



Gender Disparity in Land Ownership: An Invitation to National Underdevelopment

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Abstract

Issues of gender inequalities and denial of women rights to land have attracted widespread attention both at national, regional and international levels. This will continue to remain in the public domain for as long as the land tenure system and reform programs of the third world nations support the existing system of land holding. The paper assessed the system of land ownership and the place of women in a traditional Idoma setting in order to examine the recent shift in land holding, the level of gender disparity as well as suggesting ways for achieving gender parity in land holding within the community. To achieve the aim set for the study, proper identification of land acquisition or ownership system in the communities was done, policy gaps identified and its impact examined. A survey of 145 respondents comprising of village heads/chiefs, family heads and women was embarked on. Findings of the research work revealed significant level of land ownership disparity between men and women in the area. Out of the total sampled population, 131 land holders were men, representing 90% of the sampled population while the remaining 10% are women. High rate of rural women illiteracy, finance, archaic custom/ inheritance system among other factors were identified to be the causative factors for gender disparity in land holding. The paper recommended gender parity through the promotion of gender inclusiveness and full participation in family and community decision making. This can be achieved through the overhauling of the existing custom, land policies and the reformation of land management system and development programs in the country.

KEYWORDS: Gender Disparity, Idoma People, Land Tenure, Land Ownership & Women

Introduction

Land as a fundamental asset that provides foundations for the operation of social, political, economic and any other activities and the functioning of market institution is considered by all the occupants of the earth as a single most important natural resource (Ankeli, *et al.*, 2015). Human existence depends either directly or indirectly on land being the primary source of wealth and power of any nation. Ankeli *et al.*, (2015) further argued that, since land provides the primary source of livelihood for the poor; an investment vehicle; source for wealth accumulation and deity to others, its ownership should be devoid of all forms of discriminations. Elias, *et al.*, (2013) share the same view, as they advocated for equal and equitable opportunities without undue disparity for every individual regardless of their sex, education and social status in the society.

In Nigeria, just like most other countries in the sub – Saharan Africa, the land tenure system recognised by law are principally the statutory and customary or the formal and the informal land tenure system on which other forms of land holding derive their sources. Land in a typical Nigeria setting belong either to the government (government land), clan (stool or community), families and private individuals. The accessibility or ownership of any land that is within the realm of the customary segment by any individual is usually based on either established relationship or been a member of such a community, as it is the common believe and practice in most Nigeria societies that, community land must subsist within the community and thus can only be assessed or owned by members of the community only. However, despite the fact that, the head of the community or the collective retains the overall ownership of the community land, other fragmented rights over community land are accorded the desire recognition (Ankeli, *et al.*, 2015, Lasun & Olufemi, 2006 and Mabogunje, 2002).

Under the traditional or customary land holding, the outright sale of community land is not allowed in most communities as land is believed to belong to the past, present and the generation yet unborn. Ownership or use right of customary land is through transfer, inheritance or allocation/distribution to members of the community through the observance of certain clauses or rules mostly based on inheritance law, seniority and gender which is in most cases indigenous to the people. Christian (2009) and Berry (1989) however, observed that some societies in Africa accorded or grant secondary importance of use rights to such groups as religious bodies, age grades, and other socio-political bodies existing in the villages. The customs and operating laws relating to land ownership varies across societies in African nations but one thing that is unique and common to all these societies is the legitimization and the subordination of women by anchoring their land right to social ties or the relationship between the women and their husbands.

This is more, especially in the Sub-Saharan Africa countries that operates patrimonial system of land ownership where the place of the female child in the family and her rights to land is considered insignificant thus reinforces or exacerbate the existing gender disparity and social injustice. Though Earlier studies conducted by Wambu *et al.*, (2016); FAO (2010) and Kameri-Mbote (2005) have identified level of education, custom and financial incapability of women as factors hampering women right and access to land through direct land purchase or lease from either government or families. It is against this backdrop that, Owusu *et al.*, (2007) cited in Elias *et al.*, (2013) submitted that in the current era of land commercialization, poverty is an underlying reason for an unequal land access or ownership. It is against this background that this study is set to assessed the system of land ownership and the place of women in a traditional Idoma setting with a view to suggesting ways of making land more accessible to women. To achieve the aim set for the study, the identified gender disparity in land ownership factors in literatures were tested, proper identification of land acquisition or ownership system in the communities was done, policy gaps identified and its impact examined.

Literature Review

Land Tenure and Gender inequality

Land tenure as three dimensional concepts (space consideration, people and time), assesses the ways and manner in which land access and ownership rights are acquired and used by the inhabitants of a society. Land tenure systems according to Wambu *et al.*, (2016) is multi-dimensional and thus orchestrates economic, social, technical and institutional aspects in addition to the determination of resource rights of use, allowable period and under the conditions such right can be sustained. It is therefore, the possession or holding of the rights that determines the exact limit of the rights one have over each parcel of land. Its operations and dimensions however, varies from one community to the other and are usually influenced by distinctive historical development of each political grouping and consequent variation of legal and institutional structures of the communities (Wambu, *et al.*, (2016) & Kameri-Mbote, 2005).

Issues of land tenure system and gender inequality have drawn the attentions of development scholars across the globe with several concepts and theories developed towards solving land access and ownership problems. Djurfeldt (2020) asserted that the validation of land rights may enshrine gender-based discrimination through formalizing the customary land rights of male right holders. Kameri-Mbote, (2005) analysed gender issues in land tenure system from the customary law perspective and discovered that the approaches adopted in addressing issues concerning gender and land tenure system in African customary law have proved ineffective, hence, gender issues in land tenure will for a long time continue to engage policy and law makers in the continent. The study therefore recommended the need for a ground-breaking, sagacious and proactive approach which must of essence be radical. This study apart from customary law based neglected the spiritual attachment of atypical African society to land.

Quansah (2012) evaluate women's access to land in a cosmopolitan context, the study revealed that, there exist instances where women's land ownership rights are complicated by the structure and ideological stance of the society where women are not expected to own property, particularly land and housing. Women that enforce their ownership

right in property are often seen or stereotyped as naughty, self-assertive, disrespectful, unruly or even possessed evil spirit and as such; considered not marriageable material for any suitor. The study therefore recommended equal ownership and inheritance right for both men and women. George *et al.*, (2015) in their study of economic empowerment of women observed that, with the purported land reforms and policies targeted at prescribing rights to land in several countries, women's access to and economic utilization of land remain marginalized especially in the rural communities of sub-Saharan African countries where traditional norms and customs still exist. The study further submitted that women's right to land that encapsulated her sustainable wealth has been negatively affected by existence of the patriarchal structure of families orchestrated by the informal institutions which support male dominance thereby reducing women earning capacities. FAO, (2010) stressed the need for invocation of the customary rules by women to challenge land registration that benefits exclusively the men, which further limit the rights acquired by women under statutory succession law.

Several instances of women's rights of access and control over land violation, discriminatory inheritance practices, women exclusion from family decision making and taking on family land and other forms of gender inequality have been reported in literature (Akor, 2015; Arisi & Oromareghake, 2011; Odimegwu, 2011; Ochefu, 2007; Watson, 2006 and Kameri-Mbote, 2005). Though, The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), 1999–2002 argued that, the nonexistence of systematic gender-disaggregated data has makes it difficult to determine the precise magnitude of the problem (gender disparity), but asserted that the information available from countries where studies have been carried out suggested a serious situation. Men in these countries have been given the traditional responsibilities of decision making thus dominated the decision-making process especially on issues relating to family, inheritance, land access, ownership and other similar socio-cultural issues.

Reasons have been adduced by scholars for the restrictions on women's access to and ownership of land. Kabane, (2010) declared that the system of land tenure in operation in many parts of Africa which grant rights of control, access, ownership and disposition of land to adult males encourages gender inequality. Wambu, *et al.*, (2016) opined that the Kenyan women rights to land are limited as the scope of their rights is determined by the interplay of customary and statutory law. Thus legal pluralisation, centralization, patriarchy and gender ideological stance of the sub-Saharan African societies have aided the complication of women's land access and ownership rights which has not only encouraged the precarious position of the women in her daily struggle of livelihoods but the suppression of her human dignity, active and contributive roles to both local and national growth and development. Hence, Kameri-Mbote (2005) advised that viewing gender from the social construct and its role in the rural communities, will helps in the better understanding of the interface between gender, customary law and tenure.

The general archaic attitude in Nigeria and most African countries towards women, where the female genders are considered as cheap objects, given the position of second fiddle in the family setting and seen as tools to be used and dumped by men regardless of their contributory role in nation building has hampered growth in Africa. The UN women (2011), posited that the exclusion of women in decision making not only delays delivery of benefits but also affects equity and institutional efficiency. Hence any program that encourages gender sensitivity and brings about parity especially in land access and ownership is therefore tailored towards nation building and national growth.

Women's Ownership Right under the Customary or Traditional Norm in Nigeria

Gender-Based Disparity or Discrimination in land ownership against women in Nigeria is a psychological and social issue that is deep rooted in the culture and tradition of the people (Akor, 2015; Apenda, 2007 and Ochefu, 2007). Though, the customs and tradition of the various communities or societies in Nigeria are not the same but as the different ethnic groups within each locality exhibit their different culture or custom not only in essence but in detail, a cautious analysis of the numerous custom divulges some elements of common factors or characteristics in the structures, shared values and the operationalization of the various customary laws. Akor (2015) sees gender as social but not biological categorization as the variance that exist both in the socially ascribed roles and the actual biological differentiation between male and female are socially inclined. Women's right to land according to the custom and traditions as practice in most societies in Nigeria is secondary and thus inferior to that of the male folks. Right of women to land are usually through the male as either husband or brother. However, the Nigerian Land Use Act 1978 equated women's right to access or own land to that of the male folks, but this only exist in theory as this is not the case in practice. In practice, the right of women is restricted as they cannot make or take decisions on the use, acquisition or disposal of family land.

For instance, the norm, tradition, belief and the cultural practices of the Idoma nation encourages the relegation of women in term of land holding and housing (compound) ownership to the backseat. Traditionally, the Idoma people of north-central Nigeria, practice primogeniture system of land tenure. This is a system where the ownership of a piece of land passes to the first-born son of the deceased landowner. On the other hand, daughters have relatively weaker land

rights compare to the right of the male child. Yet to be married daughters are entitled to temporary land right from the family land pool, but such right over land revert back to the family whenever marriage is consummated; as their access to land comes through their husband's lineage. However, Peters (2019) cited in Djurfeldt (2020) observed that, daughters can return to their natal family upon divorce or the death of their husband, or they can continue to hold rights to land through their sons as long as they do not remarry. It is, however, the belief of the people that the submissiveness of the woman to the authority of man must be complete and total, hence, a taboo for a woman to head a family or own a compound or inherit land. On the other hand, the Ikwerre culture permit women to inherit her late father's land but on the condition that she remain single (unmarried) for the rest of her life. The protagonists of this cultural norms are of the view that part of family land given to a woman automatically belongs to another family as the woman belong to whatever family she is married to. Though the antagonists of the system as Elias *et al.*, (2013), Arisi and Oromareghake (2011), Yngstrom (2002) and World Bank. (2000) asserted that the control and dominance of the male over the female in the society engenders the perpetuation of gender inequality as well as the exclusion of female gender from the society or the communal entity. The assertion of Elias *et al.*, (2013) that the non-clearly defined social identity of women, the male – centered kinship institutions and authority structure has all helped in the reductions or weakening of women land access or ownership rights in favour of the male folks further collaborate their position. However, it is important to also mention at this point that, there exist some few localities like some part of Ondo, Ekiti and Ijesha land that allow for the appointment of a daughter of the deceased king/chief as the regent to take charge of the affairs of the chieftdom within the interregnum period. The regent is within this period, in charge of the administration of every resources of the chieftdom including the management of her land. However, the submissions of earlier studies as Aluko and Amidu (2006), Abdullah and Hamza, (2003) have proved that the legal pluralization of land ownership have aided degree of uncertainty surrounding land rights of the vulnerable groups especially that of the women for which the world including Nigeria is yet to find lasting solutions. It is on this background that, Kingwill (2016) concluded that the right women have to land in land tenure systems that is based on patrilineal descent are contingent on a functioning relationship between the woman and her husband, father or son.

The Research Scope and the Contribution of Women in Nation Building

The Idoma people occupy nine local government areas in the western part of Benue state and are the second largest ethnic group in the state with Otukpo as their headquarter. Other land believed to belong to the Idoma people have been ceded to Nasarawa and Cross Rivers states through state creation in Nigeria (Ochefu, 2007). Inheritance and parentage are usually in the male line with lineages settled on identifiable tracts of land. Clans are normally formed by the larger lineages. Idoma people are predominantly farmers thus depend heavily on land (Ajeh) for their livelihood. Both statutory and customary land governance are recognised by the people. This study focused on Otukpo, the headquarter of Idoma nation. The choice of Otukpo which is a town that have steadily grown from a small town to the second largest city in Benue state as a location for the study presents a discerning contribution to the discourse on gender disparity. The communities picked for this study are Otukpo-Icho, Upu, Ugboju-icho and Otukpo-Nobi. The four communities constituted a thought-provoking possibility for the evolution of gendered land rights disparity in Idoma land, a good reflection of the custodian of the Otukpo (Idoma) cultural heritage, historical and political headquarter of the Idoma nation. As agrarian communities, land is valued second to life, thus, its use right and ownership are issues that has to do with marrying traditional requirements with the modern-day laws.

Ochefu (2007) noted that women in north central Nigeria, Idoma women inclusive contributed 50.06% and 33.27% man-hour to farming and non-agricultural activities apart from home and children maintenance while men contributed only 49.94% and 32.51% man-hour to farming and non-agricultural activities. This, Akor (2015) posited that it buttresses the traditional adage that “men work harder but women work longer”. Other studies as Chukwu (2003) asserted that women in this part of the country provided between 60% to 90% of the total food consumed by their families. These women were reported to dominated small and informal entrepreneurial sector and are directly responsible for the economic growth of the region. This shows that significant proportions of the national developmental activities are within the domain of the women who currently occupy the lowest rung of poverty ladder in the country (Ankeli, *et al.*, 2015 and Akor, 2015). It is on this backdrop that Akor (2015) further argued that the operationalisation of patriarchal system which places men over and above every aspects of woman's life with socialisation, culture and traditions placing the interest of the male folks above those of the woman thus serves as a clog in the wheel of national developmental efforts, hence, equality for the women folk is therefore, more than just a mere right but an absolute necessity.

Though gender stereotyping is a global phenomenon but it is more pronounced in sub-Saharan African countries. In Idoma land, women are not allowed to acquire or own land and where she must own land, it must be with the consent and approval of the husband and whatever assets thereafter acquired belong to the husband. Again, the situation where an Idoma woman is required by custom to share common purse with her husband who have unrestricted access to such purse and any woman who refuses to abide by the dictate of the custom is typecast, castigated and regarded as a loose and unmarriageable woman, this according to Ochefu (2000), exacerbate, reinforces and legitimises gender disparity in the society. Apart from women's inability to own land, in most parts of Nigeria, culture and traditional practices forbid women from been seen to be richer than their husband. This cultural notion which promote woman subordination status to her male folks according to Apenda (2007) hamper woman economic stability, relegate the woman to the background and impinges national development.

The fact that the practical and fundamental role of woman is yet to be fully recognized and acknowledged in many societies of the developing economies, scholars as Akor (2015) and Ochefu (2007) are of the believe that the current configurations and family style will hopefully, gradually transform the traditional roles of women to what is obtainable in the modern day world. Paradoxically, the prevailing slow developmental trend in north central Nigeria especially Benue state and Idoma land to be precise have been linked to gender disparity. Hence, Akor (2015) have identified the recognition of the work of women and gender equality as a potent force for accelerated poverty reduction and national development.

Methodology

Data for this study was collected between October, 2019 and May, 2020 in Otukpo-Icho, Upu, Otukpo-Nobi and Ugboju-Icho communities in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue state, Nigeria. The quantitative data collected were from village heads/chiefs, clan head, household heads and women that own or were previously denied access to land in the communities which invariably constituted the target population for the study. Samples for the study were selected based on multi-stage sampling technique. The communities to be studied were first identified and for ease of sample identification and unequal distributions of clans, the clans were stratified into families or households with the household heads in each of the clan randomly selected with no particular sequence followed.

A total number of 145 persons were sampled; out of which men constituted 131 and women 14, representing 90% and 10% response rate respectively. The communities selected for the study are defined ward headquarters and household settlement areas recognized by the laws of the federation. Within the duration of the study, only 14 females that were identified to own land or were at one time or the other denied access to land in their communities and as such were purposefully picked for this study.

In order to adequately determine the actual causes of gender disparity in land ownership in the studied communities, the identified causative factors in previous literatures were subjected to test through the perceptions of the custodians of customs and traditions of the people and land owners in the communities. The identified causative factors based on the perception of the respondents were further ranked through the use of Relative Importance Index (R.I.I). The formula that was adopted for the calculation of the R.I.I is:

$$R.I.I. = \frac{\sum W}{A*N} = \frac{5n_5 + 4n_4 + 3n_3 + 2n_2 + 1n_1}{5N}$$

Where;

W = weight given to each statement by the respondents' ranges from 1 to 5;

n5 = strongly agreed; n4 = agreed; n3 = uncertain; n2 = disagreed; n1 = strongly disagreed

A = Highest response integer (5) and

N = Total number of respondents.

Result/Findings

The survey conducted on the socio-demographic characteristic of the respondents is in such a way that members of each of the sampled households were asked questions on gender disparity and other land related issues that are peculiar to their communities. Questions like the age of the respondents, who can own land and why, mode of acquisition, how ownership disparity affect agricultural and real estate development potentials and the length of time such individuals have lived in the community were asked. The survey instrument was designed in English with the services of indigenous research assistants who could fluently speak the local dialect engaged. The result is as presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Parameters	Frequencies	Percentages	Parameters	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender			Occupation		
Male	131	90	Artisan	6	4
Female	14	10	Trading	8	6
Total	145	100	Farming	104	71
Age			Civil Service	10	7
18 - 40	35	24	Student	6	4
41 - 65	79	55	Professional	8	6
Above 65	31	21	Self-Employ	3	2
Total	145	100		145	100
Marital Status			Acquisition Mode		
Married	118	81	Inheritance	130	90
Single	8	6	Gift	7	5
Separated	2	1	Purchase	3	2
Divorce	3	2	Lease	3	2
Widowed	14	10	First occupant	2	1
Total	145	100		145	100
Education			Decision on land		
Post-Secondary	5	3	Men	120	83
Secondary School	20	14	Female	25	17
Primary School	85	59	Son	0	0
No formal education	35	24	Daughter	0	0
Total	145	100		145	100
Women Literacy level			Land ownership		
Post-Secondary	0	0	Men	100	69
Secondary School	0	0	Women	14	10
Primary School	2	14	None Native	3	2
No formal education	12	86	Children	28	19
Total	14	100		145	100

Source: Authors, (2020)

The result of the surveyed communities and respondent rates base on the sex of the respondents are as presented in table two. This was done in order to at a glance know the percentage rate of respondents from each of the communities studied. The findings are as presented in table 2 below

Table 2: Demographic profile of Respondents

S/N	Survey Communities	Survey participants	Participants sex	
			Male	Female
1	Otukpo-Icho	48	42	6
2	Upu	40	37	3
3	Otukpo-Nobi	25	23	2
4	Ugboju-Icho	32	29	3
	Total	145	131	14

Source: Authors, 2020

Furthermore, in order to rank the five identified gender disparity factors identified in literature and tested in the study areas, Relative Importance Index (RII) was run and the outcome is as presented in table 3 below

Table 3: Relative Importance Index (RII) of factors influencing Gender Disparity in Land Ownership in Idoma land

Causative factors	1	2	3	4	5	R.I.I	Ranking
Illiteracy	5	2	5	20	35	0.83	2 nd
Poverty	2	0	15	20	30	0.83	2 nd
Custom/Traditions	0	0	10	20	60	0.91	1 st
Religious factor	11	2	5	0	5	0.48	5 th
Psychological Factors	0	5	15	20	20	0.78	4 th

Source: Field Survey, (2020) * sig level at 0.5

Discussion

Table 1 indicate that 90% of the respondents are male, while the remaining 10% were female. This further revealed the supremacy of men over women in land related issues in the study area. Evidences from the field as shown in table 1 below revealed that, the previous out-right discrimination of land right against female gender in Idoma land is gradually changing. In the communities studied, several families are dropping the general norm and practice of land ownership based on gender. Although, the study further revealed that 83% of the male gender had the right to take decisions over family land, while 17% of the women in the study areas also have similar rights over family land. This however, mean that, Idoma land is gradually pulling out of issues of gender disparity over land ownership which negates the submissions of Quansah (2012) and Yngstrom (2002) where total decision over family land are said to be in the hand of men. More so, the table reveal that 55% of the respondents are within the active age bracket, 71% of them are engaged in agriculture (farming). This further prove the agrarian nature of the communities and support the assertion of Mathew (2007), that over 50% of the productive youths in the developing economies are in farming or other forms of agricultural activities. The table also show that decision over family land are mostly taken by men (83%) and land are mostly acquired through inheritance (90%). The men decide what the land inherited by women should be put. This most often discourages large scale agricultural practices by women and legitimises the subjugation of women right to men using patriarchal system as alibi. This idea was shared by UN Women. (2011) and other previous scholars as Kabane, (2010), Kameri-Mbote (2005) among others

Judging from the foregoing, it can be inferred that land right and economic stability of women that work longer and provide between 60% to 90% of the total food consume by the families are hampered by the operations of patriarchalism. However, the findings of the current study are in line with those of earlier studies conducted by Akor (2015) and Ochefu (2007) which link the slow developmental efforts in the north central Nigeria to gender disparity. The current study however observed slight improvement in women land right in Idoma land as some families are gradually allowing women to now inherit and own land.

Table 2 present the list of the surveyed communities and respondent rates. It could be seen from the table that the number of respondents in each of the communities was unevenly distributed. This was basically due to ease of ward accessibility, uneven distribution of clans and household aside the problem of high-level illiteracy and unwillingness to answer questions. Again, the table reveal low women response rate compare to that of their men counterparts. This could be tie to the patriarchal custom that subjugate women rights to land to that of men in Idoma land, thus exacerbate the subordination of women to men in the communities. The survey revealed that the custom and tradition of the communities studied are the same. Otukpo-icho and Upu have the highest survey participant rate due to their willingness to participate and literacy level.

Five critical factors were identified to cause gender disparity in land ownership. These critical factors identified in previous literatures to cause gender disparity in land ownership were subjected to the perception of indigenous Idoma landowners and custodian of customs and tradition and the result is as presented in table 3. The responses from the field were analyzed using percentages and Relative Importance Index to determine the most influential factor. The table revealed that four of the five identified factors significantly influences gender disparity in land ownership in the study area. Custom and tradition with R.I.I of 0.91 turn out to be the most critical influencing factor, closely followed by illiteracy and poverty with RII of 0.83 each. This is in line with the position of Ikimi (2018) that instead of prioritizing the right of women, culture has marginalized it and thus greatly impeded development. This is more so with the prevalence of prejudicial traditional practices and customs which legitimizes and exacerbate the inequality of women's right in most rural communities of the African sub-region thus hampering the effective implementation of human rights, especially right of women, as a vulnerable group. Djurfeldt (2020) collaborated the position of Ikimi by asserting that, institutional provisions exacerbate discrimination against women through a number of internal informal land tenure system mechanisms that places women's land rights in the context of communal and family relations, where the husband's family relations constitute a potentially threatening backdrop to a wife's tenure security. However, the least critical factor for gender disparity in land ownership in Idoma land is religious factor with R.I.I of 0.48 which is less than 0.5 bench mark. This is because as predominantly Christian communities, the religion allows equal right for both male and female folks. The continuous pervasive operationalization and practice of the adverse deep-rooted, retrogressive and harmful patriarchal system that promote typecast attitudes by relegating the role of women in the community have been identified as a factor limiting developmental efforts in the study area, hence need to be urgently address. Findings of the study are congruent with the submission of Akor (2015); Apenda (2007) and Ochefu, (2007).

Conclusion

The study examined the gender disparity in land ownership in Idoma land. Findings from the study shows that the Idoma nation practice patriarchal system which subordinate women land right to that of men. Hence custom and tradition serves as a major driver for gender disparity. Though, the outcome of previous similar studies as Akor (2015), Arisi and Oromareghake (2011), Apenda (2007) and Chukwu (2003) have revealed similar results but the current study further discovered slight positive improvement in women land ownership in Idoma land. The study further indicated that the studied communities are agrarian communities with 71% of the inhabitants engaged in one form of agricultural production or the other. The study also shows that there exists high illiteracy and poverty level among women in the farming communities as 86% of the women have no formal education but peasant practicing small scale farming. This finding is congruent with what was found in previous literature as Ankeli *et al.*,..., (2015) and Mathew (2007) but negate the submissions of Ogbole (2016) which opined that the economic reality of today have drawn most educated men to farm thereby making Nigeria farmers to be highly enlighten. Again, the study exposes the fact that, little have been done in the communities to retrieve land from the grip of cultural and traditional manipulations, heirs that are not interested in the productive use of land and the subjugation of women rights to land which is a clear invitation to national underdevelopment. Earlier studies conducted by Djurfeldt (2020); Ikimi (2018); Akor (2015) and Abdullah and Hamza, (2003) share similar views. The nature of land ownership practiced delimit the ability and potentials of the women as only 10% of the women in the communities' own land while 69% of the land belong to the men and 19% are hold by men in trust for the children of their deceased parents. The study therefore recommends gender parity through the promotion of gender inclusiveness and full participation in family and community decision making. This can be achieved through the overhauling of the existing cultural and traditional practices, land policies and the reformation of land management system and development programs in the country.

Future Research

The study is limited by its geographical scope as it covers land tenure practice of a tribe in a section of the country. Future studies can therefore be conducted on a wider geographical coverage in the country to evaluate or compare gender disparity in land ownership between tribes in the country and between nations of the world.

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