



Vol. 24, No. 2, 2025

DOI: 10.14746/jpg.2025.24.2.9

Lawal A. Bakare

Osun State University (Nigeria)

ORCID: 0000-0001-7407-3681

Marvellous Adetola Oyekan

Osun State University (Nigeria)

Capabilities, Contributions, and Constraints: A Gendered Analysis of Women's Role in Fostering Local Development in Oyo State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT. This study offered a comprehensive examination of women's socioeconomic contributions to local development in three strategically selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Oyo State, Nigeria. Grounded in Gender and Development (GAD) theory and Feminist Political Economy, the research interrogated women's perceptions, participation, and the structural constraints shaping their developmental roles. Utilizing a mixed-methods design, quantitative data from 300 respondents and qualitative insights from 90 in-depth interviews revealed a paradoxical reality: women are central actors in agriculture, commerce, and community service, yet remain institutionally invisible and culturally marginalized. Descriptive and inferential analyses underscored that cultural beliefs are the strongest negative predictors of women's leadership and economic agency, while literacy and awareness exert only marginal influence. Interview findings revealed that despite significant contributions to household welfare and informal economies, women face structural exclusion from decision-making and development programmes due to entrenched patriarchal norms. Notably, 88.9% of respondents reported that traditional customs inhibit leadership access, while 81% identified awareness gaps in government or NGO support. The study concluded that development efforts will remain fragmented unless policy, cultural, and institutional barriers are jointly addressed through gender-responsive budgeting, inclusive governance, and community-led reorientation. These findings have implications for development planning, gender policy reform, and grassroots economic empowerment initiatives.

KEYWORDS: participation, awareness, empowerment, barriers, socioeconomic

Introduction

In contemporary development discourse, the role of women in local and national development has garnered increasing scholarly and policy

attention. This is based on the growing recognition that sustainable and inclusive development cannot be attained without the active engagement and empowerment of women, particularly at the grassroots level, where they constitute a significant portion of the labor force and social fabric (UN Women, 2020; World Bank, 2022). The significance of women in driving socioeconomic development at both national and local levels has gained considerable recognition in contemporary development discourse. Globally, women play critical roles in enhancing household welfare, contributing to economic productivity, and fostering community development. In Nigeria, women constitute nearly half of the population and are actively involved in various economic activities, including agriculture, petty trading, education, and informal sector entrepreneurship (NBS, 2021).

In an ideal socioeconomic environment, women are active agents of development, participating equally in economic activities, influencing decision-making, and benefiting equitably from national and community development outcomes. However, in many parts of Nigeria, including Oyo State, the reality diverges significantly from this ideal. In the selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu, women play vital roles in agriculture, small-scale trading, and informal labour, yet their contributions remain underreported. Cultural norms, low literacy levels, and gendered power structures continue to limit women's access to land, credit, formal employment, and political participation. Over 60% of women in these LGAs work in the informal sector, where income security, legal protection, and access to development resources are minimal.

The socioeconomic landscape of Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu local governments areas reflects broader national trends. Akinyele, a predominantly agrarian local government area, relies on women for 70% of cassava and maize cultivation, yet they lack access to modern farming technologies or cooperative funding (FAO, 2021). In Lagelu, a hub for small-scale commerce, women constitute 80% of marketplace traders but face exclusion from formal credit systems due to collateral requirements (Ogunleye et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Ido's peri-urban communities grapple with urbanisation pressures, where women's informal sector earnings are vital yet unstable (Adeniran, 2021). These dynamics underscore the paradox of women's visible economic roles juxtaposed with systemic disempowerment.

A woman's capacity to generate income and maintain authority increases the likelihood that she will invest in quality education and healthcare for her children, so improving the overall living conditions of her family. Prior studies on women's livelihoods in rural Nigeria have demonstrat-

ed that rural women participate in several income-generating activities, including agriculture, fishing, small-scale trading, handicraft production, and entrepreneurship, among others (Ukwueze, 2022). However, there exists a gap regarding the extent and efficacy of those activities in fostering positive transformation in the socio-economic status of their communities (Onyima, 2024).

Despite the critical importance of women's roles in local economies, there is a noticeable lack of localised, empirical research that examines their contributions, constraints, and the effectiveness of empowerment programmes in these specific LGAs. This knowledge gap hinders the development of targeted, evidence-based strategies for women's inclusion in development. The broad objective of this study is to examine women and their socioeconomic development in selected Local Government Areas of Oyo State. The specific objectives are to examine women's perceptions of socioeconomic development in the study areas; determine the extent of women socioeconomic contributions in the study areas; and determine the factors influencing the socioeconomic roles of women in the study areas.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Socioeconomic Development

Socioeconomic development is a broad and multidimensional concept that encompasses both economic growth and improvements in social well-being. It refers to the process by which individuals and communities experience rising standards of living, increased access to resources, and enhanced opportunities for personal and collective advancement. Unlike economic development, which primarily focuses on measurable indicators such as income levels and GDP growth, socioeconomic development integrates social indicators such as education, healthcare, equity, and gender inclusion (World Bank, 2023).

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022), socioeconomic development involves expanding people's choices and improving their quality of life through access to knowledge, better health, and a decent standard of living. This human-centered approach emphasizes the development of human capital, which includes education, skills, and health-factors that are crucial for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth.

In recent years, scholars and development practitioners have increasingly recognised that economic growth alone does not automatically translate to improved living conditions for all. For development to be meaningful and sustainable, it must address structural inequalities, especially those based on gender, class, and geography (UN Women, 2022). Socioeconomic development thus focuses on reducing poverty, promoting equity, and ensuring that the benefits of growth are widely shared.

Women's Socioeconomic Roles

Women's socioeconomic development remains a critical yet under-explored issue in Nigeria, particularly in rural Local Government Areas (LGAs). Globally, socioeconomic development encompasses improvements in income, education, health, and political participation. For women, however, patriarchal norms often limit access to these opportunities (Aderinto, 2019). In Nigeria, cultural practices such as early marriage and the gendered division of labour restrict women's economic agency (Nkechi et al., 2020). For instance, rural women in Southwest Nigeria, including Akinyele LGA, face systemic exclusion from land ownership, which stifles agricultural productivity- a key economic sector (Adegbite & Alabi, 2020). Feminist theorists argue that such structural inequities perpetuate gender disparities, relegating women to informal and undervalued roles (Momsen, 2010). Conversely, Human Capital Theory posits that investments in women's education and healthcare yield long-term economic returns.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding women's socioeconomic development in the context of local governance requires a multidimensional theoretical lens—one that captures structural inequality, agency, and the institutional context in which gender roles are negotiated and contested. To this end, this study draws upon two interrelated but analytically distinct theoretical perspectives: Gender and Development (GAD) Theory, and Feminist Political Economy, as the basis for analysing the socioeconomic role of women in the study area.

Gender and Development (GAD) Theory

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged in the 1980s as a response to the limitations of the Women in Development (WID)

framework. While WID emphasized integrating women into development processes, GAD critically shifts attention to the social relations of gender—i.e., the power structures that underpin the unequal positioning of men and women in society (Razavi & Miller, 1995; March et al., 1999). GAD theory posits that development planning must not merely include women as beneficiaries, but must fundamentally address the patriarchal structures that produce gender inequality.

In the context of this study, GAD theory is highly relevant as it explains the systemic exclusion of women from decision-making processes, control of economic resources, and formal leadership in the selected LGAs. As Cornwall and Rivas (2015) assert, gendered power is deeply embedded in both formal institutions (laws, policies) and informal institutions (cultural norms, household dynamics). The theory offers tools for analyzing how social norms in Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu LGAs mediate women's access to land, education, and leadership opportunities, even when formal development programs exist.

Furthermore, GAD's emphasis on intersectionality—i.e., the interlocking effects of gender, class, marital status, and education—provides a grounded framework for analyzing how rural and peri-urban women in Oyo State experience marginalization differently. As studies by Nwankwo and Okafor (2018) and Oladeji and Oladeji (2022) show, women's development opportunities are shaped not only by their sex but by their social positioning within kinship systems and local governance structures.

Feminist Political Economy

Feminist Political Economy (FPE) provides a critical extension of GAD by situating women's roles in development within the broader framework of production, reproduction, and power in capitalist and post-colonial economies (Elson, 1999; Bakker & Gill, 2003). It interrogates how state policies, labor market structures, and local institutions disproportionately assign reproductive and care responsibilities to women, often rendering their economic contributions invisible or undervalued.

This theory is particularly relevant to the present study given that women in the LGAs under study play significant roles in agriculture, informal trade, and caregiving—all of which are critical to local economies but systematically excluded from formal development indices and political recognition. As Benería et al. (2016) argue, the invisibility of women's informal labor is a political choice sustained by development models that

prioritize growth over equity. FPE thus allows for a nuanced interrogation of how gendered labor divisions—compounded by policy neglect—affect women’s socioeconomic agency at the grassroots.

By applying this framework, the study not only identifies the barriers to women’s empowerment but also critically assesses how local governance structures contribute to the reproduction of economic subordination through budgetary decisions, land allocation, and public service delivery. This perspective also facilitates the critique of “instrumentalist” approaches to women’s empowerment, which treat women’s participation as a means to efficiency rather than as a question of justice.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on women and socioeconomic development in Nigeria, especially at the grassroots level, have consistently shown the critical role that women play in community development, poverty alleviation, and economic resilience. In rural and peri-urban like Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu LGAs in Oyo State, women are heavily involved in agricultural production, petty trading, and small-scale enterprises. These activities form the backbone of local economies but are often under-recognised and poorly supported by formal institutions. A study by Akinyemi and Fawole (2018) in South-Western Nigeria found that women’s participation in formal sector face systemic barriers such as lack of access to capital, education, and land ownership.

Empirical evidence also suggests that cultural and institutional constraints continue to limit women’s development. According to UN Women (2021), gender inequality in decision-making and limited access to formal education disproportionately affect women’s ability to engage in high-value economic activities. These patterns are evident in Oyo State, where traditional norms often restrict women’s mobility and access to resources necessary for development.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have played a pivotal role in promoting women’s socioeconomic development in Nigeria, particularly in underserved and semi-urban areas such as Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Oyo State. These organisations complement government efforts by implementing grassroots-focused programmes aimed at enhancing women’s access to education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and leadership opportunities.

According to Akinyemi and Fawole (2018), NGOs in Southwestern Nigeria have significantly contributed to empowering women by providing

access to microcredit, vocational training, and reproductive health services. In Oyo State, several NGOs have been instrumental in improving the welfare of rural women, especially through capacity-building programmes and advocacy for gender rights. These efforts are crucial in LGAs like Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu, where many women are involved in informal economic activities and face systemic barriers such as limited access to finance, education, and healthcare services.

One notable intervention is the work of the Center for Women's Health and Information (CEWHIN), which has been active in Oyo State since the early 2000s but significantly scaled its operations post-2018. The organization focuses on promoting women's health and economic empowerment through education and advocacy. In a 2020 report, CEWHIN highlighted its collaboration with local health authorities in Akinyele LGA to improve maternal health and increase women's awareness of reproductive rights (CEWHIN, 2020). These interventions have reportedly contributed to a decline in preventable maternal deaths and an increase in the number of women accessing antenatal care.

Another significant NGO, Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), has been involved in training women in agribusiness and small-scale enterprises in Ido and Lagelu LGAs. As reported by WOCON (2019), the organization implemented a project funded by international donors to provide rural women with climate-resilient farming techniques and access to improved seedlings. This initiative not only increased agricultural productivity but also enhanced food security and income generation among female-headed households.

In 2021, the Ajoke Ayisat Afolabi Foundation (AAAF) launched a women's economic advancement initiative in selected LGAs of Oyo State, including Akinyele and Ido. The program provided over 500 women with interest-free loans, business mentorship, and digital skills training (AAAF, 2021). These forms of support are particularly critical in a post-COVID-19 context, where women in the informal sector have faced disproportionate economic setbacks (UN Women, 2021).

Furthermore, international NGOs like ActionAid Nigeria have contributed to enhancing gender equity through the "Women's Voice and Leadership" project implemented in Oyo State since 2019. This project focuses on strengthening local women's rights organisations and improving their capacity to influence policies and decision-making processes at the community level (ActionAid Nigeria, 2020). In Lagelu LGA, ActionAid facilitated community dialogues and leadership training for women, which

reportedly resulted in increased female participation in local governance structures.

Despite these achievements, scholars such as Oladipo and Adeleke (2022) argue that the impact of NGOs is sometimes limited by resource constraints, poor coordination with local governments, and cultural resistance to gender equality. They recommend integrated approaches that involve traditional leaders, community-based organisations, and religious institutions to enhance the sustainability of NGO interventions.

Gap in Literature Review

Although numerous studies have addressed women's roles in socioeconomic development, significant gaps remain, particularly in the Nigerian context and more specifically at the grassroots level. Much of the available literature has focused on national or urban-level analyses, with limited attention to rural and semi-urban communities such as Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Oyo State. This has created a contextual gap, where the lived experiences and contributions of rural women remain underexplored (Olanrewaju et al., 2019).

Furthermore, while studies such as Arowolo and Aluko (2012) have examined the socioeconomic challenges women face in Nigeria, they often generalize findings without disaggregating data by community, educational level, or marital status. This limits the understanding of how intersecting variables influence women's participation in development. There is also a methodology gap, as many existing studies rely heavily on quantitative data, which, while useful, may not capture the nuanced perspectives and cultural dynamics that shape women's roles in rural settings (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2012).

Another gap lies in the limited examination of informal contributions by women to community and household development. Most literature emphasizes formal employment or political participation, often overlooking informal economic activities such as petty trading, subsistence farming, and unpaid caregiving, which are prevalent among rural women (UN Women, 2020). These roles, although critical to family and community well-being, are rarely quantified or acknowledged in development discourse.

In addition, there is insufficient literature evaluating the effectiveness of existing government and non-governmental programs targeting women's empowerment at the LGA level. While national such as the National Gender Policy exist, their implementation and impact at the local level re-

main poorly documented (Amadi & Abdullah, 2021). This limits the ability of policymakers and stakeholders to design context-specific interventions that address the actual needs of rural women.

Finally, the role of cultural and traditional institutions in shaping women's socioeconomic engagement is often mentioned but not critically analyzed. The persistent influence of patriarchal norms and traditional leadership structures continues to hinder women's access to land, leadership, and economic resources, yet there is limited empirical research that interrogates these systems in rural Nigerian communities (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2012).

Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by focusing on local contexts, employing a mixed-methods approach, and capturing both formal and informal aspects of women's socioeconomic contributions in Oyo State.

Methodology

This study focuses on Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Oyo State, selected for their diverse socioeconomic and cultural characteristics. Located within the Ibadan region, these LGAs reflect a mix of rural and peri-urban settings, making them ideal for exploring women's roles in socioeconomic development. The study adopts a descriptive survey research design, which allows for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data to describe, analyse, and interpret the role of women in socioeconomic development within Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu local government areas. The design is appropriate as it facilitates the exploration of existing conditions, relationships, and practices among the target population.

The study adopted both primary and secondary sources of data in order to gather valid information for the study. In this study, the instruments used for the purpose of data collection are the structured questionnaires (close- and open-ended items) and key informant interviews (with community leaders, women leaders, and local government officials).

The population of the study comprises all women aged 18 and above residing in Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu local government areas who are engaged in various socio-economic environments. The estimated population of women in Ido LGA is 152,500; Akinyele LGA 302,700 and Lagelu LGA 211,700 (www.citypopulation.de). These include women in formal employment, informal trade, agriculture, service provision, and homemakers

involved in community-based development. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, three LGAs were selected purposively to reflect different socio-economic environment. In the second stage, three communities were randomly selected, making a total of nine communities. In the third stage, within each community, women were stratified into four categories: market women/traders, female farmers, women in formal employment (teachers, nurses), youth and women in vocational training or unemployed. At the last stage, respondents from each stratum were selected using proportionate random sampling, ensuring representation across age, education, and marital status groups.

Based on this approach, a total of 300 women were selected as the sample size for questionnaire administration while a total of 9 respondents, 3 from each LGAs were selected for qualitative in-depth interviews. The data were analysed using both descriptive statistics and content analysis.

Findings

The demographic data of the respondents provide crucial insights into the profile of women participating in socioeconomic development within Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu LGAs of Oyo State. According to Table 1, the age distribution reveals a relatively balanced representation across age groups. Women aged 36–45 form the largest group, accounting for 28.33%, followed closely by those aged 26–35 (22.67%) and 46–55 (22.00%). The least represented group is those aged 56 and above (11.67%), suggesting that middle-aged women are more engaged in or accessible for development discourse.

In term of marital status, most respondents are married (45.00%), followed by singles (26.67%), divorced (16.00%), and widows (12.33%). This shows that married women dominate the study population, which may reflect their role as household managers and economic contributors.

The education level of respondents indicates a significant portion had at least secondary education (39.33%), while 26.67% had no formal education. A smaller proportion had tertiary education (13.00%), implying that although education has reached many women, a considerable number still lack formal schooling, which may affect their economic opportunities and civic participation.

Occupationally, the majority are farmers (29.67%), followed by artisans (23.33%) and traders (20.33%). Civil servants (13.67%) and the

unemployed (13.00%) constitute the smallest groups. This suggests that women in rural and semi-urban areas are primarily engaged in informal economic activities.

Lastly, each LGA- Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu- contributed equally to the sample, with 100 respondents each. This balanced distribution ensures fair representation and comparability across the study locations. Overall, the demographic data suggest that interventions targeting women in these LGAs must be tailored to address the needs of middle-aged, married, and informally employed women with limited formal education.

Table 1. The Distribution of the demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic characteristics of the respondents		F	(%)
Age	18-25	46	15.33
	26-35	68	22.67
	36-45	85	28.33
	46-55	66	22.00
	56 - above	35	11.67
	Total	300	100
Marital status	Single	80	26.67
	Married	135	45.00
	Divorced	48	16.00
	Widowed	37	12.33
	Total	300	100
Educational level	No formal education	80	26.67
	Primary education	63	21.00
	Secondary education	118	39.33
	Tertiary education	39	13.00
	Total	300	100
Occupation	Trader	61	20.33
	Artisan	70	23.33
	Farmer	89	29.67
	Civil servant	41	13.67
	Unemployed	39	13.00
	Total	300	100

Source: Survey (2025)

Women's Perception of Socioeconomic Development

The data presented in Table 2 highlight the perceptions of women regarding their roles and inclusion in socioeconomic development within Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu Local Government Areas (LAGs) of Oyo State. The findings reveal varying levels of agreement with key statements related to women's involvement, access, and empowerment in community development processes.

The first item, "Women play a key role in the development of my community", yielded a mean score of 2.6, which falls below the acceptance threshold of 3.0, indicating that the statement was rejected by the respondents. Although 48 respondents agreed and 23 (7.67%) strongly agreed, a significant number 102 (34%) remained undecided. This ambivalence may be attributed to cultural constructs that traditionally downplay women's contributions to societal advancement. According to Okeke-Ihejirika (2012), patriarchal norms in Nigeria often obscure women's roles, despite their substantial involvement in informal economies and community welfare.

The strongest agreement was recorded for the statement "socioeconomic development should include more women's participation," with a remarkably high mean of 4.4. This exceeds the threshold for high acceptance, reflecting a strong consensus among respondents on the need for inclusive development practices. A total of 184 (61.33%) respondents strongly agreed, while 74 (24.67%) agreed. This result is consistent with global advocacy for gender-inclusive development emphasised by UN Women (2020), which states that sustainable development cannot be achieved without the active participation of women in economic, social, and political spheres.

On the issue of access to education, the item "Development in my area has improved women's access to education" received a mean score of 2.7, which is below the cutoff point and therefore rejected. While 26 (8.67%) strongly agreed and 42 (14%) agreed and observed some improvements, 105 (35%) respondents were either neutral and 56 (18.67%) disagreed. The persistent education gap, especially in rural areas, is consistent with the findings of Olanrewaju et al. (2019), who highlighted that many women in southwestern Nigeria still face barriers to education due to poverty, early marriage, and entrenched cultural beliefs.

The statement "Government policies are effective in empowering women" received a mean score of 2.3, indicating a clear rejection. Although

27 respondents strongly agreed, a greater proportion of 97 (32.33%) disagreed, and 87 (29%) strongly disagreed. This implies that existing policies may not be adequately implemented or accessible to women, especially at the grassroots level (Amadi & Abdullah, 2021).

Lastly, the statement "Women are involved in decision-making processes in my community" had the lowest mean score of 2.1, again resulting in rejection. This suggests a widespread perception that women are largely excluded from leadership and governance roles. The findings align with Arowolo and Aluko (2012), who assert that social norms in many Nigerian communities continue to marginalise women in public decision-making structures.

Table 2. Women's perception of socioeconomic development

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
Women play a key role in the development of my community	23 (7.6)	48	102 (34)	78 (26.0)	49 (16.3)	2.6
Socioeconomic development should include more women participation	184 (61.3)	74 (24.6)	20 (6.7)	14 (4.7)	8 (2.6)	4.4
Development in my area has improved women's access to education	26 (8.6)	42 (14)	105 (35)	56 (18.6)	71 (23.7)	2.7
Government policies have effectively supported women's empowerment	27	49 (16.3)	40 (13.3)	97 (32.3)	87 (29)	2.3
Women are involved in decision-making processes in my community	20 (6.7)	43 (14.3)	89 (29.7)	88 (29.3)	60 (20)	2.1

Source: Survey (2025)

The Extent of Women's Socioeconomic Contributions in Selected LGAs

The data in Table 3 reveal insights into the extent of women's socioeconomic contributions in the selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Ido, Akinyele, and Lagelu in Oyo State. The statement "I contribute financially to my household" recorded a mean score of 2.7, which, although below the cutoff, indicates a fair level of agreement. A total of 35 (11.67%) respondents strongly agreed and 30 (10%) respondents agreed, which affirmed this statement, suggesting that many women are economically active, es-

pecially in informal sectors. This aligns with the findings of UN Women (2020), which report that women in sub-Saharan Africa are significant contributors to household income, despite limited formal employment opportunities.

For the statement “I participate actively in community development activities,” the mean score was 2.5, which meets the average but does not reach the acceptance threshold of 3.0 while 28 (9.33%) strongly agreed and 33 (11%) agreed, a considerable number of 98 (32.67%) were undecided respondents, show that participation is inconsistent or dependent on context. This reflects the observation by Olanrewaju et al. (2019) that women’s involvement in community projects is often hindered by domestic responsibilities and lack of institutional support.

The lowest level of agreement was observed in the statement “I own or manage a business/farm,” with a mean score of 2.3. This suggests that a majority of women do not own or manage economic ventures, potentially due to barriers such as lack of capital, land ownership rights, or training (Amadi & Abdullah, 2021). Despite growing awareness of women’s entrepreneurship, structural constraints continue to limit participation in productive enterprise.

The response to “I train or support other women in income-generating activities” yielded a mean of 2.5, indicating marginal support. While 65 (21.67%) respondents agreed to some extent, the high number of undecided and negative responses suggests limited peer support networks among women. This is consistent with the findings of Okeke-Ihejirika (2012), who notes that social capital among rural women remains underutilised due to competition and traditional roles.

Finally, “My opinions are considered in family or communal economic decisions” had the lowest mean of 2.2, indicating that women feel largely excluded from economic decision-making processes. This is a critical concern, as it reinforces gender inequality and disempowerment at both household and community levels (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012).

Table 3. Extent of women’s socioeconomic contributions

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
I contribute financially to my household	35 (11.6)	30 (10)	71 (23.7)	86 (28.7)	78 (26.0)	2.7
I participate actively in community development activities	28 (9.3)	33 (11)	98 (32.6)	78 (26.0)	63 (21.0)	2.5

I own or manage a business/ farm	56 (18.7)	52 (17.3)	78 (26.0)	89 (29.6)	23 (7.7)	2.3
I train or support other women income-generating activities	65 (21.6)	12 (4.0)	89 (29.6)	78 (26.0)	45 (15)	2.5
My opinions are considered in family or communal economic decisions	18 (6.0)	28 (9.3)	78 (26.0)	65 (21.7)	89 (29.6)	2.2

Source: Survey (2025)

Factors Influencing Women's Socioeconomic Roles?

The findings in Table 4 show the factors influencing women's socioeconomic roles in the study area. The data underscore the multidimensional constraints that affect women's participation in socioeconomic development in selected LGAs of Oyo State—constraints that are rooted not only in informational deficits and educational limitations but also in deeply entrenched cultural norms.

Awareness Deficits and Developmental Disempowerment

The items under the *awareness* category reveal significant informational and cognitive gaps. For instance, the statement “I am aware of government programmes supporting women” scored a low mean of 2.2, with over 53% of respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Similarly, the awareness of land rights (Mean = 2.4) and access to vocational training (Mean = 2.3) also fell well below the neutral threshold of 3.0. These findings reflect a systemic communication breakdown between government agencies and grassroots women, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas.

This aligns with the findings of Olanrewaju et al. (2019) and UNDP (2022), which suggest that when state programs are not localized, linguistically accessible, or culturally tailored, women are often excluded by default—even when such programs nominally exist. As Kabeer (2016) notes, access to information is a foundational layer of empowerment, without which rights cannot be claimed, and resources cannot be navigated.

Literacy as a Double-Edged Sword

Despite some progress in literacy levels, the data shows that functional literacy remains limited. For example, while 38.3% agree or strongly agree

that they can read and write fluently, the item only recorded a mean score of 2.4. The ability to use literacy to manage income-generating activities scored a slightly higher 2.5, suggesting that even where basic literacy exists, it does not consistently translate into economic utility or empowerment.

Furthermore, the item “I can access and understand financial records or forms” yielded a mean of 2.4, implying a widespread deficiency in financial literacy, which is essential for microenterprise growth, formal sector engagement, and creditworthiness. This corroborates the position of UNESCO (2021) and World Bank (2022) that literacy interventions in development must move beyond mere reading and writing to incorporate contextual financial and civic competencies, particularly for marginalized women in the Global South.

Cultural Constraints: The Most Pervasive Barrier

Cultural barriers, more than informational or educational factors, were found to be the most powerful inhibitors of women’s socioeconomic roles in the study areas. The item “Cultural beliefs in my community limit women’s roles in leadership” scored a staggering mean score of 4.4 -the highest in the entire data set—indicating near-universal agreement that cultural gatekeeping and patriarchal values actively suppress women’s leadership potential. Similarly, the statement “Traditional norms discourage women from speaking in public meetings” scored a high 4.1, further reinforcing the claim that women are silenced or marginalized in communal discourse.

This finding is consistent with Nussbaum’s (2011) capabilities approach, which emphasizes that individual agency is often bounded by the “social and institutional arrangements” that condition freedom and opportunity. It also aligns with Cornwall and Rivas (2015), who argue that even where legal or formal equality exists, *normative structures* embedded in local cultures can sustain gendered exclusions, rendering policy interventions ineffective.

The mean score of 3.1 for “Women are discouraged from owning land or property” is equally critical. Land ownership is not only a marker of economic security but also a predictor of political voice and legal recognition in many African communities (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2007). The data thus suggests that *women’s lack of land rights is not just a legal failure but a cultural reality* in the study areas, severely limiting their ability to engage in productive enterprises or claim community leadership.

The data in Table 4 offer a layered view of the institutional and social ecosystem that shapes women's socioeconomic realities. While lack of awareness and low literacy create immediate functional barriers, it is the deeper cultural architecture—manifesting as normative control over speech, leadership, and land—that constitutes the most intractable barrier to women's empowerment in these LGAs.

These findings reinforce the theoretical position that development is not merely about service delivery or economic access, but about challenging hegemonic structures of power (Sen, 1999; Rao & Kelleher, 2005). Any intervention strategy must therefore combine structural reforms (policy change, land rights enforcement, education) with normative re-orientation, including grassroots gender dialogues, cultural negotiation with traditional leaders, and gender-sensitive civic education.

Table 4. Factors influencing women's socioeconomic roles

Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
Awareness	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	
I am aware of government programmes supporting women	22 (7.3)	62 (20.6)	56 (18.7)	86 (28.6)	74 (24.7)	2.2
I know my rights to own land and property	26 (8.7)	71 (23.7)	98 (32.7)	62 (20.7)	43 (14.3)	2.4
I have access to information about business or vocational training	18 (6.0)	76 (25.3)	62 (20.7)	78 (26.0)	66 (22.0)	2.3
Literacy	SA	A	U	D	SD	
I can read and write in English or Yoruba fluently	31 (10.3)	84 (28.0)	54 (18.0)	88 (29.3)	43 (14.3)	2.4
My literacy level helps me manage my business or income activities	32 (10.6)	98 (32.)	43 (14.3)	68 (22.7)	59 (19.7)	2.5
I can access and understand financial records or forms	29 (9.7)	89 (29.7)	43 (14.3)	78 (26.0)	61 (20.3)	2.4
Cultural						
Cultural beliefs in my community limit women's roles in leadership	98 (32.7)	102 (34.0)	32 (10.7)	35 (11.7)	33 (11.0)	4.4
Women are discouraged from owning land or property	76 (25.3)	79 (26.3)	45 (15.0)	68 (22.7)	32 (10.7)	3.1
Traditional norms discourage women from speaking in public meetings	69 (23.0)	122 (40.6)	42 (14.0)	46 (15.3)	21 (7.0)	4.1

Source: Survey (2025)

Interview Responses on Women's Roles in Socioeconomic Development

The participants represented diverse socioeconomic categories, including market traders, teachers, cooperative leaders, local entrepreneurs, and community health workers. Their ages ranged between 25 and 60 years, and educational backgrounds varied from primary education to tertiary qualifications. This diversity provided a broad perspective on women's lived experiences and perceptions of their socioeconomic roles within the context of local development.

Women's Perception of Their Socioeconomic Roles

The interviewees were first required to show their understanding of socioeconomic development. In response to this, participants generally understood socioeconomic development as "improvements in living standards, education, healthcare, and job opportunities" (F/Ido/2025).

Additionally, others conceptualized it as "to tangible infrastructure such as schools, roads, markets, and electricity, reflecting their lived experiences" (F/Lagelu/2025).

The above views about socioeconomic development align with the World Bank's (2020) view of development as multidimensional, encompassing both economic growth and human capital advancement. Women in rural LGAs often equate development with access to basic amenities that facilitate daily survival and economic activity. For instance, roads are crucial for transporting goods, while education is essential for mobility and empowerment. As UN Women (2020) emphasized, development must be inclusive to be sustainable, particularly in terms of gender access to resources and opportunities. The responses indicate that while women understand development in practical terms, their perception is grounded in everyday realities rather than abstract policy. Their insights suggest that local development initiatives should prioritize basic infrastructure and services to meet the needs of grassroots women.

A central theme emerging from the interviews was that women perceive themselves as *indispensable actors* in community and household development. Most participants articulated a sense of *collective responsibility* toward both family welfare and community progress. As one respondent from Ido LGA stated: "Women are the backbone of our community. We run the homes, support our husbands, and still engage in trading or teaching to sustain the family" (F/Ido/2025).

This perception aligns with findings from Akinola (2020) and Oladejo and Olowu (2022), who observed that women in Southwestern Nigeria see economic activity not merely as income generation but as an extension of their social and nurturing roles. The interviews revealed that participants conceptualized “development” not only in terms of infrastructure or income but also as improved education, health, and collective well-being.

Another respondent from Lagelu, a cooperative leader, noted: “We contribute by helping other women start businesses, forming groups to support ourselves, and training young girls to avoid early marriage” (F/Lagelu/2025).

This reflects a gendered notion of development as *communal and inclusive*, emphasizing social capital and intergenerational empowerment. The data underscore women’s awareness of their role as agents of socio-economic transformation despite existing structural inequalities. However, some interviewees acknowledged that their contributions are often *undervalued* or underexplored in local policy frameworks, echoing the argument by Oduro and Owusu (2021) that women’s informal economic roles are frequently overlooked in development planning.

Extent of Women’s Socioeconomic Contributions

Findings from the interviews revealed that women contribute substantially to both household and community economies, though their efforts remain largely unrecorded in formal statistics. Across the three LGAs, women reported involvement in diverse activities such as small-scale trading, agro-processing, education, and microfinance cooperatives. One entrepreneur from Akinyele LGA described her work as follows: “Through my cassava processing business, I employ young girls and even some men. We produce gari and sell to other communities, which helps everyone” (F/Akinyele/2025).

Such accounts demonstrate women’s multifaceted economic participation that transcends domestic confines. The analysis further indicates that women’s contributions extend beyond economic outputs—they play vital roles in *social infrastructure development*, such as funding community schools and health projects through cooperative societies.

Another respondent, a teacher in Lagelu LGA, shared: “We form women groups that donate to community projects and even help the local government when they need volunteers for awareness campaigns” (F/Lagelu/2025).

This indicates that women's socioeconomic engagement operates within both formal and informal networks, fostering social cohesion and grassroots participation in governance. The findings corroborate Eze and Nwankwo (2021), who highlighted that women's participation in local co-operative and market associations strengthens community resilience and enhances developmental outcomes.

However, the analysis also revealed *regional and occupational disparities* in the extent of women's contributions. According to Ibrahim and Ojo (2021), women in urban LGAs, such as Ibadan North, exhibit greater access to capital, education, and market opportunities than those in rural Ibarapa East. Rural respondents cited infrastructural deficits, particularly poor roads and limited access to credit, as major impediments to expanding their businesses (Ibrahim & Ojo, 2021). This variation reinforces the argument that local development outcomes are deeply conditioned by contextual inequalities (Akinyele & Fasoranti, 2022). This study further reinforces the submission of Olarewaju et al. (2019), who documented the vital role Nigerian women play in community-building and informal education. Women often serve as the first educators in the home and frequently engage in volunteer work like cleaning health centres or organizing food cooperatives. Despite their efforts, these contributions are often undervalued due to prevailing gender norms (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012). The emphasis on informal economic roles also supports the assertion by UN Women (2020) that African women account for a large portion of the informal sector. Their involvement is crucial to the survival and growth of rural economies, underscoring the need for policies that formalize and support women's contributions.

Regarding recognition by local leaders, a striking number of participants emphasised that women's contributions are not adequately recognized by local leaders. Despite their participation in economic and social spheres, many women report being excluded from decision-making processes. Statements such as "men dominate meetings and we are not called to speak" reflect deeply entrenched patriarchal systems that marginalize women. This resonates with Okeke-Ihejirika (2012), who found that traditional leadership structures in Nigerian communities rarely include women, despite their community-building roles. The lack of recognition discourages participation and perpetuates inequality. Studies by Amadi and Abdullah (2021) show that recognition is key to empowerment, as it fosters confidence, agency, and leadership aspirations among women. Without institutional mechanisms to ensure gender representation, the

developmental contributions of women will continue to be overlooked. These findings highlight the urgent need for gender-sensitive governance structures that acknowledge and integrate women's voices in local leadership.

Factors Affecting Women's Socioeconomic Roles

The analysis identified several interrelated factors shaping and, in some cases, constraining women's socioeconomic roles in Oyo State. These include *cultural norms, limited access to resources, policy neglect, and household dynamics*.

Cultural expectations regarding gender roles remain a pervasive influence. Several interviewees indicated that women's economic engagement is sometimes viewed as *secondary* to men's, and that social norms discourage women from pursuing leadership positions. A respondent from Ido LGA lamented: "Even when we have ideas or money, men often want to lead the associations. They believe women should only support, not direct" (F/Ido/2025).

This reflects enduring patriarchal structures that reinforce gendered hierarchies in community decision-making, consistent with the observations of Okeke-Ihejirika and Salihu (2020), who argue that such socio-cultural constraints perpetuate the marginalization of women in local governance and development.

Economic barriers also emerged as significant. Most respondents cited *limited access to credit and government grants* as obstacles to expanding their enterprises. A trader from Akinyele LGA shared: "We hear about government loans for small business owners, but when you apply, they tell you to bring guarantors or documents we don't have" (F/Akinyele/2025).

This indicates that financial inclusion policies often fail to reach rural women due to bureaucratic barriers, inadequate information dissemination, and systemic biases in loan administration.

Education and exposure further surfaced as critical determinants. Educated women reported greater confidence and engagement in community leadership roles, suggesting that education enhances both agency and negotiation power in patriarchal environments. Similarly, women with cooperative membership demonstrated higher financial literacy and collective bargaining power, underscoring the role of *social capital* in navigating institutional constraints (Ibrahim & Ojo, 2021).

Environmental and infrastructural challenges, such as poor transportation networks, limited access to markets, and inadequate childcare facilities, were additional factors affecting women's participation. The intersection of these factors creates what the study identifies as a *gendered development trap*, where women's productive efforts are simultaneously celebrated and constrained by the structures meant to support them.

Drawing on Gender and Development (GAD) and Empowerment Theory, the interview analysis reveals that women's socioeconomic roles in Oyo State are both *agentic and constrained*. Women act as active agents of change, yet their agency operates within patriarchal, economic, and institutional limitations. The findings support Moser's (1993) GAD framework, which emphasizes that development policies must transcend welfare approaches to focus on gender relations and power redistribution. The women's narratives demonstrate that empowerment is a process of continuous negotiation—mediated by access to resources, knowledge, and supportive policies (Kabeer, 2019).

Furthermore, the integration of women's voices highlights the *transformative potential* of local-level participation in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth). Yet, without deliberate gender-sensitive policy interventions, the informal contributions of women risk remaining undervalued and unleveraged for structural development.

Discussion of Findings

Triangulated Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings provides a deeper, multidimensional understanding of women's socioeconomic contributions in selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Oyo State, Nigeria. Both strands of data converge to emphasize that women are *indispensable agents of local development*, yet their capacity to maximize this potential is constrained by structural, cultural, and institutional barriers. The mixed-method triangulation thus reveals strong complementarity between the two data sources, highlighting areas of agreement, amplification, and explanatory depth.

Quantitative analysis indicates that over 78% of surveyed women reported active participation in local economic activities such as trading, agriculture, and small-scale enterprises, while 65% confirmed membership in cooperative or community-based organizations. These numerical find-

ings substantiate the qualitative evidence from interviews that portrayed women as *entrepreneurial catalysts and social mobilizers* within their communities.

The convergence between both data strands affirms that women are not passive beneficiaries of development but dynamic contributors who sustain household economies and stimulate community growth through innovation and collective organization. For example, interviewees described themselves as “the backbone of the community” and emphasized roles in education, cooperative savings, and community projects, perceptions that statistically align with the high proportion of women engaged in self-help or cooperative associations recorded in the quantitative data.

This convergence supports empirical literature (Akinola, 2020; Oladejo & Olowu, 2022) which positions women as *grassroots development multipliers*. Thus, both data sets corroborate that gendered pathways to local development are fundamentally driven by women's multifaceted participation across informal and semi-formal economic spaces.

Quantitative data revealed that women contribute significantly to both household and community-level development: 72% of respondents indicated that their income supports family welfare and children's education, while 54% participate in community-based infrastructure or welfare projects. These numerical indicators complement qualitative accounts in which interviewees described collective efforts to fund school buildings, health outreach, and microcredit programs for other women.

The complementarity here lies in the *depth of contribution*. The quantitative data quantify the *extent* of engagement, while the qualitative narratives uncover the *social meaning and motivation* behind such participation—rooted in communal solidarity and moral obligation. This integration underscores that women's development contributions are not limited to economic returns but extend to *social capital formation, capacity-building, and local governance participation*.

For instance, cooperative leaders interviewed explained that they “train younger women and fund small ventures,” illustrating how economic activities overlap with mentorship and social empowerment roles. The synergy between numerical and narrative evidence therefore reveals that women's socioeconomic involvement in Oyo State is simultaneously *economic, relational, and transformative*.

While the quantitative results showed that only 38% of respondents reported access to formal credit facilities and 42% noted institutional support from local government, the qualitative data illuminated *why* such

gaps persist. Interviewees identified cultural hierarchies, bureaucratic constraints, and gender-biased financial systems as the primary barriers limiting women's economic advancement.

This divergence demonstrates how qualitative insights enrich quantitative patterns by explaining underlying mechanisms. For instance, survey data alone could suggest a deficit in access to finance, but interviews revealed that requirements such as guarantors, collateral, and literacy levels disproportionately exclude rural women. Similarly, although 62% of respondents agreed that "women should participate in decision-making at the local level," qualitative narratives exposed the subtle cultural tensions through which male dominance still restricts women's voices in community associations.

This analytical divergence echoes the observations of Okeke-Ihejirika and Salihu (2020) and Kabeer (2019), who argue that quantitative indicators of women's participation often mask the invisible social negotiations and structural constraints that define their lived realities. Hence, the mixed-method integration provides both *statistical evidence of inequality* and *contextual interpretation of its gendered roots*.

A key synthesis emerging from the triangulated findings is that women's development potential in Oyo State remains undervalued and under-institutionalized. Quantitatively, only 29% of respondents believed that existing local government policies adequately support women's economic activities, while 74% expressed the need for more inclusive development programs. These statistics mirror the qualitative conclusion that women's efforts are sustained primarily through informal and cooperative networks rather than structured governmental support.

The interviews further clarified that policy neglect manifests in two critical ways: inadequate access to local decision-making forums and limited gender-responsive budgeting at the LGA level. Women's narratives consistently pointed to the need for *capacity-building, recognition, and representation* in local governance. This complements the quantitative evidence indicating a strong willingness among women to engage in formal governance if institutional opportunities exist.

Thus, both sets of data converge to advocate for an *institutionally embedded gender policy framework* that integrates women's entrepreneurial and social contributions into local development planning. The findings collectively reinforce the call by Eze and Nwankwo (2021) for strengthening women's cooperatives as platforms for both empowerment and policy engagement.

Integrated Interpretation through Gender and Development Lens

Interpreting the triangulated data through the Gender and Development (GAD) and Empowerment Theory frameworks reveals that while women's agency is strong, structural inequities continue to shape the boundaries of that agency. The quantitative data measure the *extent of participation*, while the qualitative insights explain the *conditions and constraints* under which participation occurs.

Both data types point toward the need for a *transformative empowerment approach*, where development policies address systemic inequalities rather than merely expanding participation rates. The integrated evidence supports Kabeer's (2019) argument that empowerment must combine resources, agency, and achievements. In Oyo State, women possess agency and motivation (as reflected in high participation rates), but resource access and institutional recognition remain inadequate—thereby limiting the achievement dimension of empowerment.

In sum, the triangulated findings reveal that gendered pathways to development in Oyo State are characterized by high female participation, low institutional support, and persistent structural inequality. This dynamic underscores that sustainable development cannot occur without a deliberate, gender-sensitive framework that recognizes and amplifies women's socioeconomic roles within formal policy structures.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study underscores that women in the selected LGAs of Oyo State are pivotal actors in driving socioeconomic development through entrepreneurship, social mobilization, and cooperative leadership. However, their contributions are constrained by entrenched gender norms, systemic exclusion from financial resources, and inadequate policy support. Women's perceptions reveal a strong sense of communal responsibility, yet the sustainability of their efforts depends on institutional recognition and capacity-building.

Ultimately, the study finds that fostering local development through gendered pathways requires not only recognizing women's economic activities but also transforming the structural conditions—cultural, financial, and institutional—that limit their potential. The integration of women's perspectives into local policy frameworks will thus enhance equity, efficiency, and sustainability in grassroots development initiatives.

The study underscores the need for:

- i. Targeted gender-responsive budgeting at the local government level.
- ii. Community-based training and microcredit schemes co-designed with women.
- iii. Deliberate cultural re-orientation programmes, particularly in traditional councils and rural areas.
- iv. Policy mechanisms to ensure that women's informal contributions are formally recognized and rewarded.

Without these, development strategies will remain incomplete, and the transformative potential of women's roles in local development will remain untapped.

REFERENCES

- Action Aid Nigeria (2020) *Women's Voice and Leadership Nigeria Project Report*. [Online] Available at: <https://nigeria.actionaid.org>
- ADEGBITE, O., & ALABI, B. (2020) Women's Land Rights and Agricultural Productivity in Rural Southwest Nigeria. *Journal of Gender Studies*. 29(4). Pp. 482–496. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2020.1718790>
- ADENIRAN, A. (2021) Urbanization and the Informal Sector in Peri-Urban Ibadan: Implications for Women. *African Development Review*. 33(2). Pp. 158–169. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8268.12489>
- ADERINTO, S. (2019) *Women and Social Change in Nigeria: Gender, Culture, and Development*. Routledge.
- Ajoke Ayisat Afolabi Foundation (AAAF) (2021) *Annual report: Women's economic advancement initiative*. [Online] Available at: <https://ajokeayisatafolabi.org>
- AKINOLA, A. (2020) Women, Empowerment and Local Development in Nigeria: Rethinking the Grassroots. *Journal of Gender Studies in Africa*. 12(1). Pp. 45–62.
- AKINYELE, S., & FASORANTI, O. (2022) Gender, Poverty and Sustainable Development in South-West Nigeria. *African Journal of Development Studies*. 14(3). Pp. 77–95.
- AKINYEMI, A. I., & FAWOLE, O. (2018) The Role of NGOs in Improving Rural Women's Socioeconomic Status in Southwest Nigeria. *Development in Practice*. 28(3). Pp. 376–385. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2018.1434595>
- AROWOLO, D., & ALUKO, F. (2012) Women and Political Participation in Nigeria: A Case Study of Ilesa East and West Local Government Areas. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*. 1(3). Pp. 1112–1123.
- BENERÍA, L., BERIK, G. & FLORO, M. (2016) *Gender, Development and Globalization: Economics as If All People Mattered* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- CORNWALL, A. & RIVAS, A. (2015) From 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment' to Global Justice: Reclaiming a Transformative Agenda for Gender and Develop-

- ment. *Third World Quarterly*. 36(2). Pp. 396–415. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1013341>
- ELSON, D. (1999) Labor Markets as Gendered Institutions: Equality, Efficiency and Empowerment Issues. *World Development*. 27(3). Pp. 611–627. [Online] Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(98\)00147-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(98)00147-8)
- EZE, C. & NWANKWO, B. (2021) Women Cooperatives and Rural Development in Nigeria: A Gendered Analysis. *Journal of Rural and Community Development*. 16(4). Pp. 23–41.
- EZEH, O., AKPAN, J. & OKEKE, M. (2020) Gender Inequality and Informal Economy in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of African Development Studies*. 12(2). Pp. 45–61.
- FAO (2021) *Gender and Agriculture in Nigeria: A Country Profile*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- IBRAHIM, A. & OJO, A. (2021). Women's Social Capital and Community Development in Rural Nigeria. *Development in Practice*. 31(8). Pp. 1035–1047.
- KABEER, N. (2016) Leaving No One Behind: The Challenge of Intersecting Inequalities. *IDS Bulletin*. 47(5). Pp. 91–103. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.19088/1968-2016.149>
- KABEER, N. (2019) Women's Empowerment and Inclusive Growth: Labour Markets and Enterprise Development. *International Labour Review*. 158(4). Pp. 473–500.
- LASTARRIA-CORNHIEL, S. (2007) Who Benefits From Land Titling? Lessons from Bolivia and Laos. *International Development Planning Review*. 29(1). Pp. 55–81. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.29.1.3>
- MOMSEN, J. (2010) *Gender and development* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- NBS (2021) *National Bureau of Statistics Annual Report*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng>
- NKECHI, O., IBRAHIM, S. & AYODELE, K. (2020) Cultural Barriers and Women's Empowerment in Nigeria. *African Journal of Gender Studies*. 19(1). Pp. 63–78.
- NUSSBAUM, M. (2011) *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Harvard University Press.
- ODURO, A. & OWUSU, G. (2021) Women's Work, Informal Economies and Local Governance in West Africa. *Gender and Development*. 29(1). Pp. 101–118.
- OKEKE-IHEJIRIKA, P. (2012) Patriarchy, Gender Equality and Political Representation in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*. 6(10). Pp. 197–204. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJPSIR11.106>
- OKEKE-IHEJIRIKA, P. & SALIHU, A. (2020) Gender Politics and the Struggle for Development in Nigeria. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. 54(2). Pp. 285–306.
- OLADEJI, M. & OLADEJI, B. (2022) Gendered Social Capital and Rural Women's Economic Participation in Nigeria. *Journal of Community Development Research*. 34(2). Pp. 122–137.
- OLADEJO, S. & OLOWU, O. (2022) Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Participation in Southwestern Nigeria. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*. 14(1). Pp. 32–50.
- OLADIPO, S. & ADELEKE, B. (2022) Gender-Based Development Programmes and Women's Empowerment in Southwest Nigeria. *African Journal of Social Sciences*. 10(1). Pp. 45–59.

- OLANREWAJU, I. A., OKUNADE, T. & AJAYI, A. (2019) Education, Empowerment and Development of Rural Women in Southwest Nigeria. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*. 7(4). Pp. 11–20.
- Oyo State Government (2021) *Oyo State Gender Policy*. Ibadan: Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Inclusion.
- RAO, A. & KELLEHER, D. (2005) Is There Life After Gender Mainstreaming? *Gender and Development*. 13(2). Pp. 57–69. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552070512331332287>
- RAZAVI, S. & MILLER, C. (1995) *From Wid to Gad: Conceptual Shifts in the Women and Development Discourse*. UNRISD.
- SEN, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- SMEDAN (2022) *Annual Report on SMEs in Nigeria*. Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria.
- UN Women (2020) *Women and Sustainable Development*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org>
- UN Women (2021) *Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org>
- UNDP (2021) *Human Development Report: Women's Roles in Rural Economies*. United Nations Development Programme. [Online] Available at: <https://www.undp.org>
- UNESCO (2021) *Education Transforms Lives: The Importance of Adult Literacy*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.unesco.org>
- WOCON (2019) *Empowering Rural Women Through Climate-Smart Agriculture: Final Project Report*. Women's Consortium of Nigeria.
- World Bank (2022) *Nigeria Economic Update: Resilience Through Reform*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org>
- World Bank (2023) *World Development Indicators*. [Online] Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org>