



Research Article



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Examining the factors that affect women in land accessibility amongst Talensi of Northern Ghana

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Abstract

Agricultural production provides a source of income for millions of families throughout Africa. Women, who constitute the majority and are the poorest in Africa, and particularly those in Talensi in Ghana, are engaged in farming and make significant contributions to agricultural production. Whether or not women have access to land will determine their contributions to the agricultural sector and any other sectors of the economic system. This study investigated factors that affect women's access to land in the Talensi community in Northern Ghana, using a qualitative approach that included in-depth interviews and key informant interviews. The findings were presented in a report. A total of 30 participants from the Talensi area were questioned, including chiefs, Tindans, women, and household heads. The findings of the study covered customary practises on property ownership and inheritance, economic considerations, understanding of land rights, and urbanisation in the Talensi area. According to the findings, future land reforms should involve increased engagement with traditional leaders (gate keepers) to rethink the modalities of getting access to and control over property to be successful.

Keywords: accessibility, land, Northern Ghana, Talensi, women

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Public Interest Statement

The findings will aid in the development of policies on land access and gender inequality in land ownership by local governments and policymakers, as well as government and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, if the study's recommendations are adopted and executed properly, they will contribute to resolving women's land difficulties. Finally, the study will serve as a springboard for future research on women and land access or ownership.

1. Introduction

Women's access to land is a hot topic in Sub-Saharan Africa's social, economic, and political discussions. Land is a highly valued asset across Sub-Saharan Africa, according to Davison (1988) and Sarpong (1974), referenced by Dery (2015). As a result of this, land is the primary source of money, wealth, social position, and influence in Ghana. All things being equal, every individual deserves equal treatment and opportunity without undue gender bias. In Ghana, clans, stools, skins, and families possess 80% of the land. According to Kuusaana et al., the state owns 18% of the company, while the community owns the remaining 2%. (2013).

Accessibility of land within the customary sector is based on individual land holdings within the community. Pottier (2005) viewed land under customary tenure as a resource that all community members should have access to in order to survive. Many previous scholars have recognised this (Kamer-Mote 2005; Kuusaana 2013). According to Kuusaana (2013), there are two ways to share property in Ghana: matrilineal inheritance and matrilineal inheritance.

In the south of Ghana, property is inherited through the mother's lineage. In this situation, only a matrikin member can inherit lineage property, whereas self-owned property can be gifted to anybody the deceased wishes. So, property and prestige pass from the mother's brother to the sister's kid. In fact, the heir generally ignores the traditional obligations owed to the surviving widow and her child. Matrilineal women have more access to and control over land than patrilineal women. Wives, daughters, and sisters have no inheritance rights under patrilineal succession systems (from father to son or father to brothers) (Kuusaana, 2013).

Many prior research concurs with Kuusaana (2013). For example, Quan (2006) stated that matrilineal systems allow women to obtain land more easily in social networks, but that these benefits are rapidly disappearing. Manuh (1984) also reported that lineage chiefs frequently favour men over women. The Talensi people of northern Ghana have male-dominated institutions like chieftaincy, kinship, Tindans, lineages, and family head systems. Men, divorcees, and widows may be required to relinquish matrimonial lands even if they have an interest in them (Toulmin and Quan, 2000; cited by Kuusaana, 2013). The key question therefore is what are the factors that affect women accessibility to land amongst Talensi of northern Ghana. This current study answers the question raised above.

1.1 Research Question

What are the factors that affect women accessibility to land amongst Talensi of northern Ghana?

1.1 Research Objective

To explore the factors that affect women accessibility to land amongst Talensi of northern Ghana.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Women Accessibility to Land

Gender and kinship relations play a significant influence in determining the degree of access, ownership, and control of land in many nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana (Benneh, Kasanga, and Amoyaw 1995; Rao 2006; Kiguli 2004; GAAP 2013; Alidu 2015). The majority of women in Ghana, particularly rural women, have access to and control over land reliant on their social relationship with a male family member – father, spouse, or brother – and this access right is forfeited anytime the relationship breaks down. A woman's right to land forfeiture occurs if she is in a relationship that is separated, married, divorced, or widowed (Rünger 2006 as referenced by Gender inequality in land ownership between men and women has been documented in research by the International Centre for Research on Women (2011), which found that the gender difference in land ownership between men and women is considerable and ubiquitous.

According to Banda (2012), among patrilineal groups in Northern Malawi, marriage status determines women's land rights. Bonye & Kpieta (2012) found that the spiritual significance of land is an asset that restricts women's access to agricultural land in northern Ghana since women in this region are unable to make sacrifices for land because the custodial role is reserved for men. Women cannot possess land unless they are willing to make sacrifices. Land is an asset, and in some cases, they are regarded as people who cannot be trusted to maintain it well. As previously stated by Bonye & Kpieta (2012), males believe that if women are allowed to inherit productive resources, the land will become the property of their husband's family upon her marriage. According to Bonye and Kpieta (2012), a growing percentage of males in the Upper East Region of Ghana are willing to grant land to women for farming since they appreciate their contributions to the family's income. Even if a couple owns land jointly in Ghana, men have more say in how that land is managed and used, according to Duncan and Brants (2004).

According to Apusigah (2009), access and management of landed resources in rural Ghana are highly politicised, gendered, and subject to negotiation. Since women in the Upper West Region of Ghana are not allowed to cultivate yam, Apusigah (2009) reports that women in the Mamprugu and Sisal communities use their labour to work on their own fields during yam cultivation. Apusigah (2009) observed that women in Northern Ghana are able to gain access to land through their labour. They work on small family farms, where they bargain for the right to farm their own land. Some researchers, however, argue that the lack of formality and security for women is a problem with this type of property access. As mentioned by Aliu (Mutangadura 2007; Tiskata & Yaro 2014), land has been sold by chiefs and family heads in peril-urban villages, where commercialization and privatisation have led to a high demand for land (2015).

Women who own land lead more dignified and respected lives, supported by greater household decision-making alternatives, according to substantial empirical data (Agarwal 1994; Mason 1998; Jejeebhoy 2000). According to the literature mentioned above (see e.g., Haddad, Hoddinott and Aldweman 1997; Agarwal 1997), access and ownership rights to land may boost women's security at home and in the wider society, according to the literature mentioned above (see e.g., Haddad, Hoddinott and Aldweman 1997). A society free of domestic abuse is possible when women have access to land of their choice or sovereignty over land.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Setting

The study was conducted in the Talensi Traditional Area, which is located in the Talensi District of Ghana's Upper East Region. The district's men and women were recruited for this study. Indeed, they were. The overall attendance from the start of the interview on 1 August, 2020 to the end of the interview on 31 August, 2020. They numbered thirty and included both males and females.

3.2 Study Design

This study made use of a qualitative framework. There is a strong connection between qualitative research and non-positivist or interpretive viewpoints. It was defined by Bryman in 1988 as 'the cluster of beliefs and directives that for scientists in a specific discipline determine what should be studied, how research should be done, and how results should be evaluated'. Qualitative research is based on the premise that people develop their own interpretations of their social environment and that these interpretations are often transient and situational in character (Winegardner, 2001). Design research was the best method for identifying the barriers that women face in gaining access to land. Because some researchers (such as Monette et al., 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Richardson, 1995) believe that qualitative data is the best way to study human learning, we chose a qualitative framework. Qualitative research methods allow participants to express their own unique perspectives on the subjects being investigated.

3.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

According to Pollock (2009), sampling is the process of selecting one or more items from a population. Sampling is an essential component of behavioural research. Without sampling, no research can be conducted effectively. Without sampling, no research can be conducted effectively. A study of an entire population is neither possible nor feasible (Singh, 2006). Cost and time limits are just two of the difficulties impeding the research of the entire population. Thus, sampling was created with the goal of producing cost-effective yet accurate study findings (Singh, 2006). The study's participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling technique in which the probability of selecting each constituent in a population is unknown or even zero for some members (Osuala, 2005). This study enrolled a total of 30 individuals, including women and men. Each participant was interviewed in-depth about the subject area based on his or her prior expertise.

Table 1: Category and Number of Respondents

Category of respondents	Total number interviewed
Chiefs	6
Tindans	6
Family heads	6
Women	6
Widows	6
Total	30

3.4 Data collection techniques

The study incorporated both primary and secondary data. Primary data were gathered through the use of a semi-structured interview guide and an informant guide to elicit detailed information from each participant. The researcher performed these interviews individually. Triangulation was ensured by the employment of multiple tools. Secondary data were used to supplement the acquired data. The information gathered from the authors' published works on subjects pertinent to the research aided in informing and influencing the research activity. Before the interviews began, all participants signed a consent form, and responders who were unable to sign were given a stamp pad to thumb print. The interviews were taped. Along with the interview results, demographic information about each participant was gathered. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to react freely to questions and also enable the researcher to elicit detailed descriptions and explanations of circumstances from participants. Participants were urged to respond freely to all questions. Each interview session with a subject lasted between 15 and 20 minutes, and data collection took place over the course of one month. According to Bryman (2008) and Creswell (1998), trustworthiness is quantifiable using four criteria: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Conformability. According to Guba and Lincoln (1982), in qualitative research, the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are analogous to the quantitative concepts of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. This was the method used in the study.

3.6 Data Analysis

After the interview replies were translated verbatim from the Talis language into English by the researcher, the data was analysed using thematic and content analysis. Every recorded audio interview was then transcribed and the resulting data was examined to get a complete picture of the experiences of the people who took part in the research project in question. Field notes were then added to the transcribed data. The interviews were recorded on audiotape and then transcribed into a note book and written afterwards. The transcribed data was labelled to identify the various participants. Participants A through C were labelled with P1, and so on all the way up to P30, which stood for "participant 30." First, the data had to be coded by identifying specific words, phrases, and paragraphs, and then giving each one a label to give the data some context. The themes that emerged from the data were labelled with the first lists of codes. Revisions were made to the codes in the list and thematic categories were created. Nonverbal communication was also considered in the quest for fundamental meanings and essence, but redundant information was deleted from participants' responses.

4. Results & Discussion

Participants were interviewed on factors that affect women accessibility to land. Results from the participants' presents the main themes that came strongly to the fore from the findings included Customary Practices on Ownership of Property, Customary Practices on Inheritance, Economic Factors, Domestic and Reproductive roles of women, Knowledge on Land Rights and Urbanization in the Talensi District.

Customary Practices on Ownership of Property

According to the data obtained, husbands, brothers, elders, chiefs, and family heads can allot land to women in the study. Most female and male respondents stated that women were traditionally restricted in their land ownership. The following explanations were given by participants:

Historically, women have been viewed as transient members of their biological families who will marry and leave the family. As a result, they are disregarded when allocating land among family members. In this regard, women's land ownership may be subject to claims by their spouses.

According to the participants' perspectives, men are responsible for awarding land to women and determining the type of land to allot. According to these key informants, as daughters, women can inherit farming land from their fathers. Wives cannot inherit their husbands' farming land, but their children can inherit from their fathers. That was explained by a key informant;

Our customs prohibit a wife from inheriting her husband's farming land; but she may gain access to the land through her children. It is possible for the children to inherit it and designate the land for farming to their mother. In the absence of sons, daughters inherit farming land, he continued. Where there are sons and daughters available, sons inherit the land and distribute it to their sisters.

Additionally, another person remarked that;

Women are viewed as "properties/assets" in their married houses, transported from somewhere to care for their husbands' children and residences. As a result, "properties cannot own properties." As a result, women are not permitted to possess property because they are themselves considered assets. They assist their husbands on their fields and execute their marital obligations as helpful hands.

All participants stated that in such conditions, where women are not automatically entitled to land and are deemed assets incapable of owning property, women are left with no options within their families and kin. This was consistent with previous reviews of the literature (Aliu 2015; Walby 1990; Sultana 2011; Kandiyoti 1988; Whitehead 1994), which all agreed that in patriarchal systems, women's labour is exploited, and the family and household become a site for gendered conflicts of interest and negotiations, as well as cooperation between husband and wife/wives. This finding is consistent with Bonye & Kpeita's (2012) findings in Ghana's Upper East Region. This sociocultural milieu not only impedes but also denies women secure access to land. This study also confirms Banda (2012)'s finding that among patrilineal communities in Northern Malawi, women's access to land is determined by their marital status.

Customary Practices on Inheritance

Qualitative data from the study also revealed that it is mostly men who inherit their fathers' lands and properties. When a father dies, his property devolves to the eldest of his sons and not the eldest child. One woman participant stated that;

It means that even if I grow older than any of my father children because am a woman I cannot inherit my father's property.

Another key informant said that;

However, if all the deceased's children are minors then the land is inherited by the

deceased's surviving brother(s) to be held in trust for the minors.

Another participant agreed with above and said that;

This is done with the presumption that whoever inherits the property would take care of the sisters, mother and minor children of the deceased.

Participant added that;

The properties owned by a deceased who have only female children are completely inherited by the deceased's brother(s) and Widows do not inherit their husbands' properties; they only rely on their sons who inherit their fathers' properties to cater for their mothers' needs.

One female participant also explained that;

These strict positions in custom; legal redress can be sought under the Intestate Succession Law, PNDCL 111. Section 4 of the PNDCL 111 provides that where someone dies intestate leaving an immovable property such as a house or a parcel of land, the surviving spouse (which may be the widow) and the children are entitled to that property.

Another female participant made it clear that;

Customary beliefs and practices on sacrifices to the 'land gods' are some of the factors impeding women's access to and ownership of land.

All of the study's participants believed that women are traditionally barred from undertaking sacrifices and ceremonies to the land and ancestral gods. This is based on the belief that women are impure, and because ownership is contingent upon these activities, women are judged incapable of owning land. This study verifies Bonye & Kpieta's (2012) results that men claim that if women inherit productive resources, the land will become the property of the husband's family when she marries. This current study also confirmed the findings of previous researchers (Benneh, Kasanga, and Amoyaw 1995; Rao 2006; Kiguli 2004; GAAP 2013; Alidu 2015) that in many Sub-Saharan African countries, including Ghana, gender and kinship relations are critical in determining the extent to which access, ownership, and control of land differ in meaning and understanding between men and women. Another study, Aliu (2015), found that while the cultural system of inheritance favours sons over daughters is a significant impediment to increasing women's access to farming land, family ties formed through marriages or blood relations are reinforced through land allocation to widows and separated women.

Economic Factors

The study further revealed that there were other factors apart from customary factors that impeded women access to and ownership of land in the Talensi district. The major factor mentioned by both men and women respondents were financial constraints.

According to one female participant, the majority of women are unemployed; they make very little from their little farms and modest trading operations. As a result, they lack the funds necessary to purchase land to compensate for what their relatives have denied them.

Another person concurred;

In the recent decade, the growth of lively land markets and subsequent commoditization of land have harmed women's land ownership.

The current study confirms Gray and Kevane's (1992) study on land tenure systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, in which they established that changing land values have a greater impact on women's access to land than on men. As land becomes more valuable, males and business groups headed by men, including governmental authorities, believe it is in their best interests to bargain with women or to take away their properties entirely.

Domestic and Reproductive roles of women

Population growth, women's time constraints, and a lack of enthusiasm among young women in farming were all identified as potential explanations. Women's access to land is hampered by a lack of time. Participants, both male and female, agreed that some women do not have enough time to run their farms. One of the female participants:

Women's domestic and reproductive activities, such as cooking, fetching water, childbearing, and child care, have a detrimental impact on the amount of time they spend working on their farms.

A male participant added,

People in this area are unwilling to give women land since it is difficult for them to find time or money to employ labor for her farm.

This suggests that men's land distribution to women will be influenced by time restrictions. This may impede women's ability to expand their farming operations and produce. Women's access to land, particularly excellent quality land, is limited due to land scarcity caused by population growth. All of the participants agreed that as the number of individuals in families grows, men are given priority. A female participant described how property partition to sons can result in women having lesser or no fields:

Due to the increase in family size, members of the family now have smaller plots of property due to land sub-division among the family's rising members. Before allocating land to women, the household leader will allocate land to interested men who want to cultivate. As a result, the size of women's farms has shrunk, and some women have been denied access to property.

Land scarcity in families during times of population growth is a threat to women's access to land, according to Alius (2015), because the patrilineal inheritance system promotes sons over daughters in land distribution, and time and labour are barriers to increasing women's access to land.

Knowledge on Land Rights

Almost all the female participants did not aware about their land rights, as seen by their comments. This could be since land rights for women are not traditionally prescribed and institutionalized. As a result, they are underappreciated and misunderstood even by women. According to them, *the traditional role of men as family heads continues, and they are*

solely responsible for caring for women and providing them with food, clothing, and shelter, as custom dictates.

As one participant put it,

We, as women, are just to assist our husbands in whatever they do and to carry out their marital responsibilities.

It was also discovered that all of the female respondents were aware of laws aimed at protecting their rights, despite the fact that some of them were unable to list them.

This was brought up by a crucial informant:

A woman is a woman, according to our tradition. Even if she is considerably older than these guys, woman cannot be the leader of a family in their presence. She has no control over the land, which is a valuable resource for the family. Men oversee family matters, such as land allocation and management.

This was clearly illustrated by this participant:

Customarily, the head of the family needs to pacify the ancestors every year for the lives of the surviving family members. Can a woman pacify the ancestors? No! It is not done here.

This study's findings are comparable to those of Duncan and Brants (2004), who studied the Volta region of Ghana. Sixty percent of the people surveyed had no idea that the Intestate Succession Law (PNDCL 111) was used, while traditional inheritance processes were still being used. As we've previously discovered, these factors are harmful to women's access to land and property ownership.

Urbanization in the Talensi District

When rapid urbanization occurred, it was found to have an impact on women's rights to land. More agricultural property is now being converted to urban land uses such as residential, commercial, and recreational, and the price of land is rapidly rising. The Talensi District is seeing rapid growth. As a result, the leaders of land-owning families increasingly prefer to sell their land rather than give it away as a gift to women.

One participant said;

Women's high-value lands are depleted and are being replaced by less valuable properties located far from towns where extra land is available.

Another participant said;

A lucrative industry for landowners has made it difficult for men to get their hands on land for themselves, encouraging the marginalization of women in the ownership of land.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, women in Talensi do not have equal access to land, and there is a gender bias in land allocation. Their rights are restricted to their natal and matrimonial family lands. However, without the family/clan head's approval, women cannot govern, alienate, sell, or rent property. Because most women merely have user rights, the current landholding system does not provide security of tenure for most women. Our research indicated that traditional barriers prevent women from owning land in Talensi. It revealed that customary land ownership, inheritance, and ancestral sacrifices are impeding women's access to and ownership of land in Talensi. Financial constraints, growing urbanisation, and high female illiteracy rates further hinder women's land ownership in Talensi. Based on the foregoing findings, there is a large gender bias (between women and men) in Talensi district land ownership and access. Ownership and access are usually granted to men. Women do not own customary land in the Talensi district because "women are property of males and property do not own property".

1. It proposed that the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) work more closely with traditional leaders (gatekeepers) to achieve land reforms.
- 2 The Lands Commission's work can feed into existing projects in Ghana to streamline land registration under the Land Administration Project (LAP). These suggestions may not change conventions and traditions, but they may re-awaken leadership in the Talensi customary framework, notably Tindans and family heads who are primary actors in land ownership and transfer.
3. Local Sector Agencies (LSAs) and NGOs to educate chiefs, family leaders, and elders on the importance of women's access to and ownership of lands.
- 4 The government must establish policies to economically empower women by guaranteeing land rights and fair economic possibilities.

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