



## The Cultural Forces and Women Livelihood Options in Rural Areas of Kano State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The paper explores the cultural issues surrounding buying and selling engaged by rural women to supplement their housewifery functions. The aim of the study is to evaluate the various livelihood options that are culturally permissible in the study area with a view to understand the variation of occupations in relation to the cultural norms of the people involved. Occupational clusters were identified; the reasons for adoption of occupations, risks and inconveniences as well as people responses were envisaged. It is cross sectional research that involves both quantitative and qualitative type of data. Demographic characteristics of women especially age and preferences were captured. Questionnaires and interviews were employed for the quantitative and qualitative data collection respectively. The study discovered that indoor occupations such as food and eatery items within matrimonial homes are the modal livelihood options due to cultural values. Problem of poverty affects women due to social inequality and the people who patronize such occupations in the rural environment are affected by poverty. Some respondents described the women's occupation as a 'last option' because the profit obtainable is too meager commensurate to the laboring nature of the occupations. Many people described the act as marginal due to hardship, burden and risk involve. Many women sustain injury; at times enter social trauma in the livelihood options. The women complain of poor economic backing and support from husbands, relatives and family members. High cost of materials in some of women's occupations affect the choice of the occupation to pursue. The study pathetically discovered that the women are marginalized due to lack of capital. The loitering under the sun and rain is affecting their health (mental and moral) hence at high risk of ailment. The study recommends for provision of financial and moral supports by both government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to reduce the burden on women who are for various cultural reasons made poor so that they are allow to earn living with minimum duress

**KEYWORDS:** Occupation, family, poverty, preference, value, rural, NGOs and livelihood.

### BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Males and females are shape by cultural process into different sex/gender specific roles by the environment. Most of the biological behaviours of males and females supplement the social role of men and women through social interaction within the society (Lambu 2015). These socialization processes have created the basis upon which males and females are ranked, and because males are held superior to females by culture (precisely religion), members of society preferred a son over daughters Musa (2012) as quoted by Lambu (2015). Variation among Nigerian social groups exist where there are wide differences on sex preferences and gender roles based on values attached to each sex.

It will be very important to lay the foundation of this paper with the theory of symbolic interactionism where, Blumer (1962) as quoted by Lambu (2015) opined that "Human beings

act towards things on the basis of the meaning that things have for them” in an attempt to portray this in line with the scope of this study, women should be seen through the lenses of culture. The meaning culture attached to women made the society to handle them as precious assets that are kept under safe and lock. Even at the sharp-edge of poverty, males in the society agree to provide to their wives and regard their incapability in that direction, a shame and abomination. The cultural meaning escalate to the point that empowered women (by virtue of exposure or prestige) suffers some social stigma, exclusion and in some cases even to the extent of rejection where the husbands of the empowered women are call with names such as Mijin Hajiya, Auren Jari and so on. It is in line with this background that livelihood options of women in the rural areas (the culture preserving pot) despite the complementary roles of women in the society are at stake. Livelihood options for women can be helpful toward eradication of poverty among families due to the support woman gives to her children, husband or the entire family.

Poverty in the rural areas is very severe due to its effects on the already impacted poor quality shelter, foods and feeding as well as health care practices. Rural household in Nigeria usually cope with both poverty and increase fluctuation in income. Rural women partake in a number of strategies including agriculture, migration, and livelihood diversification which enable them to attain sustainable chores, women in rural areas contribute to increase their household income as well as sustain families by working at home and extra domestic domains. Scones (1998) in Gebru and Beyen (2012) as quoted by (Dalladi 2016) opined that the combinations of livelihood resources (different livelihood assets) are resulting in the ability of people to follow combination of strategies. Livelihood assets available to women represent the basic need in the society especially in the rural settings. It is a platform upon which the women livelihood may be built into livelihood goals, he further emphasize that everything that goes towards creating that livelihood can be thought of as a livelihood asset. Majority of women especially at the rural areas, to them life remain a drudgery with a host of problems and challenges in their various role as wives, mothers, care-givers, farmers, artisans and traders (ibid). The livelihood needs of the men and women are not always the same due to the culturally differentiated roles, responsibilities and resources available.

The fates of women in the rural setting need attention from every segment of the society because they play their biological roles as well as extra cultural obligations despite unfriendly environmental settings. it is evidently acknowledge and incorporated in the united national millennium goal (MDGs) (UN 2005) state that nation member states have pledge to promote gender disparity in primary and secondary education at all levels by 2015. The roles and contribution of women in development have never been given proper attention in the past. With recent uproar by women activist like the Feminists, gender studies and education are now attracting some priority. Research so far conducted have gone into detailed study of women livelihood strategies and options most especially their engagement in agriculture and more importantly in their participation to bring out their specific roles towards self-sufficiency for support of family needs. Maxwell (1992)

Majority if not all, the rural women have little opportunity to participate in intra household out-doors socio-economic and decision making processes even at domestic level as well as very limited interaction with people outside of their homes due to cultural reasons. Rural women suffer most in terms of hunger and food insecurity due to poverty and their over reliance on irregular and low paying laborious daily wages. The study if accomplished will try and provide solutions to what, why and when about women livelihood in the rural areas. The

study will among other things identify the various occupations available in the study area. It will elucidate on the reasons women engage in some of the occupations and desert others. Lastly the paper will find out the major challenges facing women livelihood option in the area. The paper adopts Tofa LGA due to its proximity with the metropolitan city of Kano where livelihood options may be available due to dual marketability of the area (internally and the neighboring city). Secondly, Tofa town itself is a typical rural settlement where majority of the occupants engage in primary economic activities. The study is never interested in the matrimonial family issues pertaining relationship between couples, duration of stay or personal possession of either of the spouses.

### **THE STUDY AREA**

Tofa LGA is located around latitude 12o 17N and longitude 7o52E in the north east wing of Kano state Nigeria. It lies 10 kilometer away from metropolitan Kano along Gworzo road. The total a land mass of the LGA is 210.8 KM<sup>2</sup>. The LGA is tangentially criss-crossed by Watari river a tributary to river Chalawa in Kano state. It is blessed by agricultural practices both rainy and dry seasons farming. It has one the fast growing market in the state the Janguza market that serve the western part of the metropolis. The Local Government is bordered by D/Tofa in the north, by Bagwai Local Government in the north-west and by Ungogo by the east.

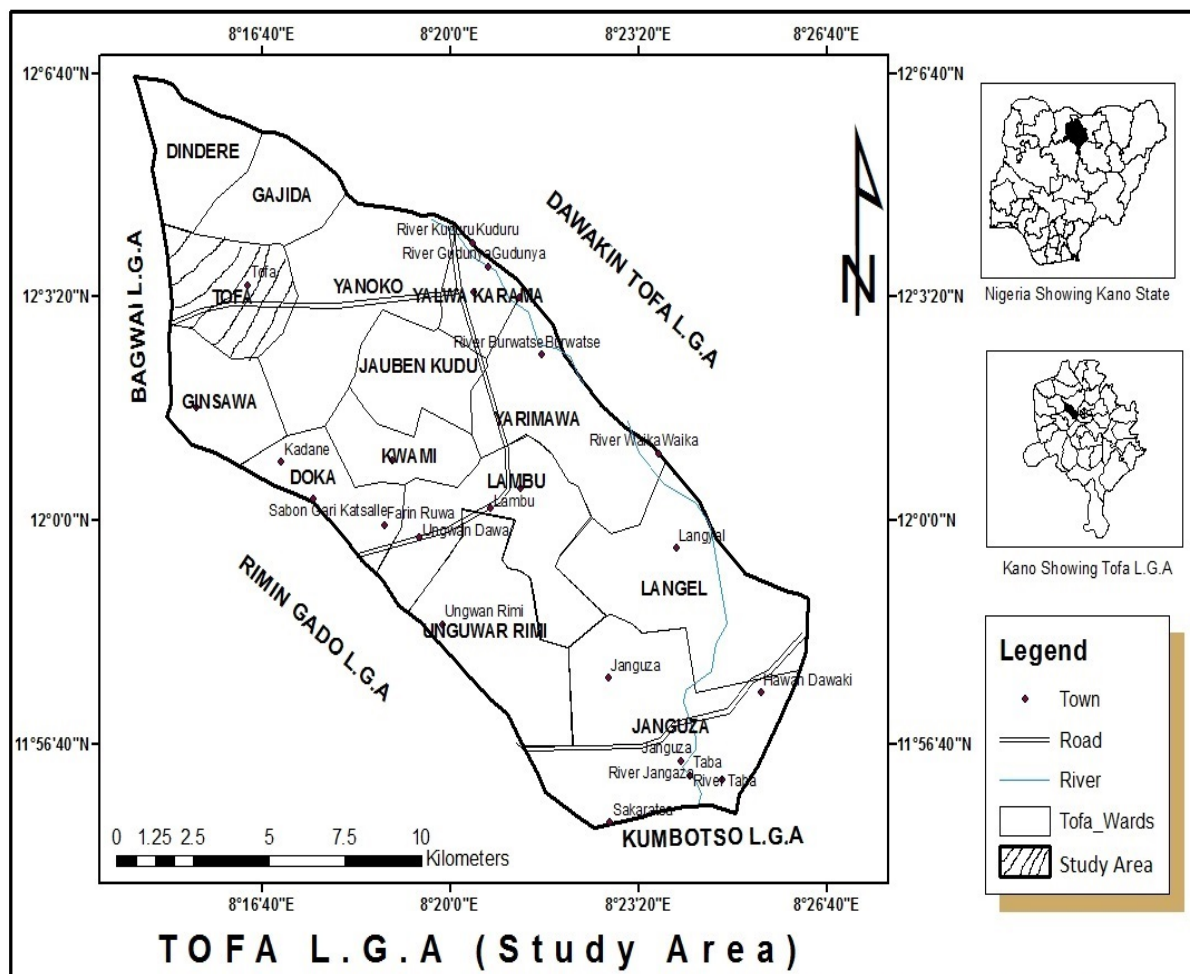
The population of the area according to the 2006 census is 97,734 people (NPC 2006). Its Headquarter is in the town of Tofa. Majority of the people are Hausa/Fulani. It is dominated by Muslim belonging to Islamic faith. Some minority tribes and faiths core exist in the area such as Igbos, Yorubas and other southern tribes and their beliefs include Christianity and pagans in the area. It has 19 wards under the traditional rulership of District head the Dan Adala and wards are Tofa, Lambu, Doka, Janguza, Langyel, Yanoko, Gajida, Ginsawa, Yarimawa, Jaube, Kwami, Dansudu, Wangara, Unguwar rimi, Dindere and Yalwa karama each and the auspices of the Village heads.

Tofa local government area is under the climatic zone classified as tropical continental type, characterized by existing wet and dry seasons. The temperature could be described as high but not uniform throughout the year, mean annual rainfall experience in a normal year in Kano is about 800mm. Source: Olofin, (1987) in Dalladi (2016). The area is affected by effect of micro climate along the valley of Watari river due to vegetation and high water table along the river bank especially around Yasanya, Burwatse and Fadamar Kalebawa areas.

The natural vegetation of Tofa is mostly Sudan savannah, it consists of several scattered tress that are hardly taller than 20m. Olofin (1987) Grasses are the dominant vegetation, during rainy season and grow up 1.5m high at maturity. However the natural vegetation has been greatly modified as a recent of several years of human activities i.e. bush burning, bush clearing, over grazing, and extensive cultivation. Source: Olofin (1987). Economic trees such as Guava, citrus and Mongo trees are at high proportion. Irrigation farming along the river and Lambu Dam creates green carpets over large hectares of land in the area. There are three main different crops grown in the area such as Vegetable: which include Okro (Kubewa), pepper (Tattasai), onion (Albasa), tomato (Timatir), and some other leafy vegetable i.e. Salad (Salak). Then the grains: This include, maize, rice, and groundnut etc and lastly other crops include cassava, sweet potatoes (Dankali), cocoyam (makani)

Other land uses are also practicable in the area. It has a large expanse of land area which favors a lot of activities ranging from economic to social activities. The land is also used for residential purpose and some serve as recreational center such as football field and also for economic

activities such as market, Motor Park and educational purposes. Major towns in the Tofa LGA include Tofa, Lambu, Doka, Unguwar rimi, Janguza, Yanoko and Wangara towns.



### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section explains the types, sources and stages in data collection activities. There are two types of data in the study which includes quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data included number of people employable by an occupation, incomes, number of occupation, number of people engage in each occupation etc. the qualitative data in this study involve the choices and women preferences, satisfaction and meanings by individuals and groups in the study area. The primary sources of data in this paper include the data from respondents during interviews and questionnaires in various households on their livelihood strategies and options which they involved in to earn a living. Record of occupations, jobs and services perform in the area as well as incentive and assistance from community services department of the LGA will be the secondary source. The instruments in the study include questionnaires, interviews, Digital Cameras, Recording Tape and writing materials.

### DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

To ensure spatial coverage, all the 19 wards are covered through convenient sampling. Proportionate random samplings of 450 people were made according to the sizes of the wards. For administration of interviews and questionnaires, 250 and 200 were respectively delivered. A purposive approach to sampling was adopted in visiting the Department of Community

services of the LGA to identify various occupations and record of assistance so far given to the rural women in the area. Similarly the same approach was adopted in each ward, the Village head was used in getting the name and address of women who engage in any occupation. This approach is considered for many reasons among which include an idea of getting approval and permission by community leaders as well as a way of getting introduction and acceptance to the community (Lambu 2013). For subsequent treatment of the samples, snowballing process of sampling is adopted. The snow ball can facilitate easier contact with relevant respondents because most people especially women are often aware of their co occupants due to bilateral relationship

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section is dedicated to presentation of various findings of the study from both interviews and questionnaires. Despite some hitches encountered in the field such as anticipation of respondents to receive some assistance, show of annoyance due to failed promises of assistance by Government and NGOs, the data collection was successful. The pathways described above greased and smoothed the entire exercise. The traditional rulers attached some guides who introduced the research team to the respondents. In some localities, announcement was made and mandating the cooperation of all and sundry.

### **Level Of Educational Attainment**

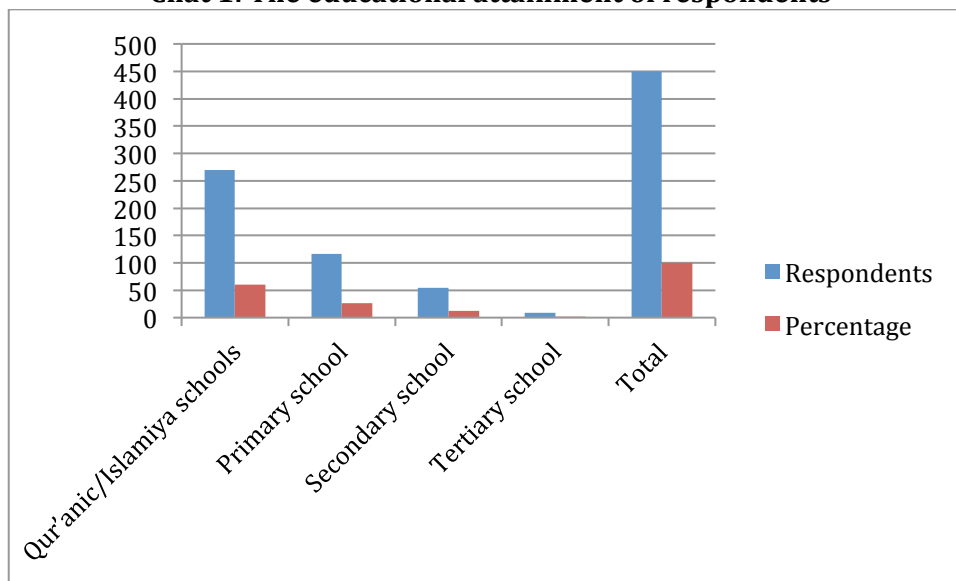
Attempt was made to look into the educational status of the respondents at least to ascertain the literacy level of the rural women. The study considers ability to read and write with comprehension in any language as literacy. Sizeable number of women attended primary education or Islamiya schools hence some can read and write either in Hausa or Arabic languages. Quite very few attended secondary level of education hence some are capable of reading and writing in English. From the table1 below it shows that educational background of the respondents are mostly primary school 26%, while Qur'anic Education with 60%, 12% passed through secondary school while 2% have higher institution certificate like H.I.S, Diploma and NCE. The implication of this educational status is an indication of the fact that 86% of the respondents are full time house wives who can only be supported by indoor means of livelihood or to live under the fate of their husband solely for living no matter how impoverished the husbands might be. In this type of population, the type of empowerment needed must small scale trading because due to low level of literacy, majority cannot manage heavy financial investment. The result is also a testimony for very poor market potentiality of the population. In other word, the people can only support lower level of goods and services. Any program meant for the people must be through the culture of the people using religious scholars, local dialects and through traditional institutions due break the conservative nature of the rural live. The type of schools attended by the respondents are presented in chat 1 below

### **Nature Of Income Of The Respondents**

The study gathered the ways by which the respondents obtain their income in the area. From the table 2 below, it shows that based on the data collected nature of income of the respondents, which comprises of erratic income of 73.5% from the occupations which are used for other expenses to improve the wellbeing of the family or contribution during ceremonies (Gudmmawa), while regular daily income earners are 24% mostly wives of civil servants and business men who give the money on daily basis for upkeep of the family. Quite fewer women fall within Monthly regular income earners with just 2.5% these are category of women engage in domestic services in homes of rich individuals who pay them on monthly basis. Table 2 below is an indication of population characterized by irregular income with high probability of uncertainty. Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the women in the area are living under the fate of uncertainty by

implication even their husbands are within the category of casual labourers who scout daily for jobs. Issues of feeding, health, and daily needs are at stake.

**Chat 1: The educational attainment of respondents**



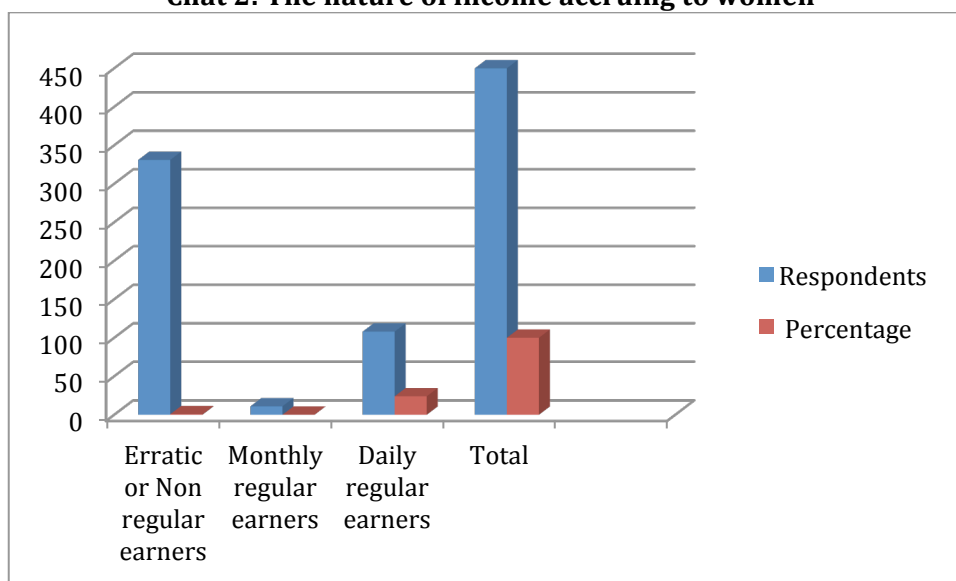
**Source: Field work 2015**

**Table 2: Nature of income earning of Respondents**

Sources of income	Respondents	Percentage
Erratic or Non regular earners	331	73.5%
Monthly regular earners	11	2.5%
Daily regular earners	108	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2015**

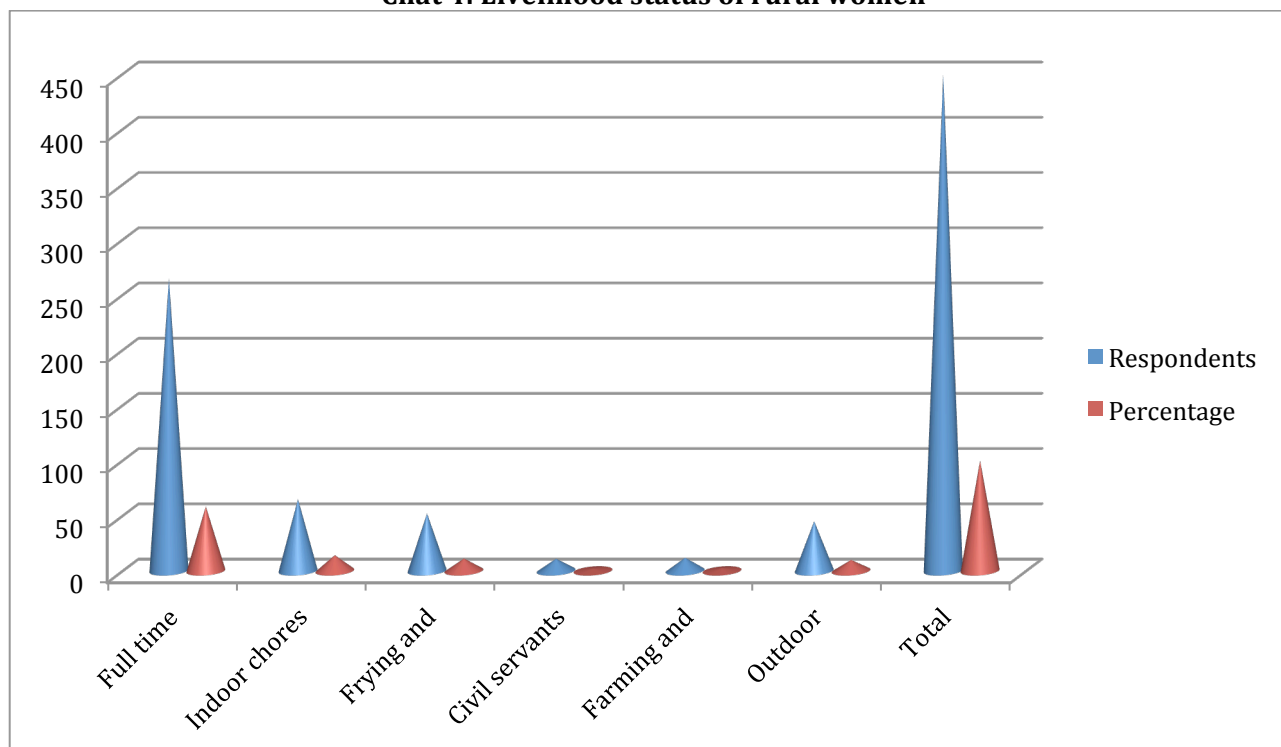
**Chat 2: The nature of income accruing to women**



### Livelihood Status Of The Respondents

The study from both interviews and questionnaires depicted an amazing scenario. The data shows that the status of the respondents are mainly full time housewife with 58.4%, some are engage in the indoor chores at rich people homes with 14.3%, while few are into domestic services like frying or cooking services 11%. This shows that majority of the women in this place are complete housewives of which all their livelihoods are from their husbands. Over half the populations of women in the rural areas are dependently supported by the income of their spouses who are or are not capable of satisfying their basic needs like food, clothing, health and a times shelter. It is an indication that over 50% of rural women in the area cannot make decision on what, when, where, why and how to buy even on the cases are exclusively theirs. This may worsen women occupations further as the potential buyers are males who may due to various reasons (including culture) choose to patronize their male counter parts. It means the only options available to females remain only the chores are males regarded too derogatory to participate and left to the women who have no other alternatives to take. Only 10% of the women are engaged in outdoor services and they are women that build age, have no husbands and no relatives to sustain their living. The outdoor activities usually constitute collection of fir woods in the bushes, dehusking and hawking of milk and butter (Nono da mai). Majority of women in this category are not happy with their situation because apart from the social stigma of being outpoured, the income is not commensurate with the daily trekking and hard laboring as well as the risks involved. Could they be supported, these category of women would choose to be camped at home no matter how meager the income. The civil servants in the area are so negligible and insignificance to create any impact. They are women at junior cadre in teaching job at primary schools and Midwiferies at village Dispensaries. Pathetically the area is just a second home to them because it marriage that brought them, they have no sense of belonging therefore share little or no regard with rural women’s plights.

**Chat 4: Livelihood status of rural women**



**Source: Field Survey, 2015**

### Women's Choice Of Livelihood Options

Most women in the study area are more contented with full time housewifery. They described earning income through other options as tedious, non-rewarding and stressful. 'If your husband realize that you are making #100 in a day, he can allow you to take of domestic problem of #150. It means your capital is declining by #50 and before you know it you already indebted' said a respondent in the area. From 250 respondent interviewed, over 200 are of the opinion that it is the responsibility of men to take of the family so they do not consider engaging on other occupation apart from husband support towards sustaining their livelihood. Even if I have money, my husband is responsible for the upkeep of the family, so I cannot trouble myself now added by another respondent. A bitter response from one that attended secondary school said 'we cook for family, cater for the children and even the husband, so all these are not enough? If they tell that they tied of taking the responsibility, let them come and cook, the women can go to farm and work, is that what you mean? About 20 women (4%) shows desire to engage in other livelihood options but not for assisting in the upkeep of their homes rather to help them in solving personal problems like contribution during ceremonies (Gudunmawa or Ajo) or buying cosmetics, Jewelries and so on. I am trading at home but for my own benefit, since he (husband) has money to marry another woman, I cannot spare a naira for his sake, a polygamous wife responded. About 22.5% responded that upkeep of their homes is collective responsibilities of all, so they are engage in other occupation to help their husbands. 'They take care of us, handling us like a precious asset and even denying themselves many things for our own sake; we need to show that we are grateful. We need them like they need us, women must assist their husbands in everything because without them we are nothing' contributed by another respondent.

An amazing finding on this regard is the response by some women (21.2%) describing their opinion that they prefer to have alternative options instead of depending on husbands. One responded said that 'one must prefer for rainy day, your husband can be sick, die or part with you! Remember you started living without him, you may also have to live one day without him so have an alternative before it is late!'

**Table4:Choice of livelihood options by women in the area**

<i>Options</i>	<i>respondents</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
<i>Full time housewife</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>44.4</i>
<i>Indoor occupation</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>22.5</i>
<i>Outdoor occupation</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>21.2%</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: Field Survey, 2015

### Demographic Variations And The Choice Of Livelihood

The theory of symbolic interaction applies overtly in this section more than in place within this paper. Women of lower age from 14 to 24 years are reluctant to show any desire or even appreciate the value for engaging in other occupation. The reason is just obvious, due to the conspicuous nature and tender age, the husbands put extra care in maintenance and upkeep of the homes and hence needing virtually nothing in life so that is why they remain fully housewife-ing the husbands. Around these ages, the number or size of the family is manageable hence the expenses are within the range a husband can satisfactorily discharge. Women at those ages are treated so goldly that 87% of the husbands refused giving approval for interview with their wives. It was when some realizes that the interview was holding in their presence before the allowed the wives to attain and respond to any questions. At some



instances, a female research Assistant was used in interviewing the women especially in the Fulani areas like Yanoko, Gajida and Dindere. Tender aged ladies regarded some occupations as derogatory, show down or even a humiliation of personality. Cultural seasoning butter made from Shea nut (Daddawa) is one of the hated options among ladies. On their preferences, the New arrivals like light and fassionable indoor occupations like knitting, weaving or selling snacks to children who are frequently with them especially then new Brides. Occupations perform by medium-age class women who are within 25 to 46 ranges from selling of cooked food (like Rice and Beans) at home, Frying of Bean's cake (Kosai and Awara) or selling of cooking materials like salt, sugar, fresh vegetables etc. The mothers of higher ages who according this study are mostly widows aging 47 years above are easy-goers who are ready to take available rather than the desirable. Some are making Pap (Koko), Gruel (Kunu), Local Bread (Gurasa) and so on. Women of 60 years and above do partake activities like Ground nut cake and oil (Kuli da mai) and Shea butter seasoning (daddawa). Some even trek outdoors to hawk and sell their materials by themselves especially if they don't have a girl to assist them in the sale.

**Table 5 Variation of opinion on livelihood option**

Age classes	Types of option	Respondents	Percentages
14 - 24	Light and fassionable	35	14%
25 - 35	Knitting and weaving	64	25.6%
36 - 46	Cook food	76	30.4%
47 - above	Available/affordable	75	30%

### **Pilot Or Parallel Study**

It is not out of place to seek the indulgence of the reader that it was after some major findings were achieved, when the research concluded to involve some husbands in the study to serve as triangulation or something of that nature. About 50 husbands were interviewed especially those that were reluctant to allow their wives for interview. Interestingly, 60% are of the opinion that they want shoulder the responsibilities of their houses. Major described assistance of wife for home upkeep as a slap on their face. Only stupid husband can live his wife to buy the needed items at home, in fact that person is not a man and cannot control the house said one respondent. On the issue of allowing women to go for outdoor occupations many men declined negatively emphasizing the religious injunction on Purdah (seclusion) of married women. Exceptional instances were obtained at Janguza where 6 respondents agree to allow their wives to work out side homes. On close observation, the study learnt that the habit may not be unconnected to the effect of neighbourhood with a Military Barrack at Janguza who are culturally heterogeneous and their wives are hardly staying without outdoor occupations.

### **SUMMARY**

The study is on the evaluation of occupations that women partake in their daily transactions. Both interviews and questionnaire were used in capturing various responses from the affected women in Tofa LGA of Kano state. There are many livelihood options in the rural area but due to conservative nature of rural areas and the poverty that get rooted in the area, the options are limited. The study also x-rayed the effect of age on the role of women in the society as well the application of a theory in order to explain human behaviour and relationship, and attempted a pilot study and captured males' opinion.

## CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded with emphases that poverty and cultural restrictions stare women livelihood options in rural areas especially Tofa LGA. The environment had conditioned the women to adopt and adapt themselves to live within culture-friendly occupations even if the options are not profitable

Age affects women socio-economic roles and responsibilities in the rural environment. Occupations are being patronized by women based on their age cadre due to cultural and personal choices and preferences in the rural domain.

Western education at rural environment is at infancy because majority of rural women only attend primary schools if at all, the study was not able to sight an indigenous women graduate that is a female with an academic degree.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The study recommend on a strong term that Government should intensify effort toward provision of education to the rural women as well as enlightenment campaign should be vigorously given priority so that life of the poor rural women and the entire families become improve and meaningful
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like WOFAN and its allied need to come to the aid of rural women in areas of education and as well as training them in hand crafts, small scale enterprises and so on. This can alleviate the suffering of many families especially women who are the natural care-giver to children and even to their husbands.
- The males need to relax some of the restrictions and allow their girls child to attend schools as well allow them partake in gainful business both indoors and beyond. Women successes are family success hence women lots need to be nurtured and uplifted so that happy families are cultured for better living.
- Women on their sides should try to understand their capabilities, potentialities and resourcefulness so that hard work, dedication and industry are incorporated in their life styles to face the challenges of the environment and break all barriers that impede development of rural life.

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