

## **Appraisal of Discriminatory Cultural Practices and Their Effects on Women Farmers in Gombi Local Government Area of Adamawa State.**

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**Abstract:** Most women farmers operate at the subsistence, smallholder level in extensive Agricultural System. This is due to discriminatory cultural practices in Gombi Local Government Area. About 40-60% of the women farmers have experienced discriminatory cultural practices in various ways. This is because most (35%) of the women farmers have no access to formal education. The discriminatory cultural practices found in the study area among others included lack of power to make decision, early marriage, denial of inheritance widow hood practices, customary land tenure and denial to work by husband. The causes of these discriminatory practices against women are religious beliefs, customs and traditions, educational backwardness, family history, low income, unemployment etc. these practices lead to increased poverty level, lack of confidence in women, low esteem, dependence on husbands, personal isolation, illiteracy, infant and maternal mortality rate, divorce etc. there is therefore the need to adopt legislation prohibiting discriminatory cultural practices against women. Government should cooperate with religious institutions and traditional authorities to eliminate such practices. Other aspects of discriminatory cultural practices in Gombi Local Government Area are discussed.

**Keywords:** Women farmers, Discrimination, Cultural Practices, Food Security, Gombi.

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Date of Submission: 28-05-2018

Date of acceptance: 18-06-2018

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Every society has discriminatory cultural practices that distinguish it from others. These cultural practices encompass the totality of the people's lifestyle. The various aspects of these cultural practices are what give the people an identify. In Nigeria, certain practices no matter how well intention still pose threat to the empowerment of women and their integration into the national development process. Discriminatory cultural practices have their roots in ancient and religious beliefs. There is abundant evidence to show that enforcement of some of these harmful cultural practices violate women fundamental human, reproductive rights and cultural spaces. (Agunloye, 2011). They are handed down through succeeding generations and are generally detrimental to socio-economic well being of women whose fundamental human rights are also violated by these practices. (UNCHR, 1979).

Discriminatory practices are therefore defined as practices relating to a specific population or group within the community, the state or society especially women and children. (Idyorough, 2005).

Discriminatory against women shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made of the basis of sex which have the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of quality of men and women, of human right and fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social cultural, civil or any other field (Cook 1994:235).

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, calls, for the elimination of discrimination against women in the field of employment, in order to ensure on a basis of quality of men and women the same rights. It also calls upon states to ensure women in rural areas have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform. Evidence indicates however that as girls grow older; they face discriminatory treatment in gaining access to economic opportunities. Major inequalities persist in employments, access to credits, inheritance right, marriage laws and other socio dispensations. Landlessness has increased among women, and the members of women cultivators have declined in same region partly due to mechanization of agriculture.

An increasing number of women in most developing countries are occupied in the informal, invisible factors where national, social and labour legislation in maternity benefits, equal wages and crèche facilities does not apply (unchr:2009).

The Constitutions of most African countries today affirm the right to non-discrimination on the basis of sex. In Nigeria the 1999 constitution in section 39 render all laws including customary and religious laws, subsidiary legislation, regulation and official government practices that permit discrimination against unconstitutional.(Ilumoka;1994).

In effect, Nigerian women therefore have all human rights stipulated in the constitution, including the right to non-discrimination on the basis of sex.

The broad objective of the study was to ascertain the type of discriminatory practices and their effect on women farmers. The specific objectives included:

- i. To describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.
- ii. To identify the types of discriminatory practices and laws against women in the study area.
- iii. To describe the effects of the practices of on women farmers.
- iv. To identify the various strategies for combating discrimination against women.

## II. MATERIAL AND METHODS:

The study was carried out in Gombi local Government Area of Adamawa State. It is located on latitude  $10^{\circ}40^{\circ}$  North and longitude  $13^{\circ}10^{\circ}$  East of Greenwich meridian and has a land mass for  $2,232\text{km}^2$  with a population of 147,787 (NPC, 2006 and Isa *et al*, 2013).The residents of the area engaged in agricultural and trading activities. The study population included all the women farmers in Gombi Local Government Area.

Sampling technique: multi-stage sampling procedure and random sampling techniques were employed for selecting the respondents. The first stage involved the existing four (4) Districts namely: Ga'anda, Garkida, Guyaku and Lala in the Local Government Area. The second stage was the selection of five (5) villages in each of the Districts as follows:

GA'ANDA	GARKIDA	GUYAKU	LALA
Ga'anda	Garkida	Gombi	Fotta
Gabun	Wuyaku	Mijiwana	Duwa
Boga	Mbewa	Balwhana	Johita
Zangra	Namta	Garfite	Kwanda
Shime	Tashan Yusuf	Gildambara	Sama

**Source:** Field survey 2016.

Finally, five (5) women farmers were randomly selected from each of the selected villages making one hundred (100) respondents.

### Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The data used for the study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through the use of well structured questionnaire while secondary data were obtained from text books, journals, magazines and materials from the internet. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as percentages, and frequencies presented in a tabular form. The descriptive statistics were use for analyzing the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, discriminatory practices and the causes of discriminatory Cultural Practices.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-Economic Characteristics of the respondents:

**Table 1:** showed that 40% of the respondents are within the age group of 47 – 56 years. Then 25% within the age group of 27 – 36 years, while 10% of the respondents are within the age group of 18 – 26 years and 5% are within the age group of 57 and above years. This finding showed or indicated that the majority of the women farmers are old and experienced. Hence, they have experienced discriminatory cultural practices in various ways.

Again 35% of the women farmers have no formal education, 27% of the respondents went to primary school while 25% have secondary school education. The table further revealed that 8% of the respondents attended adult education, 5% went to tertiary institutions. This finding showed that most of the respondents are educated, though they did not attain the highest level of education. (Anigbobu, 1995) stated that education is the key to progress, education does however offer the women an improved opportunity to be less dependent on men in later life (UNCHR: 2009) the table also showed that 50% of the respondents are farmers, 20% are traders, 15% of the respondents are students while 10% are civil servants and other forms of occupation constitute 5%. The findings indicated that majority of the respondents are farmers. This result is in agreement with the study

conducted by Yemisi, etal (2009) that women make some 60 – 80 percent of agricultural labour force in Nigeria and they produce two-third of the food crops. This is due to their low educational background and lack of employment, so they have no other work than to work in their husbands farm, agricultural labour which is the major occupation of the rural dwellers (Anyoha, etal 2015). Furthermore, 60% of the respondents are married, 30% of the respondents are single while 10% of the respondents are widows. This indicated that these married women and widows have experienced discriminatory cultural practices such as the customary land right that do not allow women to own land, women are invariably given subordinate position in the management affair and are inferior to men. (Ijere, 1991).

Table 1: also showed that 60% of the respondents have been farming for 20 and above years, 30% of the respondents have been farming for 11 – 15 years while 6% of the respondents have farm experience for 6 – 10 years and 4% of the respondents have below 5 years farm experience.

On farm size, 80% of the respondents have farm size of 1 – 2 hectares, 15% of the respondents have 3 – 4 hectares, while 3% of the respondents have 5 and above hectares, 2% of the respondents have no farm land. This indicated that these women are small scale farmers who produce mainly for family consumption and little scale are made when they are in need of money.

**Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of the respondents (N=100)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
18-26	10	10
27-36	20	20
37-46	25	25
47-56	40	40
56 and above	5	5
<b>Education</b>		
No Formal Education	35	35
Adult Education	8	8
Primary Education	27	27
Secondary Education	25	25
Tertiary Education	5	5
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farming	50	50
Trading	20	20
Civil Servants	10	10
Students	15	15
Others	5	5
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	60	60
Single	30	30
Widow	10	10
<b>Farming Experience</b>		
Below 5 years	4	4
6-10 years	6	6
11-15 years	30	30
20 and above years	60	60
<b>Farm Size (Ha)</b>		
No. of Farm Land	10	10
1-2 ha	70	70
3-4 ha	15	15
5 and above	5	5

Multiple Responses

**Source:** Field Survey 2016

**Table 2:** Showed the discriminatory cultural practices in the study area. The practices are customary land tenure with 20% responses. This finding indicated that women have limited access to land, as they are not beneficiaries through inheritance. Unmarried daughters are usually given the most unproductive plot (CTA, 2001). Other discriminatory cultural practices included male child preference 17%, denial of land inheritance 16%, lack of power to make decision at home 15%, widow hood practices 14% early married 10%, female genital mutilation 5% denial to the work by husband 3%. The above findings are in line with Agunloye (2011) who stated that in many patrilineal African societies, the concept of primogeniture is embedded the cultural system and such property inheritance is usually through the first son, no matter how far down he is from the hierarchy of children. The study is also in line with Anyoha (2015) who stated that the practices of inheritance in all kinds of moveable and immoveable parental property is a global practices but some of the traditional societies are characterized by gender discrimination in the form of either total or partial deprivation. More so, women are subjected to oppressions and dehumanizing widowhood practices especially in Africa. UNCHR (2009) stated that a widow has no right to inherit and cannot inherit the property of her husband even though they might have worked together to produce that property.

**Table 2: Discriminatory Cultural Practices and law against women**

S/No.	Practices	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1.	Lack of power to make decision at home	15	15
2.	Early Marriage	10	10
3.	Denial of land inheritance	16	16
4.	Widowhood Practices	14	14
5.	Male Child Preference	17	17
6.	Female Genital Mutilation	5	5
7.	Customary Land Tenure	20	20
8.	Denial to the work by husband	3	3
	Total	100	100

Multiple Responses

**Source:** Field Survey 2016

**Table 3:** Showed the causes of these discriminatory cultural practices against women. Some of the factors are religious beliefs which are indicated by 25% responses. Again 20% responses indicated that customs and beliefs is a major cause of discrimination against women. 15% responses agreed that educational backwardness is another cause of discrimination. Other causes of discrimination included family history, 14% responses; family condition indicated by 10% responses, low income 9% and unemployment indicated 7% responses. This is in line with the study of Illumoka (1994) who stated that religious beliefs discriminate in the amount of entitlement granted the deceased instated children along the sexual lines. In traditional lives in rural areas, religious laws and traditions still determine the lives of many people particularly women. This is also in line with CTA (2000) who stated that history, customs and traditions have long excluded women from land ownership by traditional patriarchal inheritance system.

**Table 3: The causes of Discriminatory Cultural Practice against Women**

S/No.	Causes	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1.	Religious beliefs	25	25
2.	Customs and traditions	20	20
3.	Education backwardness	15	15
4.	Family history	14	14
5.	Family Condition	10	10
6.	Low Income	9	9
7.	Unemployment	7	7
	Total	100	100

Multiple Responses

**Source:** Field Survey 2016

Effect of discriminatory cultural practices and laws against women, these respondents mentioned the following as effects of discriminatory against women: increased poverty level, unemployment of women, lack of confidence in women, low self esteem, dependence on husbands, personal isolation, illiteracy, infant and maternal mortality, divorce etc.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The result showed that the sample is dominated by respondents between the age group of 37 – 46 years and majority of the respondents who attended no formal education who are 35% mainly poor farmers and older married who have really experienced discrimination. The study further revealed that a good number of women are being discriminated in one way or the other by their families, husbands, or their society. The result showed that discrimination leads to increased poverty level, unemployment, lack of confidence in women, low self – esteem, dependence on husbands, personal isolation, illiteracy, infant and maternal mortality, and divorce and so on.

The majority causes of these discriminations against women are religions and cultural beliefs of the people.

Combating discrimination against women include: -

- Government should adopt legislation prohibiting discriminatory cultural practices against women.
- Government should cooperate with religious institutions and traditional authorities in order to eliminate discriminatory cultural practice against women.
- Non – governmental organizations should intensify their activities for the elimination of discriminatory cultural practice.
- Topics relating to gender based discriminatory practices affecting women should be introduced into functional literacy campaigns.
- Non-inheritance should be introduced.
- Efforts should be made to remove misconceptions in religious teachings which reinforce the unequal status of women.

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Isa Z, Hayatu Y "Appraisal of Discriminatory Cultural Practices and Their Effects on Women Farmers in Gombi Local Government Area of Adamawa State."IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 23 no. 06, 2018, pp. 76-80.