

EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF GENDER AND AGRICULTURE USING CREATIVE ART: A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN RURAL NIGERIA.

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Abstract: Nigerian rural women face particular opportunities and problems due to the interaction of gender and agriculture. Through a human rights-based perspective, this study investigates how creative art might be used as a tool to combat gender inequality and empower women. A thorough conceptual model, a variety of methodological tools, and theoretical foundations are all included in the enlarged framework. The study examines how well artistic interventions work to raise awareness, improve skills, and advance gender parity using data gathered from Nigerian rural communities. The results of the statistical analysis, which was carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), show that women's involvement in agricultural decision-making and revenue creation has significantly improved. Rural women's voices are amplified through creative art, which includes visual arts, performance, and storytelling, which depicts their goals, challenges, and lived experiences. This strategy encourages discussion and group action for change in addition to increasing awareness of gender inequality by including the community in participatory art projects. This study looks at how artistic expression can inspire grassroots initiatives that support women's rights and empowerment, challenge gender conventions, and overcome cultural and socioeconomic boundaries. The report also identifies important factors that contribute to empowerment, providing practical advice for putting policies into practice.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Gender, Agriculture, Creative Art, Human Rights-based Approach, Empowerment, Women, Rural Nigeria

1. Introduction

High rates of poverty, gender inequality, and restricted access to resources are characteristics of rural Nigeria (FAO, 2011). Despite making up a large share of the agricultural workforce, women frequently encounter structural

obstacles that restrict their ability to contribute and advance their level of empowerment. Unfair access to land, education, and agricultural inputs are some of these obstacles (Cornwall, 2016). By encouraging community involvement and questioning social norms, creative art—which includes visual arts, theater, music, and storytelling—offers a special platform for tackling these problems (UNDP, 2014).

International frameworks like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 5 (gender equality) and Goal 2 (zero hunger), highlight how critical it is to address these gender disparities in agriculture. These frameworks place a strong emphasis on the necessity of empowering women in order to achieve food security and wider socioeconomic development. A human rights-based approach (HRBA) to gender and agriculture emphasizes how important it is to guarantee rural women's equality and dignity so they can assert their rights and take part fully in agricultural systems. This study therefore looks at how, within the context of human rights, creative interventions might improve women's agency in agriculture. In particular, it explores how artistic expression may support sustainable farming methods, gender equality, and women's voices. This study adds to the expanding corpus of research on women empowerment and sustainable development by using a multifaceted approach.

1.1 Problem Statement

Nigerian women in rural areas continue to be underrepresented in decision-making and resource distribution, despite their significant contributions to agriculture. This imbalance is sustained by cultural norms, restricted educational opportunities, and gender-based discrimination (FAO, 2011). The promise of creative art as a transformative instrument for empowerment has frequently been disregarded by traditional interventions. In order to bridge the divide, this project investigates how agricultural methods and creative art might work together to strengthen women's rights and roles in rural communities.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What impact do artistic endeavors have on women's empowerment in rural agricultural settings?
2. What quantifiable effects do artistic interventions have on women's agricultural decision-making and revenue generation?
3. How might the efficacy of artistic expression in tackling gender inequality be improved by a human rights-based approach?

1.3 Study Variables

- **Independent Variables:** Artistic interventions (visual arts, drama, music, storytelling).
- **Dependent Variables:** Women's participation in decision-making, access to agricultural training, income levels, and perceptions of gender equity.
- **Control Variables:** Age, educational level, and socioeconomic status.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and Naila Kabeer's concept for women's empowerment serve as the study's foundations. These theoretical stances stress how crucial it is to improve people's capacity for decision-making and opportunity access. By connecting it to human rights ideals and agricultural results, the conceptual framework incorporates creative art as a vehicle for empowerment.

2. Research Design

To give a thorough grasp of the research subject, this study uses a mixed-methods design that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. Data on the effects of creative art interventions can be gathered at one particular moment as result of the cross-sectional design.

2.1 Instrumentation

- **Quantitative Tools:** Structured questionnaire to evaluate economic results, participation rates, and demographic characteristics.
- **Qualitative Tools:** checklists for observations and focus group discussion guides to record members' opinions and experiences.

2.2 Method of Data Collection Data were collected using:

- 300 women in Abia, Ebonyi, and Imo were given surveys.
- Put an emphasis on group conversations led by qualified moderators.
- Firsthand views of farming techniques and community art events.

3. Literature Review

Previous studies highlight the role that creative art may play in empowering people and changing society (Cornwall, 2016). However, its application in agricultural settings has not received much attention. Several studies have looked at the connection between gender and agriculture, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address systemic inequities (FAO, 2011). The intersectionality of gender and agriculture can be effectively addressed through creative art, especially when it comes to elevating the voices of underrepresented groups and encouraging community involvement.

Visual arts, drama, and storytelling are all forms of artistic expression that can question social norms, draw attention to gender inequities, and spur group action (Boal, 2000). Creative art can be a culturally sensitive tool for advocacy, education, and empowerment in rural Nigeria, where cultural traditions are strongly embedded. A comprehensive framework to address the particular difficulties faced by women in agriculture can be created by fusing the transformative power of art with the HRBA tenets. This study bridges the gap and advances global development goals by integrating creative art into frameworks for women's empowerment (UNESCO, 2019).

Gender Inequality in Agriculture: Structural Barriers

In rural Nigeria, women face disproportionate barriers to accessing resources like education, agricultural inputs, financing, and land. Women are frequently denied the ability to own land due to patriarchal conventions and customary laws, which forces them to live under precarious tenure arrangements (Agarwal, 1994). Due to their lack of ownership, they are unable to obtain credit facilities that demand collateral or undertake long-term farming investments (FAO, 2011). Furthermore, women are less likely to acquire the training and resources needed to increase production due to gender-based discrimination in extension services and technology access (Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010).

These difficulties are made worse by the junction of gender, class, and sociocultural norms. For instance, women from lower-income households, widows, and younger women frequently experience many layers of discrimination that hinder their capacity to participate in decision-making or fight for their rights (Crenshaw, 1991). In addition to undermining women's economic agency, these systemic obstacles also sustain poverty and food insecurity at the household and communal levels.



'Her Agricultural Story'. Grace Onyebuchi-Igbokwe Studio Work, 2023.

Artist name: Emmanuel Anugwolu, Title: *Child Spacing*. Medium: cement. Final year student's project, Imo state university Owerri. Year 2012



Artist name: Christian Ndiike, Title: *Terrorism*. Medium: Oil on board. Dimension 48 “ x 96”. Final year student’s project, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri. Year: 2013



Artist name: Chibuzo Ohakpougwu & Innocent Udelinkwo, Title: *Child Molestation*. Medium: Oil on board. Dimension 48 “x 96”. Final year student’s project, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri. Year: 2015.



Artist name: Ugochukwu Egbujor, Title: *Blood shed*. Medium: Cement and metal. Dimension 60"x 84". Final year student's project, Imo state university Owerri. Year: 2014.

The Role of Creative Art in Addressing Gender Inequalities

Gender inequality in agriculture can be addressed in a distinctive and culturally aware way through creative art. The power of art to question social norms, elevate underrepresented perspectives, and promote discourse has long been acknowledged (Boal, 2000). Creative art can be a potent tool for addressing gender and agricultural concerns in rural Nigeria, where storytelling and oral traditions are ingrained in the cultural fabric.

To increase awareness of gender-based violence and women's rights, for example, community-based storytelling and participatory theater have been employed in other settings (Sloman, 2011). These techniques promote empathy and group action by getting community members to consider their attitudes and behaviors. Similar to this, visual arts like murals and posters; can tell a story that motivates change by illustrating the hardships and victories faced by women in agriculture. Creative art has the potential to bridge the gap between local cultural practices and international human rights values by fusing traditional art forms with modern activism.

Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and Gender Equity

An appropriate framework for tackling the intersectionality of gender and agriculture is a human rights-based approach, which places an emphasis on the values of equality, participation, and accountability. By addressing the underlying causes of inequality, HRBA stresses women's empowerment and acknowledges them as holders of rights (UN Women, 2015). Applying HRBA to the agricultural sector can aid in the elimination of discriminatory practices and the advancement of laws that provide fair access to opportunities and resources. Failure to acknowledge women's roles will make human society's developmental efforts practically impossible due to the unique functions embedded in each gender. Therefore, an essential tool for society's development is understanding gender roles from the traditional African perspective, which is imperative for Africa's sustainable development (Onyebuchi-Igbokwe et al, 2024).

By encouraging community involvement and ownership, combining HRBA with creative art increases its impact. Participatory art initiatives, for instance, can facilitate discussions between men and women around resource distribution, labor rights, and land ownership. In addition to increasing awareness, these programs give women the confidence to speak up for their rights and push for legislative changes. The significance of gender parity in development is highlighted by studies that demonstrate a considerable improvement in household welfare and agricultural output when women are empowered (World Bank, 2012).

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Characteristics Table 1 summarizes the demographic data of participants.

Demographic Variable	Frequency (n=300)	Percentage (%)
Age (Years)		
18-25	60	20.0
26-35	120	40.0
36-45	80	26.7
46+	40	13.3
Educational Level		
No Formal Education	150	50.0
Primary Education	90	30.0
Secondary Education	45	15.0
Tertiary Education	15	5.0

Desk Research, 2025

4.2 Impact of Artistic Interventions Table 2 shows the changes in women's participation in agricultural decision-making before and after the interventions.

Indicator	Pre-Intervention (%)	Post-Intervention (%)	Change (%)
Participation in Decision-Making	25.0	65.0	+40.0
Access to Agricultural Training	30.0	70.0	+40.0
Income from Agricultural Activities	15.0	55.0	+40.0

Desk Research, 2025

4.3 Perceptions of Gender Roles:

Qualitative findings show changes in the way the community views gender roles. According to the participants, women's contributions to agriculture and decision-making are now more widely acknowledged. Discussions in focus groups emphasized how drama and storytelling can subvert conventional wisdom.

5. Discussion

The results show that activities promoting creative art greatly increased the empowerment of women in rural Nigeria. By offering a forum for discussion and skill development, artistic interventions empowered women to question conventional gender norms and fight for their rights. These findings are consistent with earlier research that emphasizes the transformational power of the arts in situations of growth (Cornwall, 2016; Nussbaum, 2000). The success of these initiatives was further increased by incorporating a human rights-based approach, which guaranteed sustainability and community ownership.

Although HRBA and creative art present promising paths for resolving gender disparities, their use is not without difficulties. The success of such projects may be hampered by institutional support, financial constraints, and cultural resistance. For instance, attempts to empower women may encounter resistance from deeply ingrained patriarchal standards, especially in situations where traditional authority figures hold substantial sway (Aina, 1998).

But these difficulties also offer chances for creativity and cooperation. The cultural relevance and sustainability of art-based interventions can be improved by collaborating with regional artists, civic leaders, and non-governmental groups. Furthermore, using digital channels can help creative art endeavors reach a wider audience, especially with younger audiences. For example, combining art with digital storytelling can produce a potent advocacy and educational tool that can raise rural women's voices globally.

6. Conclusion

The study advocates a multifaceted strategy to address the intersectionality of gender and agriculture. In addition to tackling systemic obstacles like land tenure and loan availability, policymakers must give women's participation in agricultural planning and decision-making top priority. It is also in focusing on the research variables that the researcher brings to limelight the paper's thematic philosophy of a more inclusive and equitable agricultural system that empowers women and promotes sustainable development as inevitable adhesive in the fusion of the transformative potential of art with the tenets of HRBA.

7. Recommendations

- 1 In order to empower women in rural Nigeria, this study emphasizes the value of incorporating creative art into gender and agricultural programs via the following:
- 2 Increase access to community-based art initiatives (UNESCO, 2019) is something that policymakers and development professionals should do.
- 3 It is important to acknowledge creative art as a valid and effective advocacy instrument that can support conventional development initiatives.
- 4 Include instruction on human rights in artistic endeavors (OHCHR, 2012).
- 5 Encourage collaborations between agricultural extension agencies and regional artists (FAO, 2020).
- 6 Create mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating creative interventions to determine their long-term effects.
- 7 Sustainable women's empowerment can be accomplished by utilizing the intersection of art, gender, and agriculture, which will support more general development objectives (Kabeer, 2005).

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