in a study in Mekelle, Ethiopia. In Accra, Ghana, majority of the urban farmers were men (Asomani – Boateng, 2002). Similarly, Egbuna (2008) found that urban farming (crop and livestock) in Abuja, Nigeria was mainly a male activity. This indicates that sex distribution of urban livestock keepers is highly variable from city to city.

Entries in Table 1 further indicate that majority (88.2%) of the respondents were married while 3.6% were single. This finding is in line with that of Olaniyi (2012) who reports that majority of urban farmers (crop and livestock) in Oyo state are married. Similarly, Salau and Attah (2012) found out that 90% of urban farmers in Nassarawa state were married. The higher percentage of married individuals may increase productivity and innovativeness, since married people tend to be committed to tasks (Onu, 2003). In addition, farm labour required by married respondents could be supplied by the households, thereby reducing production costs.

A greater proportion (38.5%) of the respondents had secondary education while about 20.9% had primary education (Table 1). Only about 19% had tertiary education while 13.3% had no formal education.

The mean years spent in school was 12.2 years. Thus, a majority (86.7%) of the respondents had at least primary education. This finding is in contrasts with that of Ashebir *et al.* (2007), who indicate that in Mekelle, Ethiopia, urban farmers generally have low educational status. A study from Brazil shows that 10% of urban farmers had a university degree, 6% were illiterate, while the remaining had an intermediate education (Madaleno, 2000). The fact that most respondents in the study were literate is advantageous to adoption of farm innovations in the study area. Agwu (2004) reported that increase in farmer education positively influenced adoption of improved practices.

As shown in Table 1, many (53.8%) of the respondents had a household size of 6–10 persons, while about 36% had 1–5 persons in their household. The average household size was 6 persons. The household size could be considered to be high. A high household size may lead families to engage in urban farming to improve their feeding. A high household size in addition to providing cheap labour could contribute to the variation in getting access to agricultural information to improve urban farming. The average household size in two towns (Mbeya and Morogoro) in Tanzania consisted of six persons (Foeken *et al.,* 2004). Olaniyi (2012) also reported a mean household size of 6 persons among urban families in Oyo State.

Table 1. Percentage distribution of respondents according to their socio-economic characteristics (n = 210)

Socio-economic characteristics	%	M
Age		
20 – 29	1.9	
30 – 39	10.9	
40 – 49	40.0	49.1
50 – 59	31.0	
60 – 69	12.4	
70 – 79	2.4	
80 and above	1.4	
Gender		
Male	38.6	
Female	61.4	
Marital status		
Married	88.2	
Single	3.8	
Widowed	5.2	
Divorced	2.8	
Educational level		
No formal education	13.3	
Primary education	20.5	
Secondary education	38.5	
Tertiary education	19.1	
Above tertiary education	8.6	
Mean years spent in school		12.2
Household size		
1 – 5	36.2	
6 – 10	53.8	
11 – 15	3.3	6. 0
> 15	6.7	
Major source of labour		
Family labour	60.0	
Hired labour	37.1	
Exchange labour	2.9	
Main source of hired labourers		
Rural adult women	32.1	
Rural adult men	12.8	
Rural youth	7.7	
Urban people	47.4	

Table 2. Percentage distribution of respondents according to types of animal kept

Animals	Enugu % n = 70	Imo % n = 70	Ebonyi % n = 70	All % n = 210
Poultry				
Broilers	87.1	75.7	71.4	78.1
Layers	35.7	42.9	21.4	33.3
Turkeys	57.1	24.3	10.0	30.5
Local chicken	31.4	37.1	44.3	37.6
Goat/sheep	20.0	25.7	55.7	33.8
Pig	22. 9	10.0	10.0	14.3
Cow	0.0	0.0	4.3	1.4
Duck	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.5
Rabbit	2. 9	0.0	1.4	1.4

Table 3. Percentage distribution of gender roles in urban livestock keeping

Livestock activities	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	All
Building of animal house	88.2	6.6	12.7	0.5	4.2
Maintenance of animal house	59.4	25.5	17.0	9.4	16.2
Buying of feed	34.4	56.7	14.2	11.3	26.9
Feeding of animal	17.9	25.0	13.7	11.3	53.8
Vaccination	59.4	23.6	7.5	5.7	18.9
Purchasing of stock	60.4	63.2	7.5	8.0	13.2
Processing	37.9	69.8	18.4	7. 1	10.8
Selling of animal	35.4	50.9	10.8	10.4	24.1
Disposal of waste	20.3	27.4	25.9	25.5	69.8

Results in Table 1 show that majority (60%) indicated that family labour was their main source of labour while about 37% used hired labourers. This shows that majority of the respondents use their family members for labour. This may be as a result of the high household size, members could serve as cheap labour to agricultural activities. This finding is in line with that of Foeken *et al.* (2004) who reports that labour force in urban farming in Tanzania mainly comprise household members who allocate their labour time according to their degree of responsibility, the time they had available, their abilities and their age.

Moreover, hired labourers came from a variety of sources (Table 2). Rural residents (52.6%) constituted the main source of hired labourers. A good proportion (47.4%) of urban residents was, also, hired as labourers. The most important rural source was adult women (32.1%). They may probably be women who seek additional source of income in urban gardens. The finding is not in line with that of Foeken *et. al*. (2004) who state that urban people constituted the main source of hired labourers in urban farming.

3.2 Types of animals kept

Majority (78.1%) of the respondents kept improved chicken (broiler). Other animals kept included goat/sheep (33.8%), local chicken (37.6%), layers (33.3%), turkeys (30.5%) and pigs (14.3%) (Table 2). This implies that majority kept poultry, many did not keep cow, duck and rabbit in the study area. According to Baumgartner and Belevi (2001) rabbits are ideal animals to raise in the city because they do not take up much space. That most of the respondents kept improved chicken implies that they were adopting improved animal breeds in the study area. This finding corroborates the assertion of Olukosi (2005), who states that poultry production dominates urban livestock production. Spore (2012) reports that few pigs were kept in urban areas. In a study carried out in Niamey, Niger, Graefe *et al.* (2008) state that majority of urban farmers keep sheep and goats. In Nassarawa state, Nigeria, 75% of urban farmers keep poultry while 40% and 35% account for those who keep pigs and goats, respectively. In Uyo urban area, poultry is the most popular animal production activity (Njengbwen and Njengbwen, 2011). However, the most common livestock kept in Kisumu, Kenya, were goats (Ishiani, 2009). He reported that goats were numerous because they do not need a lot of care and do not present major health problems.

3.3 Gender roles in urban livestock keeping

As shown in Table 3, majority (88.2%, 59.2%) of the respondents indicated that men were

responsible for building and maintenance of house for livestock. Buying of feed was done mainly by the women (56.7%) while feeding of the animals were carried out by all (53. 8%) gender groups (men, women, boys and girls). Other activities performed by men included vaccination (59. 4%) and purchasing of stock (60. 8%), and selling of animals (35.4%). All (69.8%) the gender groups were involved in disposing waste of the animals (Table 3). This shows that most of the tasks in urban livestock keeping were shared by men and women. Boys and girls offer helping hands in some activities, especially in feeding and disposal of waste. This implies that any intervention meant to improve urban livestock keeping should consider the various roles played by each gender.

The results also show that men generally take care of the animal's health while women are involved in the feeding. In Lima, Peru, women are actively involved in the feeding, health care and marketing of livestock (Arce *et al.,* 2009). Ishiani (2009) shows that in Kisumu, Kenya, men are involved mainly with animal health and routine work of animal care was left to the women. She further reports that children, especially boys, help in waste disposal and egg collection and that the girls are rarely involved in any activity.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that the respondents were middle aged and literate. Majority of the urban livestock keepers kept improved chicken. The roles of men and women in urban livestock production were not really distinct since all members of the family participate in one activity or the other. Men were mainly involved in building and maintenance of animal houses while women generally took care of the processing and buying of feed. The finding also showed that youths (boys and girls) were not deeply involved in most of the activities.

The study therefore recommends that urban families should encourage the younger ones to participate in livestock production. This can help to promote their interest in agriculture. Interventions meant to improve urban livestock production should consider the major roles played by each member of the family. Urban planners and policy makers should make effort to fully acknowledge and incorporate gender into the promotion and support of urban livestock production.

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