

# **Impact of Women in Palm Oil Production on The Economic Development of Ogbadibo Local Government Area**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**T**his paper examines the impact of women on palm oil production in Ogbadibo Local Government Area from 1960-2000. The paper highlights the various contributions women have made that boosted palm oil production in the area ranging from socio-economic to cultural contributions. The paper makes use of written sources largely and a few oral sources to gather relevant information for the discussions. Among the major findings made in the study, the work notes that, palm oil production created job opportunities for many people including women and men. It also served as an item for marriage ceremony among other cultural celebrations. In conclusion, the paper observes that, despite the significant role of women to promoting palm oil production in the area, their contribution has not been recognized and that women faced quite a number of challenges in the process of participating in palm oil production including lack of capital for the business and gender discrimination. For

these challenges to be addressed, the paper recommends the involvement of stakeholders including government to empower women to maximally contribute to the development of palm oil industry in the area.

Keywords: Palm oil, Production, Women. Gender.

## **Introduction**

Palm oil production is a vital economic activity in many parts of Nigeria, providing employment and income for millions of people, especially in rural areas. While much attention has been given to the role of men in palm oil production, the contribution of women has been largely overlooked. In recent years, however, there has been a growing recognition of the important role that women play in the palm oil value chain, from planting and harvesting to processing and marketing. This paper will examine the impact of women's contribution to palm oil production in Ogbadibo Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State, Nigeria. Ogbadibo LGA is known for its large palm oil plantations and processing mills, which provide a major source of livelihood for many households. Despite the significance of women's contribution to palm oil production in the area, there is limited research on their role and impact on the local economy.

The study will focus on the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of women's involvement in palm oil production in Ogbadibo LGA?
2. What are the socio-economic and cultural impacts of their contribution on the local economy?

By exploring these questions, this paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of the gender dynamics in palm oil production in Nigeria, and to highlight the importance of women's participation in this vital economic activity. The findings of the study could also inform policy interventions and development

programs aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the palm oil sector.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

The key concepts that require clarification in this paper are Palm oil and the gender Question. The concept of palm oil (*Elaeis guineensis*) is a tropical plant native to West Africa that is widely cultivated for its high oil content. It is a versatile and highly productive crop, with its oil being used for various purposes, including food, cosmetics, and biofuel production. The oil palm industry has experienced significant growth over the years, driven by increasing global demand for vegetable oils. However, the expansion of oil palm plantations has raised concerns due to its environmental and social impacts.

Scholars have defined oil palm from different perspectives, shedding light on various aspects of its significance and challenges. According to Meijaard *et al.*, oil palm refers to the plant species *Elaeis guineensis* and its products, primarily palm oil. They emphasize the economic importance of oil palm as a major agricultural commodity, contributing to rural livelihoods and national economies.<sup>1</sup> In terms of environmental impact, Laurance *et al.* defines oil palm as a major driver of deforestation, particularly in Southeast Asia, where vast areas of rainforests have been cleared for oil palm plantations.<sup>2</sup> This definition highlights the negative consequences of oil palm expansion on biodiversity, carbon emissions, and ecosystem services. From a social perspective, scholars such as Obidzinski *et al.* defines oil palm as a controversial crop due to issues related to land tenure, land grabbing, and conflicts with local communities.<sup>3</sup> They emphasize the need for responsible and inclusive practices in the oil palm industry, ensuring the protection of human rights and the welfare of affected communities.

From the above analysis, oil palm is a tropical plant species cultivated for its oil, which has diverse uses.

It is an economically significant commodity but also a major driver of deforestation, posing environmental challenges. Additionally, the oil palm industry has faced social controversies and conflicts due to land-related issues and community welfare concerns. Balancing the economic benefits with environmental and social sustainability remains a critical challenge for the oil palm industry. As used in this context, oil palm encompasses the extracts from the palm tree including palm oil and palm kernel, among others.

The concept of the "gender question" on the other hand refers to the examination and exploration of gender as a social construct, including its impact on individuals, societies, and institutions. It encompasses critical analysis of the roles, expectations, and inequalities assigned to individuals based on their gender identity. Scholars have provided various definitions and perspectives on the gender question, shedding light on its complexity and relevance in different contexts.

Judith Butler argues that gender is not a fixed or inherent quality but a performative act constructed through social norms and practices. According to Butler, gender is a fluid and ongoing process of identity formation and expression, challenging the binary notions of masculinity and femininity.<sup>4</sup> Another important perspective by Raewyn Connell, who introduced the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" and "emphasized femininity" argues that gender operates within power structures, with dominant forms of masculinity and femininity shaping societal expectations and hierarchies.<sup>5</sup> This definition highlights the influence of power dynamics and social norms in shaping gender roles and identities.

Furthermore, Judith Lorber approaches the gender question from a sociological perspective, viewing gender as a social institution. Lorber defines gender as "a set of socially constructed practices that organize social relations between males and females".<sup>6</sup> This definition underscores the societal and institutional dimensions of

gender, emphasizing the ways in which gender influences various aspects of life, including family, education, and work. In summary, the gender question involves a critical examination of gender as a social construct, challenging binary notions and emphasizing its performative nature. It encompasses the exploration of power dynamics, societal expectations, and the institutional dimensions of gender. Scholars like Butler, Connell, and Lorber have contributed to the understanding of the gender question, offering insightful perspectives on the complexities and implications of gender in society.

### **Socio-Economic Impact of the Women Participation in Palm Oil Production in Ogbadibo Local Government Area**

The palm tree is referred to as the tree of wealth. It is planted in tropical countries. With the fact that many products can be generated out of palm tree, the level of its economic importance is aggravated. In 1900's oil palm were planted in parts of Africa including Nigeria, in 1960. Over 80% of the population of Ogbadibo Local Government Area engage in farming. Cassava is cultivated in commercial quantity in the districts of Ogbadibo Local Government Area. Other agricultural produce include yam, beniseed, bambara nuts, melon and millet. Ogbadibo Local Government Area has the largest palm plantation in Benue State and produces palm wine in commercial quantity.

The local government provides the best and wide range of investment opportunity in small scale agro-allied industries in areas like palm kernel, palm oil production and palm wine preservation in Benue state and in all states north of the Niger. There is a large coal deposit at Owukpa and Kaolin at Orokam. These minerals are left untapped. The Owukpa coal Mine, which stopped operation in the early 60s is reputed to have been the best grade in Nigeria. Strategically located, ogbadibo is a fast developing commercial center. The Igalas, the Ibos and

Idomas of Okpokwu, Otukpo and other local governments flood the local government to buy its agricultural produce. Ogbadibo has three major markets viz: UkwoOgbo (Otukpa) UkwoOrokam and OkwuOwukpa. Other markets include AhoAdupi, Orokam, Ede Otukpa, Geri ObuOtukpa, Eke ai-OnaOrokam and Eke AkpaOwukpa, AhoOgbo, Ede as well as AhoAifam – all in Owukpa. On the whole, the local government generates revenue from the three major markets, the largest and the busiest being the UkwoOtukpa.

Palm oil production has no doubt made a ground breaking mark on the economy of this local government. It has been an auxiliary to economic improvement since the last decades. Most of the production carried out has been on large scale other than what was obtainable when many hands were not engaged in this lucrative business of production. The production capacity affected the economic parlance of Ogbadibo Local Government; The increase in the number of women engaged in the business is responsible for the economic boost. According to Lawal, a developing economy needs the participation of more sectors responsible for its growth. This assertion is mostly suitable for economies characterized by different sectors for a traditional economy such as Ogbadibo Local Government Area where wind of developing condition is blowing, much engagement by different players who may have important role to play in the development of the economy is highly needed, though some determinants of the economic development may seem not visible, however, in a local economy this determinants may become visible once they are put into full practice.

This principle can be said to have worked well on the economy of Ogbadibo Local Government Area. The immediate effect of this development is the increased and the growth of middlemen and middle women. This emergence of this group of businessmen and women gave rise to firstly, the availability of the product within the confines of the market and secondly, the creation of job.

The middle business group is responsible for proper distribution of the production once the product is brought to the market. The increased number of the product brought to the market led to the increase in the number of middle businessmen and women involved in the purchase of the product from the producers. One major impact of this on the economy of the local government area is that it became a new avenue by which taxes are generated. According to Abraham Itodo in an oral interview; the revenue department of the local government what had over the years, generated a good sum of money from the middle business set up. The middle men and women were made to pay taxes to the council as it was assumed that the business format they had engaged in is a lucrative one.<sup>7</sup> This claim was corroborated by John Ameh who stated that the revenue is responsible for the inability of the middle men and women to purchase the adequate quantity of product that they normally buy prior to the emergence of the revenue department policy to tax the middlemen and women.<sup>8</sup>

Another major impact of oil palm production on the local government is the creation of jobs. Palm oil production had created jobs that had covered a good percentage of the local government area especially within the rural community most women with the rural area had found solace in oil palm production due to the non-availability of jobs within the Nigerian society. Prior to the beginning of the last century, a lot of women were not involved in the business of oil palm production. In fact, most of them viewed it as business that is tedious in nature and not suitable for women. According to Josephine Aboh, women shy away or refuse to engage themselves in palm oil production. This motive and mood changed drastically towards the tail end of the last century, although prior to this period, women were seen participating in the production of palm oil but their number was few. The great number of women involved in

this business nowadays, has indeed boosted the economy of the local government. More money have been generated as personal incomes, a lot had come from other parts of Nigeria as a result of the buyers of the products coming from other parts of the country.

The youths are not left out in the economic improvement brought about by the lucrative business of palm oil production. Though most youths are not much in the production aspect, a good number of them can be seen in the retailing aspect of the business. They buy and store the product during the time of boom that is, the period where there is enough palm oil quantity in the market and in turn, sell at exorbitant prices during the period of scarcity. It is estimated that a good quantity of the product could be bought from the market and stored.<sup>9</sup>

There has been an expansion of the market coupled with the growth of existing markets within Ogbadibo area. The expansion of market was due to the increase of palm oil production coupled with increased supply to markets. Oil Palm production within this area has indeed, led to expansion of markets, small markets have expanded beyond what we can imagine. A very good example is the "*Ukwo* market". According to Mary Sunday who asserted that the market used to be a small setting with few buyers and seller, found in the market was mostly dominated by garri, processed garri is a major commodity found in the market prior to the influx of palm oil. Most dealers especially, women in the market were seen trading in garri though much profit was realized by these women, the adequate quantity needed was not coming forth; the market remained as it was when it started. However, the market when more women began to troop in with palm oil; buyers were first and foremost, interested in buying small quantity before this period of the product. However, with the continuous supply of the product; large quantity was demanded by buyers not only within the confines by the local government but outside the local government.

The development of the palm oil trade cannot be seen from the current perspectives but can be traceable to the 18<sup>th</sup> century industrial revolution in Europe. Before this period, the people of Ogbadibo have established themselves as producers of palm produce and maintaining trade relations with their neighbor's but at a subsistence level. At this period also, West Africa was isolated from Europe though with the discovering of America, interest was shifted to West Africa coast in a trade for slaves to sustain the development of the new countries in the Western world. During the period of this slave trade, there was virtually no other trade on the West Coast.<sup>10</sup>

However, by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain had already created capital out of the slave trade and its American plantations, and this capital launched the industrial revolution. The slave trade was accordingly no longer vital to the British economy; whereas palm oil and kernel of the Niger Delta and its hinterland were required by British industry, this slave trade was abolished around 1807. There was a switch to the trade in West African cash crops of which palm oil was a major item of trade or so called legitimate trade with Europe, became more important with the spread by industrial revolutions in Europe which created the need for oil and fats.

"In Europe, it was realized that the intrinsic qualities of palm oil placed it at the head of the vegetable fat and that no other oil was capable of being put to such a variety of uses. Beside its value in the soap and candle industries, palm oil found a large application in the manufacture of tin plates, it was therefore, necessary to increase the production of palm oil in order to cater for both internal consumption in Nigeria and the industrial demands in Europe."

In the early 1970s, export of palm oil from the Niger Delta ranged from 25,000 to 30,000 tons per annum and by 1911, the British West African territories exploited 87,000 tones. Africa led the world in production and

export of palm oil throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led by Nigeria and Zaire by 1966. However, Malaysia and Indonesia had surfaced Africa's total palm oil production. According to oil palm Review Published by the tropical development and research institute in the United Kingdom, over 3,000,000 tons of palm oil was produced by Malaysia in 1983, compared with total of about 13 million tons of African production. The trade in palm oil was in existence in Ogbadibo from the earliest times and the initial nature of the trade was by barter. Palm oil was exchanged for other commodities needed like salt, yam, pepper etc. with the penetration of colonial rule between 1908 and 1909 into Idoma land and with the introduction of money currency, palm oil began to be sold for money.<sup>11</sup>

Several trade routes were in existence in the palm oil trade in Ogbadibo. The first of such route was the Otukpo route. Men were mostly seen carrying palm oil on their heads along this rout which started from Otukpo to places like Orokam, Ekeh, Ajide. It took traders three day on foot to get to markets in other parts of Idoma land close to Ogbadibo local government area especially Otukpo and Orokam including Igede land. Ogbadibotradeters also used the routs to Igboland from Orokam to Obollo or Ufdegwu, a boarder community with Owukpa. The Kogi route to Iyaia land begins from Orokam to markets like UkwuAgariga, UKwulu -da Ede Alhaki and Eke Ade. There was also the Otukpo route to Otukpahitch begins from Ukwoobu in Otukpa, and also the route from Orokam,Ukwo,Uwukpa. There was yet another route from Orokam to Ede Okpoga and Ahon Ola-Ifamu near Okpoga palm oil and palm wine is taken along. These routes mentioned above for sale the people of Ogbadibo in turn buy food stuffs and clay pots. There is an attempt to examine some important trade routes that favored the sale of palm oil produced in Ogbadibo land to other parts of Idoma land and beyond such as Igbo land. It is no doubt that the people of Ogbadibo local government area felt the great impact of palm oil production by the women of the

area. It will not be an over statement say that every native of Ogbadibo local government area both at home with good and in the Diaspora have benefited directly or indirectly from the production of palm oil and other palm produce. Those who are indigenes of Ogbadibo local government area usually leave home with good quantity of palm oil whenever they visit home. some were given those products by their relations who are engaged in the production of palm oil while others buy the products at cheaper rates as they claim that it is cheaper back home than whenever they had come from.<sup>12</sup>

Those that came from Abuja area that is, the Federal Capital Territory and Lagos including port Harcourt, Rivers State claimed that the cost of palm oil in these places is very high hence, they resulted in buying from Idoma indigene, a twenty-five thousand naira in Rivers state, he also claimed that the prices still varies depending on the market and part of the state in some parts of the state where the product is scarce, the same quantity can go as far as thirty thousand naira.<sup>13</sup>

From the above analysis, we can see that the people of Ogbadibo living outside the state also made their contributions directly or indirectly to the development of the economy of the local government through their patronage of palm oil. The economy has indeed, boasted though this may not be felt immediately or on a wide range it rather made gradual contribution to the economy. In other words, much income was injected into the economy and more business outlets like small scale business was established those that were engaged in palm oil business outlets like small scale businesses was established alongside those that engaged in palm oil business. They resolved in adding to their business other forms of business so as to strengthen their economic base and financial capacity. Palm oil production has been of great importance to the economy and society by Ogbadibo people right from pre-colonial period. This is another way

the trade in the product had made a good impact on the economy of Ogbadibo land. As regards to the impact on people and the society, palm oil serves as a relief substance when poisonous substances are eaten or inhaled. Also in the case of constipation and cough, particularly dry cough, palm oil taken to soften the stomach and chest. In Ogbadibo, hardly will important meals be prepared without using palm oil and essential ingredient or condiment. It is a valuable source of vitamins in the indigenous diets.

There has been the development of local soup industry in Ogbadibo Local Government of which palm oil is the major ingredient used in the production. It is called Ugwonoti in Idoma (black-soup). This is a manifestation of the industrial use of palm oil as an export product. The production of this soup is done locally by the natives of Ogbadibo in their homes. It has been a source of income for a good number of people. Due to the processes involved in soap making, division of labor is brought to bear. This has to do with those who specialize in the production of palm oil and those of the soap production. They all have their financial reward at the end of the day. Although this production is not in very high large quantity but if the government pays more attention to this area, there might be the emergence of a large soap manufacturing industry in Benue State which will generate revenue for the government. It will be awarding to mention here that, small scale agro-processing seems to enhance rural poverty reduction and oil palm trees provides the best raw materials for siting rural industries.<sup>14</sup>

Obi asserts that the raw materials found in some local areas (rural areas) of Nigeria can be tapped to benefit both the immediate community and the country at large. The palm oil is a very important raw-material to so many industries of states above, but much has not been done in the area of harnessing the important material for the overall benefit of the rural economy as described by

Talbot. Much can be impacted on the economy of Ogbadibolocal government if more explorations is carried out with regards to the improvement in the use and production of palm oil hence there will be great contributions of the product to the economy of the local government than what is obtainable now.<sup>15</sup>

Another major impact of palm oil production of the economy of Ogbadibolocal government can be from the angle of unemployment which has been reduced by this lucrative business in palm oil. The issue of unemployment is one serious problem in Nigeria today. Thousands of graduates are turned out of our universities and other institutions higher learning every year. There are no Government jobs to accommodate these young energetic men and women even the private sector has not been empowered enough or encourage employing a reasonable number of Nigeria unemployed youths. This problem has led so many engaged in social vices today.<sup>16</sup>

In Ogbadibo however, palm oil production has provided employment in a way to a reasonable number of the population within the locality. Most youths in Ogbadibo can be said to be in a state of self-reliant. They proceed and make from the production of palm oil and other products of palm tree are sued by some, in pursuit of western education. Others built house, got married and became responsible Nigerians. Others purchased motorcycles which are used for public transport (okada). The above may be responsible for the low crime rate in most parts of Ogbadibo. This employment does not just stop with the youths; it extends to the women also. In fact, the role played by women in palm oil production cannot be over-emphasized. From the point the palm fruits are cut down, to the sale of the oil, women are the forerunners. The standard of living of the producers (women) relatively improved a great number of who were hitherto poor and dependent on their husbands began to

acquire wealth through the fate of palm oil. They started to take care of their needs.

There is also the decline in production of food crops over the years as a result of the production of palm oil. Even though palm oil production has positive impacts as mentioned above on the economy of Ogbadibo Local Government area, it also has some negative economic impacts. Notable among these impacts are the decline in food crop production, the average farmer no longer have much interest in the production of food crops since it is assumed that a lot of profits are generated from palm oil production. This has made farmers to abandon the production of food crops on the farm and face the production of palm oil. There is no doubt that palm oil production has serious positive impact on the people of Ogbadibo. However, the concentration of palm oil, has affected the production of food crop such as yam and cassava in commercial quantity even though the soil of Ogbadibo support large scale production of food crop. They seem comfortable with the profit they generate from palm produce. This has led to the decline in food production.<sup>17</sup>

The decline in food production has brought a lot of problems to Ogbadiboland; for instance, there arose a sharp rise in prices of food in recent times in markets across the land, the concentration in palm oil production and the subsequent dealing in it as a major item of trade leading to a lucrative nature of the business indeed, led to more people especially farmers to divert their attention to the business hence, low participation in the production of food crops. Less attention has been paid to the production of food crops such as cassava, rice, maize, yam etc. and cash crops which include soya beans, guinea corn. This has led to high demand for these crops which in turn, led to increase in their prices.<sup>18</sup>

### **Socio-Cultural Impact of Women's Participation in Palm Oil Production in Ogbadibo Local Government**

The palm frond is very significant traditionally. Palm frond is seen as a sign of sacred to all the shrines and refrain people's behavior. In traditional religion setting, any place where palm fronds are tied signifies sacred. Most of the masquerades do attach palm frond to their costumes. Palm frond is also synonymous to Ekwu (Masquerade), it was recorded to have being clothe. If a corpse is to be transported on a vehicle from one place to the other, palm frond is attached to the vehicle for easy movement. If it is tied to the entrance of a farm or house it means don't touch or enter, failure to adhere to this you bear the consequence/repercussion. Palm Kernels are used for Alekwu divination. In the act of making traditional sacrifice, Palm oil is used for pouring libations.

Palm oil is called "Ano ole" in Idoma Language. Apart from the fact that people use palm oil to cook their meals, it has several other social and spiritual uses in the Idomá culture. It is used for traditional, religious, and ceremonial functions such as marriage, naming, burial, traditional festivals, and so on in Idomaland. The importance of "Ano ole" cannot be overemphasized.<sup>19</sup> Palm oil is a prominent element in Idoma traditional medicines. The palm kernel fruit called 'Ikpali' is used for as an anticonvulsant and laxative in Idomaland. Knowledge of medicinal plants combined with spirituality continues to thrive in Africa today.<sup>20</sup> Some recent ethno botanical field studies confirm that divination still plays a major role in traditional knowledge systems and palms are still used for this purpose just as they were many years ago. The belief in witchcraft, divination and spiritual healing has come to coexist with Christianity, independence and development. While in most African countries palm fronds are carried by Christians on Palm Sunday, they are also used to ward off the evil in village entrances. Palms are still considered sacred objects, assuring protection from malevolent forces.

In Otukpa Ogbadibo, Shea butter (*Vitellariaparadoxa* C. F. Gaertn.) is used to make a ring around the neck. Underneath another ring with palm oil is made. If a patient is a female, a doctor puts left hand on her head; and right hand if it is a man. Then the following incantation is recited: "The mosquito with six children is the name given to the blacksmith who makes headache (repeat thrice). Two of the children went to a white tree, the last two were sent by ichekpa (the deity for good health) to go and beat the drum on the heads of human beings. But ichekpa ordered that this drum should not be beaten on the head of those patients that make this mark of Shea butter and oil around their neck. Because of this, (name of the patient) whose neck has been marked around with Shea butter and oil should be quickly spared. The author mentions this treatment is for high temperature and severe headache, but makes a note that this is probably equivalent to Western malariaology.<sup>21</sup> Ancestor spirits appreciate drinks, and palm wine was often used in offerings and fetishes to obtain their favor and help or to reduce their anger and, therefore, the risk of disease or other calamity. To engage a powerful being in a relationship of beneficial exchange and prosperity, palm wine was a valued consumable and lubricant of good relations and hospitality.

In the past and even in the the present times, palm oil in the form of cooking oil is given to young girls who get married and are going to their matrimonial home. A parent who does not do this is seen as very poor and without pride. This shows how important and valuable palm oil is to the people of Ogbadibo especially the Otukpa people. Marriage in Idoma land is regarded as a sacred union and adultery heavily frowned at and prohibited. Growing up into adolescent in my community in Idoma land, the most inquisitive moment in marriage rites is "confession hour." Both young and old look forward to the time when the bride-to-be will confess her improprieties, especially immoral affairs at the foot of a shrine, a

microcosm of Alekwu; the traditional god of the Idoma nation. Items needed in preparing the god (Alekwu) to listen to the confession of the colleen, the prospective bride in the presence of the members of the community are :a hen, kola nut, bowl of water. Palm oil and palm wine. During “oji” in idoma language which is confession of sexual-related improprieties by the female gender, especially by a prospective bride (*ameriya*) or a widow<sup>22</sup> the woman will be on her knees, carrying the hen on one hand and the kola nuts inside a bowl of water before proceeding to confess any sexually related relationship she had with the opposite sex.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the women after producing the palm oil are engaged in the marketing of the product, this takes them to near and far markets. Consequently, these women meet and interact with other women from areas with different dialectical groups. The process transacting this oil palm business therefore resulted in a lot of cultural transfer. According to Abigail Inalegwu, palm oil production and marketing has taken her to a lot of local market in Idomaland and beyond. She was able to learn the different dialect and could effectively communicate in Igala and Ibo languages. This according to her was a deliberate action, as most of her business partners felt more at ease doing business with someone communicating to them in their local dialects. She also said, this helped ease the course of business and reduced the time it took to reach an agreeable price. Most of the Otukpo women have learnt how to speak the Idoma dialect of *Enone* (comprising of Okpokwu and Ogbadibo areas) whose Idoma is different from that spoken in Otukpo. These women have also learnt how to cook and eat so many of the traditional foods of the people they transact with and had introduced these foods in the Otukpo area.

In the process of transporting and marketing these oil products in other markets outside Ogbadibo, these

women met and got married to men from different other ethnic groups. It was gathered that in some cases, the men from other outside groups fell in love with Otukpo women seen in their markets and most ended up getting married to them. These are the different cultural ways through which this participation have had impact on the lives of the Ogbadibo women and Ogbadibo land as a whole during this period of study.<sup>23</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The study of the impact of women's contribution to palm oil production in Ogbadibo Local Government Area has revealed significant contributions of women to the local economy. Women play a vital role in the entire value chain of palm oil production, from planting and harvesting to processing and marketing. Women's participation in palm oil production provides them with opportunities to earn income, contribute to their households, and achieve economic empowerment. One of the significant findings of this study is the high level of participation of women in palm oil production in Ogbadibo LGA. Women are involved in all stages of the palm oil value chain, including planting, harvesting, processing, and marketing. Women's active participation in palm oil production has contributed to increased production and has helped to improve the local economy.

However, despite the significant contributions of women to palm oil production, they face several challenges. Women often have limited access to land, finance, and other productive resources, which limits their ability to participate fully in the value chain. Women also face cultural and social barriers, such as gender stereotypes and discrimination, which further hinder their participation and impact. In conclusion, this study highlights the significant impact of women's contribution to palm oil production in Ogbadibo LGA. Women's participation in the value chain has led to increased production, household income, and economic

empowerment. However, to maximize the potential impact of women's participation, there is a need to address the challenges they face, including limited access to resources and cultural and social barriers. The findings of this study could inform policy interventions and development programs aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the palm oil sector in Nigeria.

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