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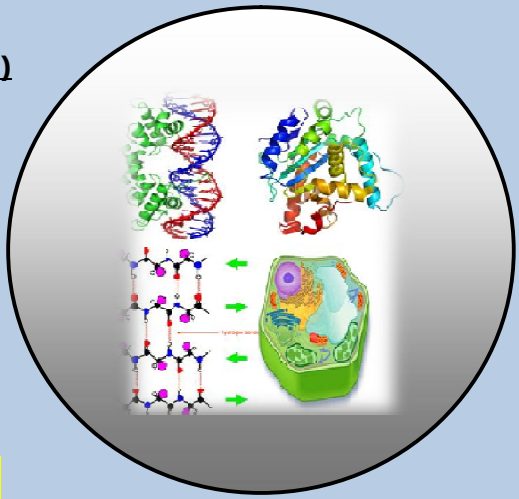

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RESEARCH PAPER

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Women Involvement in the Utilization of Non-Timber Forest Products

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ABSTRACT

Non-timber forest products are wild plants and animal products harvested from forests such as wild fruits, vegetables, nuts, edible roots, palm leaves, medicinal plants, poisons and bush meat. Millions of people especially those living in rural areas in developing countries collect these products daily and many regard selling them as a means of earning for a living. This paper seeks to examine the factors affecting the participation of women and the level of utilization in Non – Timber Forest Product in Ibadan. The methodology adopted for data collection for this study includes purposive random sampling of four (4) selected Local Government areas, namely; Oluyole, Egbeda, Akinyele and Lagelu Local Government Areas. Simple descriptive statistics tools such as frequency and percentage were used to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Simple regression analysis was used to analyze factors affecting the participation of women and the level of utilization in Non – Timber Forest Products in the study area. It was revealed that most women in the study area do participate in the utilization of NTFPs and play dominant roles in forest related activities. This boils down to the fact that utilization of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) is gaining prominence in the tropical world because of the commercial importance to the host community. It is imperative to state that subsidies on agricultural resources be made available for the optimum production, processing and marketing of NTFPs which if done will no doubt improve the availability, accessibility as well as affordability of NTFPs. Thus, more people most especially women will improve on their level of participation and as a result, they will be grossly empowered.

Key words: Women Involvement, NTFPs, Utilization, and Forest.

INTRODUCTION

There has been renewed interest in the development of non – timber forest products (NTFPs) as an instrument for sustainable rural development. Non-timber (or non-wood) forest products (NTFPs) are defined as goods of biological origin other than trees, derived from forests, other wooded land and trees outside forest (FAO, 1999). The forest is full of a lot of products that are vital in human life. Non-timber forest products are wild plants and animal products harvested from forests such as wild fruits, vegetables, nuts, edible roots, palm leaves, medicinal plants, poisons and bush meat. Millions of people especially those living in rural areas in developing countries collect these products daily and many regard selling them as a means of earning for a living. There are various uses of NTFPs. It can serve as source of food, (Chrysophylu malbidum, Irvingia gabonensis, Irvingia wombolu, Beilshmiedia manni e.t.c), Condiments (Tetrapleura tetraptera, Parkia biglobosa, Piper guinensis, Capsicum spp e.t.c), Masticant (kolanuts such as kola accumulata, kola nitida or bitter cola such as Garcina cola), oil plants (Elaesis guinensis, Dacryodis edulis, Treculia africana, Pluenetia conophora), leaf wrappers (Motragyna alata, Thaumatococcus danielli), medicine (Mahogany-bark,enantia,Okoobaka aubrevillei), hoiusehold items(Raphia spp)while others are Massularia accumulata, Plukenetia conophora, walnut, Treculia aficana e.t.c. Utilization of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) is gaining importance in the tropical world because of the commercial importance to the host community Akande and Hayashi (1998). Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) have been discovered to play many roles in the daily needs of households especially in the rural areas. NTFPs either natural or refined are found to be part of each household's daily needs. The role of NTFPs has changed markedly over the years with forest products becoming more commercially harvested and traded in many markets of the world. Research findings have shown that non timber forest resources are presently decreasing in number and quantity. This was attributed to the effects of deforestation and some other factors which is causing habitat changes and over exploitation due to increasing marketing demands for these resources. Men and women have both contributed to the decline of natural resources as they seek for the means of household's livelihood. In many developing countries of the world, the men serve as head of the family while the women play dual roles as mother and income provider for their families. Both women and men act as laborers and harvesters in agricultural work and in NTFPs collection. Women are known to play a dominant role in forestry and agricultural production in Nigeria in processing, marketing and final utilization of forest products and therefore face several challenges in collecting and trading NTFPs. Also, women are found working all year round producing food crops while men perform only pre-planting and planting tasks that occupy a small part of the agricultural production process. (Ayandiji, 2008). Most NTFPs studies observe that women play an important role in the extraction, production, distribution, and marketing aspects. Depending on the region, women are either the main participants in NTFP activities or minor participants. In any case, both men and women engage in NTFP activities (Neumann and Hirsch, 2000). Most rural women have demonstrated adequate botanical knowledge and plant management skills, exploiting over 150 wild and domesticated species in their communities (Baden with Milward, 1995). Regardless of the level of development achieved by respective economies, women play a vital role in forest related activities and in rural development in most developing countries.

Evidently, there are serious constraints which militate against the promotion of an effective role of women in the involvement and utilization of NTFPs which are bound by customs and beliefs. Consequently, they are generally invincible in plans. They were, in fact, discriminated against by stereotypes which restrict them to a reproductive role and denied access to resources which could eventually enhance their social and economic contribution to the society (Prakash, 2003). Women are largely found in the retail sector. As trade in NTFPs represent major income niches for poor populations, any effort to develop the sector would be central to poverty reduction. (Danielle 2006).

African Women has economic impact on the well-being of the household compared to men (Kamau, 2011). But in spite of their economic contribution, women are generally not considered as workers and rarely contribute to decisions, particularly those concerning irrigation schemes or credit services, among others. With the need to increase household income, the women have also been involved in contributing to the household economy through agricultural production, NTFP activities and marketing of products. Women are also involved in informal small-scale income earning activities and handicraft production to supplement their family's income. (Chanthalangsy, 2009).

According to Ogunlela et al, 2009, rural women more than their male counterparts take lead in forest related activities, making up to 60 – 80 percent of labour force. It is ironical that their contributions to agriculture and NTFP businesses are seldom noticed. This paper therefore seeks to examine the factors affecting the participation of women and the level of utilization in Non – Timber Forest Product in Ibadan.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Area

The study was conducted in Ibadan Metropolis which is the capital of Oyo state. The area is located between latitude 7^0 21^1 and 9^0 17^1 North; and longitude 1^0 2^1 and 2^0 44^1East. Two geographical seasons are identifiable; they are the rainy season beginning from late March to October and dry season stretching from November to early March. The mean annual temperature varies between 21.1^0 C and 31.1^0 C. The annual rainfall is within the range of 800mm in the derived eco-zone to 1500mm in the rainforest belt. It is bimodal with peak in July and September (Faleyimu and Agbeja, 2004).

Data Collection

The methodology adopted for data collection for this study includes purposive random sampling of four (4) selected Local Government areas, namely; Oluyole, Egbeda, Akinyele and Lagelu Local Government Areas. These selected local Government areas are considered as Ibadan less city because they are situated outside Ibadan municipality and they are relatively forested rural areas where activities of women engaging in NTFPs are more pronounced. Twenty Five (25) respondents were interviewed with the use of structured questionnaires in each Local Government area totaling one hundred questionnaires in all the selected areas. The questionnaires were designed to elicit information on the socio – economic characteristics of the respondents, factors affecting the participation of women and the level of utilization of Non – Timber Forest Product in Ibadan.

Data Analysis

Simple descriptive statistics tools such as frequency and percentage were used to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Simple regression analysis was used to analyze factors affecting the participation of women and the level of utilization in Non – Timber Forest Products in the study area.

RESULTS

Table 1. Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents.

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Age		
<20	20	20.0
20-29	18	18.0
30-39	32	32.0
40-49	30	30.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**
Marital Status		
Single	4	4.0
Married	90	90.0
Separated	5	5.0
Divorced	1	1.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**
Educational Level		
No formal education	42	42.0
Primary	17	17.0
Secondary	29	29.0
Tertiary	12	12.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**
Household Size		
32	32.0	
3-5	36	36.0
6-8	37	37.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**
Primary Occupation		
Farming	66	66.0
Trading	22	22.0
Artisan	7	7.0
Others	5	5.0
Total	**100**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Age of the Respondents

The study showed that the age group of respondents (40-49 years) has the highest percentage of 30.0 percent and the age group of 30 – 39 years has the percentage of 23.0 percent. 20 – 29 years has the percentage of 18.0 percent and less than 20 years has the percent of 20 percent. This therefore indicated that the rural women that take lead in forest related activities and the use of NTFPs are the middle aged.

Marital status of Respondents

The study revealed that 90.0 percent of the respondents were married while single accounted for 4.0 percent of the respondents. It indicated that married women take the lead in the usage therefore have impacts on the well-being of the household through the use of NTFPs in the study area.

Educational Level of Respondents

The study revealed that 42.0 percent of the respondents had no formal education. 17.0 percent and 29.0 percent of the respondents interviewed had primary and secondary education respectively while tertiary education accounted for 12.0 percent of the respondents. This showed that about half of the respondents are illiterates while the rest 12.0 percent have various higher academic qualifications. Thus, the educational status of the women does not influence their involvement in the use of NTFPs in the study area.

Family size of Respondents

From Table 1, 36.0 percent of the respondents in the study area have a family size less than 3 while 32.0 percent fell within the range of 3-5 family size .The study showed that women with lesser family size also played a greater role in the use of NTFPs like their peers with relatively large family size. This therefore indicate that regardless of the family size, the sampled women in the study area would participate in the use of NTFPs. The extent to which such women participated might however differ.

Occupation of Respondents

The study indicated that 66.0 percent of the respondents engaged in farming activities while trading accounted for 22.0 percent of the respondents. The artisans were about 7 percent and other occupations have about 5 percent. This showed that various farming activities employed by the women encouraged their level of involvement in the use of NTFPs in the study area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Table 2, R squared value of 0.518 reveals that the explanatory variables explained over 51% of the dependent variable, and the only policy relevant variables were degree of benefits derived, challenges, low cost of inputs, all were significant at 1% while the input availability was however significant at 10 percent.

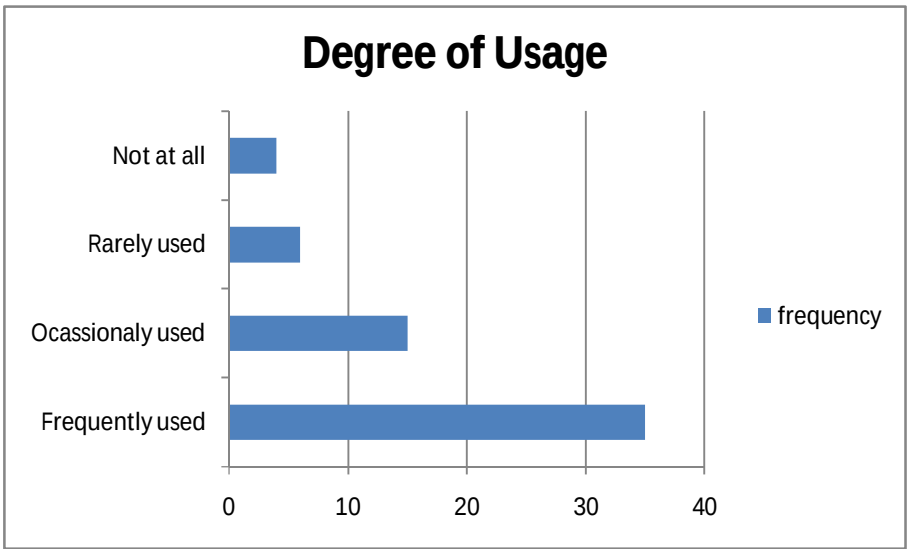
The challenges encountered in the utilization of NTFPs is significant at 1 percent and has a negative relationship with the level of usage, that is, the more difficult the task of collecting and trading in NTFPs are, the less their degree of utilization becomes and vice versa which is line with the apriori expectation. This can be explained, given the fact that the challenges they face in the business are very enormous. This is supported by the earlier work carried out by Prakash 2003 who pointed out that there are serious constraints which militate against the promotion of an effective role of women in the involvement and utilization of NTFPs which are bound by customs and beliefs. These reasons might be responsible.

Table 2. Linear Regression Analysis of Participation of Women in the usage of NTFPs.

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	sig.
(Constant)	1.388	.289		4.808	0.000
Participation	-.010	.115	-.012	-.085	0.933
Benefit	.007	.062	-.016	.114	0.010*
Reason for Participation	.065	.064	.138	1.015	0.315
Low cost	.011	.139	.011	.081	0.039*
Reason for Usage	.059	.077	.104	.765	0.448
Year of Usage	-.106	.051	-.283	-2.082	0.402
Input Availabilit	.007	.072	.013	.096	0.094*
Challenges	.116	.051	.312	-2.251	0.029*
N	100				
R^2	0.518				
Adjusted R^2	0.026				
F – value	1.200				

Source: Field Survey, 2011

- ------ Statistically significant at the 1 percent level (P<0.05)



Source: Field Survey, 2011

Figure 1. Degree of Usage of NTFPs.

The results also revealed that benefits derived from NTFPs are another significant factor (10 percent level of significant). It has a positive relationship with their participation in the utilization of NTFPs. This indicated that the higher the benefits, the higher the level of usage.

This might be due to the increased number of years of usage and effectiveness of such benefits in improving the standard of lives of the respondents in the study area. This is in tandem with the results of the study Brian belcher of CIFOR (2005) which stated that in cash based economy; households have the opportunity to specialize in those activities that offer the best economic opportunities. If food and other necessities can be purchased, people are able to concentrate their efforts on those activities that provide the highest rewards. This implies that a household's integration into the cash economy will both influence and be influenced by the way they use forests products (Timber and Non Timber Forest Products) and other resources.

The low cost of inputs and output is significant at 1 percent. It also has a positive co efficient sign showing that the level of usage increases as the inputs and output are available and affordable by the respondents and vice versa. This follows the economic principle of the law of demand, that is, the lower the price, the higher the quantity demanded. It should also be noted that limited resources required for the optimum production, processing and marketing of NTFPs can obliterate the valuable uses of these resources and consequently reduces its household demand and utilization. According to Sharma (1995), he stated that the different end users of NTFPs create competing demands for a limited resource base which, if not controlled effectively with appropriate institutions, it can result in irreversible loss of biodiversity. Therefore, local communities have to employ economic, social and cultural restrictions to control resource use, in order to prevent depletion of valuable resources. These indigenous management systems will accommodate new economic and environmental pressures. Forests, the principal asset of many communities, need to become a source of income while meeting the local demands for food, fuel wood, fodder, medicines, and so on.

The availability of the inputs needed for the NTFPs business is a critical policy driven factor and has positive relationship with the involvement of women in the utilization of NTFPs in the study area. This indicated that the more availability of the inputs, the more the propensity to participate in the utilization of NTFPs. It is significant at 10 percent.

From Figure 1 above, it was revealed that most women in the study area do participate in the utilization of NTFPs and play dominant roles in forest related activities. This boils down to the fact that utilization of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) is gaining prominence in the tropical world because of the commercial importance to the host community. Akande and Hayashi (1998).

CONCLUSION

From the study above, it is deduced that Non timber forest products constitute an integral component within the household economic activities most especially among women. The involvement of women in the NTFPs activities cannot be undermined given the fact that such activities are women related and women inclined and that is one of the reasons that propelled the level of their participation and usage. It is however imperative to state that subsidies on agricultural resources be made available for the optimum production, processing and marketing of NTFPs which if done will no doubt improve the availability, accessibility as well as affordability of NTFPs. Thus, more people most especially women will improve on their level of participation and as a result, they will be grossly empowered.

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