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EFFECTS OF CHILDBEARING ON RURAL WOMEN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN IREPODUN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT
This study was carried out to analyze the effect of child bearing on the activities of the rural women agricultural activities in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. The study was to determine socio-economic characteristics of childbearing women involved in agricultural activities, identify agricultural activities practised by childbearing women, identify the agricultural activities that are affected by childbearing and determine the effect of childbearing on women farmers' income. A *total of one hundred and twenty respondents were sampled from four randomly selected wards out of the ten wards in the study area. Interview schedule was used to collect data. The study revealed that majority (76.7%) of respondents were between the age of 36-45 years, 80.5% were married and* 72.8% were literate *and had farming experience above 10 years. Ninety-five percent of the respondents were engaged in agricultural activities as their primary and secondary occupations. The study revealed that most of the agricultural activities practised by the respondents were affected during childbearing. However majority of the respondents (72.0%) were participating in informal saving and credit group, 63.8 % of the respondent contributes below N200 and 36.2% contribute N450 and above. The study revealed that childbearing affects 42.4% of the respondent income while 57.6 % are not affected by childbearing, since respondent has different source of generating income. The hypothesis showed that there is no significant relationship between selected socio economic characteristics of childbearing women and number of activities they are involved in. The study therefore recommends that Women involved in agricultural activities should be given appropriate types of technology to cater for the labour intensive agricultural activities. Childbearing women are encouraged to join or form cooperative society in order to source funds from government, NGOs as well as access credit facilities from financial institutions to boost their involvement in agricultural activities.*

Keywords: *Childbearing, Rural women, Agricultural activities.*

INTRODUCTION
Women constitute nearly half of the adult population of Nigeria and 77% of them live in the rural area. The major occupation of rural women is agriculture and its related activities. Women contribute about three-fourth of the labour required for agricultural operations (Ramesh, 2013). Regardless of the level of development achieved by the respective economies, women play a pivotal role in agriculture and in rural development in most countries (Jean-Pierre, 2012). In the process of food production, handling and preparation of food, women play multiple roles. Therefore, women are said to be feeding the world**.**

The role of women in Agricultural development process has been well documented. Everywhere in the world, women have been actively involved in farming, food processing and preservation (Yusuf & Adenegan, 2009). Women produce more than half of all the food that is grown in the world (Jean-Pierre, 2012). In Sub-Sahara Africa and the Caribbean, women produce up to 80% of basic foodstuffs. In Asia, women contribute from 50-90% of the labour for rice cultivation. And in Southeast Asia and the pacific as well as Latin America, women's home gardens represent some of the most complex agricultural systems known (Dilrukshi, Russell & Karim, 2013).

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In developing countries, rural women provide most of the labour for farming, from soil preparation to harvest. After harvest, they are mostly responsible for operation such as storage, handling, stocking, marketing and processing. In addition to rural women's economic activities, rural women also bear primary responsibility of feeding children from gestation through weaning and throughout the critical period of growth. Work in the household is also part of women's responsibility as wives and mothers rather than occupation to be accounted for in both the household and the national economy.

However, reproductive roles and productive functions played by women are so closely linked that they cannot be considered independently (Chatterjee, 1991). These reproductive roles in one way or the other can be said to affect their agricultural activities. This can be viewed in terms of valuable time spent on child bearing by these rural women. Women in developing nations in general spend what should be their productive period on reproduction (UNFPA, 1988). (Doss (1999)), found that childbearing statuses of women affect their availability for agriculture. The perennial strength which the unique roles of childbearing ascribe biologically and socially affects women's productive potential and labour supply.

The perennial stress and unique roles of child-bearing and childcare ascribed particularly to women, biologically and socially, affect their productive potential and labour supply in Agricultural production (Okeowo & Olujide, 2014). In most developing nations, the various ailments after childbirth can be said to limit women performance and this is further aggravated by poor state of health facilities. The health of an individual is an important factor in determining performance in any situation. Therefore, maternal morbidity as a fall out from child bearing to a large extent affects woman performance of agricultural activities. By affecting women's physical health, illness also may be detrimental to their social, emotional and economic wellbeing (agricultural activities) if they affect women ability to work or interact in their communities (Population Report, 1997). Also, the rural women combine their roles as wives, mothers, and housekeepers with their priceless tasks as farmers, farm labourers, etc. (Osondu, 2014).

World Bank, 1996 observed that consistent child bearing reduces productivity not only at household level but also in the formal and non-formal economic sector. It has been observed that pregnant and lactating women contribute significantly less income generating labour over years than other women, which was attributed to less time devoted to labour intensive activities such as farming (Baksh et al, 1994). The paper therefore determined the effect of childbearing on agricultural activities of women in Irepodun local government area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to

1. determine the socio-economic characteristics of childbearing women involved in agricultural activities;
2. identify agricultural activities practised by childbearing women;
3. identify agricultural activities that are affected by childbearing; and
4. determine the effect of childbearing on women farmers' income

METHODOLOGY

Study area

The study area is Irepodun Local Government Area (LGA) of Kwara State with headquarters in Omu-Aran town, which was created in 1976. The area lies in the middle belt between approximately latitude 80 00'N and 80 29'N and longitude 400 410E and 500 340E. The LGA has eleven wards with a population of 196,020 (99,640 males and 96, 380 females) based on our population growth rate of 2.9% pa. Arable crops planted include yam, grains, maize, guinea corn, cassava with cashew as a cash crop. Irepodun Local Government is the largest and oldest Local Government Area in Kwara State and was created in 1968 at the inception of the state as Igbomina/Ekiti Division. Indeed the Local Government was an offshoot of the defunct Ilorin Native Authority of the Colonial era, which later metamorphosed into the Igbomina/Ekiti division. In 1976 it was named Irepodun Local Government. Irepodun Local Government

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is divided into eleven political wards and a landmass of 1, 095 square kilometers. It is endowed with savannah/rain forest vegetation on a plain terrain with patches of river/streams to serve as verdant for early crops and animals grazing. The people of the Study area are predominantly farmers and they engage in petty and large scale trading.

Study population and sampling procedure

The population for the study comprised some selected childbearing women involved in agricultural activities in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. Simple random sampling were used to select four wards out of the eleven wards in the LGA based on the involvement of childbearing women in agricultural activities in the area namely: Omu-Aran 11, Ajase-Ipo II, Esie, and Oko. In each of the four wards thirty (30) respondents were selected using simple random sampling technique to give rise to 120 respondents for the distribution of questionnaire. Hence, a total of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents were used as sample size.

Data analysis

All the data was analyzed manually using SPSS package. Descriptive statistical techniques such as percentage and frequencies were used. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of childbearing women involved in agricultural activities

The frequency and percentage distribution of the socio-economic characteristic data of the respondents were determined. Socio-economic characteristics included: Age, marital status, how long respondents has lived in the village, farming experience and education level. The result is shown in table 1
Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (76.7%) fall within the age range of 26-45 years. This result implied that majority were youth. These categories of people are still at their prime, economically active and thus energetic to undertake most agricultural activities for livelihood and sustenance. Majority (80.5%) of the respondents are married. Table 1 revealed that 74.3% of the respondents have been farming for the past twenty years. This implied that majority of the respondents have been exposed to farming activities before marriage.14.4% had primary education,18.6% had secondary education, 4.2% had ordinary National Diploma, 22.9% had National certificate of Education, 2.5% of respondents had Higher National Diploma while 10.2% had Bachelor of Science certificate. This implied that majority (72.8%) of the respondents were literate.

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Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by their socio economic characteristics

	Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
(a)	**Age**		
(i)	20-25 years	8	6.7
(ii)	26-35 years	41	34.5
(iii)	36-45 years	50	42.2
(iv)	46 and above	20	16.6
(b)	**Marital Status**		
(i)	Married	95	80.5
(ii)	Widowed	15	12.7
(iii)	Divorced	3	2.5
(iv)	Single parent	5	4.2
(c)	**Farming Experience**		
	1-10 years	42	35.4
	11-20 years	46	38.9
	21-30 years	18	15.1
	Above 30 years	5	4.1
(d)	**High Education level**		
(i)	No formal education	30	25.4
(ii)	Primary education	17	14.4
(iii)	Secondary education	22	18.6
(iv)	OND	5	4.2
(v)	NCE	27	22.9
(vi)	HND	3	2.5
(vii)	B.Sc	12	10.2

Source: Author, (2014)

Primary and secondary occupation of childbearing women involved in agricultural activities

Table 2: shows that 94.9% of the respondents are engaged in farming, either as their primary and secondary occupation. Also, the result shows that the respondents engage in more than one income generating activities to augment income received from agricultural activities.

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Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their primary and secondary occupations

	Occupation	Frequencies	Percentages
(a)	**Farming**		
(i)	Secondary	63	53.4
(ii)	Primary	49	41.0
(b)	**Trading**		
(i)	Primary	27	22.9
(ii)	Secondary	52	44.0
(c)	**Artisan**		
(i)	Primary	6	5.1
(ii)	Secondary	3	2.5
(d)	**Civil Service**		
(i)	Primary	33	27.1
(ii)	Secondary	10	8.5

Source: Author, (2009)

Agricultural activities practiced by childbearing women

Table 3 indicates that 81.4% and 83.1% of the respondents were actively involved in harvesting and processing respectively, while70.3% and 69.5% are engaged in planting and marketing. Also, 59.3% and 44.1% engage in weeding and land preparation, 37.3% and 33.9% engage in transplanting, fertilizer application and transportation of agricultural produce. This shows that majority of the respondents engage actively in harvesting and processing. This agrees with the findings of (Olawepo & Fatulu, 2012) that women engage more in harvesting and processing of farm produce.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents based on their involvement in agricultural activities

	Agricultural Activities	Frequency	Percentage
(a)	Land preparation	52	44.1
(b)	Planting	83	70.3
(c)	Transplanting	44	37.3
(d)	Weeding	70	59.3
(e)	Fertilizer application	40	33.9
(f)	Harvesting	96	81.4
(g)	Processing	98	83.1
(h)	Marketing of Agric Produce	82	69.5
(i)	Transportation of Agric Produce	44	37.3

Source: Author, (2009)

Agricultural activities that childbearing affected

Table 4: shows that 72.0% of agricultural activities (weeding) were affected during childbearing, 70.3% during harvesting and processing, 71.2% during planting, 67.8% and 60.3% of agricultural activities was

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affected during childbearing. This shows that majority of agricultural activities are affected during childbearing. This is due to discomfort during pregnancy that limits the participation of the respondents in agricultural activities.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents based on the agricultural activities that childbearing affected

	Agricultural Activities	Frequency	Percentage
(a)	Land preparation	80	67.8
(b)	Planting	84	71.2
(c)	Transplanting	77	65.3
(d)	Weeding	85	72.0
(e)	Fertilizer Application	71	60.2
(f)	Harvesting	83	70.3
(g)	Processing	83	70.3
(h)	Marketing Agric produce	79	66.9
(i)	Transportation of Agric produce	76	64.4

Source: Author, (2009)

Effects of childbearing on the income of women involved in agricultural activities

Table 5 indicates that 72.0% of the respondents are participating in informal saving and credit group.63.8 % of the respondents contribute below ₦200 equivalent to $1.5 and 36.2% contribute ₦450 equivalent to $2.5 and above. Majority of the respondents contribute on daily basis and childbearing affects 42.4% of the respondent income while 57.6% are not affected by childbearing, since respondent have different source of generating income.

Table 5: **Distribution of the respondent based on the effects of childbearing on their income**

	Frequency	Percentage
Participation in informal saving and credit group		
Yes	85	72.0
No	33	28.0
Contribution on daily basis		
Below 200	75	63.8
450 above	43	36.2
Days in a week contribute		
1-7	101	85.6
No	17	14.4
Childbearing affect income		
Yes	50	42.4
No	68	57.6

Source: Author, (2009)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been revealed that agricultural activities practised by the childbearing women were affected during childbearing. This might be due to the rigours associated with subsistence agricultural practices which is the major farming system in the study area and the stress attached to childbearing. However, the result shows that rural women engage in more than one income generating activities to augment income received from agricultural activities.

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Therefore, women involved in agricultural activities should be given appropriate types of technology to cater for the labour intensive agricultural activities. Also, efforts should be made to reduce drudgery of domestic chores with the use of labour saving devices that save time and energy at home this will help women to participate more in agricultural activities during childbearing. Childbearing women are encouraged to join or form cooperative society in order to source funds from the government, NGOs, as well as access credit facilities from financial institutions to boost their involvement in agricultural activities.

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