

Original Research Article

## Gendered Participation in Chicken Feeding in North Rift Region, Kenya

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**Article History**

Received: 18.12.2020

Accepted: 07.01.2021

Published: 20.01.2021

**Abstract:** Kenyan population mainly lives in rural underdeveloped areas spread across the country. Rural areas in Kenya is characterised by low formal employment, low income as well as high level of food insecurity which eventually leads to increased poverty levels. Rural folk considers indigenous chicken as key in economic empowerment and as part of the social life. Chicken provides cheap animal proteins especially white meat and eggs and contributes to convenient cash income. Chicken farming is easy to implement and carrying out feeding is indeed much easier than any other agricultural enterprise hence considered convenient to resource poor rural households. Chicken, especially indigenous are prevalent in the rural areas owing to increased adaptation to harsh scavenging conditions, survival in poor nutrition and tolerance to disease and parasite. Women being found in the homesteads more hours than male counterparts provides a biased operation of women carrying out the feeding operations more than male. This study therefore explains the gendered participation in feeding of chicken among the households in North Rift Region in Kenya. Since feeding is a crucial component in the chicken production value chain, it is important to involve all the players in the household to enable ownership and enhance the investment through chicken farming.

**Keywords:** Poultry, Income, Female, Male, Production, Income.

## INTRODUCTION

Chicken farming have been carried out in Kenya for long with various intentions that include social-cultural intent [1], nutritional purpose and economic support [2]. According to Okitoi, Ondwasy, Mbali and Murekefu [3], every household in North Rift region leaving in the rural set up have chicken of small flock ranging between 5-20. Chicken is key in provision of income and protein to the household family members through eggs and meat [4]. Demand for chicken especially indigenous chicken has been on constant increase in the recent past. Increase in demand has been exacerbated by local consumers of their products [5]. The demand has also been made competitive due to their low productivity, increased disease & pest incidences, poor feeding, low life weight and non-organized marketing channels among the producers [6, 7]. This study therefore provides a highlight of gendered roles in the feeding of chicken especially the indigenous type by the household in North Rift Region and suggested way forward in the household participatory feeding for increased production and achievement of objectives of rearing the chicken.

## METHODOLOGY

Cross sectional survey was carried out in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu Counties in the North Rift region with a total of 250 households targeted. Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu Counties comprises a diverse ethnic and cultural background hence provided a good area for multi ethnic view and operation of chicken feeding among the various households in the region. A self-administered questionnaire comprising of closed and open ended questions for the responded to fill was designed and given to the household heads to fill. Households were chosen at random from the purposely selected two Counties in the region.

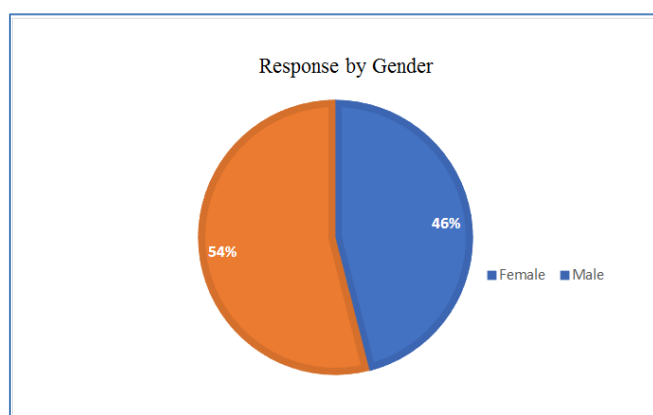
## RESULTS

Age determines decision making process and soundness in making the decision. The study established that 25% of the response was of ages between 41-50 years. On the other hand 24% were 31-40 years followed in number by age range between 51-60 at 22%. youth category of between 20-30 years were 14% while the elderly of over 61 years were represented by 14% as shown in Table 1.

**Table-1: Response by Age**

Age category	Frequency	Percent
20 – 30	38	14
31 – 40	63	24
41 – 50	67	25
51 – 60	58	22
61 – 70	17	11
> 70	8	3
Total	250	100

A total of 135 (54%) of the total response were female while 115 (46%) of the response rate were male. High number of female was available for interview at homes than the male counterparts. Results are illustrated in Fig 1.



**Fig-1**

### *Gender Roles in Indigenous Chicken Feeding Activities*

Table 2 shows categories of participation by the household members especially men and women. Results indicate that purchase of feed if any is carried out by men (56%) in the family though there is a near balance between men and women (44%) participation. However if it comes to actualizing the feeding, female takes critical step in doing it, with a total of 74.2% agreeing so. Only 25.8% of men participated in the indigenous chicken feeding in the rural areas. Cleaning of feeding and watering equipment was basically undertaken by women in the households. A total of 82% of the respondents implied that women carried out the cleaning of chicken equipment of use. Provision of water to indigenous chicken was undertaken by majority women with 70.8% indicating the same while 29.2% indicated male participating in the water provision. The results are presented in Table 2

**Table-2: Gender Roles in Indigenous Chicken Feeding Activities in North Rift Region**

Activity	Percent	
	Male	Female
Purchase of chicken feeds	56.0	44.0
Feeding the chicken	25.8	74.2
<b>Cleaning of feeding area or equipment</b>	18.0	82.0
Giving water to chicken	29.2	70.8
Cleaning water equipment	18.0	82.0

## DISCUSSION

Chicken ownership among the household members is shared among women, men and children. However in terms of level of ownership, women and children owned more chicken than the male counterparts in the region [8]. The findings concur with findings by Kitalyi [9]. A woman role in the feeding of chicken is attributed to the child caring roles which entails feeding hence subsistence farming that is a prerequisite to feeding. Indigenous chicken normally kept in the

rural areas are attributed to non-market production carried out within the homestead where most women in the rural set up spend most of their time. Most indigenous chicken in the rural areas are kept in the kitchen where women spend most of the time carrying out daily activities hence chicken is closely linked to kitchen and hence feeding. Feeding of chicken in the rural areas is not well defined; it is done on kitchen waste and food waste which is recycled to chicken feed. This therefore provided women an opportunity to feed chicken unlike the men who are away most of the time during the day when the chicken is to feed. Women unlike men therefore have an opportunity to carry out chicken feeding more than men in the rural areas in Kenya.

Appreciating participatory feeding of chicken is a clear route towards ownership of chicken farming and way of managing the cost of production which is skewed towards feeds and disease management. Chicken farming in the rural areas is a sure way of economic pathway and rural development as asserted by Ndegwa *et al.* [10] and Mutua [11]. Currently, women in indigenous chicken production act as a bridge between chicken production and alleviation of poverty through income and improved nutrition. It is estimated that 80% of the rural population practice poultry farming and provides a clear view that improve chicken production is actually improving the rural economy and livelihood.

## CONCLUSION

Research findings indicate that women participate more in the indigenous chicken feeding in the rural households in North Rift Region of Kenya. The orientation of participation arises partly from the cultured gender roles which put women more at home than men counterparts. On spending of money during purchase of feeds it is proved to being near a shared role. Careful thought indicates that men are not willing to allow women to spend family money anyhow, but when it comes to real implementation of provision of feeds on daily basis men do not participate much. A reason it could have led to low production of indigenous chicken despite the ever increasing demand for chicken and chicken products in the region and beyond.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is of great concern for agriculture and health extension providers to put a concerted effort on participatory activities implementation among household members. This will provide synergy in the appreciation of the process of chicken farming and the products of chicken for improved income, nutrition and harmony within the households.

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**Citation:** Javan Ngeywo *et al* (2021). Gendered Participation in Chicken Feeding in North Rift Region, Kenya. *South Asian Res J Bio Appl Biosci*, 3(1), 11-13.