



Constraints to Female Students' Participation in Practical Agriculture in Senior Secondary Schools in Abua/Odual Local Government Area, Rivers State

***Amadi, N. S. & Eze U.**

**Department of Vocational/ Technology Education
Faculty of Technical and Science Education
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.**

***Corresponding author's Email: ndubisi_amadi@yahoo.com**

ABSTRACT

This research is on the constraints to female students' participation in practical agriculture in senior secondary schools in Abua/Odual Local Government Area, Rivers State. It aimed at determining the school factors, socio-cultural factors and parents/economic factors constraining female students from participating in practical agriculture. This study adopted descriptive design. A simple random sampling technique was used in collecting a sample size of 200 female students. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. A likert five point rating scale of agreement weighted 1-5, (SA-5, A-4, U-3, D-2 and SD-1) was used for the study. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage and mean, at value < 3 is disagree while mean value ≥ 3 is agree. The result shows that the three factors considered in this study were agreed as constraints to female students participation in practical agriculture with mean score of 3.93 for lack of commitment on school management towards practical agriculture, 4.33 for sexual harassment from male students to female students in the farm and 3.96 as means score of socio-economic background of students that can affect them towards practical agriculture respectively. The recommendation is that qualified teachers should be employed and fund channel to practical agriculture.

Keywords: Constraint, Female Student, Participation, Practical Agriculture, Senior secondary school.

INTRODUCTION

A strong commitment to youth development in practical agriculture is of great important in making the secondary schools' farm work in the 21st century. Youths interest in practical agriculture is diminishing, this particularly applied to female students in secondary schools. When it comes to class work students are involved but on the field the female students will always avoid the work. Over time, there has been low involvement of female students in practical agriculture in secondary schools (Asiabaka,1992). Female students naturally dislike farm work because they consider practical agriculture as being laborious and involves hard work (Maxwell and Pinda, 2010). Students in their characteristic manner prefer work that are easy, and not labour intensive like practical agriculture (Offen, 2000). Most female students look at practical agriculture as a physical work and stressful.

Some enroll in agriculture just to have complete number of courses to be registered in the senior school certificate examination. Olutola (1986) noted that peer group, physical strength, teacher,

social class community and parents are other constraints to female students participation in practical agriculture in secondary schools. Subsistence practice of parents in agriculture might also be responsible for the poor patronage of female students towards practical agriculture.

Social traditions and deep rooted religious and cultural beliefs are often barriers to expanding girl's educational opportunities in undeveloped countries around the world (Ganguli, Viarengo and Ricardo, 2011). Agriculture focuses on theory and practical teaching. School authorities should establish farms for students to put into practice whatever instruction they receive in the classroom. Students must be encouraged and provided with necessary things that could boost the female interest towards practical agriculture. Agriculture provides food for man and raw materials for the industries. In Nigeria the major producers of food products are the females in rural communities that are not in school. Secondary schools female students should participate actively in both theory and practical agriculture for future use. Also passing external examination such as West African School Certificate Examination and National Examination Council amongst others will be a plus to the women. Students' participation in practical agriculture in secondary schools is always a problem for agricultural science teachers. Female students are often more in number in classes but participate less when it comes to practical work on the farm.

Female students' education is a means to the realization of total women empowerment. This involves the formal, informal and non-formal training of the girl child in knowledge and skills, building them to fit in the society.

The question is, what could be the factors constraining these female students from participating in practical agriculture? Could it be school factor, societal or parental factors? Efforts to answer these questions prompted this study to determine the school factors constraining female students from participating in practical agriculture in senior secondary Schools in Abua/Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State; ascertain the socio-cultural factors constraining female students participation in practical agriculture in Senior Secondary schools in Abual/Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State; and determine the Parents/Economic Factors constraining female students participation in practical agriculture in Senior Secondary schools in Abual/Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Review of Related Literature

The school factor constraining female students in participating in practical agriculture includes time allotted for practical agriculture by the school authorities, interrelationship between the communities and the school authorities, security, availability of modern agricultural practical facilities, farm land for school and practical uniforms for female students. Some schools do not have farm land for practical agriculture and there is no security available for the farm. Most school authorities and teachers are not allowed by the community to access the school farm. Also, teachers focuses more on theory than the practical. According to Yeshimebrat, Alemayehu and Firew (2013), the problems female students encountered constitute personal, university related factors, academic factors and economic factors

Socio-Cultural Constraints

The Socio-Cultural Constraints of female students' participation in agricultural science deals with each students' ideas, beliefs, customs, and skills towards agricultural science. It is desirable that female students seek wider participation in all kinds of occupations outside the family and domestic activities which are culturally acceptable. Socio-cultural environment of female students affect their participation in practical agriculture. Female students participation in practical agriculture has a socio-cultural dimension which has become a myth to the extent that female students have come to accept that practical agriculture is man's work. But given the age of revolution, technological advancement, the requirement of physical energy in the area of practical agriculture has given way to intellectual ability and manipulation of modern farm implement (Loasa, 1982).

Traditional ideology about women has been the chief constraints that seer female students away from practical agriculture. The attitude bias beliefs which point to the female students as the inferior sex have coloured their opinion about practical agriculture and as a result they do not

regard agriculture as their career choice. Bazeman (2012) noted that women rightful place is in the kitchen and the major functions are housekeeping, child-bearing and incapable of caring for themselves. The unmarried career women are usually regarded as incomplete and have to be feminine. This explained why female students are not participating actively in practical agriculture. The effect of culture and other sociological factors on the female students is very great indeed. Role socialization process and the culture religious affiliation in most countries of the world seem to have created the myth around practical agriculture among female students. In Nigeria, religious practices have added another dimension to the disparity between females and males in practical agriculture (Catalyst, 2005). Religion has influence on one's choice of friends, spouse, occupation, jobs, values and about life. Societal norms and presumption for female students behaviour have affected and restricted their performance in practical agriculture. Sex-role is learned primarily from the parents and other significant persons with whom the female students interact. These studies stressed the influence of the role of the societal norms as primary in the female student's involvement in practical agriculture. The influence of the role of the societal norms is primary in their involvement in Agricultural Science as career. In some communities the female are not expected to cut palm fruit. Family size, household income, parents education, cultural and traditional beliefs contribute to poor female enrolment in school. Female students are pulled out of school by their parent and boys left in school when the family income dictates that all children cannot be educated. Female students miss school when there are chores to be done at home or there is a sick family member to nurse. Female students are taken out of school at the age of marriage or to help supplement the family income by selling, farming or performing other money earning activities (NEPAD, 2013). Bentini (2011) noted that factors affecting female schooling includes socio-cultural and socio-economic factors. The effects of these factors on female student's education are far-reaching and affect the performance and persistence of these female students that remain in school.

Parents/Economic Constraints

Parents/Economic Constraints is one of the factors influencing female students participation in practical agriculture. Onyejiaku (1987), pointed out that occupation of the parents influence children's vocational interest. Children raised in a home dominated by certain occupation are likely to be influenced by that occupation. Children whose father and grand-fathers, uncles and brothers are physicians or lawyers will invariably have different vocational interest from children raised in a family as farmers, teachers, or labourers. Adedibu (1986) added that most parents especially those in professions that have been considered by people as low and non-prestigious e.g. farmers do not want their children to enter into the same professions with them. Also, Ojoko (1989) stated that the majority of the highly educated parents do not want their children to take up career in agriculture but to become medical practitioners, lawyers and engineers. Loasa (1982) noted that students are influence by their parents based on their educational and occupational status. Parents who are highly educated and occupying high socio-economic status want their children to attain similar educational and occupational positions in the society. Parents from the low socioeconomic status homes on the other hand, do not give such aspiration to their 'children. The female students when forced to the farm, openly declare that practical agriculture is a dirty work, no quick money, that agriculture is for the poor, and some will depart from the work. Women with low family income carry out land preparation, planting, weeding, transportation, processing and marketing of agricultural products in order to feed their family. The socio-economic inequality accompanying labour migration increased investment in agriculture and increased production have resulted from agricultural innovation and intensification. Rural women are more vulnerable to resource depletion and hard work on the farm (Melanne, 2011 & Action Aid, 2011). This help to discourage female students from taking agric practical seriously. Females in the rural areas are currently over worked and increasing the number of hours worked by them will adversely affect their nutritional standards (Longhurst, 1982). Investing in women farmers will boast agricultural production, reduce hunger, promote economic growth and contribute to the achievement of the millennium development goals.

The key to knowing the potential of small-scale farming is addressing gender barriers that impede women from accessing inputs, markets, technologies and decision making. The female students should be encouraged by investing much in them during schooling so as to catch them young. This will boost agricultural production and reduce hunger in Abua/Odual Local Government Areas and promote the economy of the people as well as the nation at large.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study was a descriptive survey. Jamie (2016) describes descriptive survey as a survey that participants answer questions administered through questionnaires. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The population for the study comprises of all the female students in Senior Secondary Schools in Abua/Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State. The sample size used for the study was 200 female students. 40 female students were randomly selected from each of the 5 Senior Secondary Schools (GSS Abua, GSS Emelego, GSS Egbolom, GSS Otapha and GSS Emago-Kugbo) randomly selected from 11 Senior Secondary Schools in Abua/Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State. A likert five point rating scale of agreement weighted 1-5, (SA-5, A-4, U-3, D-2 and SD-1) was used for the study. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage and mean. Mean value < 3 is disagree while mean value ≥ 3 is agree. 200 copies of questionnaires were administered to the students by the researcher. Hence, 100% of 200 questionnaire were retrieved upon completion by the respondents and use for the analysis.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Table 1: Factors constraining female students from participating in practical agriculture

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1.	Lack of commitment on school management towards practical agriculture.	100 (50)	50 (25)	4 (2)	28 (14)	18 (9)	3.93	Agreed
2.	Inability of schools to provide farm inputs.	125 (62.5)	35 (17.5)	7 (3.5)	25 (12.5)	8 (4)	4.22	Agreed
3.	Lack of vibrant school securities to protect the environment.	130 (65)	55 (27.5)	5 (2.5)	9 (4.5)	1 (0.5)	4.52	Agreed
4.	Lack of proper funding of agricultural practical.	115 (77.5)	70 (35)	3 (1.5)	7 (3.5)	5 (2.5)	4.45	Agreed
5.	Lack of modern agricultural science facilities.	140 (70)	40 (20)	1 (.5)	8 (4)	11 (5.5)	4.45	Agreed
6.	None availability of school land for practical.	150 (75)	21 (10.5)	2 (1)	20 (10)	7 (3.5)	4.45	Agreed
7.	Lack of agricultural science teachers.	90 (45)	79 (39.5)	13 (6.5)	11 (5.5)	7 (3.5)	4.17	Agreed
8.	Lack of practical skills by the teachers.	40 (20)	60 (30)	5 (2.5)	20 (10)	25 (12.5)	2.6	Disagreed
9.	Low level of teachers' income.	135 (67.5)	37 (18.5)	3 (1.5)	18 (9)	7 (3.5)	4.38	Agreed
10.	Poor teachers' commitment to practical classes.	167 (83.5)	20 (10)	1 (0.5)	7 (3.5)	5 (2.5)	4.68	Agreed
11.	Physical strengths of female students.	111 (55.5)	52 (26)	5 (2.5)	19 (9.5)	13 (6.5)	4.15	Agreed
12.	Lack of concentration on the part of female students.	97 (48.5)	87 (43.5)	4 (2)	7 (3.5)	5 (2.5)	4.32	Agreed
13.	Dirty and tedious nature of agricultural science practical.	107 (53.5)	67 (33.5)	7 (3.5)	11 (5.5)	8 (4)	4.27	Agreed
14.	Lack of students' interest on agricultural practical.	115 (57.5)	45 (22.5)	7 (3.5)	25 (12.5)	8 (4)	4.17	Agreed
15.	Peer group influence on female student.	105 (52.5)	58 (29)	5 (2.5)	19 (9.5)	13 (6.5)	4.15	Agreed
16.	Insufficient time to carry out agricultural practical.	120 (60)	67 (33.5)	3 (1.5)	7 (3.5)	3 (1.5)	4.47	Agreed
17.	Difficulty working in the farm with their uniforms.	150 (75)	45 (22.5)	1 (0.5)	3 (1.5)	1 (0.5)	4.70	Agreed
18.	Lack of medical facilities in case of injury.	170 (85)	18 (9)	3 (1.5)	5 (2.5)	4 (2)	4.76	Agreed

Mean ≥ 3 Agree. Mean < 3 Disagree N =200

Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

The data on Table 1 showed responses on school factors constraining female students from participating in practical agriculture. The respondents agreed on the 17 factors and disagreed on one of the factors. These are lack of commitment on school management towards practical agriculture (3.93), inability of school to provide farm inputs (4.22), lack of vibrant school securities to protect the environment (4.52), Lack of proper funding of agricultural practical (4.45), Lack of modern agricultural science facilities (4.45), None availability of school land for practical (4.45), Lack of agricultural science teachers (4.17), Lack of practical skills by the teachers (2.6) Low level of teachers income (4.38), Poor teachers commitment to practical classes (4.68), Physical strengths of female students (4.15) and lack of concentration on the part of female students (4.32), Dirty and tedious nature of agricultural science practical (4.27), Lack of students interest on agricultural practical (4.17), Peer group influence on female student (4.15), Insufficient time to carry out the practical (4.47), Difficulty working in the farm with their uniforms (4.70), and lack of medical facilities in case of injury (4.76).

Table 2: Socio-cultural factors constraining female students participation in practical agriculture

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1.	Sexual harassment from male students to female students in the farm.	99 (49.5)	85 (42.5)	4 (2)	7 (3.5)	5 (2.5)	4.33	Agreed
2.	Belief of female students in the study area.	54 (27)	99 (49.5)	6 (3)	23 (11.5)	18 (9)	3.74	Agreed
3.	Host communities destroying school farms.	91 (45.5)	66 (33)	3 (1.5)	23 (11.5)	17 (8.5)	3.96	Agreed
4.	Crude method of practical agriculture.	68 (34)	87 (43.5)	6 (3)	21 (10.5)	18 (9)	3.83	Agreed
5.	Early marriage of female students.	97 (48.5)	70 (35)	9 (4.5)	14 (7)	10 (5)	4.15	Agreed
6.	Conflicts between the community and school.	93 (46.5)	57 (28.5)	8 (4)	20 (10)	22 (11)	3.90	Agreed
7.	Poor public relation by the school authority.	100 (50)	69 (34.5)	7 (3.5)	11 (5.5)	13 (6.5)	4.16	Agreed

Mean ≥ 3 Agree. Mean < 3 Disagree N=200

Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

The data on Table 2 showed the Mean responses on socio-cultural factors constraining female students participation in practical agriculture. The respondents agreed on the 7 factors, and the factors includes Sexual harassment from male students to female students in the farm (4.33), Belief of female students in the study area (3.74), Host communities destroying school farms (3.96), Crude method of practical agriculture (3.83), Early marriage of female students (4.15), Conflicts between the community and school (3.90) and Poor public relation by the school authority (4.16).

Table 3: Parents/Economic Factors constraining female students participation in practical agriculture

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1.	Socio economic background of students can affect them towards practical agriculture	91 (45.5)	66 (33)	3 (1.5)	23 (11.5)	17 (8.5)	3.96	Agreed
2.	Dual economic role of female students.	50 (25)	103 (51.5)	6 (3)	25 (12.5)	16 (8)	3.73	Agreed
3.	Female discrimination in extension planning.	73 (36.5)	78 (39)	6 (3)	23 (11.5)	20 (10)	3.81	Agreed
4.	Parents transfer from the area.	64 (32)	95 (47.5)	4 (2)	25 (11.5)	12 (6)	3.87	Agreed
5.	Crude method of farm practice.	85 (42.5)	68 (34)	5 (2.5)	22 (11)	20 (10)	3.88	Agreed
6.	Discouragement from parents.	95 (47.5)	72 (36)	7 (3.5)	15 (7.5)	11 (5.5)	4.13	Agreed
7.	Students of the rich evade practical as a result of pride.	102 (51)	65 (32.5)	2 (1)	17 (8.5)	9 (4.5)	4.1	Agreed

Mean ≥ 3 Agree. Mean < 3 Disagree N = 200

Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

The data on Table 3 showed the mean response on Parents/Economic Factors constraining female students participation in practical agriculture. The respondents agreed on the 7 factors and the factors includes Socio economic background of students that can affect them towards practical agriculture (3.96), Dual economic role of female students (3.73), Female discrimination in extension planning (3.81), Parents transfer from the area (3.87), Crude method of farm practice (3.88), Discouragement from parents (4.13), and Students of the rich evade practical as a result of pride (4.1).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study reveals that physical strength, lack of practical skills by the teachers, lack of modern agricultural science facilities, lack of teachers commitment, lack of proper funding of practical, peer group influence, dirty and tedious nature of agricultural practicals, constrain female students. Others are, lack of student concentration, lack of farm input, lack of commitment on school management in practical agriculture are all school related constraints to female student participation in practical agricultural activities in Abua/Odual Local Government Area in Rivers State. This is in line with the idea of Akinwunmi (1997) whose research revealed that interest, teachers, commitment, lack of modern facilities etc are some major factors associated with female involvement in practical agriculture.

The social-cultural constraints to female student participation in practical agriculture includes belief of female students in the study area, host community destroying school farms, crude method of practical agriculture and conflict between community and school. Imam (1990) opined that female students do not have physical strength required by practical agriculture, this makes them shy away from it.

The study reveals that the parent/economic constraint to female participation to practical agriculture are the low income parents, high income parents of female students, dual economic role of female students, crude method of farm practice and discouragement from parent. Ojoko (1989) stated that the majority of the highly educated parents do not want their children to take up career in agriculture but to become medical practitioners, lawyers and engineers

CONCLUSION

The results obtained from the findings of the research revealed that school factors such as lack of modern agricultural facilities, lack of student commitment, peer group, lack of commitment of school management, lack of proper funding, physical strength of female students, lack of concentration, interest, lack of medical facilities etc. contribute in discouraging female students from participating in practical agriculture. The student parent/economic status was found to constraint female students from involving themselves in practical agriculture. The socio-culture factors such as belief of female students, religion of female students, host communities destroying their farms, conflict between school and community and crude method of practical agriculture also were found to posed and as impediment to female students participation in practical agriculture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents and schools should encourage female students to participate in practical agriculture.
2. The host communities of secondary schools should make farm land available for Practical Agriculture.
3. Qualified teachers in the study area should be employed to give good guidance to female students in practical agriculture.
4. Adequate fund should be channeled to practical agriculture by the government in collaboration with the parents through PTA. to encourage female student participation. This s is because when necessary modern facilities are in place for practical work in agriculture the female students will not see the work as being tedious but will be interested in it.
5. The school authority should absorb a good maintenance culture for the equipment available to them for practical agriculture, this will bring continuity of practical agriculture, year in year out for the female students.
6. There should be adequate remuneration for teachers of agriculture. This will make teachers happy, devoted and more active with the practical agriculture to bring out the best from the students.
7. Opportunities should be given to female students for excursion to observe women in practical agriculture as it will motivate the female students to emulate those women in higher positions and start doing practical agriculture as they aspire to be like the women they see.

REFERENCES

- Action Aid. (2011). *Farming as Equals: Flow Supporting Women's Rights and Gender Equality makes the difference.* http://www.actionaid.org/sites/default/files/actionaidJaa_fanninas_equals1ores.pdf. Retrieved 2016.
- Adedibu, A.A. (1986). *Unemployment: Issue, Trends and Implication for vocational Guidance.* In. Ipiye, P. (Ed.). *Educational and Vocational Guidance: Concepts and Approaches (54-55).* Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press Ltd.
- Akinwunmi, E. (1997). *Equipping Female Students with Career Decision Making Skills, Nigeria Journal of Counseling and Development.* 1(6), 51-53.

- Asiabaka, C.C. (1992). Factors Influencing Choice of Agriculture as Area of Specialization among Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO) Students. *Nigerian Journal of Agricultural Teacher Education*, 1(1), 91-99.
- Bazeman, M. (2012) *Laboratory Organization and Administration*. New York. Macmillian Educational Ltd.
- Bentini, C. (2011). "Girls Grow" A vital force in rural economies. The Chicago council on Global Affairs. <http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/userfiles/file/globalAgDevelopmentlReportlGirlsGrowReportFinal-V9.pdf>. Bentine, C. (2011). Retrieved 2016.
- Catalyst, B. (2005). Women "Take Care", Men "Take Charge". Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leadership Exposed. New York, NY. Catalyst.
- Ganguli, I. Viarengo, M. & Ricardo, H. (2011). The Closing of the Gender Gap in Education: Does it Foretell the Closing of Employment, Marriage and Motherhood Gaps? HKS Working Paper. dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/5027209/RWP11-021_Hausma
- Ihiegbulem, O. (2000). *A Text book of Fundamental Concept and Issues in Guidance and Counselling*, Onitsha, Cape Publishers Int'l Limited.
- Imam, A.M. (1990). Gender Analysis and African Social Sciences in African. *Journal of Gender Analysis Development Magazine*, 8 (3), 3-5.
- Jamie, H. M. S. (2016). The 3 Basic Types of Descriptive Research Methods. <http://psychcentral.com> Date Retrieved 2016
- Loasa, L.M. (1982). School Occupation Culture and Family. The Impact of Parent Schooling on the Parent-Child Relationship. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 74(6), 91-93.
- Longhurst, R. (1982). *Resource Allocation and the Sexual Division of Labour: A case study of a Moslem Hausa Village*. In: Beneria L. (Ed.), *Women and Rural Development: The Sexual Division of Labour in Rural Soweto*. New York, Praeger.
- Maxwell, S. & Pinda, E. (2010). Farming as a Pattern of Vocational Agricultural Science Education a Career. *Journal of Technical and Science Education*. 1(3), 83 - 96.
- Melanne, V. (2011). The Vital Role of Women in Agriculture and Rural Development <http://www.state.gov/s/gwi/rls/rem/2011/167899.htm>
- NEPAD (2013). African agriculture, transformation and outlook. NEPAD, P.72 www.nepad.org
- Offen, K. M. (2000). *European feminisms. 1700 - 1950*. Ithaca. Cornell University Press.
- Ojoko, S. (1989). Family Influence on Vocational Agricultural Education as a Career for Rivers State Students. *Journal of Technical and Science Education*; 1, (1) 83-94.
- Olutola, A. (1986). Career Choice. In: Ipaye, T. (Ed). *Educational and Vocational Guidance Concepts and Approaches*, Ile-Ife, University of Ife Press Ltd.
- Onyejiaku, E.O. (1987). *Career Guidance and Counseling Services in Schools*. Calabar: Women Press Ltd.
- Yeshimebrat, M., Alemayehu B. & Firew, T. (2013). Factors Affecting Female Students' Academic Achievement at Bahir Dar University. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 15,(3), 135-148