



# **Women's Role in Agricultural Development in Oyo State, Nigeria: Unveiling Challenges, Opportunities for Success, and Pathways to Sustainable Growth**

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**Disclaimer:**

This document represents part of the author's study program while at the International Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily the Institute's.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
UN	United Nations
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
WOFEI	Women Farmers Empowerment Initiative
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRLA	Sustainable Rural Livelihood Approach
GAD	Gender and Development
GDR	Gender Development and Right
LGA	Local Government Area
IDI	Individual Interviews
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the roles of marginalized women in agricultural work within Nigeria's Oyo State, emphasizing their contributions, obstacles, and aspects of gender involvement with farming. Drawing on the GAD (Gender and Development) and (SRLA) Sustainable Rural Livelihood procedure, the study investigates how women direct socio-economic restrictions, such as inadequate ownership of land, financial resources, and technology for agriculture, while balancing their roles in care work. The study emphasizes the contradiction between improving women's empowerment, productivity in farming, and sustainability, challenging the belief that these goals can be achieved without resolving underlying structural inequities. Empirical data were gathered using qualitative methods such as focus groups and interviews with other female farmers in rural parts of Oyo State with (a non-probability sample size of 60 participants). While women contribute greatly to agricultural output, they often lack recognition and support, despite their essential role. Their participation is limited by social and cultural customs that restrict their rights to land and power to make decisions. Furthermore, the study investigates how women's empowerment measures, such as government initiatives, frequently fail to address the larger sociopolitical systems that maintain gender inequalities. This study sheds light on the complex relationship among gender, development, and agriculture, and it proposes policy recommendations for increased recognition of women's participation in the agricultural sector. The study reports how these women get help from Women Farmers Empowerment Initiatives (WOFEI). By tackling challenges to empowering women, such as land rights and financial availability, this research argues for an improved inclusive and equitable strategy for agricultural development that incorporates gender and sustainability considerations.

## **SIGNIFICANCE TO DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

This study adds to our knowledge of how gender, farming, and development belong together. It will help to inform policy promoting inclusive and sustainable growth in agriculture to reduce poverty and improve family well-being and food security. It contributes to the fight against gender inequality to improve rural economic growth aligning with the development objectives, especially reducing poverty and hunger, as stressed by the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (SDGs) (Leal Filho et al., 2021). It supports Agrarian food and environmental studies to discover present conflicts facing rural development and their environment and recommend a policy for policymakers to boost agricultural development.

## **KEYWORDS**

Women's Role, Women in Agriculture, Gender Power Relation, Empowerment, Socio-Cultural Barriers, Gender Disparities, Rural Development, Land Access, Sustainable Rural Livelihood Approach (SRLA), Resources, Gender, And Development (GAD), and Oyo State



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to the Study

Globally, women are vital to food production mainly to meet the increasing demand in population. In Africa, agriculture is often seen as a traditional world for women, this involves both subsistence and commercial activities with limited engagement to the market. Specifically, women in Nigeria, contribute 60-80% of agricultural output and conduct labor-intensive tasks like land preparation, planting, weeding, tilling, and harvesting to marketing (Ayioke and Igben, 1996).

Despite their essential role contribution to farming, Nigerian women farming in rural communities in Oyo State face various obstacles, such as restricted opportunities for credit, land, and farm inputs and significant home obligations (Action, 2015). In (Akaninyene et al., 2022), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS, 2012) emphasizes that women farmers cultivate over 50% of the world's food, specifically in developing regions. In areas like Oyo State, women have historically played major roles in farming from pre-colonial times, yet their contributions are often overshadowed and undervalued (Akaninyene et al., 2022). Typically, Statistical analyses emphasize the involvement of males in marginalizing women's roles (Adams, 2017). This lack of acknowledgment, particularly for small-scale, subsistence farmers, highlights the need to address gender inequality and improve access to resources for women to ensure sustainable rural livelihoods.

Traditional rules and legislative frameworks in Oyo State create considerable obstacles to women's empowerment in agriculture. Customary regulations controlling the owners of land and inheritance benefited men, limiting women's capacity to own or manage land independently. This limitation reduces their product output and decision-making capability, affecting food adequacy and rural development. The obstacles women experience in farming activities in Oyo State are made worse by their lack of schooling and money, plus traditional practices that limit what they can do. In the face of these obstacles, women contribute much more to agricultural production and nutrition in their homes. Governments or non-governmental groups like the Women Farmers Empowerment Initiatives (WOFEI) are working to solve these difficulties through programs with women empowerment focus and enhancing their use of resources and training. NGOs like community-driven initiatives establish innovative strength or power of collective action, in this way, they promote empowerment through shared resources and knowledge exchange (Oyekale, 2011).

One of the aims of this study is to investigate women's roles as agricultural workers in Oyo State, looking at their participation, obstacles, and potential in the field. Also intends to explore ways gender roles and legal obstacles impact women's productivity in farming and empowerment. Studying these dynamics is critical in achieving sustainable growth and food security in rural regions in Nigeria.

## **1.2 The Significance of the Study**

By concentrating on Oyo State, this research sheds light on the gendered elements of agricultural engagement in southwestern Nigeria. It emphasizes the importance of reforming land ownership rules, improving the female ability to obtain resources for farming, and addressing socio-cultural challenges to empowerment. The results will support more general conversations on gender and developmental theory, particularly with African farming practices and rural lives. Furthermore, Addressing the systemic barriers affecting women in agriculture requires a shift in policy and perceptions of society. Recognizing women's contributions and implementing reforms obtained from data collection and analysis are important to accurately capture their roles (Adams, 2017).

## **1.3 Statement of Problem**

The agricultural sector as of the year 2022 accounts for 23.78% of Nigeria's GDP (Oyim et al., 2023) which was achieved by the input of women in the farming sector.

In Oyo State, on large or small-scale plots, women are vital contributors, cultivating food for their members of households and communities at large, sustaining food production, and ensuring food security. They contribute as essential workers on family-owned farms or as paid or unpaid laborers in various farming exercises (Ahmed and Maitra, 2010; Udemezue and Odia, 2021). Furthermore, rural women actively participate in every aspect of processing. For instance, research in Oyo State indicates that women are extensively involved in lots of farming activities, including “Weeding (97%), processing (92%), transportation (91%), agricultural activities, from planting and weeding to fertilizing, harvesting, storing, processing, and marketing produce (Mgbada, 2002). Statistics reveal that women in rural dedicate a substantial portion of their time to agricultural work, contributing between 40% and 60% of the total Labor hours in production marketing (79%), planting (50%), and harvesting (35%)” (Udemezue and Odia, 2021).

Beyond agricultural duties, rural women also fulfill responsibilities such as collecting fuelwood and water, caring for family members, being involved in livestock rearing, and other businesses in maintaining household affairs. They are also involved in social activities with other women, men, and children in the communities to improve their well-being. For example, play Nido games, community festivals, and others. Women's contributions to agricultural development and production are significant and deserve more recognition (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009).

Despite the significant contributions of women to agricultural development globally, the roles of women in agriculture remain marginalized (Amusan, et al., 2021; Udemezue and Odia, 2021) as they continue to face several challenges hindering their full participation and empowerment in Oyo State Nigeria (Boluwade, 2021). Therefore, there is a pressing need to uncover the specific challenges women face in farming activities in Oyo State, Nigeria, to identify the opportunities for enhancing their success, and describe pathways to boost sustainable growth in the farm sector while promoting gender equity and empowerment.

## **1.4 Research Question**

What are the specific roles and contributions of women in agricultural production and development in Oyo State, Nigeria?

### **Sub Questions**

- What socio-economic factors influence women's participation and empowerment in agricultural activities in Oyo State?
- What are the gender disparities in access to resources, decision-making processes, and socio-economic opportunities within the agricultural sector in Oyo State?
- What are the main challenges hindering the full participation and empowerment of women in agricultural activities in Oyo State, including barriers to access, cultural norms, and institutional constraints?
- What strategies and interventions can be proposed to enhance the success and empowerment of women in agricultural activities in Oyo State, Nigeria, thereby fostering sustainable growth and development in the agricultural sector?

## **1.5 Research Objectives**

- To identify specific roles and contributions of women in agricultural production and development in Oyo State, Nigeria.
- To examine the socio-economic factors influencing women's participation and empowerment in agricultural activities in the region.
- To assess the gender disparities in access to resources, decision-making processes, and socio-economic opportunities within the agricultural sector in Oyo State.
- To explore the challenges hindering full participation and empowerment of women in agricultural activities, including barriers to access, cultural norms, and institutional constraints.
- To propose strategies and interventions for enhancing the success and empowerment of women in agricultural activities in Oyo State, Nigeria, thereby fostering sustainable growth and development in the agricultural sector.

## **1.6 Relevance and Justification of the Research Topic**

The findings of this study shed light on the essential responsibilities women perform in productivity in Oyo State, Nigeria. It adds to a corpus of information about the gender roles among farmers, by interviewing and recording how women manage farming difficulties and contribute to production. The findings are crucial for developing methods that effectively include women in farming, thus increasing their role and impact in agriculture. Furthermore, emphasizes the relevance of land access to rural women, and illustrates how owning a piece of land by the women can greatly boost their livelihood resources and negotiating power within the household.

The findings underscore that land access is important to enhancing women's livelihoods, indicating a need for legislative changes to obtain women's rights to land and other important resources in agriculture. Moreover, the study points out the possibility of sustainable development of agriculture by presenting practical solutions to the issues that women confront when farming. It outlines strategies to achieve future development in Oyo State's agricultural businesses, calling for programs and activities that increase women's productivity and the capacity for resilience in farming.

Insights from Kajola can inform local, and state policy decisions aiming for sustainable development. Recent initiatives emphasize sustainable and organic agriculture to address environmental issues and ensure long-term productivity (Adesina et al., 2021). Research conducted promotes gender equity in agriculture and advocates focused measures to create equal chances for both men and women farmers. This method is consistent with bigger development objectives of establishing gender balance in farming, resulting in an efficient and inclusive sector for farmers.

### **1.7 Population and Agricultural Evolution in Oyo State, Nigeria.**

Oyo State, which sits in southwest Nigeria, since 1976 has been a key agricultural region known for its diverse crop production, inhabited by Yoruba-speaking communities. It has 28,454 square kilometers (Martins et al., 2019). The state is predicted to have approximately 8 million population in 2021. Agriculture employs a sizable section of the population, with rural communities mainly relying on farming for a living. Oyo's agricultural production consists mostly of primary crops including yam, maize, and cassava, in addition to cash crops including cashews, cotton, and cocoa. The state's environment, which fluctuates throughout rainy and dry seasons, is suitable for earning a living and commercial agriculture together. The agricultural Zones in the state are Ibarapa, Oke Ogun, Oyo, Ogbomoso, and Ibadan, which have different farming activities in the various zones Such as cassava, yam, maize, soybeans, cowpea, and livestock farming. However Urban farming includes Tomatoes, vegetables, fish, and poultry (Akande et al., 2020).

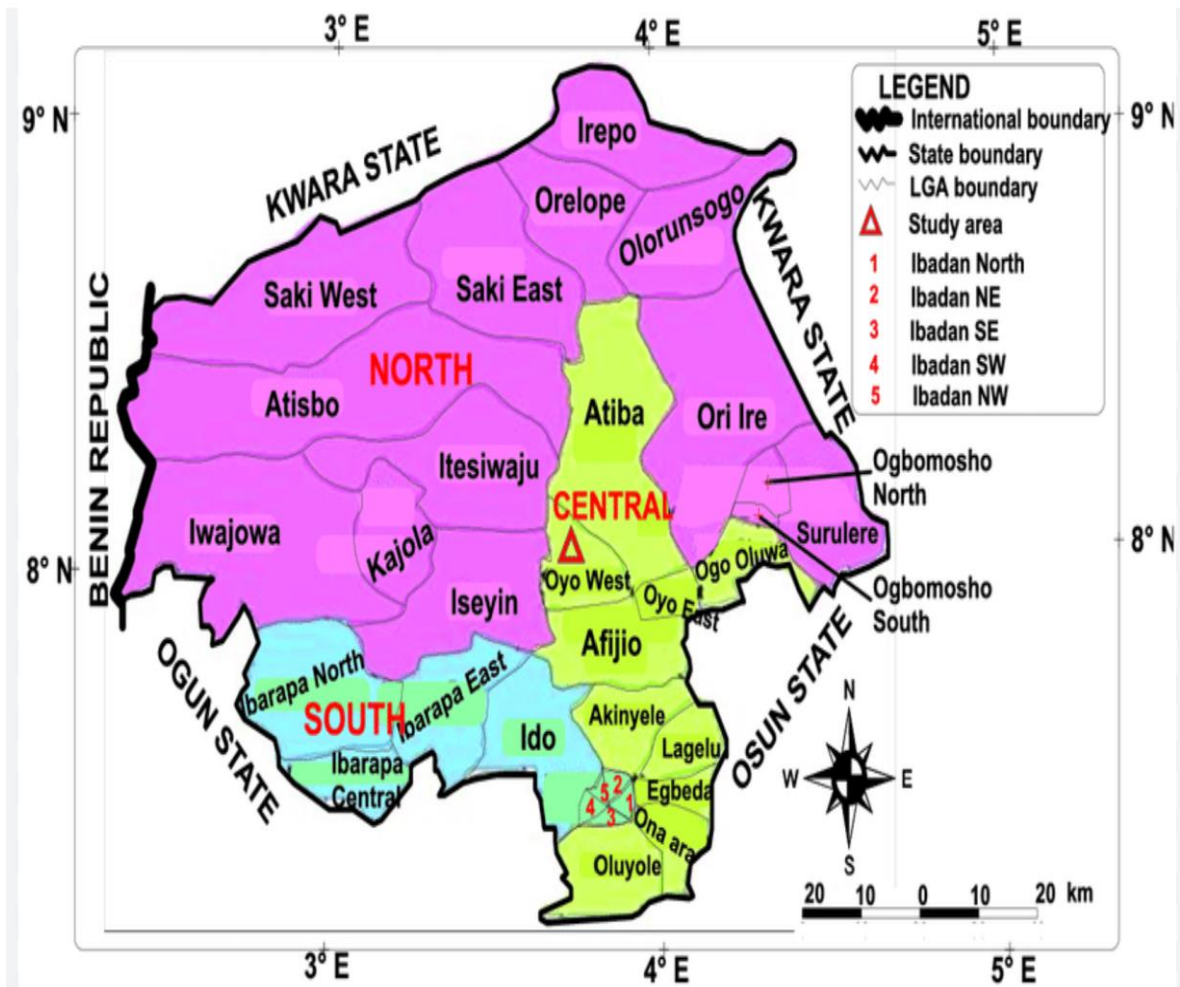


**Map 1:** Map of Nigeria showing the location of Oyo State. Source:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nigeria - Oyo.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nigeria_-_Oyo.svg)

### **Study Area**

The study was conducted in the Kajola Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria, Kajola covers 609 square kilometers of different farmland areas with a demographic population of 200,997(Kunle, 2014). The Region is composed of ancient igneous and metamorphic rocks, and hills. Blasting the bedding rock has slowed the rate of well construction. So, residents rely largely on their few old wells. The State government supported digging boreholes, whereas wells were dug by individuals who could afford to blast the rock. (Kunle, 2014, p. 2). This study region Comprises men and women farmers (estimated to be over five hundred). Due to its significant agricultural and economic characteristics, the region is rural with farming as the primary occupation, focusing on crops like pepper, and cassava, maize. Some minor parts growing legumes and vegetables. Kajola LGA also benefits from an active trade sector, where diverse economic activities such as hunting, crafting, and textile weaving play vital roles. The area's rich cultural heritage, with a mostly Yoruba-speaking population, allows for exploring cultural influence on economic activities.



**Map 2:** Map of Oyo State showing the study area Kajola in the middle.

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/FQbcbvHPWSCYRiFJA>

Settlements are distributed throughout natural land, including flatlands, hilly hills, and uncommon water bodies. Such landscape diversity is essential for sustaining agricultural seasons and boosting the region's dependence on farming to ensure sustenance and economic survival (Ogunjinmi and Ogunjinmi, 2022). Kajola's villages are frequently built close to compounds of families with covered or brown tin-roofed dwellings. Traditional customs continue to develop in these communities, as seen by common venues for prayers, markets, and meetings. Kajola's population comprises a mix of regional belief systems and Christianity, while Islam remains practiced, particularly in bigger areas.





**Figure 1:** Picture of Kajola locality in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/2dmHPKqnN3JLJF898>

Kajola's farmland is primarily produced by family units, passed down across generations. However, legal limits and inheritance customs might limit women's access to land, impacting their involvement in farms and household decision-making. As discussed by Udemezue and Odia, higher-income families, and those with direct family ties to land have larger plots, whereas others operate in smaller rented, or shared spaces (Udemezue and Odia, 2021).



**Figure 2:** Different agricultural farmland in the Kajola region

Source: <https://www.icirnigeria.org/farmers-in-oyo-state-seek-timely-support-in-new-planting-season/>



Source: <https://cappaafrica.org/2023/05/30/report-of-field-visit-to-oke-ogun-oyo-state/>





Source: <https://www.icirnigeria.org/how-lack-of-access-to-agricultural-financial-loans-impact-women-farmers-in-oyo-state/>



Source: <https://nijigroup.com/nijifarms/about/>

Aside from farming, Kajola has small-scale industries such as textile-based or pottery, although farming activities remain a key component of the economy in this region. Because of its agricultural dependency, Kajola is extremely vulnerable to shifting trends on climate change and market circumstances, which impact its food availability and financial stability (World Bank, 2015). Efforts to boost farmland yields with sustainability have become important for resolving the district's concerns, including gender disparities in farmland involvement and access to resources (Doss, 2018). Reflecting on this, Kajola can use community-based assistance programs to boost the economy and agricultural output. The region's diverse landscapes present issues including possibilities for sustainable development, emphasizing the significance of a specific, locally based approach to rural development policy.

### **1.8 Legal Status of Women Regarding Inheritance and Land Ownership**

In Oyo State, customary rules commonly direct land ownership and succession, especially in rural areas. Men usually regulate and inherit land under customary law, with women's access to land negotiated mostly by male relatives (fathers, sons, or husbands). This restricts women's right to own and oversee land. Although Nigeria's constitution protects gender equality and rights to property equally for people, cultural and traditional behaviors usually hinder these legal rights. Women's restricted legal entitlements concerning land possession are made worse by laws on inheritance, which frequently use family-based traditions, in which lands and other types of property are transmitted between fathers and their sons. Daughters have little rights to land in their families and need to find access via male relatives (fathers, uncles, sons). This raises considerable challenges for women in food production, as the availability of land is important to productivity in farming and empowerment. According to studies (Doss, 2018; and Chigbu et al., 2019), these legal and cultural restrictions limit women's access to land, affecting agricultural output and decision-making.

### **1.9 Women Farmers Empowerment Initiative (WOFEI)**

The Women Farmers Empowerment Initiative (WOFEI) is a recent non-profit organization established in 2021. It was set up by a group of female activists and experts in agriculture who noticed the necessity for concentrated efforts to deal with the individual obstacles suffered by women farmers. (WOFEI) cares deeply about empowering women farmers, assisting women to own land and access other resources, promoting gender liabilities, and advancing social justice. Assist smallholder farmers in improving their livelihoods and supporting them in adding value to their produce and breaking free from poverty by improving their income. This is done through cooperatives, collaboration with other NGOs supporting the farmers financially to empower women to get land plus concentrating on gender equality and sustainable development.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW/CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This current research's literature evaluation begins by outlining the mainstream approaches to supporting women in the farming sector adopted by global bodies, including (FAO) also the World Bank. These institutions frequently advocate for a gender-smart approach that views empowering women as a process to boost agricultural output and economic prosperity. For example, the FAO's approach stresses women's empowerment as a means of improving food security and supporting rural development, with policies based on supplying women with adequate resources, training, and credit, fertilizer, paid work, that if women have the same access resources to productivity as men, they can improve output on their farms (FAO, 2011, p.5; Doss, 2018, p.36; Quisumbing et al., 2014, P.195) Similarly, the World Bank usually regards assisting farm women as a financial asset in farming effectiveness, claiming that addressing gender gaps in resource access could greatly enhance output and reduce poverty. (Wong, 2012; Doss, 2018)

However, experts such as Kalpana Wilson have questioned the theory of gender-smart economics, challenging the notion that women's empowerment can be perfectly connected with the productivity of the economy and environmental goals. As noted, (Wilson, 2020), gender-smart policies often use empowerment language while integrating women in neoliberal systems of development that favor economic growth over meaningful social reform. She criticizes its narrow concentration on the economy as a means of empowerment, arguing that it frequently fails to tackle underlying social imbalances, such as land management and family decision-making power, which are still deeply gendered. Furthermore, Wilson points out that these techniques can neglect the intersectionality of discrimination against women, as well as the restrictions women confront inside patriarchal organizations.

This review will situate these present findings to examine empowering women in farming systems by comparing popular "gender-smart" concepts with Wilson's critique. This method will allow for an evaluation of the efficacy of various empowerment strategies, besides identifying possible areas for development, such as structural transformations required for actual empowerment beyond economic output. Furthermore, this theoretical framework will support the study's objectives by studying how policies targeted at empowered women farmers may need to include greater economic changes in structure in rural communities to truly help the women they target. This combined strategy in reviewing the literature emphasizes the importance of a detailed concept of empowerment that goes beyond production and financial benefits to include additional approaches to free will and equality for women in rural farming settings.

## 2.2 Challenge for Women in Agriculture

Though often under-recognized, women's devotion to agriculture is important to farming outcomes. (Amusan et al., 2021; Udemezue and Odia, 2021). Despite the degree that women account for over 60% of the women's labor in agricultural argues (Meinzen-Dick, 2019.) and in some regions, up to 80% (FAO, 2011). Women engage in multiple tasks such as processing food and marketing including animal husbandry (Palacios-Lopez, Christiaensen, and Kilic, 2017). However, their roles have increased beyond farm work as they rear livestock, food processing, production of cash crops, and marketing, and their involvement in decision-making power is important and valuable in agricultural activities (Adebayo and Worth, 2024, p.1). Similarly, teams of authority make decisions as household heads and farm owners. They represent 52% of the mainland agricultural population, which has made them significant stakeholders in the sector (Adebayo and Worth, 2024, p.1).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has highlighted the significance of women in agriculture stating, "Women in agriculture in rural areas have less access than men to productive resources and opportunities. The gender gap imposes genuine costs on society in terms of low farm output and food security" (FAO, 2011, p.5). This claim underlines the opportunity for enhancing agricultural productivity and fighting hunger by investing in women. For example, in Africa, women contribute approximately 50% of agricultural labor (Njobe and Kaaria, 2015). They are commonly caregivers and provide food for their families, participating in production and food security. Still, they have limited access to resources that should increase farm productivity. Women in agriculture continue to encounter obstacles that hinder their productivity and recognition, like access to land ownership. According to UN Women, less than 20% of landholders globally are women (Women, 2015). This factor limits their capacity or else borrow money, invest, or make land use decisions. In various instances, cultural and legal hindrances on property rights and inheritance worsen this issue. Another significant barrier is the gender gap in agricultural extension services and technology. A study conducted by the (World Bank and IFPRI 2010). International Food Policy Research Institute, found that women receive fewer Agricultural extension services and have less access to technologies and tools than men because they were not recognized as decision-makers in agriculture. (Wesley and Faminow, 2014).

Empowering women in farming requires access to land, financial services, education, resources, and technology (bin Duwa bin Khoja, 2021, p.1). Land rights for women can transform their opportunities positively for productivity and empowerment. Research on Women's land Rights has shown that securing women's land rights would improve crop yields and family welfare (Meinzen et al., 2019). Law reforms and community education are important in overcoming traditional biases that prevent women from owning land. Secondly, introducing gender-sensitive agricultural practices and extension services is necessary, and addressing the load of unpaid work and domestic responsibilities needs a societal shift. Increased recognition and support for women in gender equity and strategic necessities for global food security and sustainability (Anderson et al., 2021). Finally, policymakers, agricultural enterprises, and development agencies must take

measures to close the gender gap by securing land rights and maximizing the balance between domestic and agricultural workloads for women.

### **2.3 Gender Equity and Empowerment of Women in Agriculture**

Literature shows that empowering women in agriculture is important for achieving sustainable development and food security. A rising body of research suggests that women's empowerment may result in economic gains for women independently and in their homes and communities. (Duflo, 2012; World Bank, 2011). Increasing their access to resources such as land, and financial support, seeds and providing them with education and training, can improve their productivity, income, and decision-making power and contribute to gender equality and social justice. To analyze gendered dynamics, it is important to consider issues like land, and credit discrimination and how these are interwoven in productivity and care work. Women's contributions to agriculture are frequently underestimated, especially when unpaid care work in families and communities goes unnoticed (Doss, 2018). Furthermore, women's access to land is typically controlled by social interactions, like marital or familial bonds, which bind them to unpaid care duties and limit their economic independence (Udemezue and Odia, 2021). Aside from these systemic challenges, patriarchal power structures limit women's decision-making responsibilities in distributing resources and income use. To address these difficulties, a comprehensive understanding of women's involvement in protecting society needs to be established in addition to farming (Anderson et al., 2021, p.194).

Class and race impact women's cultivation experiences, for example, poorer women frequently face additional barriers to loans and other agricultural inputs, compounding their economic vulnerabilities. Addressing these concerns holistically, and tackling reproductive and productive labor, can result in more successful and gender-sensitive farming programs and policies. For instance, Land use Rights and Social Interactions are when women's right to land is frequently moderated by social interactions, such as marital or status in the family. In many countries, the rights of women to land are linked to their relationships with male relatives such as husbands, fathers, or brothers. This limits women's autonomy and binds them to unpaid care and farm labor, increasing their economic dependence. Labor in the family, and agriculture is the allocation of Labor within families interconnected to women's participation in agriculture. They often manage subsistence farming while looking after the household's everyday requirements. The interrelated nature of the productive and reproductive work lowers the time women may put into productive farm work, thus limiting financial flexibility. The concept that women's agricultural work is secondary to principal men's activity reinforces their labor invisibility. Women involved in farming frequently have patriarchal norms that usually reduce their ability to make decisions about crop choices, the distribution of resources, and income use. Initiatives aiming to empower women in farming must think of bigger care responsibilities. Without tackling the dual load of care and farming labor, attempts to improve women's entitlement to credit or farmland may be compromised.

The interplay of class, gender, and other societal structures shape the course of action of the people in agriculture. Women's experiences in farm work differ greatly based on socioeconomic class, cultural background, and regional circumstances. To tackle gender inequalities in agriculture, it would take an integrated approach that views women as part of an intricate system of social links rather than as isolated individuals. This requires resolving formal distinctions of land and financial access and solving the fundamental and cultural causes that perpetuate gendered differences equally in productive and caring activities. Only by realizing these linked characteristics can policymakers and development measures effectively improve women's empowerment in agriculture.

## **2.4 Sustainable Growth and Women in Agriculture**

Sustainable growth in agriculture involves many factors, including technological advancements, reaching the market, and equitable resource distribution. Empowering women has particularly been emphasized as an important stimulation for sustainability. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, if women had equal access to land that was as productive as males, they might raise farm yields by 20-30%, boosting the total output of agriculture in underdeveloped nations by 2.5-4%. (FAO, 2011). This vital uptake in productivity would feed an additional 150 million hungry people, and additionally deal with resources more intelligently, towards achieving (SDGs), especially Zero Hunger and Gender Equality.

Land rights and access to resources constitute the foundation for women's empowerment in agriculture. A study by the World Bank (Hagiú and Barbulescu, 2015) shows a positive correlation between land ownership and enhanced agricultural productivity. Women possessing land rights are more likely to invest in the land and adopt sustainable farming practices. However, discriminatory inheritance laws and practices significantly restrict women's access to land ownership. Addressing these legal and cultural habits is necessary for cultivating an environment where women can contribute fully to agricultural sustainability. Education and training provision for women is the principal way to optimize their effectiveness in agriculture. A review by (Mulema et al., 2019) in the *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability* underlines that educated women are adept at assimilating recent practices and technologies, which can lead to more productive and sustainable farm management.

Despite the clear benefits women's involvement brings to agriculture, they face multifaceted challenges in accessing the necessary resources and support. Resisting these challenges requires a joint effort from governments, NGOs, and the international community to implement inclusive policies and programs that address the specific needs of women in agriculture. Legal reforms must ensure equal land rights and financial support for women's needs, also educational initiatives should focus on building their capacity. Gender-sensitive agricultural policies that recognize and address the barriers women face are essential for promoting inclusivity.

## **2.5 Challenges of Women's Contribution to Agricultural Growth in Developing Countries**

Regardless of the vital role women play in agricultural development in developing countries, several obstacles hinder their full contribution to this sector, these include education, access to resources, cultural and social norms, policy, and institutional structures. Women lack access to basic education and is worth acquiring fresh farming methods and knowledge (FAO, 2011). This inhibits their potential to make meaningful contributions to agricultural improvement while developing their way of life and households. Women farmers have less access to resources than males, limiting their ability to embrace current farming techniques and practices. Reducing the difference between males and females getting farming amenities in poor countries offers an opportunity to increase agricultural productivity by up to 20%. (World Bank, 2019). Furthermore, women farmers frequently suffer discrimination and marginalization in their communities, which limits their involvement in decision-making and access to services and resources. Domestic work is time-consuming, which limits their ability to fully concentrate on farming duties and access to educational and training options. (FAO, 2011). Gender-sensitive policies and institutional structures can advance gender equality within agriculture increase productivity and ensure food safety (World Bank, 2019).

## **2.6 Redefining the Roles of Women in Agricultural Development with (SDGs)**

Redefining women's tasks with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) is important to achieve a more equal future. Particularly from SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) noted in (Giannetti et al., 2020). it requires transformation by

- a. Providing balanced access to resources for women is vital for economic development, changing historical gender roles, and increasing women's role in farming and decision-making.
- b. Investing in the skills of women in agriculture is needed to create training programs that meet individual needs and obstacles, boosting technological advances founding formation, and business.
- c. Implementing gender-responsive policies in farming, such as land rights, and access to money, is necessary for improving women's freedoms and equal participation.
- d. Creating networks and organizations that promote women farmers can help them share knowledge and collaborate, in addition to exercising their agency in agriculture.

## **2.7 Reflection on women's empowerment and Evaluation of Gender-Smart Economics**

Kalpana Wilson critiques gender-smart economics for instrumentalizing women's empowerment and framing women's involvement in development just from an economic lens. According to this viewpoint, women have lowered productivity because empowerment will result in higher agricultural output and environmental sustainability. However, Wilson claims that this structure



lowers empowerment to new liberal cost estimations, ignoring the social and deep-rooted issues that contribute to gender inequality. Instead of truly empowering women, these programs might instrumentalize their positions and celebrate their possible contributions to productivity while not confronting the systemic constraints they encounter (Wilson, 2011; Murphy, 2017. p 378). (Shaw and Wilson, 2020) emphasize that, while empowerment initiatives may attempt to claim to empower women and increase productivity, they typically fail to address crucial concerns including land rights, intra-household inequality, and the political economy of poverty, hunger that is famine. For example, the method frequently overlooks the approach that patriarchal power structures restrict women's ability to obtain land, credit, and make decisions, considering women's empowerment as a vehicle for growth in the economy instead of a goal in and of oneself (Wilson, 2015, p. 804). They contend that this viewpoint regularly ignores the underlying gendered disparities and systemic challenges that continue to exist in agricultural systems.

Wilson also criticizes gender-smart economics for failing to recognize the interdependence of women's experiences, especially in rural places where gender norms have an unbreakable connection to class, ethnic background, and additional social identities. This can result in measures that worsen rather than reduce existing inequalities (Wilson, 2015, p. 806). For instance, while boosting women's engagement in agriculture could increase production, it frequently ignores the double load of farming work and unpaid care duties that many women bear, thus leading to exploitation instead of truly being empowered (Madhok and Phillips, 2013).

## **2.8 Conflict within Productivity, Empowerment, and Sustainability.**

The suggestion that productivity, women empowerment, and sustainability could at the same time be promoted equally without conflict is difficult because these objectives may pull in opposite ways. While empowerment seeks to increase women's agency and power to make decisions, productivity and sustainability frequently emphasize economic and environmental efficiency. These aims do not always correspond. By way of illustration, adopting sustainable organic farming techniques could call for more labor-intensive procedures, putting more stress on women who already have considerable duties in both crop cultivation and domestic care acknowledged by (Madhok and Phillips, 2013). Madhok emphasizes that empowerment entails more than just economic engagement, it also entails changing power dynamics in the family unit and the larger community (Madhok and Phillips, 2013, p. 110). Women may feel disempowered despite their initial involvement in farming if empowerment is restricted to basic economic produce without addressing these deeper structural disparities. For instance, while women are encouraged to work on farms, their lack of authority over land and profits frequently means they get nothing back from their efforts (Wilson, 2015). According to Wilson and others, unless structural inequities and power imbalances within agriculture are dealt with, efforts to enhance production and long-term sustainability may end in additional exploitation of women as opposed to real empowerment.

Reflecting on these issues critically, the findings from this study review that when women acquire land from their husbands or family land, they do not have direct access to land, and most of the farmland is inherited by the male child resulting in gender inequality. As a result,



development programs must concentrate on gender equality and make sure women are empowered in manners that resist patriarchal norms and give them actual agency, rather than just being viewed as economic commodities. These research findings review that women farmers do not have direct ownership of the land they farm on, they cannot decide independently on land inheritance or financial decisions, and the decisions are controlled by the husband or member of the family who is male. Some women were shown to be empowered more than others indicating the intersectionality of how ethnicity and class intersect and how the structure of the economy limits some groups of women more than others. Using Wilson's framework on women's labor of instrumentalization, Women are viewed as beneficial to the economy, but their efforts and the gender inequities that lead to their exploitation are ignored.

## **2.9 NGO Vision and Empowerment in Rural Concept**

NGOs may impose ideals based on neoliberal development, such as output, accessing markets, or financial independence, without tackling the root cause of social and cultural obstacles to women's empowerment. (Shaw and Wilson, 2020) criticizes such frameworks for encouraging an instrumentalist perspective of women's empowerment, in which women are viewed as engines for economic success instead of individuals with rights and needs. While (NGOs) can give valuable assistance and resources, their dreams may sometimes exceed women's actual needs and goals. True empowerment would necessitate a bottom-up approach, the women who make up the WOFEI organization have a voice in defining the programs that touch their lives, and the initiative gives them the chance to exercise genuine agency instead of being passive beneficiaries of externally determined goals. Women's agency in these circumstances is frequently negotiated as they need to balance their objectives against the needs or expectations of these programs.

In a rural culture where women perform productive agricultural work and reproductive care responsibilities within and outside their homes, the meaning of “empowerment” becomes diverse and complex. Empowerment frequently starts with having access to economic assets like land, loans, and agricultural inputs. However, possessing this kind of asset is not enough, one must also be able to decide how to use it by creating an environment in which women can prove their agency, reject norms, and actively engage in all parts of life. Women may have to navigate patriarchal institutions that govern how resources are distributed and administered in the home. Even though women can be willing to work in agriculture and create revenue, their influence above earnings or authority to make decisions inside the home is frequently limited by patriarchal standards. According to (Doss, 2018), while the availability of resources is critical, true empowerment necessitates the resolution of power relations within homes and communities. Without changing these patterns, women's agricultural work may remain underestimated, even if it contributes greatly to household income.

## **Balancing many roles**

Women are accountable not only for farming but also for many forms of unpaid caregiving tasks including kids, preparing meals, tidying up, and in charge of care of elderly relatives. This double stress of both productive and reproductive labor can severely limit women's time and energy that women have for farming or other income-generating pursuits. Empowerment then cannot be seen in separation from these care tasks. Kalpana (Wilson, 2015) criticizes gender-smart economics, pointing out that many development projects that claim to support women's empowerment fail to account for the unseen labor women direct at home. These programs frequently focus solely on expanding women's market involvement, without acknowledging how family duties affect and constrain their ability to engage completely. In this view, empowerment must include reducing the stress of care work and dispersing it more equally across the family and community.

Empowerment is often achieved through group action rather than individual economic advantages. Women's engagement in cooperatives and savings clubs might give them the necessary support and solidarity to resist social norms and improve their condition economically. Collective action enables women to share funding, pool work, and generate social power, which can be more empowering than individual agricultural participation. These organizations can also give practical answers for rural women who struggle with caregiving, such as providing childcare commitments, lowering their domestic workload, and allowing for greater engagement in farming. Women's experiences in agriculture are influenced by class, marital status, age, size of family, and local customs. For example, married women who have children may confront distinct challenges than single women or widows. Furthermore, women from minority ethnic or tribes may experience additional forms of discrimination, limiting their ability to obtain land, credit, and markets. Empowerment solutions must be specific to the setting and keep these intersecting barriers in mind. Following (Wilson, 2015), challenges development theories that encourage empowerment without addressing structural inequities that affect what women go through differently based on their social status. True empowerment would entail not just increasing women's agricultural participation, but should also redistribute domestic workloads, changing social norms, and establishing supportive networks that allow women to use agency in all aspects of their lives.

In brief, the literature on the role played by women in farming and empowerment emphasizes the important contributions and persistent issues. Traditional efforts like the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Bank have noticed women as important components of agricultural production and rural development, frequently proposing gender-smart initiatives created to address resource gaps. However, researchers such as Kalpana Wilson contend that such structures may unintentionally restrict empowerment to a merely economic role, ignoring the deeper social disparities and structural impediments that women face, particularly in rural communities. This critique highlights the limitations of merely the economic approach to empowerment, arguing for a model that acknowledges the larger, intersectional constraints on women's agency and autonomy.

(WOFEI) has established itself as a significant entity in this empowerment environment with a grassroots approach that fosters economic and social empowerment through campaigning, training, and support organizations. These organizations frequently function with a refined hold of local restrictions, working toward empowerment that considers the two together, economic requirements and social institutions.

## **2.10 Theoretical Framework**

### **A. Gender Power Relation Theory**

Gender and Power Theory has been developed through the contributions of many scholars such as Connell (Maharaj, 1995; Butler, 1990). In addition to the analysis of Hooks (Okpokwasili, 2023). These scholars have explored the relationships between gender and power in society, providing valuable insights into how gender norms, roles, and identities intersect with power structures. The theory reflects the interdisciplinary nature of gender studies and feminist scholarship. A key concept in Gender Power Relation Theory is the idea of gender “performativity” and power dynamics, as discussed by (Williams and Harrison, 1998, p.74; Butler, 1990, p.7) in *Gender Trouble*. This theory posits that power operates on multiple levels—interpersonal, institutional, and structural—and recognizes that power is unevenly distributed between genders. Typically, men hold more social, economic, and political power than women (Maharaj, 1995). This disparity leads to gender inequalities including education, employment, politics, and family life. This theory is useful for analyzing women's participation in agriculture, especially in Oyo State, Nigeria. It is essential to examine how gender influences labor division, resource access, and decision-making processes to understand and improve women's agriculture full inclusion.

Derived from feminist theories, The Gender Power Relation Theory argues that societal structures, shaped by gender differences, often create power imbalances favoring men. This is particularly evident in patriarchal societies where masculinity is linked with dominance and femininity with submission (Garcia, 2021). Findings review that in agriculture, these imbalances manifest as an undervaluation of women's work and restricted access to resources such as land, credit, and education. Despite women's significant contributions in Oyo State, they face substantial challenges, including limited land ownership, insufficient capital, and restricted access to modern farming equipment and techniques (Adamu, 2018). These barriers are deeply rooted in societal expectations of women's roles. Land inheritance in Oyo state typically follows fatherlike lines, disadvantaging women. Without land, women struggle to secure credit often tied to land collateral. This financial limitation hampers their ability to invest in quality seeds, fertilizers, and machinery, crucial for increasing productivity. Additionally, women often have limited access to agricultural training programs necessary for high-yield farming practices (Adamu, 2018). Despite these obstacles, there are opportunities to promote women's success in agriculture in Oyo State. Various NGOs Such as (WOFEI) are working to address the gender gap by providing targeted support to women farmers offering seeds, micro-loans, and training to empower women to become independent and successful in farming.

## **B. The Sustainable Rural Livelihood Approach**

The sustainable rural livelihood approach is a generalized model that addresses the socio-economic and environmental challenges people in rural communities generally face worldwide (Chambers et al., 1992; Adamu, 1992). It emphasizes the interrelation of economic development, social well-being, and environmental conservation, aiming for long-term resilience and prosperity in rural areas (Scoones, 1998). This approach is particularly relevant when examining women's roles in agricultural development in Oyo State, Nigeria, where women are vital to farming activities yet face significant challenges. The SRLA focuses on the sustainability of rural livelihoods by looking at all kinds of human, capital, social, physical, natural, and financial that people and their communities rely on for survival and growth. In agricultural settings, women frequently have inadequate access to diverse types of capital. For example, women often have limited availability of land, credit, and technological advances, making it difficult for them to fully participate in farming and profit from productivity. Despite cultural and legal barriers reducing women's ability to obtain land, credit, and machinery for agriculture, they manage by engaging in diverse farming activities that benefit everyone in family sustenance and local economies. As stated by (DFID, 1999), SRLA emphasizes the advantages of integrating social ties and institutional structures that influence resource access to sustain livelihoods. Emphasis on how fair distribution of resources affects the general sustainability of women's lives. One of the basic concepts of the sustainable rural livelihood approach is the promotion of diverse income sources (Bedeke, 2013). By diversifying livelihood strategies, rural households can reduce their vulnerability to external shocks such as climate change or market fluctuations (Scoones, 2015).

In Oyo State, women often implement multiple roles, combining agricultural activities with off-farm duties, this diversification not only secures their economic stability but also enhances their capacity to adapt to changing conditions, thus supporting sustainable growth in the region. Community participation is essential for the success of sustainable rural livelihood interventions (Bebbington, 1999). Involving local communities and stakeholders in decision-making processes and project implementation increases sustainability and ensures that interventions are culturally appropriate and relevant (Usadolo and Caldwell, 2016). Environmental sustainability lies at the heart of the sustainable rural livelihood approach (Scoones, 2015). Access to education, healthcare, and clean water, is fundamental for improving rural livelihoods (Alarima et al., 2020). Funding social services and infrastructure strengthens human capital, enhances productivity, and reduces poverty (World Bank, 2019). Improving access to transportation networks and information technology facilitates access to markets, allowing them to obtain higher prices for their goods. Funding substandard roads increases the time it takes to transport produce to consumers while reducing quality and quantity, resulting in lower prices. (Alarima et al., 2020). SRLA structure promotes social equity, economic development, and environmental sustainability in rural areas, and ensures that women's contributions are not only acknowledged but also maximized, Promoting an additional inclusive and resilient farming sector (Sowmiya, 2024).

### **C. Gender and Development Theory**

The GAD framework focuses on the ways gender roles and the balance of power influence women's agricultural efforts. Women's roles in the home, such as caregiving and farming for subsistence, are frequently overlooked and undervalued in agricultural programs. GAD advocates for a gender-conscious strategy that acknowledges women as key players in agricultural production, saying their contributions deserve to be visible and valued. Women are responsible for a sizable amount of worldwide food production and processing, and this is right, especially in rural areas like Oyo State, Nigeria. Where women account for 60-80% of the agricultural workforce (Asogwa et al., 2020). However, their contributions are frequently underrepresented in decision-making locations, limiting their empowerment and productivity (Doss, 2018).

Both the GAD and SRLA theories identify the shortage of possession of resources that are productive as an important challenge for women in food production, because of patriarchal traditions and inheritance rules that favor men, women's access to land is frequently mediated by male family members in many rural areas, including Oyo State. SRLA identifies this as a structural problem that impedes women's ability to create sustainable livelihoods and boost agricultural output. GAD theory examines the social and societal obstacles to women's agency. Like Oyo State, as in many other regions of Nigeria, socio-cultural customs limit women's capacity to own land and operate farms autonomously. Women's involvement in agricultural work is usually casual, and their contributions are viewed as supplemental to those of men, maintaining gendered labor limits. These cultural restraints, linked with unpaid family labor, worsen the hindrances women tackle in fully engaging in farming. GAD argues for measures that empower women, claiming that formal education, financial access, and the right to have land are the only ways for women to maximize their agricultural potential. The SRLA emphasizes that empowering women should not be viewed in isolation from larger sustainable growth objectives but instead, as the main component to protect rural people can preserve and enhance their livelihood methods.

Development is a process of change aimed at reducing gender inequality by encouraging women and marginalized people to participate in decision-making. Gender, Development, and Rights (GDR) structure, launched in the 1970s, stresses women's rights as vital to development while also acknowledging their unique experiences (Uzodike and Onapajo, 2013). GAD supports women's opportunities for healthcare, schooling, financial resources, and work, improves their inclusion in decision-making, resists gender-based violence, and supports gender-sensitive training and educational programs. Despite criticism that it focuses too much on Western ideas, the role of gender in development theory continues to be important in comprehending and tackling gender inequality. However, this study contributes much to the GAD's body of knowledge by contesting the idea of women's domination within farming while indicating their important contributions to production and food security. It also emphasizes the desire for gender-inclusive agricultural initiatives by highlighting structural disadvantages that limit women's access to resources such as loans, land, and extension services. GAD's success depends on providing women with money, knowledge, and decision-making competence.

### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The whole point of this project is to explore the crucial role of marginalized women, and the challenges faced in farming using an interpretivism approach. This study is a fully interpretive description that aims to discover and generate a rich and deep understanding of the research topics investigated. Qualitative methods were chosen to comprehensively capture the lived experiences of women farmers from the Kajola local government area, Oyo state. This approach facilitated a detailed exploration of how empowerment initiatives would impact these women individually and collectively.

#### **3.2 Target population**

The study specifically focused on women in rural settings, particularly from marginalized groups. The Women Farmers Empowerment Initiatives (WOFEI) was discovered online during the proposal of this research topic. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting women farmers in improving their productivity and household income through capacity building, input supply, and extension services. This establishes a targeted perspective for the research topics.

I chose this NGO (WOFEI) because of its success in working on empowerment, giving land access opportunities to women who do not have land, and supporting women financially when needed as a form of loan and other support. Requesting women farmers from the NGOs, older women were presented with a minimum age of 33 years and above, and other women farmers who were not part of the WOFEI were included through Snow Ball referred by WOFEI participants. These women introduced were also found to be older women of the same age range as the NGO group. I ended up using these older women as my participants for the individual interviews because these were the women who were willing to talk about their experiences. They were married with children and had farmland. (More about WOFEI can be found at [wofeing.org](http://wofeing.org)).

#### **3.3 My positionality**

As a researcher, my positioning influences how I approach the research topic under review, the research questions I put first, and how I interpret the results as holistic, dynamic, and in-depth. This is especially true in the fields of gender and development, where dynamics of power, sensitivity to culture, and social circumstances all play important roles.

I have a psychology background and obtained a bachelor's degree from the prestigious University of Ibadan, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. This has helped me to understand participant responses better during the individual interviews I conducted about their challenges and individual experiences in farming.

Additionally, I had worked previously in the International Institutes of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) Ibadan (Head Quarter) as a research institute, my work experiences as a researcher at IITA, I have gained a broad grassroots knowledge and understanding of agricultural produce, harvesting, preservation techniques, and all others that it takes or requires. My interest in digging further into agricultural development from my practical activities and involvement on the agricultural schedule in the office on how to improve food security, sustainability, and gender equality in the agricultural sector led to my pursuit of a Master's in Agrarian Food and Environmental Studies. During my study I have learned that there is conflict surrounding development in farming practices, like the production process, women's involvement in the decision-making process, and land issues. In my attempts to resolve some of these conflicts, I looked at gaps in the literature and the farmers' everyday life crises surrounding agriculture resulted in my research topic "Women's Role in Agricultural Development in Oyo State, Nigeria. Focusing on unveiling challenges, opportunities for success, and pathways to sustainable growth".

In researching women's involvement in farming, specifically using an NGO (WOFEI), I am mindful of my own self gender, cultural upbringing, and potentially separate socioeconomic level, which may influence my perception of the obstacles and agency that the rural women handle. Recognizing my positionality allows me to avoid putting outside preconceptions, instead focusing on participants' reflections through their own lived experiences. Recognizing this allowed me to maintain consciousness during my research process, interact more honestly with those who participated, and conduct and analyze data with an understanding of my own biases. This transparency is vital for establishing confidence with those involved, reporting impartial discoveries, and contributing to studies that accurately reflect the perspectives and experiences of female farmers in the study environment.

### **3.4 Research Design, Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

A qualitative research design is adopted to explore the crucial role of those women demoted or marginalized chosen to fully capture an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges. It helps me as a researcher gather rich, detailed data using an inductive approach.

The sampling strategy employed was a non-probability sampling technique which entails selecting participants in a non-random manner of a group of six women from (WOFEI) having eight participants each as the focus group and twelve other participants which comprised individual women farmers, stakeholders, and government officials as a non-focus group.

The selection was based on the ease of respondent accessibility and the need to show a bit of sampling specifically informative and rich. The unfocussed groups authorized participants to express their thoughts and feelings without interruption or influence from others. The total sample size for the study is 60 participants.

### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The main instruments of data collection used in this research are interviews due to the educational level of the participants. The participants were allowed to express their thoughts and beliefs as regards the topic under discussion in their local language (Yoruba). In the field of data collection, the interview was conducted by the research assistants (Mr. Abiodun Ojedeji, and Mr. Akin in July 2024). This is because the cost of traveling to Nigeria from the Netherlands as a researcher is high and assistants were chosen based on their experience in fieldwork and important level of understanding of the Yoruba language. The focus group interviews of women farmers and other stakeholders were conducted by assistants and other individuals (the unfocussed group interviews were performed by me the researcher. This is achieved through phone call discussions with participants at convenient times at different time intervals in July 2024. Also, at the field, records and pictures captured were done by Richard.

**Semi-structured interviews:** In-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved in farming, including farmers and extension workers, community leaders, and government officials. These interviews provided insight into each participant's challenges and opportunities.

**Focus Group Discussions:** Conducted by research assistants with groups of women farmers involved in agriculture activities for the past five years among the (WOFEI). This group allows women participants to have an opportunity to share their different experiences and perspectives on their roles, challenges, opportunities for success, and pathways to sustainable growth and agricultural development. Older women farmers were interviewed, those who owned or had access to farmland showed resilience and women's ability to work on the farm.





**Figure 3:** Picture of (WOFEI) division of (6) focus groups.

Source: Photograph by Richard in July 2024. Video <https://bit.ly/rpmergeddiscussions>

**Observation:** The observations were useful, particularly in gaining insight into the setting and the actual behaviors of the participants interviewed. The observer (research assistant) writes down what is happening, including nonverbal aspects of the situation, such as the participants' emotions when they express their views. The notes are then used as the observation protocol.

**Documents Study:** The pre-defined topics for discussion used during this interview were derived from the literature previous research and journals. These topics were later improved at the start of the data collection process of this study, but the focus was kept on learning the meaning that the participant held about the problem.

Other instruments used during this research are audio recordings, taking of photos, and video recordings.



**Figure 4:** Picture of Agricultural Extension workers, and community leaders.  
Kajola Local Government area Oyo, state.  
Source: Photo by Research assistant Mr. Abiodun in July 2024.

### 3.6 Data, Analysis Procedure/ Techniques

Data collected through observation, interviews, and focus groups were transcribed manually into written format by repeatedly listening to the recorded audio tape. Then Data is condensed from the code to form the Theme. This was done by editing the transcripts to remove grammatical errors and repeated phrase/ statement while ensuring the critical response of each participant was not changed. Similar responses were categorized to form code and generated a theme initially identified and pre-defined from previous literature reviews and theories in addition to the themes derived from the participant's responses. For example, Participants' responses- "*I started farming as a child,*" "*My parent are farmers,*" and "*Farming was my family business even before I got married*" These are similar codes categorized under code "***Born into farming/ Family business***" which generated the theme "***Involvement in Farming.***"

Participant's response- *"I was farming, and it was good when I was young and I started farming again after a friend from this women's group encouraged me to start it at my compound backyard because the ground is fertile, this is after I got married about ten years ago."* was categorized under code "**Started later**". Here, I used the coding method to sort all the raw data; it makes it possible to extract and examine all segments of the participant's responses collected from the interview. From the findings, the challenges and obstacles encountered in farming generated the following codes: *"Money is the main challenge"* *"limited money to plant crops and maintain the farm"* *"no help from husband, financial difficulty"* and *"No tools and Money"* and were later reframed as **(lack of financial aid), (seedings, diseases, and pest control), (Machinery/tools), (Climate Condition and flood)**.

In summarizing the data in each theme/ Category, the frequency/reference for each code, which I recorded and analyzed. Possible limitations include potential response biases in self-reported data and challenges in generalizing findings beyond the study population. Efforts were made to reduce these limitations through rigorous sampling techniques and transparent methods were used to report the methodologies.

### **3.7 Ethical Consideration**

This research adhered to ethical principles, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for all the participants' rights. Before data collection commenced, an approved signed designed copy of the ISS ethics boards was received. All participants were given thorough information about the study's objectives and those who participated gave written or verbal approval; with the choice to withdraw at any time without consequence. Informed consent guarantees participants' choice and that all persons understand their involvement entails photos and video records. As the sensitive nature of conversations regarding family details, the research was attentive to the emotional implications of discussing gender norms, disparities, and specific experiences, and all information submitted was kept strictly disclosed.

## **4 DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

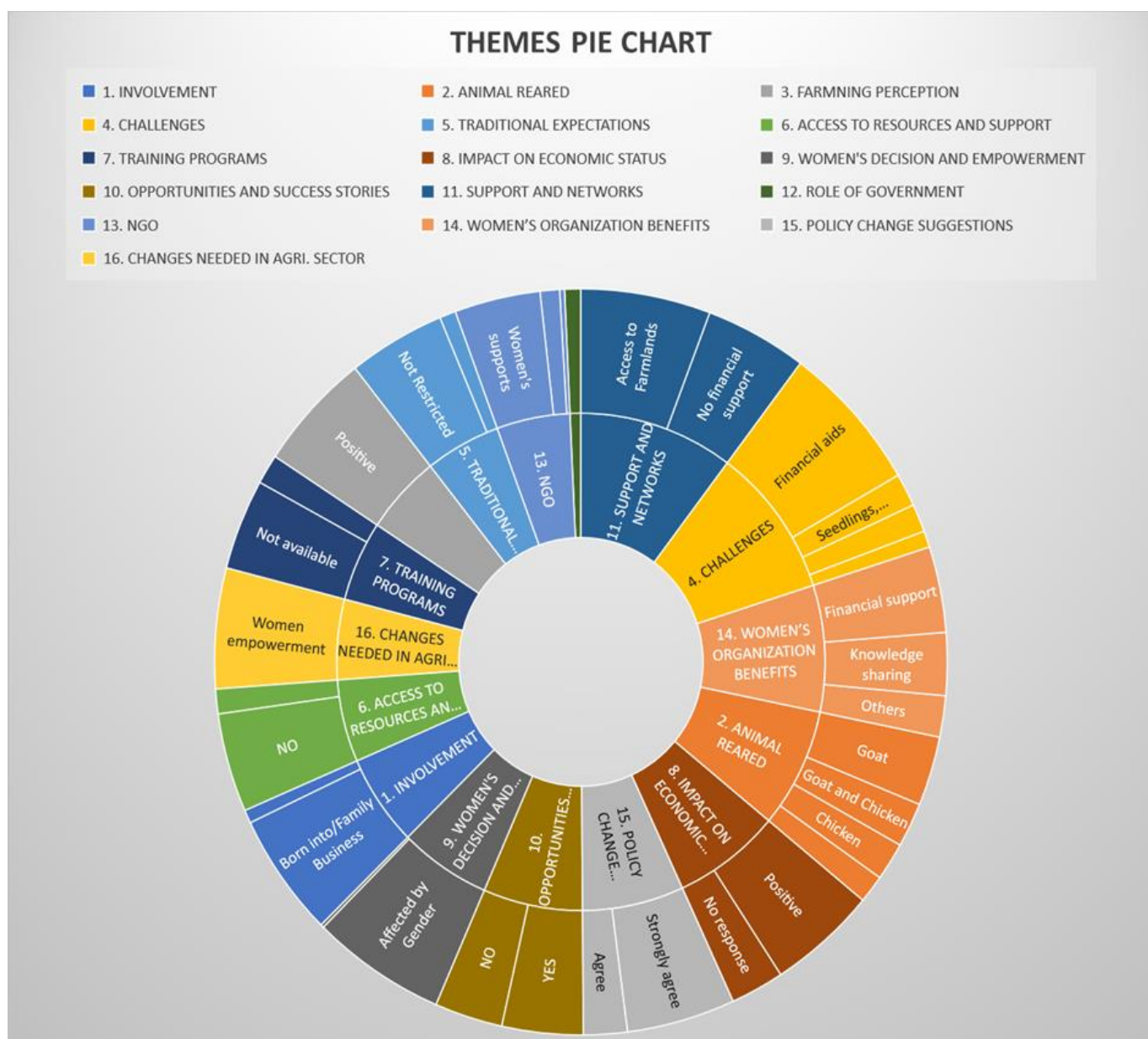
This chapter covers the study's empirical analysis, interpretation, and discussion of findings. This was structured into sections based on the key themes identified in the data. The empirical analysis begins with an introduction and follows section 4.2. Explain the thematic analysis using pie and bar charts to illustrate the findings, following section 4.3. explains the findings and the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while Section 4.3 Analysed Responses from Interviews, 4.4 explains the analysis of Interviewed Responses, and Section 4.5 looks at the findings of data analysis. 4.6 Entails the discussion of Findings, additionally, sections 5.1 summarize the contribution of (WOFEI) and 5.2 to 5.6 summarize the findings from the studies, linking these findings to the research question or objectives, conclusion, and recommendations.

### **4.2 Thematic Analysis**

The qualitative data was gathered from semi-structured interviews with 60 participants active in farming activities during the last five years, I analyzed the data manually using inductive and reflective thematic analysis techniques. Additionally, the coding of the (IDI) and (FGD) interviews were transcripts based on the research questions guiding this study. Inductive thematic analysis enables the extraction and examination of all response divisions provided.

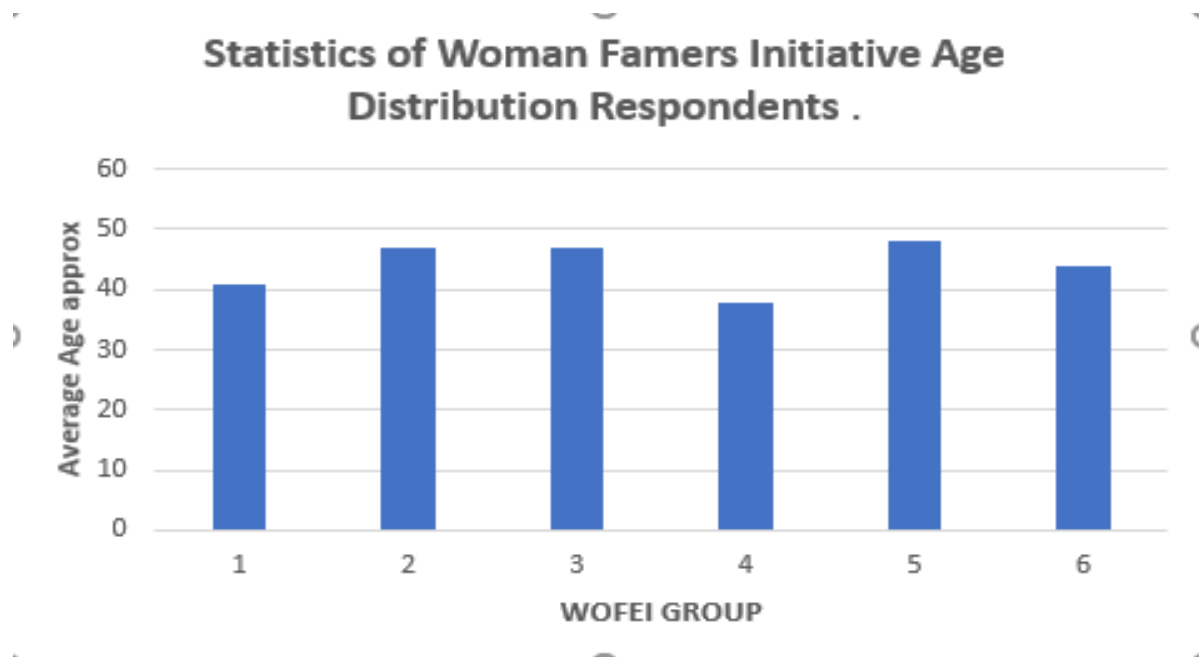
Following steps to analyze the data. Firstly, the recorded interview was transcribed and read through thoroughly to fully comprehend the information given by those interviewed, by familiarization with the data, the appropriate code from the transcript was manually chosen, also examining each interview's transcript, and producing initial codes, developing initial themes, reviewing possible themes, putting a name to and establishing themes, and creating findings (Braun and Clarke, 2020).





**Chart 1:** A pie chart showing various themes and codes.

Various themes were established using codes generated by the participant responses. For example, Codes like *goat*, *goat with chicken*, and *chicken* led to the formation of the theme of *Animal reared*.



**Chart 2:** A Bar chart of the WOFEI age distribution

#### 4.3 Discussion of Findings on Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Analyzing the age distribution among focus group and individual participants provides critical insights into the demographic diversity of women involved in agriculture in Oyo State, Nigeria. This diversity is central to understanding their roles in agricultural development, it reflects the challenges and opportunities women face at various stages of life. The participants' ages range from 33 to 62 years, with a predominance of middle-aged women, particularly those between 40 and 47 years., indicating that this demographic plays a leading role in farming activities. This suggests that agriculture is a long-term commitment for many women, who often begin farming in their youth and continue into their later years. This age group is the backbone of agricultural activities, balancing the demands of family and farming. Their experiences shape the discussions, revealing the unique challenges and opportunities they encounter in their agricultural pursuits.

The presence of younger and older participants highlights the generational continuity in farming practices, with younger women inheriting agricultural knowledge and responsibilities from their parents. This generational link is vital for ensuring the sustainability of traditional farming methods within the community, ensuring that conventional farming practices are preserved and passed down leading to long-term growth of agriculture in the region. However, it also highlights the need for more support that addresses the individual needs of different age groups.

Younger women, who may be establishing their farming practices, could benefit from training and financial assistance. In contrast, older women might require support in accessing modern tools and reducing physical strain, particularly as they continue to contribute significantly to agricultural activities despite the physical demands of farming.

The variability in age within each group further enriches the discussions by bringing diverse perspectives. Some groups, where ages are more closely clustered, may have discussions more focused on shared experiences related to a specific life stage. In contrast, groups with a broader age range may introduce a wider array of topics, reflecting the different priorities of younger and older women. For instance, middle-aged women may focus on expanding their farms and improving productivity, while older women might prioritize sustainability and reducing labor-intensive practices. This diversity also presents challenges that must be carefully managed to ensure all voices are heard. In groups with a wide age range, there is a risk that the perspectives of older, more experienced women could dominate, potentially overshadowing the contributions of younger participants. Effective assistance is important to maintaining a balanced discussion, ensuring that the needs and insights of all age groups are equally represented.

Overall, the age distribution among the focus group participants is universal in the broader agricultural community in Oyo State. It highlights the vital role of women in agricultural development and the need for targeted interventions that consider the different challenges and opportunities they face. By understanding these dynamics, policymakers and development practitioners can design programs that support women at every stage of their agricultural journey, paving the way for sustainable growth and success in the sector.

#### **4.4 Analysis of Interviewed Responses**

The focus group interviews were conducted across six groups, with participants involved in agriculture within the Kajola local government area and other women farmers getting by Snow Boy. The analysis reveals several key themes and insights associated with their involvement in agriculture, challenges, and perspectives on empowerment and policy changes.

Reflecting on the study, women depend on their husbands to access land, and some rely on their family land to cultivate crops, few were able to buy land for themselves with the support of NGOs, cooperatives, and microfinance banks. This is about gender relations showing gender inequality in access to land because women do not have direct access to land. This shows the gender power inequality in access to land, it shows how men usually dominate over women. Women who always had a passion for crop cultivation or agriculture, worked double duties because they actively worked the farmland and worked in household responsibilities. This shows how the WOFEI tries to help the women gain access to land by supporting them financially with a loan to purchase land with no interest rate, and sometimes the NGO groups support the farmers to acquire farm tools and seeds, chemicals when needed for pest control. The Women Farmers Empowerment Initiative as an NGO in Oyo States gives them access to things they could not get from their husband.

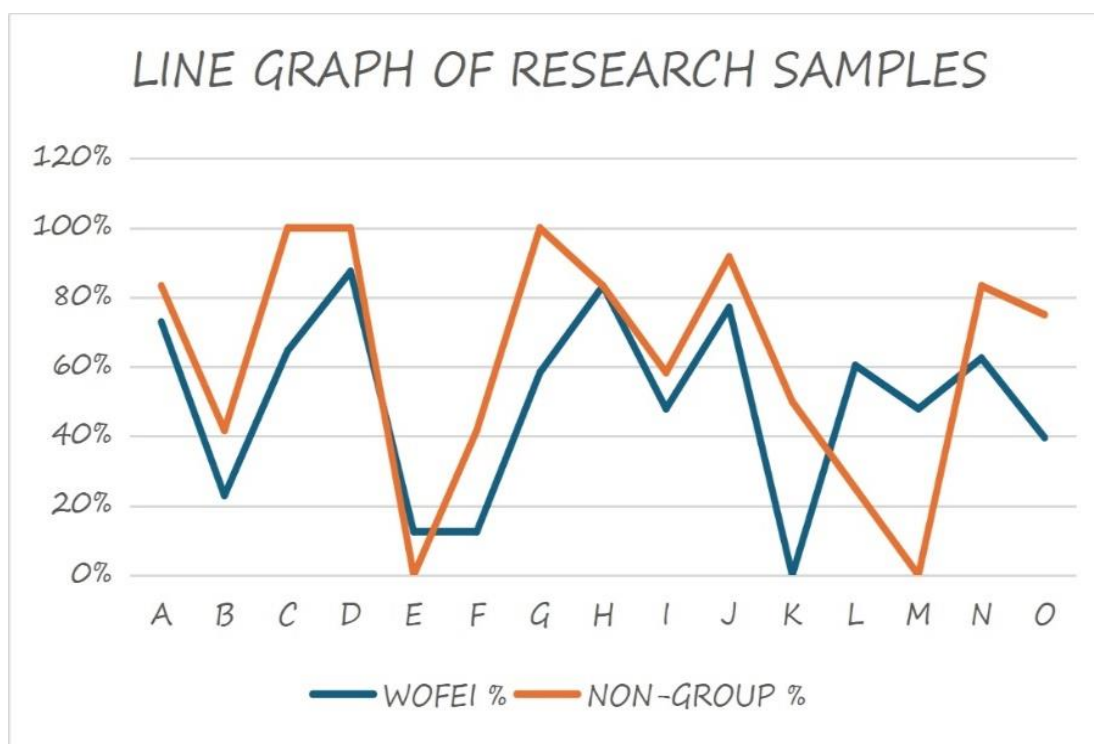
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Identified Challenges</b>
<b>Cultivation of crop</b>	Primary women are involved in planting, tilling, weeding, and harvesting different crops (e.g., cassava, maize, cashew, yam)	Limited availability of high-quality seeds and farming equipment, labor-intensive tasks with poor financial rewards.
<b>Animal reared</b>	Farming small-scale livestock (chickens, goats, etc.).	Limited availability of animal care and money for expansion.
<b>Sales of agricultural produce</b>	Women would bring flash vegetables, and raw or processed products of crops to marketplaces nearby for sale.	Local or community markets have poor pricing bargaining strength plus limited access to formal money systems.
<b>Processing of Farm Produce</b>	Women convert foods such as cassava into garri, among other things.	Heavy human work, insufficient processing equipment; and limited chances of finding formal markets.
<b>Household Care and Management</b>	Balancing farm work, household management, and care of children and old people.	Women's homework burden is heavy, while societal expectations limit their time for farm work and lead to growth in business and others.
<b>Participation in agricultural cooperatives, and NGOs.</b>	Women joined cooperatives, and WOFEL allowed them to figure access to land, money, farm inputs, and information on the markets.	Women in these cooperatives, or associations have limited leadership responsibilities and are excluded from the decision-making procedures.
<b>Access to Land for Farming</b>	Many women depend on their husbands' land, family land obtained from male family members, or WOFEL assistance to get land.	Women face cultural barriers to property ownership, making it difficult to acquire legitimate land rights.
<b>Size of farmland for cultivation</b>	Access varies, typically, tiny plots ranging from 1 to 2 hectares depending upon location and resources.	Larger farms tend to be owned by men, which limits women's financial success in earning in agriculture.
<b>Type of land access</b>	Women typically acquire land through inheritance, from their fathers, husbands, sons, or male relatives.	Patriarchal land laws often restrict women's direct title to land, while inherited land frequently belongs to male heirs.
<b>Leisure activities</b>	Spending time with some friends and relatives, getting	Limited leisure time for the women due to excessive workloads



	involved in practicing faith, (praying), and attending different community events.	associated with practicing farming and domestic care work.
<b>Religion</b>	Most of the women practice Christianity and are practitioners of Islam or are involved in traditional faiths, in the community they live in.	Religious norms can have an impact on gender roles, mostly women's independence and economic empowerment.
<b>Family size</b>	The average household size is 6 to 10 individuals comprising of extended family members.	Those with larger families put stress on women to manage farming activities and household care together.
<b>Number of children in the households</b>	Women often have three to seven children; this is based on the household they belong to and cultural norms.	Larger family sizes are reviewed to place a greater demand on women's time spent on farming work and childcare duties at home.
Total Number of Participants	48 participants are from the focus group and 12 individual farmers outside the group.	
Age range	The participant age range for this study is from 33 to 62 years.	

**Table 1:** Summary of findings on daily life and agricultural activities of women farmers

The above table demonstrates social and economic-demographic aspects that influence women farmers' participation and experience in farm work. Findings review that women face difficulties caused by parental obligations, religious factors, including sociocultural expectations, and the limits of bias against them in accessing resources for framing.



**Graph 1:** A line graph of the samples studied showed similarity from the findings.

This shows the consistency in similarities of women farmers' activities between the focus group and the individual farmers not in the group. It means that they all have similar activities and challenges encountered in agriculture.

ALPHABETS	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
CODE	Born into/Family Business	Goat and Chicken	Positive	lack financial aids	Restricted by beliefs/norms	Available and Impactful	Positive
H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Affected by Gender	YES	Access to Farmlands	Training and awareness programs	Women's supports	Knowledge sharing	Strongly agree	Policy on gender equality

**Table 2:** Code Alphabets Table

More than 80% of WOFEI and non-focus group interview participants mentioned lack of financial aid, and gender inequality as major challenges. They also claimed to have access to inherited family farmland. (see the line graph above). Some of the women were able to access the farmland through their husbands, sons, or fathers.

## 4.5 Findings from Data Analysed

S / N	Key Themes	Findings
1	Involvement in Agriculture	75% of participants have been involved in farm work since their youth time, often inheriting the practice of farming from their parents. The predominant crops cultivated mentioned include cashews, tomatoes, peppers, corn, yam, and cassava. While 8% of participants started farming after marriage, indicating a continuity of agricultural practices across generations.
2	Rearing of Livestock	42% of the participants were engaged in rearing goats, with some raising chickens or fish. However, there were instances where participants had reduced or ceased livestock rearing due to financial constraints or other challenges.
3	Women's View on Agriculture	72% had the perception and claimed that farming is a crucial source of income and provides for their families, although it is perceived as challenging work. Some participants expressed difficulties in expanding their farming activities due to financial limitations.
4	Challenges and Obstacles	The most general challenges identified were a lack of financial resources, difficulty accessing seeds, and the excessive cost of farming inputs. Participants also noted a lack of support from their husbands and limited assistance from the government. Women's Periods and traditional expectations were mentioned as factors that have historically affected women's participation in farming, although some traditions have developed.
5	Access to Resources and Support	80% of participants have access to family-owned farmland but lack financial support and access to modern farming tools. Promised aid and government support have often not materialized, leading to dependence on personal or community networks for assistance.
6	Training Programs	There is a significant gap in access to agricultural training programs, with some participants noting that available training is often geared toward men. A few participants benefited from specific training programs on crops like tomatoes, cucumbers, and watermelon, which improved their farming techniques.
7	Impact on Economic Status	Agriculture is viewed to provide jobs, improve health through fresh produce, and support families by paying school fees and other expenses. Participants acknowledge the positive impact of farming on their income and the broader community.
8	Women Empowerment	There is a consensus that women are often not involved in decision-making within their households or farming operations. Participants suggested that

		empowering women could improve agricultural productivity and societal development.
9	Opportunities and Success Stories	Some participants shared success stories where training and empowerment initiatives had a positive impact, leading to increased production and economic development. However, the need for more targeted support and resources for women farmers was emphasized.
10	Role of NGOs and Government	Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of support from the government and NGOs. While some mentioned mutual support among farmers, there is a clear need for more structured and consistent assistance from external organizations.
11	Policy Change Suggestions	The participants suggested that women should receive more resources, equal treatment in training programs, and financial support to improve their farming activities whereby men's resources should be separated from women's resources. The introduction of laws to empower women and ensure their involvement in decision-making was also recommended.

**Table 3:** Table showing findings from Data Analyzed

#### 4.6 Discussion of Findings

The focus group discussion emphasizes the agriculture key role plays in the lives of these women and their families. However, the ability to expand this capacity is hindered by financial constraints, limited resource utilization, and insufficient training opportunities. There is a need for policy changes and support systems that prioritize women farmers, this is evident to ensure their empowerment and the sustainable development of their communities.

**Research Question 1:** What are the specific roles and contributions of women in agricultural production and development in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Based on interview responses, the key roles and contributions of women in agriculture in Oyo State, focus on their involvement, management practices, specific roles, and impact on household income, and food security. The farmers are typically involved in mixed farming by combining crop production such as cashew, cocoa, palm oil, cassava, maize, yam, vegetables, legumes, rice, millet, and livestock rearing. Specifically, played roles in crop and livestock management.

The women balanced farm work and household duties using a prescription for time management practices and engaging others, particularly children, in farming and household tasks. They also contribute to food security by providing food like (eggs, meat, and vegetables) and financial stability through sales and family income.

## Findings on Objective One

Women are heavily involved in different farming activities, from crop cultivation to livestock rearing, often combining both activities to optimize resources and outputs. Their specific roles extend beyond just physical labor, and they are actively engaged in pest control, weeding, harvesting, marketing, and even expanding their agricultural organizations. This demonstrates their adaptability and their important contribution to the stability of the economy and their households. Women often employ strategies like multitasking, delegating tasks to children, or strictly scheduling their activities to ensure that neither farm work nor household tasks are neglected. These activities are carefully integrated into their farming routines, with livestock often kept in their backyard or near the farm or managed through specific practices like using cages. The contribution of these farming activities to household income and food security is significant through the means of selling livestock and crops. This double role played in production in agriculture and income generation from other activities highlights women's vital role in their economy and communities. The study shows the indispensable role of women in the agricultural sector, emphasizing their contribution to household welfare and social development.

**Research Question 2:** What socio-economic factors influence women's participation and empowerment in agricultural activities in Oyo State?

Many women are motivated by the need to provide for their families with passion, the availability of the land offered by their husbands or family land, and the traditional pattern of farming in their community. Women face gender-based challenges such as limited access to resources but find strength in their ability to engage in multitasking activities and manage both farm duties and household responsibilities so one will not limit the other. Usual challenges include inadequate access to cash, hindrances of land ownership issues, and gender discrimination in the communities they live. Also, inadequate money continues to reduce women's ability to engage in better farming practices while social norms sometimes restrict women's involvement in certain agricultural roles.

In my view, women's empowerment is seen as gaining access to resources, decision-making power, and the ability to contribute to community development through their agricultural activities. Empowered women are considered key to community development, as they can contribute to economic growth, improve food security, and serve as examples for younger generations to embrace farming. Many women participate in farming cooperatives, like joining associations and women's groups, which provide support through shared resources, pooling resources together, training, financial aid, and emotional encouragement for farming and household issues.

## **Findings on Objective Two**

The thematic analysis of socio-economic factors affecting women's participation and empowerment in agriculture in Oyo State, Nigeria, reveals that women are flexible in managing multiple responsibilities despite facing systemic barriers with the help of social relationships and support networks they engage in, which play a significant role in the success of women involved in farming. Participation in farming associations, cooperatives, and women's groups provides essential resources, training, and emotional support, to help women manage the difficulties that come their way. These networks facilitate problem-solving collectively and the exchange of knowledge enhances women's resilience and ability to flourish in agriculture. The findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions that address gender-specific challenges while promoting women's empowerment and participation in agriculture.

**Research Question 3:** What are the gender disparities in access to resources, decision-making processes, and socio-economic opportunities within the agricultural sector in Oyo State?

Gender disparities affect women's access to resources because these women are not allowed to participate in the decision-making process, neglected sometimes due to cultural norms. Traditional gender roles commonly limit women to certain tasks within the agriculture sector, limiting their involvement in more profitable activities and increasing inequalities in resource access. Societal norms often restrict women's access to opportunities by emphasizing male dominance in decision-making and allocation of resources, thus hindering women's full involvement in agriculture. NGOs and government institutions are seen as important in providing training, resources, and financial assistance, but access to these supports is not always equal in distribution or consistency.

While few women from the findings claim to have benefited from NGO or government programs, many report limited or no access to these supports, citing gaps in outreach support and program implementation. Women's involvement in decision-making is often limited, with men commonly holding the basic decision-making power in household and community farm activities. When perceiving the impact of gender on decision-making in farm settings is always important to watch how women are usually excluded from main decisions, as it increases their marginalization in the procedures for farming and leadership in the community.

## **Findings on Objective Three**

The thematic analysis reviews significant gender disparities in access to essential agricultural resources in Oyo State, Nigeria. Women farmers frequently encounter obstacles in getting credit, Land, and technology and the majority rely on informal networks due to discriminatory practices and limited access to formal financial services. These barriers might restrict their productivity and further support economic inequalities, hindering women's full participation and ability to advance in farming. Addressing these disparities is important for empowering women and enhancing their contributions to agriculture.

Traditional gender roles and societal norms turn into significant factors influencing women's involvement in agriculture. These roles often confine women to specific, less profitable agricultural tasks, while the men most of the time dominate more profitable decision-making aspects in farming. Societal expectations support male dominance in the allocation of resources and decision-making in agriculture, this in turn limits women's opportunities for economic growth and leadership power within their communities. Challenging and transforming these traditional norms is basic for promoting gender equality in farming and this will empower women to be fully involved in and benefit from agricultural activities.

The role of NGOs and government institutions in supporting women in agriculture is recognized, yet their impact is often inconsistent and limited. While these organizations provide valuable training, financial assistance, and resources, many women report inadequate access or benefits due to gaps in outreach and accomplishment. Additionally, women are frequently excluded from a key decision-making process, especially within their households and the communities they live in, which is increasing gender inequalities. Effective interventions must verify the existence of equal access to support services which should actively involve women in the support of decision-making by developing their empowerment and followed up by promoting a more inclusive and unbiased farming region in Oyo State.

**Research Question 4:** What are the main challenges hindering the full participation and empowerment of women in agricultural activities in Oyo State, including barriers to access, cultural norms, and institutional constraints?

The main challenges discovered from the findings include limited access to money, Land, and machinery, including market information, all these issues are worsened due to gender discrimination and a lack of a supportive framework. These difficulties restrict the ability of women to expand their agricultural farm activities, reducing farming yield and limiting women's financial independence and power to make decisions. Women face barriers such as strict credit requirements, high interest rates on money from loans, limited access to lenders, and lack of awareness or availability of modern technology. Some women overcome these barriers by joining cooperatives, relying on informal loans, sharing resources within their communities, or seeking support from NGOs and local networks.

Cultural norms and expectations from traditions restrict women's full involvement in farming practices, this is when men participate in decision-making and dominate women farmers' involvement. Additionally, societal attitudes undervalue women's contributions to agriculture, viewing them as secondary to men, which reinforces gender inequality and restricts women's opportunities. Some women have participated in training programs that have enhanced their farming techniques, knowledge, and confidence, though access to such programs remains limited for many.

Women voiced a call for more accessible and frequent training programs focusing on modern agricultural practices, financial knowledge, and self-motivated skills to overcome the barriers.

## **Findings on Objective Four**

The analysis reveals significant challenges women in Oyo State face in accessing vital resources like money, farmland, and farm implements. These barriers, often rooted in systemic gender discrimination, reduce women's ability to develop their farm activities and gain financial independence, controlling access to these resources likewise reduces women's contributions to the agricultural sector prolonging their marginalization.

Norms from culture expected from tradition further constrain these women involved in subsistence farming and domestic duties. Attitudes from society often undervalue women's contributions, boost gender inequality, and restrict opportunities for advancement. Shifting these perceptions is fundamental to recognizing and supporting these women's active role in the agriculture area. While some women benefit from agricultural training programs, entry into these opportunities remains limited. The need for more accessible training focused on modern farming practices, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship is evident. Additionally, support from cooperatives, NGOs, associations, and local networks is essential to help women overcome resource accessibility barriers and fully participate in agriculture.

**Research Question 5:** What strategies and interventions can be proposed to enhance the success and empowerment of women in agricultural activities in Oyo State, Nigeria, thereby fostering sustainable growth and development in the agricultural sector?

Some effective strategies include forming associations, engaging in continuous learning and skill development, accessing microfinance, and exploiting social networks for resource sharing, the impact of microfinance programs, cooperative farming initiatives, and training workshops that have improved women's access to resources and market opportunities are some of the success stories. Although necessary changes are needed to improve access to land and credit, enhance training programs, challenge gender norms, and ensure equitable resource distribution.

The sector can be more inclusive by implementing gender-sensitive policies, increasing women's representation in decision-making, and providing targeted support services. Policies should focus on reducing financial barriers, improving access to technology, and providing legal support for women's land rights and ownership. Strengthening networks requires fixing collaboration among women farmers, enhancing communication channels, and providing platforms for knowledge sharing and collective action. Also, the community support networks should be strengthened to empower women in agriculture. Cooperatives and women's organizations should focus on providing financial support, access to land, markets, training, and advocacy for women's rights in the agricultural sector.



## **Findings on Objective Five**

The analysis identifies key strategies that proved effective in empowering women in agriculture in Oyo State, including forming cooperatives, continuous skill development, and accessing microfinance. These approaches enable women to pool resources, share knowledge, and overcome barriers such as limited access to credit and markets. Success stories from microfinance programs, cooperative farming initiatives, and targeted training workshops highlight the positive impact of these interventions in improving women's access to agricultural resources and opportunities. There is a need for significant changes to improve access to land and credit, enhanced training programs, and the dismantling of restrictive gender norms. By implementing gender-sensitive policies, increasing female representation in decision-making, and providing targeted support services, the sector can become more inclusive and supportive of women farmers.

Policy recommendations are crucial for addressing the specific challenges faced by women in agriculture ensuring equal land ownership rights, creating financial incentives, and integrating gender equity into agricultural policies are essential steps. Additionally, strengthening community support networks, particularly cooperatives and women's organizations, is vital for providing the financial support, market access, and advocacy needed to empower women and promote sustainable growth in the agricultural sector.

### **4.7 Benefits of Empowering Women in Agriculture**

- Increased productivity and efficiency and contributed to food security and economic growth.
- Improved nutrition and health outcomes for families and communities.
- Poverty reduction and promotes gender equality to a just and equitable society.
- It contributes to environmental sustainability.

### **4.8 Pathways to Sustainable Growth**

To achieve sustainable growth in agricultural development in Oyo State, Nigeria, the following pathways should be pursued:

- Gender-responsive agricultural policies should be developed and implemented to address the underlying challenges facing women in agricultural development (FAO, 2011). These policies should focus more on promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes (World Bank, 2019).
- A leadership plan should be established to enhance women's Leadership capacities, and participation, and contest cultural norms and systems of laws that exploit women (FAO, 2011). These programs should focus on building women's self-respect, confidence, and decision-making skills (World Bank, 2019).

- Multi-party corporations should be established to promote collaboration, teamwork, and discussions among separate stakeholders, including women farmers, governments, private companies, and voluntary organizations (FAO, 2011). The focus of these partnerships should boost women's access to resources, opportunities, and ability to contribute to the decision-making process (World Bank, 2019).

## **5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1 Contribution of Women Farmer's Empowerment Initiatives (WOFEI)**

WOFEI is engaged in a women's empowerment program that takes up a gender-smart economic approach, when women are empowered, it can increase the produce in agriculture and sustainability but fails to tackle the root cause of inequalities women face in farming (Wilson, 2015). The focus is on women's ability to add more to productivity without reviewing the structural barriers including the right to land, and inequalities in intra-households that limit real genuine empowerment (Wilson, 2011; Murphy, 2017).

The Women Farmers Empowerment Initiative programs aim to empower women by addressing the regular barriers women farmers face such as land rights. WOFEI supports women in acquiring land directly through financial support from NGOs, and cooperatives. Money is also provided for women to purchase land as loans to help them access resources depending on the farmer's unique needs. This initiative addresses their lack of land access, helps to address existing inequalities in the system, and supports women farmers in accessing farming tools and other resources. Understanding women's involvement using a gender lens means acknowledging that women's participation in these programs does not automatically bring empowerment but does acknowledge the inequalities that need to be addressed.

Women are given the chance to improve resources, skills, and other support to balance reproductive and productive labor. Additionally, they work in planting and harvesting their produce at different time intervals. The NGOs train women in farming techniques and support them in fulfilling domestic responsibilities and agricultural roles they occupy also empower women to fight for or promote their rights to challenge systemic restriction.

Discussions with farmers indicate the programs are inclusive and responsive to the individual needs of women from marginalized backgrounds. This procedure has assisted in reviewing the disparities in accessing resources. Some of the opportunities reviewed were training to grow watermelon and cashews and how they can improve the farmland fertility for better crop yield as well as support to acquire land through the support of NGOs.

### **5.2 Common Issues and Gender Roles**

Qualitative interviews with women revealed that women face complicated gender dynamics in the context of their communities and families. Gender-smart initiatives frequently disregard the social and cultural components of women's experiences (Shaw and Wilson, 2020). For example, although WOFEI assists women in acquiring land, it might not fully deal with the deeply rooted gender stereotypes that govern their duties in the home. Women have obligations within the framework of traditional gender norms so they cannot claim their land rights from their families or communities because they encounter opposition from family members and community leaders.

The cultural importance of owning land influences how these women perceive and interact with empowerment programs. Many of these women farmers regard land as more than just an economic asset, it is also a symbol of status, stability, and identity in their communities. To empower women who do not have land of their own and assist in providing loans to acquire land independently is a major social and economic shift in the community influenced by social and cultural considerations. Women encounter challenges in obtaining and keeping ownership of land. This entails managing family relationships, social norms, and laws that favor male ownership.

### **5.3 Women's Agency and Empowerment**

Women's agency is gained through support training, availability of resources, and market opportunities to enable women to negotiate greater access to land and improve their livelihoods (Doss, 2018). Furthermore, (Saavedra, 2024) emphasizes that women who come together in female-only agricultural business networks acquire greater confidence. Women's agency is important in making decisions within communities and families, by demonstrating their agency, they make decisions that represent their goals and desires including the right to choose how to use property, engage in farming, and balance their duties in their households and communities. Empowerment women to express their agency enables women to speak freely about their experiences and builds their competencies to bargain. Empowerment entails simultaneously having access to resources and having the freedom to make choices within household and community situations.

### **5.4 Differences among women**

The differences identified among the women are their family status, land access, and relations with their children and husbands. All these factors determine women's ability to access resources. For instance, married women face challenges that are different from divorced, widowed, or single women. Most married women depend on their husbands to get land and make farming or family decisions, so women have little freedom over farming decisions. Married women only have access to land through their husbands, sons, or other male relatives. Without "son power or kinships," a widow would not have land access (Chigbu, 2019.p.132). This shows that widowed or single women might have better control of plots of land for farming but often face big challenges in land access because of social norms. They also endure a greater weight of farming and housework, which can reduce agricultural produce. Their status may limit their ability to acquire formal loans or government assistance compared to that of the women who are married.

The types of land access by the women depend on customary practices, the patterns of inheritance in their family, and their marital relationships. Some women farmers have smaller plots and little fertile land which requires them to farm with manure, some have little, bigger land than others like two plots and few have private ownership (personal land) through the support of the NGOs assisting the women in land access. Few stated they have shared land access with other fellows in the family being a family land. Married women have access to land from their husbands which is often temporary land access depending on the marital strength relationships.

Emphasized by (Chigbu et al., 2019) claim that land control remains the main issue women face, with several unable to make independent choices about land use.

Their children's involvement in farm labor impacts women's agricultural participation. Most women with large family sizes count more on their children for manual labor, but this sometimes comes at the expense of their children's schooling, resulting in a generational circle of limited empowerment. This study reviews the interconnection of land access, family status, and inter-house relations added to the different experiences of women in farming. All these factors contribute to differences in crop output and empowerment, highlighting the need for specific strategies that address the socio-cultural limitations that limit women's ability to obtain assets and the ability to make decisions (Doss, 2018; Chigbu et al., 2019).

### **5.5 Significant challenges that hinder women's full participation and empowerment in agriculture.**

These include limited access to essential resources such as land, credit, and modern agricultural technologies, often restricted by socioeconomic factors and rooted in cultural norms. The challenges align with the research topic's emphasis on unveiling obstacles that hinder women's contributions to agricultural development and align with the research findings by (Akaninyene et al., 2022) and (Adams, 2017) which also revealed the barriers that impede women's contributions to agricultural growth.

Despite the challenges, the study identifies opportunities that could enhance women's roles in farm work when applied. Opportunities include the support provided by cooperatives, NGOs, and social networks, which can help reduce some of the barriers women face. The research highlights the potential for these support structures to empower women and enhance their agricultural productivity, contributing to sustainable growth in the sector.

The study outlines several pathways to achieving sustainable growth in the agricultural sector through empowering women. These pathways include policy reforms, providing education, and training, strengthening the support networks, and challenging the cultural norms that block women's roles in agriculture. These recommendations align with the research topic's focus on identifying strategies that promote sustainable agricultural development through women's active participation. It also corresponds to the research by (Schutter, 2013) which recommends policies that support women's empowerment in the agricultural sector.

This research on the role of women in farming emphasizes the importance of women contributing to rural farming in southwestern Nigeria, especially Oyo State. Despite their massive contributions, women continue to experience barriers to accessing land, formal finance, and resources, owing primarily to gendered expectations and structural disparities in farming and social structures. Findings in this study show that although women play diverse responsibilities in farming and domestic attention, confirming that women are not just participants but are essential drivers of family activities, their efforts are frequently hindered by legal land ownership restrictions,

social and cultural demands, and economic obstructions. These findings highlight the importance of focused policy and measures, such as enhancing land access, formal funding, and technologies that save labor and have encouraged gender equality in agriculture.

The mobilization of the Sustainable Rural Livelihood Approach (SRLA) with Gender and Development (GAD) concepts provides a complex lens through which to examine how empowering women, worker productivity, and long-term sustainability intersect for these women. Recognizing the complexity of women's relationships with society in farming, work positions, and caregiving obligations is important for developing more inclusive farming policies and programs. Finally, empowering women in the field of agriculture entails beyond boosting their output, but also considering the different socio-cultural and economic circumstances where these women operate. This method will help to achieve equal, long-term, and effective agricultural growth. The research concludes that overcoming the identified challenges, for instance, limited access to resources and fixed cultural norms rooted in tradition is vital for achieving sustainable growth.

Reflecting on this study's topic of women's roles in agriculture via the lens of my own farming experience has been eye-opening. My current understanding of how cultural factors affect female farmers has given me unique insights into their struggles and strengths, particularly as they manage institutional impediments, traditional gender norms, and resource limits. This study has shown how productivity, empowerment, agency, and interpersonal assistance mix with the daily reality of women on farms, providing a more nuanced understanding of how they contribute to the market. Working previously at IITA, I have experienced the technical and organizational sides of crop cultivation, but this study has increased my knowledge of women farmers' particular challenges and agency. Women working in agriculture face more than physical obstacles, such as restricted entry to land and credit, but also socio-cultural constraints that influence their participation and acknowledgment in the countryside. This project has demonstrated gendered aspects that affect production, and sustainable development, especially empowering women, peer networks, and resilience.

This investigation has increased my awareness of the complexity of farming's growth and highlighted the significance of gender-sensitive tactics to enhance women's full engagement in the farm. I am now more motivated to apply my viewpoint in subsequent projects, with a renewed dedication toward encouraging inclusive, sustainable farming practices that acknowledge and support women's vital roles.

This study is limited to a short time and the sample size is restricted to Oyo state. The research focus on the lens of women which did not capture men's views could have provided more insight into the study.

## **5.6 Recommendations to policymakers and stakeholders to support women in agriculture.**

1. Recommendation on regular empowerment for women in the agricultural sector by providing incentives, money support, modern tools, training, education, and land access, to motivate women farmers and improve their productivity and income.

2. Women's empowerment and leadership programs should be established with government support to enhance their role in agricultural development.

3. Reform law for gender-sensitive policymakers to implement equal rights of resources.

4. Support cooperatives and NGOs that offer opportunities for women to overcome challenges and improve their agricultural productivity.

Future studies should focus on intersectionality, sensitive cultural interventions, gender-responsive policy, and gender participation.

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## Appendix 1: Sample of semi-structured Research questionnaire

### Open-Ended Research Questions In line with the objectives of the study

These interview questions are designed to delve into the various aspects of women's roles and challenges in agriculture, aiming to gather comprehensive insights into their contributions, experiences, and needs within the sector in Oyo State, Nigeria

Table of Demographic Questions for Respondents

Heading	Questions
Name	1. What is your name?
Age	1. What is your age?
Gender	1. What is your gender?  2. Are you involved in any gender roles in your community?
Marital Status	1. What is your marital status?  2. How many people are in your household, and what are their relationships with you?
Local Government Area	1. In which local government area do you reside?  2. Is this the same area where you practice your agricultural activities?
Level of Education	1. What is the highest level of education you have completed?  2. Have you received any formal education or training related to agriculture?
Occupation	1. What is your primary occupation?  2. Do you have any other sources of income besides agriculture?
Land Ownership	1. Do you own the land you farm on, or is it leased?  2. How many acres or hectares of land do you cultivate?
Years of Experience in Agriculture	1. How many years have you been involved in agriculture?  2. Have you worked in several types of agricultural activities over the years?

### Purpose of Demographic Questions

These questions are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the respondent's background, which can help interpret their responses in the context of their personal, social, and economic circumstances. This information is crucial for analyzing how demographic factors might influence their experiences and perspectives on agriculture and empowerment in Oyo State, Nigeria.

### Section B: Questions to Answer Each Research Objective

#### I. Women's Roles and Contributions to Agricultural Production and Development in Oyo State, Nigeria

1. Participation in agriculture.
  - Can you tell me how you got started in agriculture? What main roles or duties do you carry out in farming?
  - How do you balance your farming activities with household duties?
2. Goats or Chickens Rearing
  - Do you rear livestock like chickens or goats? If yes, how do you manage these activities?

- How do livestock activities support your income and food security in the household?
  - 3. Impact on Economic Status
    - How does your farming activity contribute to your family's income and financial strength?
    - < UNK> How do your farming efforts improve your household's maintenance and food security for the community?
  - 4. Opportunity and Success Stories
    - Can you share some happy stories or breakthroughs you have achieved in agriculture?
    - What opportunities have assisted you in developing your farming activities further?
- 

ii. Socioeconomic Factors Affecting Women's Involvement and Empowerment in Agriculture in Oyo State

- 5. Views on Women in Agriculture practicing
    - What encouraged you to continue farming as an occupation?
    - How does being a woman affect your experience in agriculture?
  - 6. Challenges and Obstacles
    - How do financial and social aspects affect your ability to take part in farming activities?
  - 7. Women Empowerment
    - How do you understand the word women's empowerment in agriculture? What does it mean to you?
    - Can you tell me how women's empowerment in agriculture supports your community's improvements?
  - 8. Support and Networks
    - Do you belong to any women's groups or farming cooperatives? How have they assisted you?
    - How do relations with other women farmers and social networks influence your agriculture practices?
- 

iii. Gender inequalities in access to funding, decision-making processes, and socioeconomic opportunities within Oyo State's farming sector

- 9. Access to Support and Resources
    - What resources such as (credit, Land, and technology) do you hold to access your farming activities?
    - How do gender inequalities affect you to access these resources?
  - 10. Traditional Expectations
    - How do customary or traditional gender roles affect your involvement in farming?
    - In what way do cultural norms affect your access to opportunities in agriculture?
  - 11. Role of Government and NGOs
    - What roles do government institutions and NGOs play in supporting women in agriculture?
    - Have you received any resources or support from NGOs or government programs?
  - 12. Decision-Making Processes
    - Are you ever being involved in decision-making processes concerning agricultural practices in your community or household?
    - How do you view the influence of gender on decision-making in farming settings?
- 

iv. Main Challenges Obstructing Women's Full Involvement and Empowerment in Farming Activity in Oyo State

- 13. Obstacles and Challenges
  - What are the main challenges you face in accessing resources in farming and chances for opportunities?
  - How do these difficulties prevent your full involvement and empowerment in farming practices?
- 14. Access to Support and Resources
  - What restrictions do you come across in accessing credit and technology for your farming activities?
  - How do you overcome these challenges relating to the accessibility of resources?
- 15. Expectations Based on Tradition
  - How do traditional expectations or cultural norms hinder your involvement in farming?

- What are the attitudes of the society toward women practicing farming in your community?
  - 16. Training Programs
    - Have you taken part in any training programs in agriculture? If yes, how does this training benefit you?
    - What further training or support could help overpower challenges?
- 

v. Strategies & Interventions to Improve the Success and Empowering of Women in Agriculture in Oyo State

- 17. Opportunity and Success Stories
  - What procedure have you found useful in overpowering barriers in farming?
  - Can you share some interventions that have successfully empowered women in farming?
- 18. Changes Required in the Agriculture Field
  - What changes are required to improve women's involvement and success in farming practices?
  - How can the agricultural sectors be more supportive and inclusive of women farmers?
- 18. Policy Change Recommendations
  - What policy changes would you recommend to improve women's empowerment in agriculture sectors?
  - How can policies tackle the precise challenges faced by women farmers?
- 19. Support and Networking
  - How can the community support system be enhanced to empower women in agriculture?
  - What role should women's organizations and cooperatives develop for sustainable growth?



## Appendix 2: Research Ethics Review Form

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### ISS Research Ethics Review Form for RP research carried out by MA students<sup>1</sup>

**Aim:**

This Form aims to help you identify research ethics issues which may come up in the design and delivery of your Research Paper (RP). It builds on the session on Research Ethics session in course 3105 and subsequent discussions with your peers and RP supervisor/reader. We hope the form encourages you to reflect on the ethics issues which may arise.

**The process:**

The Ethics Review process consists of answering questions in the following two checklists: B1-Low-sensitivity and B2-High-sensitivity. Depending on the answer to these questions you might need to fill section **C-Statement of Research Ethics** too.

The background document "ISS Research Ethics Guidelines for MA Students" provides advice and detailed information on how to complete this form.

Step 1 - Fill checklists B1 and B2

Step 2 - After answering checklists B1 and B2, the process proceeds as follows:

- **If you answer 'yes' to one or more low-sensitivity questions (checklist B1):** please discuss the issues raised with your supervisor and include an overview of the risks, and actions you can take to mitigate them, in the final design of your RP. You can refer to the ISS Research Ethics Guidelines for MA Students for help with this.
- **If you answer 'yes' to one or more high-sensitivity questions (checklist B2),** please complete section 'C' of the form below describing the risks you have identified and how you plan to mitigate against them. Discuss the material with your supervisor, in most cases the supervisor will provide approval for you to go ahead with your research and attach this form to the RP design when you upload it in canvas. If, after consultation with your supervisor, it is felt that additional reflection is needed, please submit this form (sections B1, B2, and C) to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) for review as follows:

When submitting your form to the REC, please send the following to [researchethics@iss.nl](mailto:researchethics@iss.nl):

- 1) the completed checklists B1 and B2 (or equivalent if dealing with an external ethics requirement)
- 2) the completed form C 'Statement of Research Ethics'
- 3) a copy of the RP design
- 4) any accompanying documentation, for example, consent forms, Data Management Plans (DMP), ethics clearances from other institutions.

Your application will be reviewed by a reviewer who is not part of your supervisory team. The REC aims to respond to ethics approval requests within a period of 15 working days.

Step 3 - Integrating the Ethics Review process into the RP:

- This Ethics Review Form needs to be added as an annex in your final RP Design document to be uploaded in the Canvas page for course 3105.

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<sup>1</sup> This checklist and statement is adapted from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Research Ethics Committee and informed by the checklists of two Ethics Review Boards at EUR (ESHCC and ERIM) and the [EU H2020 Guidance – How to complete your ethics self-assessment](#).

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**ISS Research Ethics Review Form - MA Research**  
**Project details, Checklists, and Approval Status**

**A) Project/Proposal details**

1. Project/Proposal Title	Women's Roles in Agricultural Development in Oyo State
2. Name of MA student (applicant)	Okunola Joy
3. Email address of MA student	606950mo@student.eur.nl
4. Name of Supervisor	Wendy Harcourt
5. Email address of Supervisor	harcourt@iss.nl
6. Country/countries where research will take place	Nigeria
7. Short description of the proposed research and the context in which it is carried out:	
<p>This research will look at women's multifaceted roles in agricultural development in rural Nigeria, it looks into marginalized women, the socioeconomic factors that influence women's participation in agriculture, such as resource availability, power to make decisions, and the impact of gender-based policies and programs.</p> <p>The objective is to examine women's roles, major challenges, their contributions, gender inequality in agriculture, and the effects of women working on household revenue and food security. Also, make recommendations for policy in support of increasing women's involvement and empowerment in agriculture.</p> <p>The study will be carried out in Oyo state, Ibadan, Nigeria, gathering 30-40 women aged 18-60 from the agriculture sector by involving community leaders, local collaborations, and NGOs. women play an important role in a variety of agricultural activities, including planting,</p>	

**B) Research checklist**

*The following checklist acts as a guide to help you think through what areas of research ethics you may need to address. For explanations and guidance please refer to the background document 'ISS Research Ethics Guidelines for MA students'. Please complete both sections (B1 and B2)*

	<i>Please tick the appropriate box</i>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>B1: LOW-SENSITIVITY</b>			
1. Does the research involve the collection and or processing of (primary or secondary) personal data (including personal data in the public domain)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does the research involve participants from whom voluntary informed consent needs to be sought?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Will financial or material incentives (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Will the research require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for access to the groups, communities or individuals to be recruited (e.g., administrator for a private Facebook group, manager of an institutions, government official)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Does the research include benefit-sharing measures for research which takes place with people who could be considered vulnerable? – please revise the background document (Guidelines) for more information.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**If you have ticked 'yes' to any of the above boxes (1-5), please discuss with your supervisor and include more information in your RP design describing the issue raised and how you propose to deal with it during your research.**

### ISS Research Ethics Review Form - MA Research

B2: HIGH SENSITIVITY	YES	NO
6. Does the research involve the collection or processing of <b>sensitive</b> (primary or secondary) personal data? (e.g. regarding racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, biometric data, data related to health or a person's sex life or sexual orientation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. Does the research involve participants for whom voluntary and informed consent may require special attention or who can be considered 'vulnerable'? (e.g., children (under 18), people with learning disabilities, undocumented migrants, patients, prisoners)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the research without their knowledge and consent (covert observation of people in non-public places)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9. Will the research be conducted in healthcare institutions, in healthcare settings, or will it involve the recruitment or study of patients or healthcare personnel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10. Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences for research participants, researchers, or persons and institutions connected to them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11. Could the situation in one or several of the countries where research is carried out put the researcher, individuals taking part in the research, or individuals connected to the researcher, at risk? Presence of an infectious disease such as COVID-19 is considered a risk – please provide information as outlined in the background document (Guidelines).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12. Does the research require ethical approval or research permission from a local institution or body?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you have ticked 'Yes' to one of the above (5-11), please complete section 'C' below describing how you propose to mitigate the risks you have identified. After discussion with your supervisor, please submit the form to the Research Ethics Committee. In addition, if you have ticked 'Yes' to a question on any kind of personal data, please also complete the privacy questionnaire.

## ISS Research Ethics Review Form - MA Research

YOU ONLY NEED TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED YES TO ONE OF THE QUESTIONS IN SECTION B2 ABOVE (Questions 5-11)

### C) Statement of Research Ethics

Using the background document 'ISS Research Ethics Guidelines for MA students', please address how you are going to deal with the ethics concern identified, including prevention measure to avoid them from manifesting, mitigation strategies to reduce their impact, and preparedness and contingency planning if the risks manifest.

Please number each point to correspond with the relevant checklist question above. Expand this section as needed and add any additional documentation which might not be included in your RP design, such as consent forms.

[TO BE COMPLETED BY MA STUDENT AND DISCUSSED WITH THE SUPERVISOR. IF THE SUPERVISOR FINDS IT NECESSARY TO SEEK FURTHER REVIEW, THE STUDENT MUST SUBMIT THE FORM TO THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE]

To ensure responsible and ethical methods for research, the risks involved include:

1) Participants might feel feelings of sadness when talking about personal experiences involving unfair treatment, and financial difficulty. This can cause painful recollections and stress. Mitigation: To Make sure that taking part is voluntary and that individuals can share their encounters without feeling pressured.

2) Providing certain data during research can result in stigmatization, Mitigation is ensuring confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process.

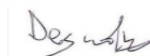
3) Participants may incur expenses by using moments off work to get involved in the study. Mitigation: the interview will be Scheduled for times that do not interfere with their farming activities. All attendees will be given an informed consentform, pointing out the voluntary aspect of involvement and the freedom to withdraw.

Sensitive information will be handled according to ethical standards. Direct physical and electronic information will be securely stored in Cabinets with locks and encrypted servers, accessible only to authorized personnel. A simple retention of data policy is implemented.

### D) Approval from Research Ethics Committee

\*To be completed by the Research Ethics Committee only if

Approved by Research Ethics Committee: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 13/06/2024

Additional comments for consideration from Research Ethics Committee:

If the REC needs more information before approving, the REC secretary will be in touch with the MA student. If after requesting more information the REC still has concerns, the REC secretary will ask the supervisor to discuss these with the student. In the unlikely event that there is still no resolution, the REC will refer the application to the Institute Board.