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Gender Differences in Migrants' Control over Productive Resources in Cocoa-Producing Communities of Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Migration to cocoa-producing rural communities is often motivated by opportunities for employment, farming and improved livelihoods. However, migrants' ability to benefit from such opportunities depends not only on their access to productive resources but also on their authority to make decisions concerning the use and management of those resources. This study examined gender differences in migrants' control over land, labour and financial capital in cocoa-producing communities of Ondo State, Nigeria. The study employed cross sectional survey research design. A multistage sampling procedure involving purposive and snowball techniques was used to select 220 migrants, comprising 113 males and 107 females. Quantitative data were collected through a structured interview schedule, while qualitative information was obtained through focus group discussions. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and an independent-samples t-test, whereas the qualitative data were thematically analysed with the aid of ATLAS Ti. The mean ages of male and female migrants were 44.6 ± 13.3 and 42.0 ± 13.3 years, respectively, while males had more years of formal education than females. Although 96.5% of males and 97.2% of females had access to land, males exercised greater control over land ownership, use and labour engagement. Conversely, females demonstrated relatively greater autonomy in some financial decisions, particularly the repayment and use of credit facilities and the management of remittances. The t-test revealed a significant gender difference in overall control over productive resources, with males recording a higher mean control score than females ($t = 3.275$, $p = .001$). The study concludes that access to productive resources does not necessarily translate into effective control, especially for female migrants. Gender-responsive land administration, inclusive financial services, stronger migrant organisations and household-level interventions that promote equitable decision-making are therefore required to improve livelihood opportunities in cocoa-producing communities.

Introduction

Migration remains an important livelihood strategy through which individuals and households respond to unemployment, poverty, limited access to productive resources and changing economic opportunities. Although rural–urban migration receives considerable attention in development literature, movement into rural agricultural communities also occurs where migrants perceive opportunities for farming, wage employment, trading and other livelihood activities. In Nigeria, cocoa-producing communities attract migrant farmers, sharecroppers, labourers and traders because of the employment and income opportunities associated with cocoa cultivation and related agricultural enterprises. Ondo State, being one of Nigeria's major cocoa-producing areas, has consequently become an important destination for migrants seeking improved livelihood opportunities in rural communities (Olaleye, 2026; Carl LeVan *et al.*, 2018; Rural Access and Agricultural Marketing Project [RAAMP], 2018).

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The extent to which migrants realize their livelihood aspirations depends largely on their access to and control over productive resources. Productive resources constitute the assets required by individuals and households to undertake economic activities, generate income and sustain their livelihoods. Within the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, these resources are broadly classified as natural, human, physical, financial and social assets (Opiyo *et al*., 2023; Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2002; De Haan, 2012). In agricultural communities, land, labour and capital are particularly important because they determine the type, scale and sustainability of livelihood activities available to households. Land supports crop production, livestock keeping, housing and non-farm enterprises; labour provides the human effort required for production; while capital facilitates the acquisition of inputs, equipment and services and enables households to withstand livelihood shocks.

Access to a productive resource is, however, different from control over it. Access refers to the opportunity to use or benefit from a resource, whereas control concerns the authority to determine how the resource is used, managed, transferred and distributed. Control therefore reflects the ability to make and implement decisions concerning productive resources and the benefits derived from them (Gunawan *et al*., 2025; Ishengoma, 2005; Boudet *et al*., 2012; Assefa and De Roo, 2015). A person may have access to farmland, labour or credit without possessing the authority to decide what crops to cultivate, whom to employ, how income should be spent or how credit should be utilised. Consequently, the assessment of livelihood opportunities should extend beyond access to examine the actual decision-making power exercised over productive resources.

Control over productive resources is shaped by social structures, cultural norms, household power relations and institutional arrangements. In many rural African societies, customary systems of land ownership and inheritance favour male household members and indigenous populations, while women and migrants often occupy less secure positions. Migrants may obtain land through temporary leases, sharecropping arrangements, informal agreements or social relationships, but such arrangements may not provide secure ownership or unrestricted decision-making rights. Studies have shown that migrants frequently experience marginalisation in access to public services, political representation and productive assets because they are regarded as outsiders within their host communities (British Council, 2012; Adisa *et al*., 2016; Carl LeVan *et al*., 2018). This suggests that migrant status can independently restrict livelihood opportunities, irrespective of gender.

Gender further influences how productive resources are accessed, managed and controlled. Socially defined roles and expectations often confer greater authority on men in decisions concerning land, production and household assets, while women may be expected to depend on their husbands or other male household members. Evidence from Cameroon, Tanzania and Ethiopia indicates that women may have access to agricultural land and participate actively in production but still possess limited authority over land use, income and other productive assets (Ishengoma, 2005; Fon, 2015; Gelan *et al*., 2016). Gender inequalities in education, ownership of property, access to information, membership of farmers' organisations and participation in household decision-making may further constrain women's livelihood choices and economic independence.

Nevertheless, gender relations are not static. Women's increasing participation in agricultural production, trading, credit groups, cooperative societies and household financial management may be changing traditional patterns of resource control. In some households, women exercise substantial authority over income, credit repayment, remittances and expenditures, while decisions over certain resources are made jointly by spouses. Such developments suggest that the control of productive resources may vary according to the type of resource, household structure, migration history and local cultural context. Gender analysis is therefore necessary to reveal differences in the roles, responsibilities, opportunities and decision-making authority of male and female migrants (Torimiro *et al*., 2009; Mohammed and Abdulquadri, 2012; Yiriyibin, 2025).

The Harvard Analytical Framework provides a useful basis for examining these differences through its access-and-control profile, which distinguishes

between the resources available to men and women and the authority each gender exercises over their use and benefits. Similarly, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework emphasizes the importance of livelihood assets in determining the strategies and outcomes available to individuals and households. Applying these perspectives to migrant households is particularly relevant because migrant status and gender may interact to produce multiple disadvantages. A female migrant, for example, may face restrictions not only because she is a woman but also because she is considered a non-indigene within the host community.

Previous studies have provided valuable evidence on gender disparities in access to land, credit, labour and other productive resources in sub-Saharan Africa. However, much of the existing literature has concentrated on indigenous farming households, women's access to individual resources, or gender differences in agricultural productivity. Comparatively limited attention has been given to the combined influence of gender and migrant status on actual decision-making authority over several productive resources within cocoa-producing communities. Moreover, studies that report women's access to land or credit often do not distinguish clearly between mere access and effective control. There is also inadequate empirical evidence on whether male and female migrants exercise different levels of authority over land ownership and use, labour engagement and provision, and the management of financial resources within the same livelihood setting.

This constitutes an important research gap because access alone cannot adequately explain migrants' capacity to select, expand or sustain livelihood activities. Without understanding who decides how land, labour and capital are used, interventions that merely increase access may fail to address underlying gender inequalities. Furthermore, the location-specific nature of customary land systems, household relations and migrant–host community interactions means that findings from other regions may not sufficiently explain the situation in cocoa-producing communities of Ondo State. The study therefore contributes to knowledge by examining gender differences in control over land, labour and capital among migrants and by integrating quantitative evidence with qualitative accounts of household and community decision-making.

Against this background, the study assessed male and female migrants' control over productive resources for livelihood activities in cocoa-producing communities of Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, it described the personal and migration-related characteristics of male and female migrants; examined their access to and decision-making authority over land; assessed their control over labour engagement and labour provision; compared their control over financial capital; and determined whether a significant difference existed between male and female migrants' overall control over productive resources.

Methodology

Description of study location

The research was carried out in Ondo State with a population of 3,460,877 (Ondo State Bureau of Statistics, 2021), covering an area of approximately 15,500 square kilometers and delineated into 18 Local Government Areas (LGAs). The state enjoys two vegetation namely the forest zone (rain forest) in the south and sub savannah forest in the northern part. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select non-indigene respondents. At the first stage, five LGAs were purposively selected based on high cocoa production. At the second stage, two communities were purposively selected from each of the LGAs based on the preponderance of cocoa production to make a total of ten communities. Lastly, twenty-two migrants were selected from each of the selected communities, using snowball technique (because the migrants are hidden respondents) for easy identification and location of 220 respondents (113 male and 107 female). The primary data were collected using structured interview schedule and Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Measurement of variables

The dependent variable of the study is migrants' control over productive resources for livelihood activities. The three productive resources investigated were land, labour and capital. They were investigated and discussed descriptively on gender basis. Control was operationalised as decision-making capacity.

Three variables considered on land were access, ownership and usage while the variables for labour engagement and provision were types of work / services provided, duration of work and payment for services rendered. Similarly, the variables considered under capital were managing cash income, repaying loan on credit, disbursing credit facilities and remittances. Respondents were asked to respond to Yes or No questions in relation to the variables based on whether decisions were made alone / independently, in collaboration with others and with permission from someone. Positive and negative responses were coded 1 and 0 respectively.

Statistical analysis

Data collected were subjected to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Descriptive (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation) analyses were carried out to reveal and describe the gender dynamics at play in male and female migrants' decision-making capacity over productive resources for livelihood activities. ATLAS Ti statistical package was also used to carry out content analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the FGDs and inferential statistics (t-test) was used to draw inferences.

Results and Discussion

Gender distribution of migrants by personal characteristics

Results in Table 1 reveal an even (51.4% male and 48.6% female) distribution of the studied population. It implies that both male and female were involved in migration and that migration is not sex- selective in contrast to the report by IOM (2016) that a higher number of migrants tend to be male in most migration flows, hence referring to migration as a sex- selective process. In addition, the average age of male and female migrants was 44.6 ± 13.3 and 42.0 ± 13.3 years, while only 18.6 percent and 28.0 percent of the male and female were 30 years and below respectively. It implies that a substantial number of the respondents were in the middle age category while there were fewer youths. Although having so many migrants within the active and productive age category could enhance productivity in chosen livelihood activities and in cocoa production in particular. However, the fewer number of young migrants portends great danger to the future of cocoa production which would depend greatly on youth involvement due to aging cocoa farmers in the study areas (Adelakun *et al.,* 2025).

Also, more female than male (28.0% and 10.6%) had no formal education, 25.7 percent and 23.4 percent of male and female had less than seven years of formal education, more (48.7%) male and female (43.9%) had between seven and twelve years of formal education and the means for years of formal education were 8.85 ± 4.51 and 6.89 ± 03 years for the male and female respondents respectively. Considering the 6:3:3:4 education policy of the Federal Government, most female respondents had access to primary education while most of their male counterparts had access to junior secondary education. In essence, gender disparity existed in access to education in favour of the male and this may enhance their accessibility to productive resources and ultimately influence their livelihood activities significantly, while the disadvantaged female could be adversely affected.

It was also revealed that 26.5 percent of male and 46.7 percent of female migrants had below 1 hectare of farmland, while, 42.5 percent of male and 23.4 percent of female had above 2 hectares. In other words, the male migrants had larger farm size compared to their female counterparts. This is similar to the findings of Mukasa and Salami (2015) which reported a wide gap between male and female land managers in favour of the male in Nigeria. Also, the average length of stay for male and female in the host communities were 21.2±14.6 and 18.3±12.3 years respectively. The lengthy residence by the migrants could be of immense benefit to cocoa production which is currently faced with the challenge of aging indigene farmers if they could be integrated into the host communities without being subjected to the traditional norms which deny migrants some land rights. It was also discovered that many (77.0% and 64.5%) male and female migrants respectively migrated to the study area for employment opportunities and only some (35.0%) female moved to the host communities for marriage. The finding implies that migration is mainly prompted by availability of productive resources. This is in consonance with the findings by Agu *et al.* (2017) that the prospect of employment opportunities were the main reasons for migration in Nigeria.

Table 1: Gender distribution of migrants by personal characteristics

	Male		Female	
Variables	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Sex	113	51.4	107	48.6
Age (Years)				
≤ 30	21	18.6	30	28.0
31 – 50	60	53.1	54	50.5
51 – 70	30	26.5	21	19.6
> 70	2	1.8	2	1.9
Mean	44.6±13.3		42.0±13.3	
Total farm size (ha)				
< 1	30	26.5	50	46.7
1 – 2	35	31.0	32	29.9
> 2	48	42.5	25	23.4
Mean	2.2±0.8		1.8±0.8	
Years of residence				
≤ 10	31	27.4	41	38.3
11 – 20	33	29.2	27	25.2
> 20	49	43.4	39	36.4
Mean	21.2±14.6		18.3±12.3	
***Favourable reasons for migration**				
Employment opportunities	87	77.0	69	64.5
Agricultural land	37	32.7	17	15.9
Marriage	0	0.0	38	35.0
Friends, families/relatives	12	10.6	6	5.6
Market for agric. Produce	5	4.4	1	0.9
Social infrastructure	4	3.5	0	0.0
Cosmopoliteness	2	1.8	2	1.9
Family relocation	3	2.7	0	0.0
Job posting	1	0.9	1	0.9
Farm succession	1	0.9	0	0.0
Education	1	0.9	0	0.00
Years of formal education				
0	12	10.6	30	28.0
<7	27	25.7	25	23.4
7 – 12	55	48.7	47	43.9
>12	17	15.0	5	4.7
Mean	8.85±4.51		6.89±5.03	

Source: Field Survey 2023, *Multiple responses

Gender Control Over Resources

Evidence in Table 2 shows that access to land was widespread among both male and female migrants in the study area. Almost all the male respondents (96.5%) and female respondents (97.2%) had access to land. This indicates that land was generally available to migrants for livelihood activities in the cocoa-producing communities. The similarly high levels of access recorded by both genders further suggest that exclusion from land use was not the principal challenge confronting the migrants. Rather, the more important issue was the nature of the tenure arrangements through which the land was accessed and the extent to which respondents could independently exercise authority over it. Thus, although access is an essential condition for agricultural production, it does not necessarily confer ownership, secure tenure or decision-making power over the land. A considerable gender disparity was observed in land ownership. While 60.2% of the male migrants owned land, only 35.5% of their female counterparts did so. This means that male migrants were almost twice as likely as female migrants to own the land used for their livelihood activities. The result

reflects the continuing gender imbalance in land ownership in many rural African communities, where customary land-allocation practices, inheritance arrangements and household power relations tend to favour men. Because land ownership provides greater security and long-term authority over land use, the lower ownership rate among women may restrict their capacity to make independent production decisions, invest in permanent crops, use land as collateral or transfer the land to their children.

The difference in land ownership is particularly important because secure land rights influence the willingness of farmers to undertake long-term agricultural investments. In cocoa-producing communities, establishing and maintaining cocoa farms requires substantial labour, capital and a long period before meaningful returns are realized. Migrants who do not possess secure ownership or long-term use rights may be reluctant to invest in cocoa rehabilitation, soil improvement, permanent structures or other productivity-enhancing practices. Female migrants may therefore be disproportionately disadvantaged because their comparatively lower ownership could limit both the scale and duration of their agricultural investments. The modes through which the respondents accessed land also revealed important gender differences. A higher proportion of women accessed land through leasing, as 44.9% of the female migrants compared with 31.0% of the male migrants used leased land. This suggests that female migrants depended more heavily on temporary or negotiated tenure arrangements. Although leasing provides an opportunity for women to participate in agricultural production, it may expose them to rental costs, uncertainty over renewal and restrictions on the kinds of crops that can be cultivated. Landowners may, for instance, discourage tenants from establishing tree crops because such crops create long-term claims on the land. Consequently, women's dependence on leasing may help to explain their lower participation in cocoa and other tree-crop production.

Sharecropping was practised by almost equal proportions of male and female migrants, accounting for 18.6% and 18.7%, respectively. This indicates that sharecropping was an important land-access mechanism for migrants irrespective of gender. It may enable migrants without sufficient capital to gain access to farmland and participate in cocoa production.

However, sharecropping can also limit the control exercised by the farmer because decisions concerning production practices, input use, harvesting and the distribution of proceeds may be influenced by the landowner. Therefore, even where male and female migrants had access through sharecropping, such access should not automatically be interpreted as effective control over the land and its economic benefits. The pattern of ownership further demonstrates that male migrants possessed stronger individual land rights than female migrants. Among respondents who owned land, 77.9% of the male migrants had sole ownership, compared with only 38.5% of the female landowners. Conversely, joint ownership was reported by 53.8% of the female landowners but only 14.7% of the male landowners. This shows that men were more likely to possess land in their individual capacity, whereas women were more likely to hold land jointly with spouses, relatives or other household members.

The relatively high level of joint ownership among women may have both positive and negative implications. On the one hand, joint ownership could signify cooperation, shared investment and recognition of women's interests in household property. On the other hand, where prevailing social norms give men greater authority within jointly owned property, women's names or contributions may not necessarily translate into equal decision-making rights. Therefore, the quality of joint ownership is more important than its mere existence. It is necessary to determine whether women could independently influence decisions relating to crop selection, leasing, sale, inheritance, transfer and the use of proceeds generated from the land. Family ownership was relatively uncommon among both genders, accounting for 7.4% of male and 7.7% of female landowners. This close distribution suggests that access through extended-family arrangements was limited among migrants, possibly because most customary family lands are controlled by indigenous kinship groups. As non-indigenes, migrants may not enjoy the same inheritance and lineage-based rights as members of the host communities. Migrant status may therefore create tenure insecurity for both men and women, although women may experience an

additional disadvantage arising from gendered household and community relations.

Regarding land use, arable crop production was the dominant activity among both male and female migrants. Most male respondents (96.5%) and female respondents (92.5%) used land for arable crop cultivation. This indicates that food-crop production constituted a major livelihood activity among migrants in the study area. The relatively small gender difference also suggests that women were substantially involved in crop production and contributed significantly to household food supply and income generation.

However, extensive participation in arable farming does not necessarily mean that women possessed equal control over decisions relating to the land, production process or income generated from the crops. A more noticeable gender difference was recorded in tree-crop production. While 66.4% of the male migrants used land for tree crops, only 51.4% of the female migrants did so. The higher participation of men may be connected with their stronger ownership position and greater access to secure and long-term land rights. Tree crops such as cocoa require permanent or long-duration occupation of land, making secure tenure particularly important. Women who depend on leased, jointly owned or informally allocated land may be less willing or less permitted to establish tree crops because of uncertainty over future access and benefit entitlement.

The lower participation of women in tree-crop production has important livelihood implications. Cocoa is a major commercial crop capable of generating income over a long period. Restricted participation in cocoa cultivation may therefore limit women's access to higher-value agricultural opportunities and reduce their influence within cocoa-producing households and communities. Improving women's tenure security could encourage greater investment in cocoa establishment, rehabilitation and other long-term agricultural enterprises. Land was used by relatively few respondents for livestock production, land sales, residential construction, leasing and non-farm businesses. Only 4.4% of the men and 0.9% of the women used land for livestock production. Similarly, land sales, residential construction and land leasing were more common among men than women, although the proportions were generally low. These results suggest that men possessed greater flexibility in determining alternative uses of land. Activities such as selling, leasing or constructing houses on land usually require stronger ownership rights and greater authority than cultivating seasonal crops. The lower participation of women in these activities therefore reinforces the view that their access to land did not necessarily translate into comparable control.

The ability to sell or lease land is particularly indicative of control because it involves the authority to transfer benefits or exclude others from using the resource. The fact that 8.8% of men, compared with 1.9% of women, reported using land for sale suggests that men exercised greater authority over land disposition. Likewise, 7.1% of men used land for residential construction or leasing, compared with only 2.8% and 0.9% of women, respectively. These differences imply that women's land rights were more likely to be restricted to cultivation rather than extending to transfer, commercial development or long-term property decisions. The low use of land for non-farm businesses among both male and female migrants also indicates limited livelihood diversification. Most respondents depended primarily on agricultural use of land, particularly arable and tree-crop production. Heavy dependence on agriculture may expose migrant households to seasonal income fluctuations, crop failure, climate-related shocks and unstable commodity prices. Nevertheless, the diversification opportunities available to women appear even more restricted because their weaker ownership position may prevent them from converting land to commercial, residential or other income-generating uses.

Table 2: Gender distribution of migrants by control over some land characteristics (access, ownership and usage)

	Male (n = 113)		Female (n =107)	
Variables	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Access to land				
Yes	109	96.5	104	100.0
Mode of access*				
Ownership	68	60.2	38	35.5
Lease	35	31.0	48	44.9
Sharecropping	21	18.6	20	18.7
Ownership of land				
Yes	68	60.2	38	35.5
Type of ownership				
Sole ownership	53	77.9	15	38.5
Joint ownership	10	14.7	21	53.8
Family ownership	5	7.4	3	7.7
Use of land*				
Arable crop production	109	96.5	99	92.5
Tree crop production	75	66.4	55	51.4
Livestock production	5	4.4	1	0.9
Sale of land	10	8.8	2	1.9
Building residential house(s)	8	7.1	3	2.8
Lease of land	8	7.1	1	0.9
Non – farm business	7	4.4	1	0.9

Source: Field survey, 2023. *Multiple responses

Male and female decision-making capacity over land

The results of the content analysis of FGD with ATLAS Ti clearly illustrated in Figure 1 provides a diagrammatic representation of decision-making capacity over land by male and female migrants in the study area. The results captured were from the FGDs carried out in four communities. It shows that only the male migrants in three of the four communities enjoyed independent (alone) decision-making power over use of land. The following statement affirmed this finding; *…many of us decide what to do with land alone. There may be occasional input from our spouses, though, besides we are heads of our households, hence it is our responsibility….* (A male FGD in Bamikemo community, Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo LGA, Ondo State).

In contrast, the female migrants in three of the communities and just a male migrant in only one community decided on land use in collaboration with someone (especially with the spouse and children). The following is one of the excerpts from the discussions:

…we decide in conjunction with our spouses. Besides, they are our heads… (A female FGD in Ajue Community, Odigbo LGA, Ondo State)

In addition, only the female migrants in one community needed to seek permission from someone to determine land usage. It is evident in these findings that most female made decisions about land usage in conjunction with someone else who were mostly their spouses or male children as required by the traditional norms in the study area. These findings clearly revealed male dominance and female submissiveness in rural household gender relations when the need arises for decision-making on land usage. This infers limited control over land by the female and consequently restricting their livelihood activities. However, these findings imply that access to land by almost all male and female did not translate to equal opportunities of being in control over land. Obviously, the male exercised more control over the basic characteristics of land than their female counterparts. This entrenched inequality in household gender relations may continue

to widen the existing gender gap in rural household economy in favour of the male if not addressed.

However, there was insecure land rights for migrants (irrespective of gender) because the customary non-inclusive land right practice against migrants persists. Even among the male who had traditional privileged access to land, incessant land disputes posed a great challenge.

Excerpts from several interviews including the following captured this finding:

...in this community, you can buy a land twice. How? Even after cultivating the land you purchased, a group of individuals may arise claiming ownership over the land. Hence, you may be forced to pay such people in order to secure the crops on the land… (A male respondent in Igbado community, Ondo West LGA, Ondo state).

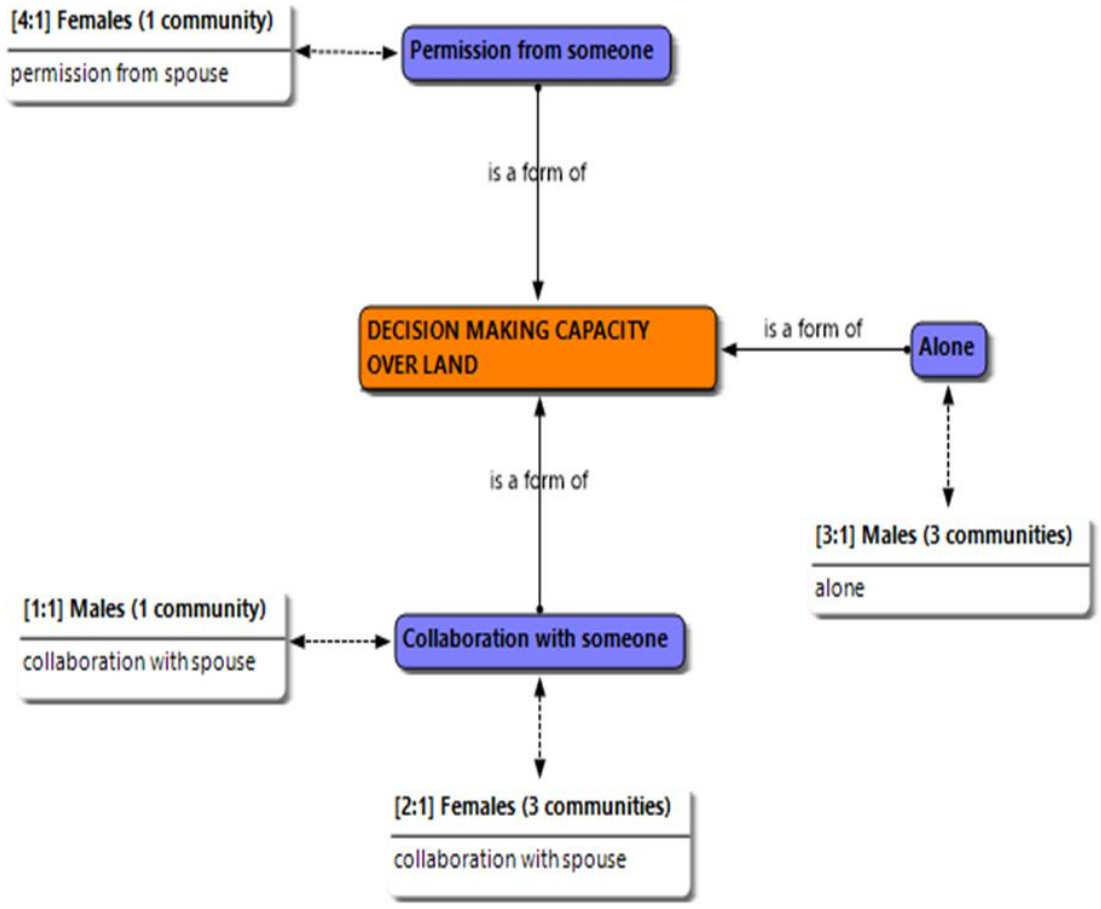


Figure 1: Decision making capacity over land among male and female migrants in the study area.
Source: Field survey, 2023.

Male and female control over labour engagement and provision

The result of control over labour (another crucial productive resource) for livelihood activities in Table 3 reveal that most (87.6% and 91.6%) male and female respectively engaged the services of labour providers. The condition for hiring labour was based on three major parameters (type of work done / services rendered, duration of work done and the payment for services rendered). These were measured by the degree of their involvement (alone or independently, in collaboration with and by permission) to determine their control over labour. More (87.8%) male than female (65.4%) made independent decisions on the duties assigned (types of work) to labour providers. In contrast, more (30.9%) female than male (12.2%) collaborated with someone who were mainly (76.0%)

their spouses and only 25.0 percent of the male spouses. This implies gender disparity in control over the type of work done by the service providers and points to more control over labour by the male which could positively impact the scale of their livelihood activities more than their female counterparts.

Similarly, more (68.4%) male than female (54.1%) made independent decisions on the duration of work assigned to labour providers, but fewer (31.6%) male than female (43.2%) decided in collaboration with someone. Among them, more (77.8%) male than female negotiated with labour providers directly while more (50.0%) female than male (22.2%) decided with their spouses. It thus infers that the rights of the female to make decision could be further eroded based on the existing unequal traditional household gender relations. However, payment for services rendered by labour providers were made through joint decision by almost equal numbers (68.5% and 67.7%) of male and female whose majority (96.7% and 83.7%) partnered directly with the labour providers. Only 31.5 percent of male and 27.4 percent of female exercised autonomy in decision making but the few (only three) respondents who sought permission on payment decisions were female. Thus, the male were the major decision makers of most conditions of hiring labour. Consequently, the relative limited female control over the conditions of hiring labour could continue to limit their choices of livelihood activities. This concern was similarly expressed in a report on Malawi by FAO (2011).

Furthermore, majority (96.5% and 98.1%) of male and female respectively provided labour services in the form of hired labour, share cropping, family labour, causal labour and reciprocal labour with most (94.7% and 95.3%) male and female making decisions on the type of services they rendered. Majority of them (96.3% male and 86.3% female) made independent decisions while fewer (3.7% and 13.7%) male than female partnered with someone. Among these few, most (92.9%) female collaborated with their spouses while all the male negotiated directly with their employers. In a similar manner, almost all (96.3% and 97.1%) male and female enjoyed autonomy in decision making on duration of work while very few (3.7% and 2.9%) male and female collaborated with someone who were all spouses of the female and mainly employers of the male. This finding is in contrast to the finding of Meng *et al.* (2014) that collaboration was the most preferred option in households by both male and female labour providers. However, this disparity may be due to location differences. These findings imply that both male and female were almost in total control over the type and duration of services they rendered. However, nearly all (96.6% and 91.7%) male and female respectively depended on collaboration with someone who were mainly their employers to fix the remuneration for services provided while only very few (3.4%) male and no female exercised autonomy over the decision. Based on the conditions of labour engagement and provision most male and female enjoyed greater autonomy over the type of tasks and the duration of time for services provided. This implies equal opportunity for both gender in access to productive resources. This could be leveraged to enhance gender equity in household livelihood and economic distribution. In the general analysis of conditions of labour engagement and provision, it was revealed that the male were the major decision makers and enjoyed more control while the female depended more on others. This disparity may likely increase the existing gender gap in rural household livelihood activities and economy in favour of the male gender if not adequately addressed.

Table 3: Gender Distribution of migrants by control over labour

	Labour engagement				Labour provision			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Variables	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Access to labour								
Yes	99	87.6	98	91.6	109	96.5	105	98.1
Major source of labour								
Hired labour	67	67.7	84	85.7	1	0.9	11	10.5
Sharecropper labour	17	17.2	5	5.1	24	22.0	5	4.8
Casual labour	3	3.0	1	1.0	1	0.9	1	1.0
Reciprocal labour	1	1.0	0	0.0	-	-	-	-
Personal Labour	-	-	-	-	79	72.5	46	43.8
Duration of work								
Alone	39	68.4	20	54.1	105	96.3	101	97.1
In collaboration	18	31.6	17	43.2	4	3.7	3	2.9
Duration of work (In collaboration with)								
Spouse	4	22.2	8	50.0	1	25.0	3	100.0
Labour provider	14	77.8	8	50.0	-	-	-	-
Employer	-	-	-	-	3	75.0	0	0.0
Type of work								
Alone	86	87.8	53	65.4	103	96.3	88	86.3
In collaboration	12	12.2	25	30.9	4	3.7	14	13.7
With permission	0	0.0	3	3.7	-	-	-	-
Type of work (In collaboration with)								
Spouse	3	25.0	19	76.0	0	0.0	13	92.9
Labour provider	9	75.0	6	24.0	-	-	-	-
Employer	-	-	-	-	4	100.0	1	7.1
Type of work (With permission from:)								
Spouse	0	0.0	3	100.0	-	-	-	-
Payment								
Alone	28	31.5	17	27.4	1	3.4	0	0.0
In collaboration	61	68.5	42	67.7	28	96.6	11	91.7
With permission	0	0.0	3	4.8	0	0.0	1	8.3
Payment (in collaboration with:)								
Spouse	2	3.3	7	16.3	0	0.0	2	18.2
Labour provider	59	96.7	36	83.7	-	-	-	-
Employer	-		-	-	28	100.0	9	81.8
Payment with permission from:)								
Spouse	0	0.0	3	100.0	0	0.0	1	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Male and female decision-making capacity over labour

Data in Fig 2 illustrates a general overview of the decision-making capacity over labour among male and female migrants in the study area. These results were revealed in the FGDs carried out in four communities. Only the male migrants in two communities made decisions alone concerning the labour providers they engaged. These decisions encompassed duration of work, type of work and payments made. The following statements corroborates this finding:

…we prefer to engage labour on our own. This is because we make the payment, most times… (Male FGD in Bamikemo community, Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo LGA)

Furthermore, the male and female migrants in two communities made decisions concerning their labour providers, in collaboration with someone (spouses or labourers).

…of course, we engage the services of labour in collaboration with our spouses. This is because there may be occasions when we cannot pay the labourer(s), hence our spouses will make the payment… (Male FGD in Igbado community, Ondo-West LGA)

Lastly, only the female migrants in two of the communities had to seek permission from someone to make crucial decisions concerning labour providers. These statements were generated from the discussions:

…we seek permission from our husbands before engaging labourers to work for us... (Female FGD in Bamikemo community, Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo LGA)

…this is how we get our wages. The proceeds from the sale of cocoa beans is usually divided into three portions. Two portions go to the farm owner/employer while the rest goes to us (the sharecroppers). Out of the little portion we get, we are even expected to pay for extra labour employed and fungicides for cocoa pest control. This often leaves us with meagre income... (A male sharecropper migrant in Ipoba community, Idanre Local Government Area).

The import from these findings is that many respondents in the study area made decisions on labour engagement and provision in conjunction with someone else, who were either spouses or the labour providers themselves and this often eroded their decision-making capacity which ultimately impacted their control over labour negatively. Also, payments for services rendered by both male and female depended mainly on partnering with others to fix the remuneration which was not always based on cash payment. The following statements was from the discussion.

Male and female control over capital resource

Table 4 shows the results of male and female control over capital resource (cash income, credit facilities, loans and remittances) based on three criteria: decision made alone, decision made in collaboration with someone and by permission. All male and female manage cash income but varied in decision making power by gender. The decision over the management of cash income revealed that more (64.6%) male and female (53.3%) made this pertinent financial decision in collaboration with someone but fewer (35.4%) male than female (46.7%) decided alone. Evidently, more male and female depended on others to make decisions but more female than male enjoyed greater autonomy over the decision to manage cash income. This may be due to the increasing number of females headed households. For those who made collaborative decisions over cash income, almost all (98.6%) male and all (100.0%) female partnered with their spouses while only one (1.4%) male collaborated with parent. This implies that the management of cash income was considered by both male and female as a financial

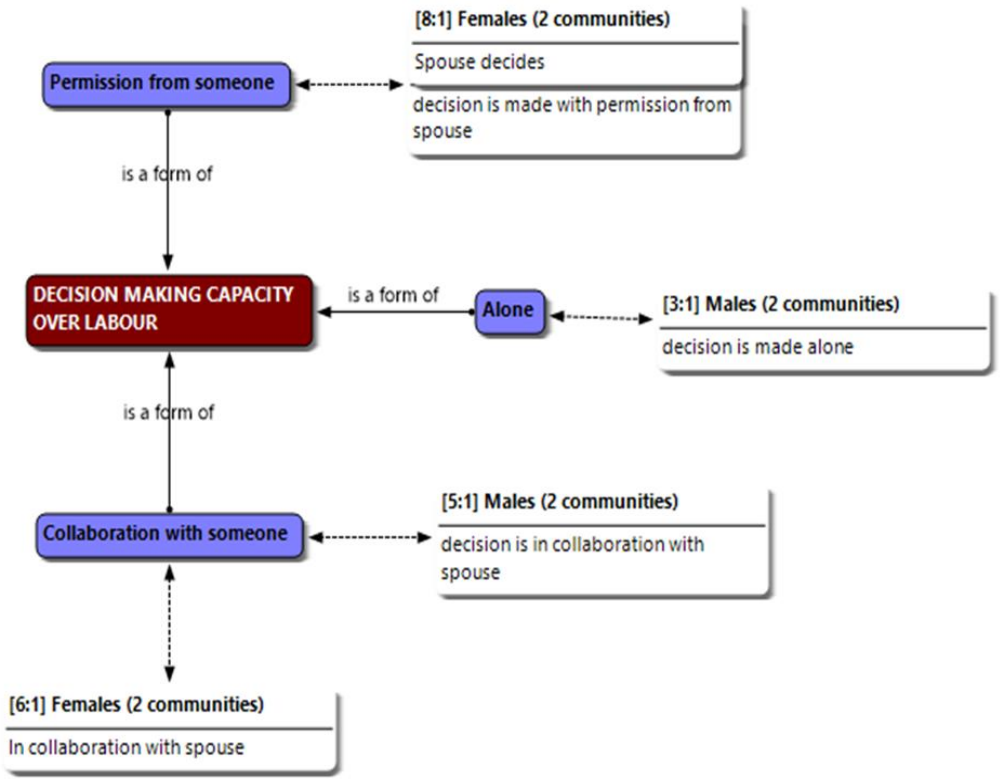


Figure 2: Decision-making capacity over labour among male and female migrants in the study area.
Source: Field survey, 2023.

decision which could only be jointly exercised effectively. However, this is in contrast to the finding by Lastarria-Cornhiel (2006) that most African households comprise men and women who are less likely to pool financial resources together.

In addition, though majority (68.0%) of male and 73.0 percent of female were solely responsible for repayment of credit facilities, more (32.0%) male than female (27.0%) collaborated with someone. Among those who jointly repaid credit facilities, majority (95.8%) of the male and all (100.0%) the female collaborated with their spouses and only one male partnered with parent. This implies that, more female enjoyed greater decision-making capacity over the management of credit facilities particularly in the disbursement and repayment.

Similarly, among those who disbursed credit facilities, more female (71.4%) than male (59.2%) decided alone while more (40.8%) male than female (28.6%) partnered with someone. Among them, majority of male and all (100%) the female partnered with their spouses while the very few (3.2%) who collaborated with parents were male. This is in contrast to the finding in Ethiopia by Mare (2017) that rural women do not exercise full control over credit facilities due to low levels of education and inadequate knowledge of financial management.

Further findings revealed that among the few who disbursed remittances, more (74.4%) female than male (55.1%) solely made the decision while more (48.9%) male than female (25.6%) depended on collaboration. Therefore, in the general analysis of the control over capital, the female exercised more control than the male over most external financial resources (credit repayment, disbursement of credit facilities and remittances) but both genders exercised lesser control over the management of cash income. Therefore, providing more opportunities for both male and female in capital resource, the disparity in rural household livelihood activities could be substantially reduced and the economy could be greatly enhanced.

Table 4: Gender distribution of migrants by control over capital

	Male		Female		Total	
Variables	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Decisions about capital						
Managing cash income	113	100.0	107	100.0	220	100.0
Repaying loan or credit	75	66.4	63	58.9	138	62.7
Disbursing credit facilities	76	67.3	63	58.9	139	63.2
Disbursing remittances	45	39.8	43	40.2	88	40.0
Managing cash income						
Alone	40	35.4	50	46.7	90	40.9
In collaboration	73	64.6	57	53.3	130	59.1
Managing cash income (in collaboration with…)						
Spouse	72	98.6	57	100.0	129	99.2
Parent	1	1.4	0	0.0	1	0.8
Repaying credit facilities						
Alone	51	68.0	46	73.0	97	70.3
In collaboration	24	32.0	17	27.0	41	29.7
Repaying credit facilities (in collaboration with…..)						
Spouse	23	95.8	17	100.0	40	97.6
Parent	1	4.2	0	0.0	1	2.4
Disbursing credit facilities						
Alone	45	59.2	45	71.4	90	64.7
In collaboration	31	40.8	18	28.6	49	35.3
Disbursing credit facilities (in collaboration with…)						
Spouse	30	96.8	18	73.0	97	70.3
Parent	1	3.2	0	0.0	1	2.0
Disbursing remittances						
Alone	23	51.1	32	74.4	55	62.5
In collaboration	22	48.9	11	25.6	33	37.5
Disbursing remittances (in collaboration with…)						
Spouse	22	100.0	11	100.0	33	100.0

*Multiple responses. Source: Field survey, 2023.

Male and female decision-making capacity over capital

Data in Figure 3 illustrates the decision-making capacity over capital among male and female migrants in the study area. These results were generated from the FGDs carried out in four communities. Only the female migrants in one community could make decisions alone concerning their various forms of financial capital. These decisions involve managing cash income, disbursing credit facilities, repaying loan on credit facilities and/or disbursing remittances. The following statement drives home this point:

…the income that comes from our spouses' side is theirs; likewise, the one from our end is ours and managed by us. It is not easy to join our own resources with that of our husbands... (Female FGD in Ipoba community, Idanre LGA)

Also, the male and female migrants in four and three communities, respectively made crucial decisions on capital in collaboration with someone (spouses mostly). These are excerpts of participants' responses at FGD sessions to buttress this point:

…when we are through with household expenditures, we keep some money apart for use in the next planting season. The funds may not even be sufficient; hence we may meet our cooperatives or cocoa buyers for loans… (Male FGD in Ajue community, Odigbo LGA)

…we cannot make independent decisions about finance. Even our spouses stand as guarantors for us when we secure loans... (Female FGD in Ajue community, Odigbo LGA)

…we sit and make financial decision with our spouses. Ranging from children's education to household maintenance (food)… (Male FGD in Igbado community, Ondo-West LGA)

It was deduced from these findings that most respondents in the study area made virtually all financial decisions in conjunction with someone, usually their spouses. This is an indication of their limited control over capital, which would consequently limit their choice of livelihood activities.

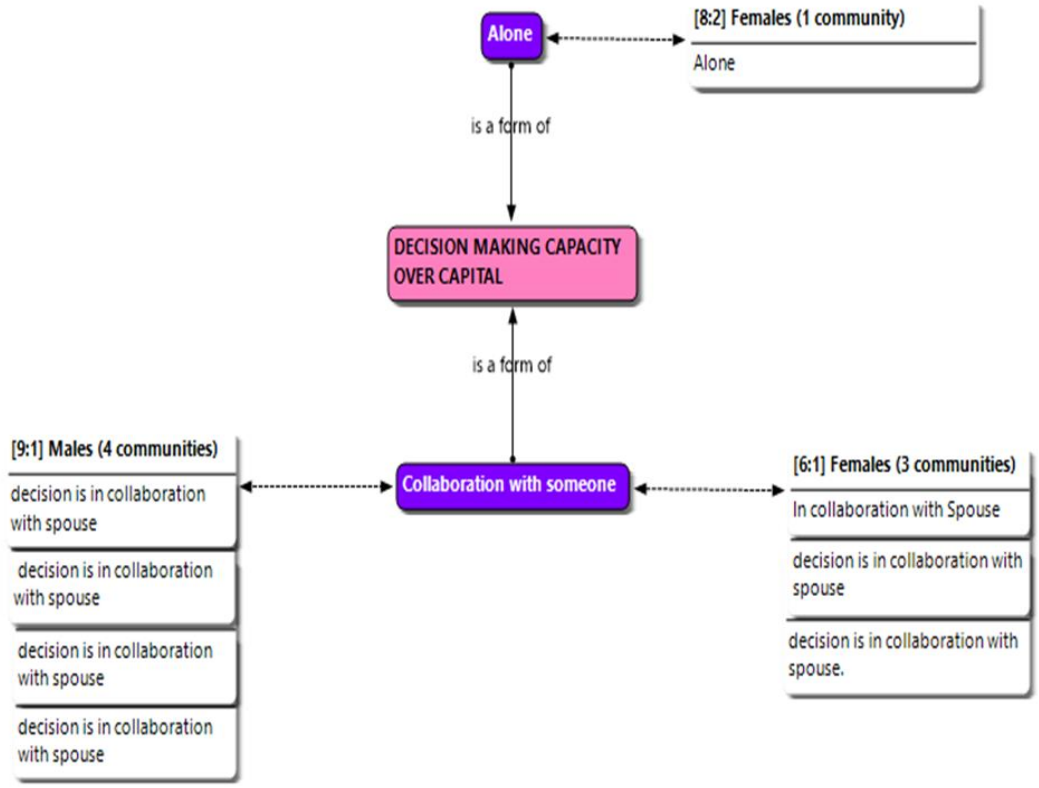


Figure 3: Decision-making capacity over capital among male and female migrants in the study area.
Source: Field survey, 2023.

T-test analysis between male and female migrants' control over productive resources

Results of t-test analysis (Table 5) show that there was significant difference ($p<0.05$) in migrants' control over productive resources for livelihood activities in the study area. The t-value was 3.275 with a p-value of 0.001 and the mean for male (Mean = 17.9) was higher than that of the female (Mean = 14.4). This is an indication that the male had higher control over productive resources for livelihood activities than their female counterpart. This may not be unconnected with the differences in their gender roles and responsibilities.

Table 5: Results of t-test analysis between male and female migrants' control over productive resources

Gender	Case	Mean	SD	SE	df	t	Sig. diff.	95% Confidence interval		Decision
Male	113	17.9	.64	3.11	111	3.275	0.001	-14.32	-3.51	H_0 rejected
Female	107	14.4	.96	2.48	105			-13.27	-3.06	

SD Standard Deviation; SE Standard Error; df degree of freedom. Source: Field survey, 2023

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study established that access to productive resources did not necessarily translate into effective control among migrants in the cocoa-producing communities of Ondo State. Although male and female migrants had similarly high access to land and labour, substantial gender differences existed in ownership, use and decision-making authority. Male migrants exercised greater control over land, particularly through higher levels of sole ownership, larger involvement in tree-crop production and greater authority to determine alternative uses of land. They also demonstrated greater autonomy in decisions concerning the engagement of labour, including the type of work assigned and the duration of services. Female migrants, by contrast, depended more on leased and jointly owned land and were more likely to make land- and labour-related decisions in collaboration with, or with the permission of, their spouses.

The findings further revealed that gender relations surrounding financial capital differed from those associated with land and labour. Female migrants demonstrated relatively greater autonomy in decisions relating to loan repayment, the allocation of borrowed funds and the management of remittances, although cash-income decisions were commonly made jointly by both male and female respondents. This indicates that women's control was not uniformly weak across all productive resources but varied according to the nature of the resource and the household decision involved. Overall, however, male migrants had greater control over productive resources, confirming the persistence of gender inequality in livelihood decision-making. The findings therefore underscore the need to move beyond providing women with mere access to productive resources towards strengthening their secure land rights, decision-making authority, bargaining power and capacity to obtain equitable benefits from livelihood activities. Interventions in migrant cocoa-producing communities should also recognize the combined influence of gender and migrant status, since insecure tenure arrangements and customary practices may constrain both male and female migrants while placing women at a comparatively greater disadvantage.

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