

Empowerment of Rural Women through Poultry Farming in Delta State, Nigeria

Wilcox, G. I^{1*} Okaba, F. E²., and Chuks-Okonta, V. A³.

1, 2 and 3. Department of Agriculture, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Rivers State, Nigeria

*willygcox68@gmail.com

Abstract

This study was designed to investigate the capacity of poultry farming to empower women in the rural areas of Delta State. The study specifically described the socioeconomic characteristics of the women poultry farmers, and identified the poultry farming activities engaged by the women, their level of empowerment, the initiatives or training women attend, and the constraints to women empowerment. A random sampling technique was used to select 144 respondents for the study collected using a structured questionnaire administered by personal interview. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics involving frequencies, percentages and means. The findings showed that respondents had a mean age of 45 years and were mostly married (61.20%), 29.10% of them had secondary education, a mean farming experience of 20.20 years, 52.90% lived in standard houses with a mean household size of 7 persons. About 79.20% had no contact with the extension agent; the average income was N49,750. The majority (74.27%) of the women were selling eggs, and 66.99% were involved in poultry products. Empowerment facilities accessed by the women were microcredit, training and input. Microcredit was sourced from self-help groups; the Government gave Training. The women were mostly empowered through their various functional groups. The majority of the women could adequately feed their family (mean = 3.05), most of the women were able to plough back their capital into their business (mean = 2.88), train their children in school (mean = 2.83), and capable of clothing their children adequately (convey 3.05). The majority also could purchase household utilities from their savings (mean = 2.89). The empowerment index of 0.74% shows that 74% of the women were empowered. The hypothesis states that poultry farming is profitable. The constraints identified were lack of government assistance 80.58%, lack of good inputs (40.29%), lack of adequate finance (70.39%), insecurity (6.80 %) pests and diseases (42.72%), and high cost of feed (11.20%). It was recommended that the Government train the women in the rural areas and provide them with microcredit and inputs to empower them further; Government should employ and post more extension workers to the rural areas.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Rural Areas, Poultry Farming, Delta State

Introduction: Empowerment, defined as a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives, is a process that vests power in people for use in their own lives, communities and larger society through acting on issues they define as important (Page and Czuba, 1902). An empowered individual is a person who experiences a sense of self-confidence and self-worth, analyses their political and social environment, and exercises control over decisions affecting their life (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2002). People can be empowered through various means, such as in agriculture, where women have been engaged (Uzokwe and Ofuoku (2006).

Nigeria's agricultural sector provides the platform on which many women are employed. Such areas are crop cultivation, weeding, animal husbandry, processing, marketing and other agricultural activities. Women have been identified as the key agents of sustainable development. Their empowerment is key to a more robust approach to establishing new patterns and sustainable development (Handy & Kassam, 2004). There is a need to empower women because they contribute to the economic development of any nation. In Africa and many developing countries like Nigeria, women make up more than one-third of the agricultural workforce. Ojimba (2000) states that women account for 70% of agricultural labour, 80% of food

Empowerment of Rural Women through Poultry Farming in Delta State, Nigeria

producers, 100% of those who process basic foodstuffs, and 60-90% of the marketing of agricultural produce. Women have been identified as playing important roles in national development. Hence, organizations like food and farming (FAO) have continued to contribute to women's empowerment (World Bank, 2007).

Hunger project (2011) believes that empowering women to be change agents is essential to achieving the end of hunger and poverty because they contribute to agricultural and rural economies in developing countries. Benefits accrue from empowering women (Hunger project, 2011), not themselves but their communities and society (Karl, 1995). Women in rural areas manage many household activities and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their roles vary between and within parts of the world, where economic and social forces transform the agricultural sector (FAO, 2011). Agriculture is the main alternative for rural women. It should come with better access to land and resources for the prevention, adaptation and mitigation of climate change, combined with rural women learning how to deal with cultural resistance and adapting to various manifestations of the phenomenon. An empowered woman is self-confident, critically analyses her surroundings and exercises control over all decisions which positively affect her life. Therefore, their education and employment are key factors that should be considered for their empowerment. Comment credited to the current president of the European Central Bank and former IMF boss, Christine Lagarde, states that women's education and authorization will help bring about their growth and reduce income disparity and poverty. Research corroborates her argument showing that empowering women can lead to improvements in their status both inside and outside the household, including greater control over household resources; better mental health; reduced time constraints; and increased access to financial services, health care, skills development, income-earning opportunities, information about markets and legal rights. This study considers the empowerment of rural women in the Delta State of Nigeria through poultry farming to bring about their growth, improve their income, and reduce the stream of poverty among rural women.

The lack of separate land for women and inadequate contact with extension agents are serious constraints women and farmers face in the study area. Women rarely own land despite their extensive involvement in agriculture; traditionally, it has been difficult for women to obtain bank loans or other forms of credit through the banking system. The land tenure system is largely by inheritance because women generally do not own land or other assets. This lack of title to land prevents women from exercising or improving their expertise in crop production and animal husbandry because of the security of tenure. The majority of women use low-yielding and unimproved planting materials, primitive and labour-intensive farm implements, and traditional farming practices, which have adversely affected agricultural production, thereby reducing the chances of being self-empowered. The substantial contribution of

women continues to be undervalued in conventional agriculture, economic analysis, and policies due to the low level of attention given to them and asset denial experienced by them. Is for these challenges that this study was carried out to consider the empowerment of women in the rural area of Delta State through poultry farming, with the following objectives: ascertain the socioeconomic characteristics of the women poultry farmers in the rural area, identify the poultry farming activities women are engaged at in the rural area, identify the level of empowerment through poultry farming, identify the initiative or training women attend, the profitability of poultry enterprise, and identify the constraints in women empowerment in the study area.

Methodology: Area of Study: The study was carried out in Delta State, situated in the region known as the South-South geopolitical zone with a population of 4,098,391 (NPC, 2006). The capital city is Asaba, located at the Northern end of the State, with an estimated land area of 17,698,559 qkm; and lies between latitude 5° and 6° N and longitude 5° and 6.45° E. It is bounded in the north by Edo State, the east by Anambra, Imo and Rivers State, south-east by Bayelsa State and south-west by Ondo State. The Atlantic Ocean forms its southern boundaries with a coastline of 160 kilometers. The State consists of twenty-five (25) Local Government Areas (LGA), demarcated into three agricultural zones: Delta North, Delta Central and Delta South agriculture zones. Agricultural production is the major occupation of the people. They are predominantly small-scale farmers, growing food crops such as cassava, plantain, maize and vegetable crops such as green (*amarantus spp*) and breeding poultry birds, among others.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique: The study population comprised all female poultry bird farmers in the rural areas that fall within the three agricultural zones of the State. At stage one, two local government areas were purposely chosen from each agricultural zone to get six local government areas. The purpose of the selection was due to the engagement in poultry production in commercial quantities. At stage two, two communities were randomly selected from each local government area previously chosen to arrive at 12 communities from where 12 poultry farmers were randomly sampled to get a total tested size of two hundred and forty (144) poultry farmers.

Analytical Technique : The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages derived from a 4-point Likert-type scale. Objectives i, ii, iii, iv were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Objectives v was analyzed with the 4-point Likert type scale, and objective vi was analyzed using gross margin analysis involving profitability.

Profitability of the Poultry Enterprise: Profitability is the difference between the total revenue and cost. This was used to achieve objective vi.

$$NR = TR - TC$$

Where:

NR = Net Returns

TR = Total Revenue

TC = Total Cost

TC = Total Fixed Cost (TFC) + Total Variable Cost (TVC)

Empowerment of Rural Women through Poultry Farming in Delta State, Nigeria

Results and Discussion: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 shows that the majority (31.60%) of the respondents were in the age bracket of 40–49 years, and about 29% were in the age bracket of 50-59 years. The mean age of the respondents was 45 years. The implication is that most of the rural women involved in empowerment are mostly in their advanced ages and are not strong enough to engage in poultry-related income-generating activities. A majority (61.20%) were married. This means that majority of them had responsibilities as they had members of their households to take care of their families. A married woman commits to make provisions for her household. This is expected to be a push factor into self-empowerment by rural women. This is in line with Ekong (2003), who stated that married people often try to make ends meet to care for their families effectively. About 51.90% of the respondents had secondary and tertiary education. This result suggests that most empowered rural women can at least read and write. Education is expected to help rural women acquire more skills and knowledge to be self-empowered; teaching also aids in accessing information. This aligns with Odebo (2008), who stated that education is essential for achieving desirable attitudinal change and improving individuals' skill and knowledge levels.

The mean household size of seven (7) persons implies that most households had large family sizes in the area. This means working more assiduously and getting more involved in poultry-related activities to empower themselves to be independent. Jhingan (2011) suggests that a large household population overshadows increased input. This makes the women seek self-empowerment through poultry-related activities. A mean of 20 years of poultry farming experience implies that they are experienced enough to be sources of initiative and support to help them increase their level of empowerment. One of the challenges women contend with is that of Land ownership (Ofuoku and Emah 2009). Majorities (68.40%) of the respondents were not owners of the land, some (19.41%) of the women used family land, and 12.14% had their land. This result shows that most women in rural areas do not own land. This aligns with Ukwoma et al. (2003) that women find it difficult to access valuable resources such as land, credit and agricultural inputs to boost their production. Olawoye (1989) suggested that land loss affects women negatively regarding their ability to meet household needs. The widespread exclusion women experience in developing countries concerning ownership and control over property as regulated by various customs restricts their land access and use (Ofuoku and Emah, 2009).

Table 1 : Distribution of Respondents According to Their Socioeconomic Characteristics

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES (%)	MEAN
Age (in years)	23	11.20	
20-29	60	29.00	
30-39	65	31.00	45 years
40-49	44	21.40	
50-59	14	6.80	
60 and above			
Total	206	100	
Marital Status			
Married	126	61.2	
Single	47	22.8	
Divorced	14	6.8	
Widow	19	9.2	
Total	206	100	
Educational Status			
No formal Education	43	20.9	
Primary	56	27.2	
Secondary	60	29.1	
Tertiary	47	22.8	
Total	206	100	
House Size			
1 to 4	77	37.4	
5 to 8	124	60.1	
Above 8	5	2.5	
Total	206	100	7
Farming Experience			
1 to 10	106	51.5	
10 to 20	65	31.5	
21 to 30	31	15.5	20 years
Above 30	4	2	

Empowerment of Rural Women through Poultry Farming in Delta State, Nigeria

Total	206	100
Sources of Land		
Family land	40	19.41
Owner	25	12.14
Lease	141	68.4
Total	206	99.95
Members of functional group		
Yes	57	27.67
No	149	72.33
Total	206	100

Source: Field survey, 2021

Types of Poultry Farming Activities: The result in Table 2 shows that most of the respondents (74.27%) were selling poultry eggs, while 28.16% were selling poultry meat. This indicates that women dominate sales of poultry eggs. This aligns with Ofuoku (2017) who observed that women dominate and take over poultry activities. This is also in line with Ekong (2006), who asserted that the major action of

rural women is in food production. The result also shows that 66.99% of the respondents were engaged in selling poultry products, while 35.92% were involved in processing poultry products. In a similar study in India, Mahadeva and Keshavamurthy (2015) found that women were also engaged in similar income-generating activities to empower themselves.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to poultry farming activities

Types of Poultry Farming Activities	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Sales of poultry eggs	153	74.27
Sales of poultry meats	58	28.16
Sales of poultry products	138	66.99
Sales of poultry feeds	74	35.92
Provision of labour	78	35.92

Source: field survey 2022

Women's Level of Empowerment through Poultry Farming: Table 2 shows that the majority of the women could adequately feed their family (mean = 3.05), most of the women were able to plough back their capital back into the business without borrowing (mean = 2.88) and able to train their children in school (mean = 2.83), capable of clothing their children (mean = 3.05) and the majority also could purchase household utilities (means = 2.89). The empowerment index of 0.74% shows that 74% of the women were empowered. This is encouraging as the others were being expected to be self-empowered too. This is in line with

(Ovaharhe, 2015), who measured women's empowerment through poultry farming. This is also congruent with Ekong (2008), who states that women are the engine driving the economy of Nigeria and are the keys to development and are therefore important to sustainable development goals. A suspected factor that makes women highly self-empowered is their quality of being better financial managers than their male counterparts. Ofuoku and Urang (2011) found that women refunded their credit faster than men in farmers' cooperative societies in Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 3 : Distribution of respondents according to their level of empowerment

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)	Score	Means
I can feed my family adequately	9 (9)	24 (48)	121(363)	52(208)	628	3.05
I am capable of clothing my children adequately	5(5)	24(48)	131(393)	46(184)	630	3.05
I can purchase my household utilities from savings	5(5)	45(90)	122(366)	34(136)	597	2.89
I can plough back my capital to business without borrowing	4(4)	48(96)	123(369)	31(124)	593	2.88
I can train my children to school without borrowing	7 (7)	58(116)	103(309)	38(152)	584	2.83

Source: field survey 2021 Cut-off = 2.50 (≥ 2.50 = ability to grand empowerment mean = 2.94 empowerment index = 0.74.

Empowerment of Rural Women through Poultry Farming in Delta State, Nigeria

Types and Sources of Initiative and Support: Table 4 shows that farmers' initiative and support types were microcredit, Training and inputs. Most (98.50%) of the respondents sourced microcredit from their self-help groups, while 84% of the respondents got their Training from the Government, and 87.40% got their inputs through their self-help groups. This shows that Government only gives the Training without going further to provide the respondents with the finance and information needed to put what they have learnt into action. The women were mostly empowered through their various functional groups, such as farmers' associations and cooperatives. Ofuoku, Oleke and Emah

(2008) found that farmers subscribe to membership in farmers' groups to access credit facilities and cheap inputs, among others. These groups also open the members' access to agricultural information (Ofuoke, 2013).

The Profitability of Poultry Enterprise: Good income from economic activities is a motivating factor in sustaining people's interest in such activities. The result in table 4.1.2 shows that the mean income of the respondents was N49,750 per month. This indicates that most of the respondents could earn a living by participating in poultry-related activities, thereby making them economically empowered and independent.

Table 4 : Distribution of respondents according to Types and sources of initiative and support

Types	Source	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Micro Credit	Self-help	203	98.50
	NGOs	1	0.50
	Government	2	1.00
Training	Self-help	2	1.00
	NGOs	31	15.00
	Government	173	84.00
Input	Self-help	180	87.40
	NGOs	13	6.30
	Government	13	6.30

Source: field survey 2021

Table 5: Distribution of Respondent According to Poultry Farming Income

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES (%)	MEAN
Poultry Farm Income			
Income/Month (₦)			
5,000 – 15,000	75	36.41	497.50
16,000 – 34,000	68	33.01	
35,000 – 70,000	59	28.64	
Above 70,000	4	1.94	
Total	206	100	

Source: Field survey, 2021

Constraints to Women's Empowerment in the Study Area:

Table 6 shows that most women (70.39%) lacked adequate finance, 80.58% lacked government assistance, and 40.29% lacked access to good input. In comparison, 42.72% of the rural women had problems with pest and disease attacks, 14.56% of the women had the problem of insecurity, 11.2% of the women had the problem of the high cost of feeding, while 2.9% of the women had the issue of climate change. This implies that rural women see a lack of finance and government assistance as a serious problem. In contrast, lack of good inputs and pest and disease attacks are serious problems facing them. This aligns with Ofuoku (2017), who found that the real small-scale farmers who needed to be empowered were socially excluded from Government agricultural programmes and initiatives. This is also in line with Ijere (1992) cited by Ukwoma et al. (2003). They found that women find it more difficult to access valuable resources such as land, credit, good inputs, extension training and services that will boost their production

capacity. This indicates that though they were empowered, they were faced with constraints.

Conclusion and Recommendation: With an empowerment index of 74%, the study concludes that women were empowered through their various functional groups. However, such constraining factors as lack of adequate finance and lack of enough government assistance are seen by the rural women as a very serious problem facing them. At the same time, they lack good inputs and pests and disease attacks are also serious problems faced by the poultry farmers; it is recommended that women increase their financial subscription to their various self-help groups to have access to more credit and that Government should not only train the women in the rural areas but also provide them with microcredit and inputs to enable them to be more empowered.

Empowerment of Rural Women through Poultry Farming in Delta State, Nigeria

Table 6 Constraints to Women's Empowerment in the Study Area

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of adequate finance	145	70.39
Lack of government assistance	166	80.58
Lack of good input	83	40.29
Pest and diseases	88	42.72
Insecurity	30	14.56
High cost of feed	22	11.2
Climate change	6	2.91

Source: field survey 2021

References

- Ekong, E. E. (2003). *Rural Sociology*. Dove Education Publishers, Wellington Bassey Way, Nigeria.
- Ekong, F. (2006). A gender appraisal of the disbursement of bank loans. *Ibom Journal of Social Issues*, 7(2), 87-101.
- Ekong, F. (2008). Contribution of women to national development: Example from Akwa-Ibom State. *Kamla – Raj. Study Home Community Science*, 2(2), 113-119.
- Darlington, P.S.E., & Mulvaney, B.M. (2002). Gender, rhetoric, and power: Toward a mutual empowerment model *Women's Studies in Communication*, 25(2), 139-172. DOI: 10.1080/07491409.2002.10162444.
- FAO (2011). The state of food and agriculture, 2010-2011: Women in agriculture-closing the gender gap for development/013:2506/i2050e. pdf.
- Handy, F., & Kassam, M. (2004). Women's empowerment in rural India. Paper presented at the ISTR conference, Toronto, Canada.
- Hunger Project (2011). Empowering as key change agents. www.thp.org
- Ijere, M. O. (1992). *Leading issues in rural development*, Enugu. Acena, pp. 95-99.
- Jhigan, M. L. (2011). *The Economics of Development and Planning* (40th Ed). Published by Vrinda Publication Ltd. Delhi.
- Karl, M. (1995). Women empowerment, participation and decision making. *Women and World Development Series*, New York, NY, United Nations.
- Mahadeva, M., & Keshavamurthy, K. (2015). How have rural women self-empowered through agricultural trades? Some reflections from Karnataka. *Journal of Rural Development*, 34(4), 475-491.
- National Population Commission (NPC), (2006). *Nigerian national population census figures, 2006*. Abuja, Nigeria. N.P.C. Publication.
- Odebode, S. O. (2008). Appropriate technology for cassava processing in Nigeria: Users point of view. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 9(3), 269-286.
- Ofuoku, A. U., & Urang, E. (2011). Effect of cohesion in loan repayment farmers' cooperative societies in Delta State. *Agriculture-Science Practice Journal*, 3-4(2-3), 35-45.
- Ofuoku, A. U. (2007). Social exclusion of real small scale of farmers from agricultural Empowerment programmes in Delta State, Nigeria. *Taraba Journal of Agricultural Research*, 3(4), 35-42.
- Ofuoku, A. U., Oleke, N. F., & Emah, G. N. (2008). Determinants of improved fish Production technologies among fish farmers, in Delta State, Nigeria. *Journals of Agricultural Education and Extension*, 14(4), 291-140.
- Ofuoku, A. U., & Emah, F. N. (2009). African rural women in agricultural and rural Development: changes and opportunities. In: J.U. Agbama (ed), *Perspective in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development* (pp. 348-360), Springfield Publishers Ltd.
- Ofuoku, A. U. (2013). Willingness of farmers to participate in farmers groups. *Journal of Extension System*, 29(1 &2), 51-63.
- Ofuoku, A. U. (2017). Social exclusion of real small-scale farmers from agricultural empowerment programmes in Delta State, Nigeria. *Taraba Journal of Agricultural Research*, 3(4), 35.

Empowerment of Rural Women through Poultry Farming in Delta State, Nigeria

- Ojimba, T. P. (2000). The contribution of women to agricultural development in Nigeria: An overview in technical education today. 10(1&2), 104-112.
- Olawoye, J. E. (1989). Difficulties of rural women to secure access to resources for agricultural production. Two case studies from Oyo State. *Rural Development in Nigeria*, 3:71-76.
- Ovaharhe. O. J. (2015), Socioeconomic determinants of plantain production in Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State. *Journal of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Studies*. 3(1), 12-20.
- Page, N., & Czuba, I. E. (1999). Actually empowerment: What is it. *Journal of Extension*, 37(5), at [http://www.Jeo.org/joe/199/October/comm.1. Html](http://www.Jeo.org/joe/199/October/comm.1.Html).
- Ukwoma, S. C., & Njoku, E. (2013). Empowering rural women through information provision: The strategic roles of the library, *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal) 878. <http://digitacommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/878>.
- Uzokwe, U. N., & Ofuoku, A. U. (2006). Change in gender division of agricultural task in Delta State, Nigeria and implication for agricultural extension services. *Extension farming System Journal*, 2(1), 91- 96.
- World Bank (2007). World development report 2008: Agriculture for development. Washington, D.C. World Bank Publications.