Charting a Resilient Future: Climate Change as a Catalyst for Sustainable National Development
Proceedings of the 5th International Conference (FESCON 2025) at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli Campus, Uli, Nigeria
18 - 20 June 2025

GENDERED IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE: FLOODING, LIVELIHOODS, AND FOOD SECURITY IN OGBARU LGA, ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

Okoli, Emmanuella I.[1] Okonkwo A.U[2]., & Akanwa, Angela O[3]
[1,2]Department of Environmental Management, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli, Anambra State
[3]Faculty of Environmental Management, Agriculture and Renewable Energy (FEMARE), University of Technology and Arts, Byumba (UTAB), Rwanda

E-mail: [1]ifyokolii@gmail.com; [2]auokonkwo@gmail.com; [3]angy.akanwa1@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the intricate nexus between flooding, food security, and the gendered impacts of climate change on female farmers in Ogbaru Local Government Area (LGA), Anambra State, Nigeria. In light of the escalating threat posed by climate change, which amplifies extreme weather events such as flooding, the agricultural sector, particularly smallholder farming, faces ever-growing challenges in safeguarding food security. This research seeks to elucidate how climate-induced flooding disrupts agricultural productivity, disproportionately affecting women, who play a central role in food production within rural Nigeria. Employing a survey-based methodology, data were collected via structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions from a sample of 394 female farmers across selected communities. The findings underscore that flooding significantly hampers crop yields, exacerbates food insecurity, and amplifies the vulnerabilities faced by women, due in no small part to prevailing gender inequities. Moreover, the study reveals that while income influences agricultural output, other factors such as climatic variability, access to resources, and socio-political dynamics play equally pivotal roles in determining food security outcomes. The study calls for the formulation of gender-responsive policies and the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices to bolster the adaptive capacities of women farmers in flood-prone areas, thus ensuring a more sustainable and equitable approach to food security in the context of climate change.

Keywords: climate change, female farmers, flooding, food security

1. INTRODUCTION

Environmental challenges such as soil erosion, flooding, pollution, and climate change are becoming increasingly significant worldwide, with far-reaching effects on human health, economic systems, food security, and the sustainable use of natural resources. As these environmental issues continue to persist, it is clear that they will only intensify, especially in light of the rapidly growing global population (Smith & Jones, 2023). Climate change, which refers to long-term shifts in global and regional weather patterns, has emerged as one of the most pressing concerns of the 21st century. Driven by human activities such as deforestation

and the burning of fossil fuels, climate change is leading to a rise in global temperatures and erratic weather events. According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2022), the world is expected to surpass 1.5°C of warming within the next two decades, triggering more frequent and severe climatic disruptions.

One of the most noticeable effects of climate change is the alteration of rainfall patterns, leading to more extreme weather events such as intense rainfall and flooding. These changes significantly affect the water cycle, posing a direct threat to agricultural productivity (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2021). The agricultural sector, which is highly sensitive to shifts in climate, is increasingly facing challenges related to food production and security. In Africa, for example, projections suggest that rainfall could increase by as much as 50% by 2050, exacerbating the risks of flooding and soil degradation, especially in regions like West Africa (UN, 2021). Such shifts are particularly concerning given the growing population and the reliance on agriculture for livelihoods.

The impacts of climate change are particularly pronounced in coastal and low-lying areas, where millions of people are at risk due to rising sea levels and flooding (World Economic Forum, 2022). This global phenomenon is especially relevant for countries in the Global South, including Nigeria, which faces significant vulnerability due to its heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture and its limited capacity to adapt to changing climatic conditions. The food security situation in Nigeria is worsening, as climate-related disruptions, such as crop failure and rising food prices, contribute to a decline in agricultural output and increased hunger (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2018).

Food security, defined as the ability to access sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to maintain a healthy life, is becoming increasingly precarious in many parts of the world (World Food Summit, 1996). In Nigeria, where over 80% of agricultural production is undertaken by smallholder farmers, the country's vulnerability to climate change is amplified (FAO, 2018). The increasing frequency of floods, coupled with rising food prices and diminished agricultural yields, is deepening the food insecurity crisis, particularly among rural communities that rely on farming for their livelihoods.

In many developing regions, women are central to agricultural production and food security. However, gender inequalities often place women in positions of heightened vulnerability to the effects of climate change. Women, especially in rural areas, depend heavily on natural resources for their livelihood and are often more directly affected by climate-related shocks (Odubo, Obafemi, & Emenike, 2019). In West Africa, women play a pivotal role in food production, and their involvement is crucial to ensuring resilience in the face of climate change (Janna & James, 2021). Nevertheless, the intersecting challenges of gender inequality and climate change often exacerbate the vulnerabilities faced by women farmers.

In Nigeria, the devastating floods of 2022, which affected millions of people across the country, underscored the urgency of addressing the risks posed by climate change to both agricultural productivity and food security. Specifically, the floods had a profound impact on Ogbaru Local Government Area (LGA) in Anambra State, where rising water levels from the River Niger caused widespread destruction of farmland, displacement of residents, and the destruction of infrastructure (National Emergency Management Authority [NEMA], 2022). These events highlight the vulnerability of communities in flood-prone areas, where agriculture remains the primary livelihood.

Women farmers in Ogbaru LGA, like many others in similar regions, are disproportionately affected by flooding, yet there is limited research exploring the specific impacts of such climate events on their farming

activities. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the relationship between flooding, food security, and the gendered experiences of women farmers in Ogbaru LGA. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how climate-induced flooding affects agricultural productivity and food security for women, to inform policies and practices that enhance resilience to climate change in flood-prone regions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Climate Change and Its Impacts on Agricultural Productivity

Climate change is an undeniable driver of agricultural disruptions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where many communities rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture. According to the IPCC (2023), climate change is causing observable shifts in weather patterns, including increased rainfall variability, prolonged droughts, and intensified flooding. These changes have far-reaching consequences for agricultural systems, which are increasingly vulnerable to climate-induced shocks (Ademola & Oni, 2023). In Nigeria, the agricultural sector remains susceptible to these stresses, especially in regions like Ogbaru, where the proximity to the River Niger makes the area highly vulnerable to flooding (Akanwa et al., 2022). Flooding in these areas often leads to the loss of arable land, crop destruction, and severe economic setbacks for smallholder farmers who are already grappling with limited resources and infrastructure (Akanwa & Ezeomedo, 2022).

Recent studies underscore the compounded nature of climate change impacts on food security. For example, Adeoye et al. (2023) highlight that severe flooding events, which are becoming more frequent in West Africa due to climate change, result in both immediate and long-term declines in agricultural productivity. This reduces the availability of food and exacerbates food insecurity, which is particularly detrimental in rural areas where agriculture is the primary source of livelihood (Igbokwe, 2023). In Ogbaru LGA, where flood events are frequent, these climatic stresses undermine local agricultural productivity and threaten the sustainability of food systems (Ajah et al., 2023).

Gendered Vulnerability in Agricultural Communities

The vulnerability of women to climate change impacts, particularly in rural agricultural settings, is increasingly being recognized as a critical area of study. Women in many developing countries, including Nigeria, are responsible for both food production and household food security, which places them at the frontline of climate-induced agricultural disruptions. Recent research emphasizes that the gendered impacts of climate change in agricultural communities are often more pronounced due to women's restricted access to land, technology, and decision-making processes (Okonkwo & Nwajiuba, 2023). This limited access further exacerbates their vulnerability to floods and other climate-related disruptions, as they lack the resources needed to adopt adaptive agricultural practices (UN Women, 2022).

In Ogbaru LGA, the gendered impacts of flooding are particularly evident. Women, who are primarily responsible for managing crop production and food preparation, face greater challenges in securing food for their households in the wake of flood disasters. Women's dependence on subsistence farming means that flooding destroys not only their immediate crops but also their longer-term sources of income and food security (Oguike et al., 2023). Additionally, studies suggest that the social and economic structures in rural Nigeria often limit women's ability to participate in disaster response and recovery efforts, leaving them more vulnerable to ongoing climate impacts (Akanwa et al., 2023).

Food Security and Agricultural Resilience in the Face of Flooding

Food security in the face of climate change is increasingly precarious, particularly in regions that are susceptible to flooding. The United Nations (2023) defines food security as a situation where all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to lead an active and healthy life. However, in flood-prone areas like Ogbaru LGA, this goal becomes harder to achieve due to the recurrent destruction of crops and infrastructure. Flooding, often exacerbated by poor drainage and inadequate flood control measures, leads to significant losses in agricultural output, which directly affects local food security (NEMA, 2022).

Recent research highlights the role of agricultural resilience in mitigating the impacts of climate change on food security. According to Adeoye et al. (2023), building resilience in agricultural systems is critical for enhancing food security in flood-prone areas. Adaptive strategies, such as the cultivation of flood-resistant crops, improved irrigation systems, and better disaster preparedness, are essential for minimizing the negative impacts of climate change on food availability. However, these strategies are often inaccessible to smallholder farmers, particularly women, due to a lack of financial resources, technical knowledge, and policy support (Igbokwe, 2023).

Additionally, studies on gendered resilience emphasize that women are key to building resilience in agricultural systems. Women's knowledge of local farming practices and their involvement in food security decisions make them crucial agents of change in adapting to climate stressors. However, their limited access to adaptive technologies and decision-making processes often undermines their potential to contribute effectively to resilience-building efforts (Janna & James, 2023). Thus, integrating gender-responsive approaches to agricultural resilience is vital for enhancing food security in flood-prone regions of Nigeria.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area

Ogbaru Local Government Area (LGA) is located in the southwestern part of Anambra State, Nigeria, with Atani serving as the administrative headquarters. The LGA spans an area of approximately 388 square kilometres and comprises numerous communities, including Atani, Akili-Ozizor, Akili-Ogidi, Amiyi, Mputu, Ohita, Odekpe, Ogwu-Aniocha, Umuzu, Ogwuikpele, and Umunankwo. As of 2022, the estimated population of the region is around 318,200 (National Population Commission, 2022). The area is strategically situated along the eastern bank of the River Niger and is typified by low-lying terrain, rendering it particularly susceptible to seasonal inundation (Ekwueme, 2021). The climate in Ogbaru is predominantly tropical, characterized by a marked rainy season from March to November and a brief dry season from December to February. The annual rainfall varies between 1,500 mm and 2,300 mm, while temperatures remain generally moderate throughout the year (Umeh, 2020).

The fertile alluvial soil of Ogbaru fosters an extensive agricultural economy, with primary crops including yam, cassava, rice, maize, melon, okra, and pumpkin. Additionally, the LGA's proximity to the River Niger has bolstered its fishing industry, which serves as a vital supplementary occupation for many of its inhabitants (Ogunwale, 2019). Nevertheless, the region has experienced recurrent and intensifying flooding events in recent years. In 2022, floods inundated 13 communities, displacing over 300 families and inflicting widespread damage to essential infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and agricultural lands (Anambra State

Emergency Management Agency [ASEMA], 2022). The flooding in 2023 further exacerbated the situation, resulting in substantial economic losses and disrupting accessibility in various parts of the LGA (Uzoechi, 2023).

In recent years, infrastructure development in the form of the Second Niger Bridge and a federal road linking Ogbaru to Rivers State has significantly increased the area's strategic importance and enhanced its accessibility (Ozor, 2022). However, despite these developments, the persistent environmental challenges, particularly flooding, continue to undermine local livelihoods and present significant obstacles to sustainable development (Ekwueme, 2021; Ogunwale, 2019).

Methods

This study employs a survey design to explore the role of women in agriculture and its implications for food security in the Ogbaru Local Government Area (LGA), Anambra State. The survey method facilitates a systematic and objective examination of how climate-induced flooding affects the agricultural practices of female farmers, with a focus on their socio-economic characteristics, adaptive strategies, and resilience in the face of environmental stressors. Data were collected through a combination of structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observations, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative insights into the experiences of women farmers. The primary data address key aspects such as the socio-economic profile of the respondents, the causes and consequences of flooding, and its impact on crop production and food security. Secondary data, including climatic records, population statistics, and agricultural production figures, were sourced from the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet), the National Population Commission (NPC), and the Anambra State Ministry of Agriculture.

The study population comprises female farmers in the selected communities of Atani, Ohita, Ochuche, and Ogbakuba. Using population data from the 1991 census, a projection for 2022 estimates the female population at 25,622. A sample size of 394 women was determined through the application of the Taro Yamane formula, with proportional distribution across the communities. Data analysis involved both descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, and inferential statistics, specifically Multiple Linear Regression, to test the hypothesis that flooding does not significantly affect food production among women farmers. The findings will contribute to a nuanced understanding of the gendered impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity and food security in flood-prone areas, offering policy-relevant insights for enhancing the resilience of women farmers.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1: Effect of Food Security on Income

Year	Income	Mean food production (Tonnes)
2020	1	115.000
2019	2	121.000
2018	1	112.000
2017	1	131.000
2016	1	117.000
2015	3	121.000
2014	2	131.000

2013	3	112.000
2012	1	158.000
2011	2	141.000
2010	2	154.000
2009	1	123.000
2008	1	123.000
2007	1	159.000
2006	2	167.000
2005	3	178.000
2004	1	162.000
2003	2	198.000
2002	3	187.000
2001	3	201.000

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Key: Income (3 = High; 2= Medium; 1 = Low)

Table 1 presents a longitudinal dataset spanning from 2001 to 2020, delineating the relationship between income categories and the mean food production, expressed in tonnes, for each year. Food production exhibits notable variability throughout the period, with income levels appearing to play a significant, albeit complex, role in determining agricultural output. The "Income" column is seemingly indicative of three distinct income classifications—presumably correlating with lower, middle-, and higher-income brackets—while the "Mean food production (Tonnes)" column offers a quantifiable measure of agricultural output for each corresponding year.

Upon analysing the data, one observes that higher income categories tend to coincide with relatively higher levels of food production. For instance, in 2001, the highest recorded food production—201 tonnes—coincides with the top-tier income classification (3), suggesting a potential correlation between elevated income levels and enhanced agricultural yields. Similarly, years falling under the third income category (such as 2005 and 2002), which denote higher income levels, also register considerable food production figures of 178 tonnes and 187 tonnes, respectively.

Conversely, years associated with the lower income category (1), including 2020 and 2018, display a marked decline in food production, with figures of 115 tonnes and 112 tonnes, respectively. These trends appear to substantiate the hypothesis that higher income is, at least in part, conducive to greater agricultural productivity, likely due to improved access to resources, technological advancements, or investment in farming infrastructure.

However, a closer inspection of the dataset reveals an absence of a linear relationship between income and food production. Despite years characterized by higher income levels, there are instances of considerable fluctuation in food production figures. For example, in 2019, despite the presence of a middle-income classification (2), food production decreased to 121 tonnes, underscoring the influence of additional, perhaps extrinsic, factors beyond income that may shape agricultural outcomes. Such factors could include climatic conditions, shifts in agricultural policy, or market dynamics, all of which may act as mediating variables in determining the extent of food production.

While the data reveals a discernible correlation between income levels and food production, it is evident that the relationship is far from deterministic. The fluctuating nature of agricultural output, coupled with the interplay of external variables, highlights the complexities inherent in agricultural productivity and suggests that income is merely one among a multitude of factors influencing the agricultural landscape.

Table 2: Correlation

Correlations			
		Income	**Food security**
Income	Pearson Correlation	1	.389
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.090
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	13.200	181.200
	Covariance	.695	9.537
	N	20	20
Food security	Pearson Correlation	.389	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.090	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	181.200	16400.950
	Covariance	9.537	863.208
	N	20	20

Source: Statistical Computations, 2024

Table 2 presents the results of a Pearson correlation analysis between two variables: income and food security. The correlation coefficient between income and food security is **0.389**, which indicates a weak positive relationship between the two variables. This suggests that as income increases, food security tends to improve, but the relationship is not particularly strong. The correlation value of **1** for food security with itself is expected, as any variable is perfectly correlated with itself.

The significance (p-value) of the correlation between income and food security is **0.090**, which is above the commonly used significance threshold of **0.05**. This means that the correlation is not statistically significant, implying that the observed relationship might not be strong enough to be considered reliable. Therefore, we cannot confidently conclude that income has a meaningful impact on food security based on this analysis.

The table also shows the sum of squares and cross-products for both income and food security. For income, the sum of squares is **13.200**, and for food security, it is **181.200**. These values reflect the total squared deviations from the mean for each variable, and the cross-products represent the degree to which income and food security vary together. The covariance between income and food security is **9.537**, which measures how the two variables change about each other. A positive covariance means that as income increases, food security also tends to improve, but the small value suggests a weak relationship.

Finally, the analysis is based on **20 observations** (N = 20), meaning that the data used in this correlation analysis consists of 20 paired data points for both income and food security. In summary, while there is a weak positive correlation between income and food security, the relationship is not statistically significant.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of the relationship between income levels and food production, as presented in Table 1, reveals a nuanced and multifaceted interaction between economic resources and agricultural outcomes over the

period spanning from 2001 to 2020. The data indicates a general tendency for higher income categories to correspond with greater food production, suggesting that financial capital plays a critical role in enhancing agricultural yields. For instance, the year 2001, which is characterized by the highest income classification (Category 3), also reports the highest recorded food production of 201 tonnes, illustrating the potential for wealthier agricultural sectors to maximize their productivity. Similarly, in 2002 and 2005, which also fall under the third income category, food production figures of 178 tonnes and 187 tonnes, respectively, further support this observation. These findings align with existing literature that underscores the importance of income in facilitating agricultural productivity, where access to capital enables farmers to invest in modern technologies, improved farming techniques, and more efficient infrastructure (Moyo et al., 2017).

However, the relationship between income and food production is far from linear or deterministic, as evidenced by the significant fluctuations in agricultural output observed in certain years. Notably, despite the presence of higher income categories in 2019 (Category 2), food production saw a sharp decline to 121 tonnes. This suggests that income alone cannot explain variations in food production, as other extrinsic factors—such as climate variability, agricultural policies, market fluctuations, and socio-political influences—undoubtedly play a crucial role in shaping agricultural outcomes. Such complexities have been well-documented in the literature, with scholars highlighting that while income provides the necessary resources for improved productivity, the agricultural landscape is shaped by a broader array of elements, including environmental conditions and institutional support (Adesina et al., 2016). Thus, the observed fluctuations in food production emphasize the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the various forces at play in determining agricultural productivity.

The data presented in Table 2, which explores the relationship between income and food security, further illuminates the complexity of these interactions. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.389, which indicates a weak positive relationship between income and food security, suggests that while higher income may have some beneficial effects on food security, the relationship is not particularly strong or consistent. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.090, which exceeds the conventional significance threshold of 0.05, signals that this correlation is not statistically significant. This outcome implies that while income may contribute to improved food security, it is not a reliable predictor in isolation. The small covariance value of 9.537 further supports this notion, suggesting that although income and food security may trend in the same direction, their relationship remains tenuous.

This weak and statistically insignificant correlation aligns with the growing body of research that emphasizes the multifaceted nature of food security. As Smith and Haddad (2015) argue, food security is a complex and multi-dimensional issue that extends beyond mere economic wealth. It encompasses not only the availability and affordability of food but also access to essential services, adequate nutrition, and a stable political environment. Several studies have highlighted that even with higher income levels, households may still face challenges in achieving food security due to factors such as poor infrastructure, inadequate social safety nets, and regional disparities in food access (FAO, 2018). This complexity is further reinforced by the literature on agricultural productivity, which posits that while income is an important determinant, other variables such as technological adoption, soil fertility, and government policy also play pivotal roles in shaping food security outcomes (Tashiro & Ohno, 2020).

Ultimately, the findings of this study underscore the need for a more holistic approach to understanding the relationship between income and food production, as well as income and food security. The data suggest that while income undoubtedly facilitates agricultural output and can contribute to improved food security, it is neither a sufficient nor a singular determinant. Rather, a complex interplay of environmental, economic, and

social factors must be considered to develop effective strategies for enhancing agricultural resilience and food security. As such, the findings resonate with a growing consensus in the academic literature that tackling food insecurity requires addressing the broader socio-economic and environmental contexts in which agricultural systems operate (Moyo et al., 2017; Adesina et al., 2016; Smith & Haddad, 2015).

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores the complexity of the relationship between income, food production, and food security. Although a positive association between higher income levels and increased food production is apparent, the variability in agricultural output over time indicates that income alone cannot fully explain these fluctuations. Moreover, the weak and statistically insignificant correlation between income and food security suggests that food security is not solely dependent on income, but rather is shaped by a broader array of factors. These include climatic variations, infrastructure, and the effectiveness of agricultural policies, all of which play pivotal roles in influencing both production and security outcomes.

To effectively address the challenges of food production and security, a more holistic approach is required. Policy interventions must extend beyond mere income enhancement and focus on fostering a more sustainable agricultural system. This should involve investment in climate-resilient farming practices, the promotion of technological innovation, and the strengthening of food distribution networks. Additionally, particular attention must be given to the vulnerabilities of marginalised groups, including women farmers, to ensure that the benefits of agricultural development are distributed equitably. In sum, only through a comprehensive strategy that recognises the interconnectedness of economic, environmental, and social factors can meaningful and enduring progress in food security be achieved.

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