

are hardly contestable, the humane character of agriculture is ignored too often in developmental paradigms. The consequences of ignoring the idiosyncrasies of farmer's individual and communal lives are reflected in the conceptualization of ideal strategy for farmer's livelihood security or well-being, among others. This strategy swings along the dictates of developmental practitioners, or the 'technologically driven' as opposed to 'socially driven' panaceas. For instance, Van der Ploeg (2012) provided a robust review of the *Rural Poverty Report 2011*. He expounded extensively on the concepts of 'socially driven' as opposed to 'technologically driven' panacea for sustainable intensification of agricultural production. The former is characterized by an extensive use of resources (such as labour) or making more efficient use of resources. In essence, the socially premised panacea for productivity is resultant of increased quantity or improved quality of labour. Hence, "labour is central time and again, be it for the ongoing improvements of soil fertility, increases in experience, knowledge and skills, more intensive cropping schemes, etc." (Van der Ploeg 2012, 444). Invariably, socially premised mechanism of intensification requires producers – "farmers, peasants, share-croppers, labourers, herdsmen, or whoever... that are interested in developing production" (Ibid.). Van der Ploeg continued by observing that "intensification has to be in line with their own interests and be seen to result in improved incomes, enlarged employment opportunities and improved prospects. ... In practice, this 'socially driven' intensification (also referred to in the literature as 'peasant driven intensification') tends mostly to be sustainable" (Ibid.).

It is plausible that sustainability is considered more of a prerogative of the socially driven basis of productivity, the simple logic being the people-centeredness of this approach. People's activities and efforts will be matched with their motivations. On the contrary, 'technologically driven' panacea prizes scientific knowledge over human experiences. It relies on farming reforms in tune with technological paradigms. In this instance, farming is premised on "high yielding varieties, chemical fertilizers, the 'Holsteinization' of cattle breeds, increased use of concentrates in animal feeds, GMO application, mono-cropping, heavy mechanization and automation" (Van der Ploeg 2012, 445). The technological approach is hinged on the hope for supplies to be made by external agents. Farmers therefore wait for inputs, machines and instruments in this dependency regime. Essentially, social and technological approaches to agricultural productivity are characterized by contextual knowledge as opposed to technical knowledge and self-determination as opposed to dependency. Van der Ploeg asserted unequivocally that the *Rural Poverty Report 2011* is favourably disposed towards the technological approach to productivity, which of course downplays the place of 'people'. In the conclusion of the report of his review of the *World Development Report 2008*, McMichael (2009) asserted that the report "reinforces the path dependence of an exclusionary corporate agriculture" (McMichael 2009, 244).

Apart from approaches to livelihood security or well-being, farmers, especially of sub-Saharan Africa, are often obnoxiously said to be poor. Classical representations assert that small-holder rural farmers constitute a strikingly impoverished segment of the population. According to the Food

and Agriculture Organization (FAO), “most small family farmers are poor and food-insecure” (2015: 31). The *Rural Poverty Report 2011* (IFAD, 2010: 47), also reported that “poverty remains largely a rural problem, ... of the 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty in 2005, approximately 1 billion— around 70% lived in rural areas”, meanwhile, “in the rural areas four out of every five households farm to some degree” (pp 9). Similarly, Rigg (2006: 180) stated that “the poor world is largely a rural world, and in terms of livelihoods, this rural world is an agricultural one”. In essence, the average small-holder farmer is said to live a life of poverty. These cannot be out-rightly invalidated, but these and similar positions are definitely nomothetic and devoid of humanistic qualities. Sometimes, the obnoxiousness of these anecdotal submissions cannot be ignored. In the opening of the *World Development Report 2008* (World Bank, 2007), the ‘poor African’ was ‘deficiently’ characterized as follows:

An African woman bent under the sun, weeding sorghum in an arid field with a hoe, a child strapped on her back—a vivid image of rural poverty. For her large family and millions like her, the meager bounty of subsistence farming is the only chance to survive. (WDR 2008, 1)

The imaging of poor Africa calls for emic research of agricultural experiences. The cultural ethos of Yorùbá people of southwestern Nigeria, for instance, venerates farmers probably because there is a long lasting tradition of farming in the Yorùbá culture. Yet, paradigms that evaluate growth and development, using Western and neoliberal ideals (Wallace, 2015) are pervasive in the literature. Examinations from idiographic perspective like ethnography can unearth emic socio-cultural peculiarities of rural livelihood. Indeed, the civilization of rural Africa for wholesome human wellbeing should incorporate a humanistic approach to self-knowledge that begins with and taps into deeply rooted cultural frameworks. It does not seem probable that approaches other than humanistic will emit truly humane dynamics that will contribute to ethical understanding and theorizing of the world of farmers, i.e. their livelihood dynamics. Hence, it is necessary to listen to farmers’ livelihood constructions, experiences and stories, to understand their securities and fears, as an essential step in comprehending reality, and fashioning optimum productivity among them. Such understanding demands exploring how livelihood is culturally constructed and experienced by farmers, while being sensitive to generational and gendered differences in thoughts and experiences. In this context, livelihood dynamics centers around the processes of livelihood. It incorporates livelihood construction, livelihood security and meanings attached to it. Of these three indicators, livelihood security is the most complex. It is defined as the state of physical and psycho-social well-being in view of one’s livelihood. This well-being includes access to food, healthcare, education and housing. Livelihood dynamics generally represents lived experiences, and can therefore be seen as a platform serving to capture experiential knowledge. This study was designed to explore livelihood dynamics among Yorùbá farmers of southwestern Nigeria.

Methods

Research design

The design of this study is the descriptive phenomenological procedure which aims to identify experiences and meanings described by participants.

Research questions

The questions that were answered in this study center on how Yorùbá farmers construct their livelihood, using *àgbèlòba* (literarily, farmer is king) phenomenon as a platform. In the typical Yorùbá community, an *Oba* (king) is the “formal head” and he is enviably admired (Morton-Williams 1960, 362). The *Oba* is “Lord of world and life, owner of the land, companion of the gods” (Ibid, 363). In essence, how participants react to the *àgbèlòba* phenomenon was questioned. The livelihood security of participants and the meaning they attach to their livelihood security were also questioned. Yorùbá concepts used to describe people whose livelihood is secured were examined as an aspect of livelihood security. This is due to the fact that a number of Yorùbá values and motivations are culturally reflected in the art of naming things.

Study Population/ Participant Selection

The study population comprised Yorùbá people currently inhabiting six States in Southwestern Nigeria. Farmers were the primary target population. From the six states of Southwestern Nigeria, two states, Oyo and Osun, were randomly selected. One rural community, Ìgbòho and Gbòngán were selected from each, respectively. Community entry at Gbòngán was initiated by visiting the king, a well learned individual who provided tremendous support in reaching stakeholders amongst farmers. At Ìgbòho, executive members of farmer’s association also provided incredible support when they were reached for assistance. Prospective participants were screened to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria. These criteria included being a farmer, as well as willingness to participate in the study. A total of 128 participants were involved in the study. Data collection was truncated when data saturation occurred. Little gifts were presented to participants as a sign of appreciation for their participation in the study.

Techniques of Data Collection

Data collection included 12 focus-group discussions (FGDs) to produce consensual data; 24 in-depth interviews (IDIs) to elicit participant’s experiential world; and 8 key-informant interviews (KIIs) to elicit uncommon information

(such as *Ifá* literary corpus) from heads of farmer’s guilds, community heads and identified custodians of *Ifá* knowledge (Babaláwo [male] or Iyanifa [female]). Pattern of participant selection is shown on table 1 below. Probing was generously featured to elaborate participant’s representations. Data collection was recorded on digital voice recorder to ensure no loss of data. Basic demographic information including educational achievement, religion, marital status, and household size were collected.

Table 1: Pattern of participant selection

Research sites	Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)*							In-depth Interviews (IDIs)							Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)							Grand Total
	Young generation (<29 years)		Middle age generation (30–59 years)		Older generation (>60 years)		Sub-total	Young generation (<29 years)		Middle age generation (30–59 years)		Older generation (>60 years)		Sub-total	Young generation (<29 years)		Middle age generation (30–59 years)		Older generation (>60 years)		Sub-total	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male		
Ìgbòhò	1	1	1	1	1	1	49	2	2	2	2	2	2	12	-	-	1	1	1	1	4	65
Gbòngán	1	1	1	1	1	1	47	2	2	2	2	2	2	12	-	-	1	1	1	1	4	63
Total	2	2	2	2	2	2	96	4	4	4	4	4	4	24	-	-	2	2	2	2	8	128

*An FGD consisted of 7 to 9 participants

Data analysis

The analysis of data began as soon as data were collected through data immersion. Data were translated into English language because all participants spoke in Yorùbá language. Data were also transcribed. The Nvivo software was used to code data, thereby giving room for formal data organization. Coding was guided by specific objectives. Data was prevented from decontextualization through excessive fragmentation. Coding query and matrix coding query were run to examine the influence of generation and gender on codes. However, there was no noticeable difference in findings along gender and generation lines.

Ethical consideration

Participants were treated with utmost respect. An introductory/informed consent form containing facts about the study were read to each participant. Among other things, they were told that there was no anticipated risk of

participation, that their responses will be used for research only, that they do not have to talk about anything they do not want to and that they may leave the session at any time. Anonymity was strongly guaranteed. The proposal of this study was submitted to the Faculty of Social Science, University of Ibadan Institutional Review Board for ethical approval.

Findings

Profile of Participants

Participants were almost evenly distributed in terms of gender. An overwhelming majority was married, and only about a quarter had no formal education. This speaks fairly of basic education among participants. Muslims were in the majority, and almost a fifth were traditional religion practitioners. Only a quarter of participants do not engage in a secondary occupation. The socio-demographic profile of participants is presented in table 2. The mean age of participants was 46.07 ± 19.48 (minimum = 20, maximum = 120). The mean household size among participants was 9.36 ± 4.07 (minimum = 3, maximum = 22).

Table 2: Profile of participants (N= 128)

Socio-demographic profile of participants		n (%)
Gender	Males	61 (47.7)
	Females	67 (52.3)
Marital status	Single	9 (7.0)
	Married	119 (93.0)
Educational achievement	No formal education	35 (27.3)
	Primary School Certificate	33 (25.8)
	Secondary School Certificate	45 (35.2)
	Tertiary Certificate	15 (11.7)
Religion	Islam	68 (53.1)
	Christianity	36 (28.1)
	Traditional	24 (18.8)
Secondary occupation	Yes	96 (75.0)
	No	32 (25.0)

Livelihood construction: Reactions to *àgbèlòba* phenomenon among farmers

Affirmative response to àgbèlòba

The dominant attitude towards *àgbèlòba* phenomenon was positive among participants. Participants generally went further to construct their livelihood in positive terms, citing varying bases. Most participants recalled a popular song eulogizing agriculture. Some group discussants stated as follows:

The farmer is truly a king. That is why it is said that farming is our land's major occupation. When we were in primary school, we were singing a song which goes as follows:

Ìwé kíkó láísí òkó àti àdà

Kò ì pé o 2x

Iṣé àgbè, iṣé ilẹ̀ wa,

Èni kò ṣiṣé, á mà jalè.

Studying (or formal education) without farming

Is incomplete

Farming is the occupation of our land

Whosoever refuses to work will definitely steal.

(Males, middle-age generation)

An in-depth interviewee also stated as follows:

Yes, '*oba làgbè*' (farmers are kings). There is no being on earth that would ever neglect the importance of a farmer. Even the literate elites cannot shy away from the important role the farmer play in the society as the feeder of all. (Female, younger generation)

A key informant similarly asserted as follows:

It is true that farmers are kings. If they are not there to produce food for consumption, no one will live to see the next day. That's why an adage says when food is out of poverty, there is nothing more to worry about – '*bóunje bá kúrò nínú iṣé, iṣé bùṣe*'. No matter how wealthy one may be, without a farmer to provide food, such wealth is useless. (Male, older generation)

Apart from the dominant affirmative response to *àgbèlòba* phenomenon, participant's livelihood construction was similarly dominantly positive, on varying grounds including provision of food. Some group discussants stated as follows:

The Yorùbá people see agriculture as a good occupation because it supplies food. For example, if a farmer goes to his farm early in the morning without taking anything, he will get something to eat from his farm and he will also bring for his family too. (Male, middle-age generation)

Farming is also positively constructed on the grounds that it is at the apex of all occupations and profitable. Some group discussants asserted as follows:

Farming is Yorùbá's long inherited occupation. There are no other occupations in the world that can be compared with farming except blacksmithing, which afford tools for farmers, and cloth making. Farming was central to the works of other occupations. So, there is no occupation that is as important and profitable as farming. (Male, middle-age generation)

It is really a good work. We are all farmers. We plant different kinds of crops to eat and sell, and we get a lot from it. We all still farm to this day. (Female, older generation)

An in-depth interviewee identified food availability and profitability as bases of constructing farming positively:

A farmer's child can never suffer because there will always be food to eat. There is wealth in farming business only if one can invest heavily in it. (Female, younger generation)

A key-informant identified traditionality, food provision, and appositely identified the dire need for food, owing to increased population, as bases of constructing farming positively:

You see, farming is the most important occupation of all. All other occupations we engage in, are just side gigs. We inherited farming long time ago from our ancestors even though, it was pushed to the backburner many years ago but today, it has gained supremacy. This is because farmers are needed to provide large amount of food for us in the society. Urbanization has taken large amount of landmass in big cities, so, there is a desperate search for food. Do not forget also that our population has greatly increased and our children are not inculcated into farming. All we do is to work hard and send them to school causing them to neglect farming. This has caused a lot of problems for us especially, our economy. If we look at other developed countries, their mainstream of economy development is agriculture so, there is the urge to go back to farming in our country and this has made farmers king of all. (Male, older generation)

Many participants also found it acceptable that their children could take on farming career, though this is in addition to other career pursuits. Some group discussants stated as follows:

Yes, I can pass on farming to my children. It is a good legacy to pass on to children. But we will not want them to make it their only source of earning. They shall be educated too. Taking up farming with their other occupation is an added advantage to their income or earnings. (Female, younger generation)

A key informant stated as follows:

The farmer is the king. My children also engage in farming and I like it. I would also like the younger ones to take it up but on a larger scale. Everything we eat comes from the farmer. It is very impossible for one to get anything from the market without the farmer. (Male, older generation)

Limitations to affirmative response to *àgbèlọba* phenomenon

In spite of the dominantly positive construction of farming among participants, it is noticeable that some participants were either ambivalent or negative in their orientation about farming. For instance, some group discussants stated that farming only enjoys past glory, and underscored the problem of scale of production and access to modern farming machinery:

Farmer was the king in the past. These days, farming without money is insufficient. If a farmer has a hoe to plough and has no money to buy other new farming tools, the work is incomplete. (Male, younger generation)

An in-depth interviewee also expressed an ambivalent opinion. She recounted the ease of beginning farming tasks but could not wish it for her children:

Truly, agriculture is quite easy for us because you can always start. Many unemployed people can easily take it up. However, farming is not that promising. It is not what one can do for long or pass over to one's children. Even, if one decides to hand it over to one's children as a legacy, it has its limits and it all depend on one's children who could accept to take it up or not. (Female, middle-age generation)

A key-informant was also ambivalent in the following response:

It is quite true that farming cannot be handed over to one's children or it is quite impossible to pray that one's children should love to take it up as real-time profession. Farming these days should only be practiced on a small scale alongside one's job in order to supplement one's income. (Female, middle-age generation)

Another key informant was outrightly negative in the construction of his livelihood:

To be candid, farming is not that easy to do. Why most of us take it up as real-time profession is because we took to fate. If we do not farm, we can't feed ourselves. We only hope our children do not take it up as we have, or as our fore-fathers did. (Male, middle-age generation)

Concepts and phrases used to describe people whose livelihood is secured

A number of concepts are used to describe people whose livelihood is secured including *ọlórò*, *ọlólá* and *olówó*. These are referenced in the following data from group discussants:

They can describe such person as *ọlórò* (wealthy person). (Females, middle-age generation)

An in-depth interviewee recounted:

They are also called *olólá* (wealthy people). (Female, younger generation)

A key informant also added as follows:

We do call them *olówó* (rich people) because they are comfortable. (Male, older generation)

We also call them *gbajúmò* (popular person). (Male, middle-age generation)

Apart from *olórò*, *olólá*, *olówó* and *gbajúmò* other Yorùbá concepts (phrases) used to describe people whose livelihood are secured are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Phrases used to describe people whose livelihood is secured

s/no	Concepts/phrases	English translation
1	<i>Eni tò ríse</i>	Literally, a person who has something to do, figuratively, one who has money to pay his bills
2	<i>Eni tò rí jàjẹ</i>	Literally, one who has been able to bite on something, figuratively, one who has money
3	<i>Eni t'Olórùn n bo àsí rì rẹ</i>	Literally, one whose secret is protected by God, figuratively, one who receives God's provision
4	<i>Eni tò ráàánú gba</i>	One who has received God's mercy
5	<i>Eni t'Olórùn rọ ọ lórùn</i>	A person who God has made things to be easy for
6	<i>Eni t'Olórùn bükún</i>	A person who has received God's blessing
7	<i>Eni tó tepá mọyé</i>	A hard-working person

Livelihood Security among Participants

A preponderance of participants expressed the fact that their livelihood was secured. In other words, participant's expressions largely indicated that they had access to food, healthcare, education and housing security. Some group discussants stated as follows:

Housing is the least of our issues because we only pay once in a year but school fees have to be paid thrice a year but we still pay anyway. Children education is the most challenging because we just have to put our children in private schools. Public schools have become bastardized. Our children feed several times a day. Once you cut your coat according to your cloth you will not have issues. (Males, middle-age generation)

An in-depth interviewee also stated as follows:

We don't have problem when it comes to getting what we want. Once we take our goods to the market, we get income. (Female, younger generation)

A key-informant also stated as follows:

My work has indeed helped us. We are enabled to pay our children fees from farm products. (Male, older generation)

Divinity in livelihood security

The concept of divinity was predominantly featured in participant's representation of their livelihood security. As much as participants expressed the security of their livelihood, they concomitantly expounded the grace of God as being responsible for what they enjoy. Some group discussants stated as follows:

One who has the blessings of the creator does not lack good things of life. (Females, older generation)

Some other group discussants also illustrated the influence of divinity in livelihood security by expounding some tenets of Yorùbá ontology:

I am doing well in my life (*ayé mi dára*). *Ifá* made us to understand that when you have a good *orí* (literally, head), you will be able to meet your needs in life. However, if you don't have good *orí* and you make sacrifice so as to live in comfort and meet the basic needs of life, you will be successful in all your endeavors and be able to fend for yourself. (Males, older generation)

An in-depth interviewee similarly expounded divinity in livelihood security and further expressed the need to be prayerful and benevolent as subtle prerequisites of being divinely blessed:

Well, it is God that provides and supply one's needs and He has been providing my needs. One thing that is needful is to pray regularly and give alms to the poor very often. (Female, younger generation)

A key-informant also espoused the role of divinity in livelihood security and went further to explain that the more people one takes responsibility for, the more will be God's blessings in a person's life:

I really thank God for my occupation which He made to sustain me. The Yorùbá people strongly believe that the number of people one feeds is what God provides for (*iyé ẹni tẹ̀yàn bá ń bọ̀ ní Olódùmarè yòò pèsè fún*). God makes His provision for anyone who caters for other people's needs. Concerning my occupation, God has been faithful for His provision to cater for my family needs. I have some of my children in higher institutions while many others are in private primary and secondary schools. No matter the amount of their needs in school, God enables me to attend to them promptly. So, God considers the number of people a person is responsible for and sends provisions according to the number of those people he caters for. (Male, middle-age generation)

Livelihood diversification in livelihood security

In addition to divinity, livelihood diversification is another strong notion reflected in participant's expression of their livelihood security. Some group discussants stated as follows:

None of us here has ever been unable to cater for her needs with our occupations. Before now, we were only into farming. And now that we are also into praise singing, we have never been in need of money because we could get money from any party we attend. Also, our children send us money whenever we call for their help. (Female, older generation)

Some group discussants affirmed the link between divinity and livelihood diversification in livelihood security:

There is no work that man does that is not enough for him as long as God blesses it. When I was really into farming, it was enough. Now that I also teach, I am still fine. What matters is contentment. Once your expectations and income are consistent, then you will not have problems. I have built my house, I have a car. My healthcare creates no issues because I count on herbs and leaves. If my children become febrile, I know which herbs to give them. I provide up to 40% of what I consume. Things like vegetables, pepper, yam, etc. (Male, middle-age generation)

An in-depth interviewee also stated as follows:

My work gives me peace of mind (*ifokànbale*). You see, what man will become in life is destined by God. My husband has been supportive too. I am also a trader, and I also engage in traditional medicine which I learnt from my parents. (Female, middle age generation)

Another in-depth interviewee also stated as follows:

I learnt bricklaying and I am also into farming. I do the two side-by-side so that my earning from the two would complement each other. (Male, younger generation)

A key-informant reiterated the roles of divinity and livelihood diversification in livelihood security:

I am Babalawo (*Ifá* priest), and I also engage in farming. My father was also Babalawo and a farmer. When you believe in *Elédùmarè* (God in Yoruba culture), you will not suffer. I have no special charm or powers that make people come to me for consultation. These consultations make me thrive and comfortable. However, without God's endorsement this would not have been the case. Once you have *Elédùmarè*, your sustenance will not be difficult. I am thankful, I send my children to school. This one (referring to one of his children) is in the Polytechnic and he is also learning *Ifá* (Yorùbá system of divination). It is when we succumb to the will of God that one will have rest of mind. No matter how big my responsibilities, God takes care of it for me. (Male, older generation, brackets mine)

Meanings Attached to Livelihood Security

Several participants expressed meanings that they attach to livelihood security. Some group discussants expressed these meaning while stating specific indicators of livelihood security:

There is nothing to enjoy in life if one is not healthy, even if you have lots of money. To be healthy I need good food and health care, so of course it is important to me to be able to access these things. With good food and healthcare life will be meaningful (*ayé o ní tumò sí eyàn*). If you go to bed hungry you will have nightmares and it will be like the day did not break on time. We live to be able to meet these needs. When people cannot meet these needs they either endure or become criminals. (Males, middle-age generation)

Meaning attached to livelihood security was also expressed by some group discussants in a way that reflects their hope for achieving success and living in comfort:

We all pray to be successful and be comfortable because it is a very pleasant thing to live in comfort. (Males, older generation)

May we not lack. It is good to be comfortable. (Males, older generation)

Some group discussant recounted her hopes and ideals in her bid to expound the meaning she attaches to livelihood security:

I am very passionate about my livelihood security. I want to look good, I want to eat good food. The kind of food I eat, my housing and my health care should be nice. I don't even believe in having lots of money in my bank account (Females, younger generation)

Meaning attached to livelihood security was also thought to be definitive of a person, and to determine respect from the surrounding community. An in-depth interviewee stated as follows:

My ability to feed, pay for my healthcare and meet other needs describes the person that I am. Even when people do not really know you, when they see the kind of food you eat, the house you live in, the car you drive, they will respect you and treat you well. (Female, middle-age generation)

International migration was identified as a consequence of livelihood insecurity by an interviewee, while trying to express meaning attached to livelihood security:

Paying school fees, feeding the family is too important, that is why we struggle every day. It is really a problem when people cannot meet these needs. That is why many people are leaving the country. (Female, middle-age generation)

A key-informant interviewee questioned the essence of life, cited a Yorùbá saying to express meaning attached to livelihood security:

Ònà òfun lònà òrun. The road to the throat is the road to heaven. Livelihood security is the essence of life and living. What is there to live for if I do not have food to eat? (Male, middle-age generation)

Another key-informant identified suicide as a consequence of livelihood insecurity in his bid to express meaning attached to livelihood security. The informant however stressed the importance of contentment:

Livelihood security (*igbáyé gbádùn*) is a core reason why people commit suicide. When people cannot afford to meet basic needs, they get frustrated, though it also has a lot to do with contentment. Some people may lack it and still remain satisfied (Male, older generation)

A key-informant digressed a little to pass some blame on individuals for general desire for wealth. To the informant, civilization has reduced contentment levels such that older ways of meeting needs are less attractive. According to him:

The problem is that people are in hurry to get rich quickly these days. Take a look around you, you will see the kind of vehicles young people are driving these days and houses they build. No one wants to live in a hut on the farm like our fathers did. Everybody is affected by the get-rich-quick syndrome. Civilization has changed the game. (Male, older generation)

Discussion

The dominantly positive attitude towards *àgbèlọba* phenomenon strongly indicates that Yorùbá farmers are positively inclined towards their occupation. Several participants also recalled the *iwé kíkọ* song, and all the singers sang with great enthusiasm. The content of the song (*iwé kíkọ, láisi ọkọ, àti àdà, kò ì pé o, iṣé àgbè, iṣé ilẹ wa*: studying or formal education without farming, is incomplete, farming is the occupation of our land) shows that the song itself is postcolonial. The advent of colonialism ushered in western education, which in effect minimized the importance of agriculture. In their essay on Education, Ethnicity and National Integration in the History of Nigeria, Davis and Kalu-Nwivu (2001) asserted as follows:

Both before and after colonization, European presence concentrated in the south. Thus, the contacts there were more extensive and intensive than in the north. The result was that European influence had more opportunity to penetrate the patterns of life, particularly among peoples along the coast in the south. Many of those peoples, almost daily, encountered European ways of work, dress, and personal care, for example. European education thus more readily became a desired asset in the south, as it provided tangible benefits such as job opportunities and intangible benefits such as *heightened prestige*. ... Schools shifted students' attention away from their indigenous environment

and toward the colonialist environment (Davis and Kalu-Nwiwu 2001, 4–5, *emphasis mine*).

The acceptance of, and high prestige accorded Western education among the Yorùbá downplayed the importance of the traditional occupation. The song showcases a reconstruction and rejuvenation of extant veneration of farming. It reiterates the need to embrace farming, the ancestral occupation and “stresses the importance of farming to the well-being of a nation” (Adebisi and Oni 2012, 890). It is a huge attitudinal resource in favour of African agriculture.

The enthusiastic rendering of this song and the dominantly positive attitude towards *àgbèlọba* phenomenon strongly indicates that Yorùbá farmers are carrying on with the Yorùbá culture’s allure of farming. They take possession of this allure as it was traditionally conferred on them from the distant past. Participants also articulated the truism that human survival is strongly dependent on the several activities that agriculture entails. This populates their self-esteem and adds to their psychological capital. The dominantly positive attitude towards *àgbèlọba* is essentially important because of the importance of the *Ọba*, the king, in Yorùbá society. Fadipe described the powers of a Yorùbá king as follows:

He was regarded with a respect approaching veneration. Popular maxims regarding him call him *Oba alase ekeji orisa*– the king, the commander and wielder of authority next to the *orisa* (supernatural object of worship). He is sometimes even referred to as an *orisa* in his own right. His person certainly was and still is regarded as sacred... (and there is) the attitude of awe toward him by the people. (Fadipe 1970, 205–6, *second bracket mine*)

The fundamental sustainable development goals concern the eradication of poverty and hunger. These concerns are in line, but emic perspective has shown that Yorùbá farmers have more prowess than they are credited for. In this light, the general imaging of African farmers as poor is questionable. The dominantly positive attitude towards *àgbèlọba* is an indication of optimistic philosophy in livelihood dynamics among the Yorùbá. However, it was conspicuous that some participants did not toll the line of dominant majority who maintained positive livelihood construction. Most of these outliers were however ambivalent rather than being out-rightly negative in the construction of their livelihood. Some of them actually debunked the notion of *àgbèlọba*, and ascribed it to the past. Some said they would not wish that their children take up agriculture as a vocation, citing the absence of other options as a reason for being farmers themselves. These participants tended to recount challenges confronting agriculture, including the problem of scale of production and poor access to modern farming machinery. The position of these outliers limits the grandeur of *àgbèlọba*. It is a marginal indication of discontinuities in cultural allure of farming as a consequence of unfavourable economic circumstances.

Olórò, *olólá* and *olówó* are popular Yorùbá words that are ordinarily used to describe the financially endowed, rich and/or wealthy. The words are descriptive in character. Each of the words is a combination of two words: *olórò* = *oní* + *órò*, *olólá* is = *oní* + *ólá*; while *olówó* = *oní* + *ówó*. *Oní* is a person who owns something. *Órò* means wealth, *ólá* means wealth too but it also means honour or prestige, *ówó* means money. *Olówó* is more specifically appropriate for a person who is simply rich. *Olórò* also means rich, but the meaning of richness here is deeper. A person who is described as *olórò* is superbly wealthy, usually possessing tremendous properties as well. *Olólá* is more appropriate for one who is rich and occupies prestigious position, like a king or a chief. The distinctions in the three concepts are not very profound. They can be used synonymously depending on context. Participants employ these concepts in order to depict someone who has access to food, healthcare, housing and education. *Gbajúmò* is a combination of three words: *igba* + *ojú* + *mò* = *gbajúmò*. *Igba* means two hundred, *ojú* is eyes and *mò* is a verb which means to know. Literally, *gbajúmò* is to be known by two hundred people. The word can be used like a noun and a verb.

The seven phrases on table 3 all begin with *eni*, which means a person. *Eni t'óríse* is a shortened form of *eni tí o rí se*, so the phrase is a combination of four words: *eni* + *tí* + *o* + *rí se*. *Eni* is a person, *tí* means that, *o* is a pronoun referring to the person, *rí se* is a verb which literally, is to find something to do, but to 'rí se' is a metaphor to underscore the fact that someone is financially endowed. All other phrases share similar semantics, though the verb in each differs. These verbs include *rí jájẹ* (literally, to bite on something, figuratively, to have money); *bo àsírí* (literally, having secret protected, figuratively, to receive God's provision); *rààánú gba* (to receive God's mercy); *rò ó lórùn* (to have things made easy); *rí'búkún* (to be blessed) and *tepa mósé* (hardworking). Apart from differences in verbs, *Olórùn* (literally, owner of heaven, lexically, God) is clearly embedded in three of the phrases. All the verbs in the seven phrases except one are obviously desirable and sought by individuals in the society. The last, hardwork, is appreciated but it is not an attribute that is typically sought after or prayed for. In three of the remaining six phrases, the source of receiving the desirable attributes is very clear— God. In the remaining three, the source of receiving the desirable attributes is not obvious but implicit— God. However, this source may not also be divine, or may be dependent on individual's conduct. For instance, the pervasive practice of *ebò* (sacrifice) among the Yorùbá is to turn things in a desired direction when circumstances or issues are not desirable. According to Awolalu (1973), sacrifice is made for several reasons including "to change unpleasant circumstances ... and to serve as means of communion between man and the supernatural world" (page 85). The dominance of divinity in the source of acquiring the desirable attributes in the phrases under scrutiny is a reflection of the centrality of divinity in Yorùbá culture. This raises the question of Yorùbá people's locus of control, which is noticeably external in this context. Yoruba people say *múra sísé òrẹ*

mi, isé la'fin d'eni gíga (be hardworking my friend, hard work is what makes a person great). They also say *sisé sisé jàre òsì* (the hardworking cannot be blamed for his or her poverty status). These are reminders that Yorùbá locus of control is quite balanced, as opposed to what current data suggest. The phrase describing people who have access to food, housing, etc., as *eni tó tepá mósé* (hardworking) is a strong indication of internal locus of control among the Yorùbá. Yorùbá concepts and phrases used with the intention of describing people whose livelihood is secured, generally indicate the desirability of this security, and the belief that God shall give access to this security.

A multitude of participants expressed that their livelihood is secured. This multitude were contended with the food, healthcare, education and housing they enjoy, though some participants had issues with education security. This is contrary to what the literature typically suggests especially in the area of food security. The FAO (2018) asserted that “the majority of the world’s poor and food-insecure people are rural, either farmers, fishermen, or laborers with direct or indirect dependence on agriculture for their income” (page 91). The FAO (2018) also reported that the percentage of people in total population who suffered from “severe” food insecurity in Africa in 2017 was 29.8%. This percentage was 33.8% in the sub-Saharan Africa region. Akerele *et al.* (2013) reported that 58.80 % of households suffered from food insecurity in their study among residents of Ado-Ekiti, southwestern Nigeria. Oluyole *et al.* (2009) also reported that 57.0% of cocoa farming households in southwestern Nigeria suffered from food insecurity. Orewa and Iyangbe (2010) reported that 75% of respondents from 90 low income households in southern Nigeria were food insecure. This is a clear case of division along epistemological lines. Objective assessments and evidences may indicate food insecurity but qualitative, interpretive exploration has shown otherwise. Hence, previous quantitative findings suggest vulnerability among farmers, but the current study indicates resilience, engendered by Yorùbá culture. The dominantly positive representation of livelihood security among participants is another strong indication of optimistic philosophy in livelihood dynamics among Yorùbá farmers. When we consider objective standards, they may be said to be poor but Yorùbá people are culturally endowed to be positive in their disposition. The saying, *‘bounjẹ bá kúrò nínú isẹ, isẹ bùsẹ’* (when food is out of poverty, there is nothing more to worry about), is an attestation to the contentment-driven nature of Yorùbá people. However, this is not to outrightly suggest that Yorùbá people lack ambition. They are passionately ambitious and they demonstrate this in their attitude towards wealth accumulation and distribution. The central thesis of Barber (1981) centers around his concept of the “self-made man” (Barber 1981, 724), signifying the culture’s endorsement of self-improvements. In the Yorùbá society, “it is very clear that the human individual’s power depends in the long run on the attention and acknowledgement of his fellow-men” (Ibid.). Power resides in chiefly positions, which is not out-rightly hereditary, but held by those who have been able to empower themselves. The “self-made man...

has to secure their attention by display and distribution of *wealth* and by using his influence as a Big Man to protect them and intervene on their behalf. If he is not able to do this, he will not attract a following” (Ibid., emphasis mine). Hence, there is a large room for self-empowerment in Yorùbá society. Many men have struggled to be great, trying to build a circle of followers. A small minority has been more successful in this endeavour, but virtually everyone plays in the game. The fact that the average person is a player in this field shows the depth at which amassing wealth is rooted in the culture.

Majority of participants attribute their security to divine blessings. Divinity in livelihood security was greatly expressed in the language of Islam and Christianity but also that of Yorùbá traditional worldview. A participant remarked that “when you have a good *orí* (literally, head), you will be able to meet your needs in life. However, if you don’t have good *orí* and you make sacrifice so as to live in comfort and meet the basic needs of life, you will be successful in all your endeavours”. This shows that people still subscribe to traditional worldview in making sense of the conditions of their lives. The Yorùbá worldview asserts the division of the universe into two, *orun* and *ayé*, i.e. the world and the heaven. While the heaven is typically for mystical beings and the world is for human beings, inhabitants of heaven are also seen to partake in life on earth (Adogame, 2000). Man is believed to select his *orí* (literally, head, figuratively, destiny, fate or fortune) on his way to the world, from heaven, while kneeling before *Elédùmarè*– the creator of heaven and the world. So, the participant’s submission affirming meeting basic needs due to having good *orí*, is an expression of core Yorùbá belief about *orí*’s role in human welfare. The participant also added that making sacrifice will turn around a bad *orí*. This is another expression of Yorùbá belief and practice of making sacrifices, *ẹbọ*. Yorùbá people believe that when you desire changes such as turning around a bad *orí*, it is apt to offer sacrifices to mystical beings/deities (Adogame 2000). Several participants made reference to the concept of *orí*, in expressing divine bases of their livelihood security. This is a strong indication of cultural survival among the people. Due to westernization and colonization (Lawal 2001), there has been considerable change in Yorùbá culture and traditions. However, the Yorùbá belief in *orí* is one of the very strong exceptions indicating cultural survival among the people. Yorùbá people have become poised to admit to being Christians or Muslims but they tend to be traditionalists in matters of supernatural belief (Olurode and Olusanya 1994). In this study, divinity functioned as a tool which enables farmers to be satisfied, contented and optimistic about their livelihood.

Livelihood diversification was a strong notion that echoed through participant’s expression of their livelihood security. The profile of participants shows that three-quarter of them have a secondary occupation. Praise singing, trading, artisanship and transport business are among participant’s secondary occupation. There is an agreement between these findings and the existing assertions in the literature. Farmer’s engagement in non-farming economic activities has been found to have positive influence on their food security status

(Jabo *et al.* 2015; Obayelu and Orosile 2015; Babatunde and Qaim 2010). The *Rural Poverty Report 2011* (IFAD 2010) is an advocate of farmer's livelihood diversification. According to the report, "agriculture will not be a way out of poverty for all rural people... many poor rural people have extremely limited, or no, access to land and markets, and they will not be able to rely on farming in this way. Instead, they will need to seek opportunities in the rural non-farm economy, in either wage employment or self-employment, that can provide them with their main route out of poverty" (IFAD 2010, 184). Hence, livelihood diversification is becoming imperative, and appears to have come to stay among Yorùbá farmers of southwestern Nigeria. Diversification of livelihood is another tool promoting optimism in livelihood security among farmers.

Meanings attached to livelihood security indicated that participants strongly desired 'the good life'. Life appears to be meaningful only with livelihood security. A participant even recounted a Yorùbá saying, *òná òfun lòná òrun* (the road to the throat is the road to heaven) to drive home his point. The saying relays the significance attached to means of livelihood. The Yorùbá people also say that *ikú tí yó pòdẹ́ m̀bẹ́ nínú igríbó; ikú tí yó pàgbe m̀bẹ́ lorùn ebè* (the death that will kill the hunter is in the forest; the death that will kill the farmer is coiled around the heap). Struggling or hustling to maintain and develop one's livelihood is praised in the culture. Participants are ambitious in their disposition, in addition to the contentment they exhibit in their livelihood security.

Conclusions

Livelihood dynamics is largely driven by a strong desire to be secured, and have a dominantly optimistic philosophy related to current state of security. Yorùbá concepts and phrases are used to describe people whose livelihood is secured, and meanings attached to livelihood security basically indicate the desirability of such security. The dominantly positive attitude towards *àgbèlọba*, and the dominantly satisfactory attitude towards livelihood security are strong indicators of optimistic philosophy in livelihood dynamics among the Yorùbá. Divinity and diversification of livelihood, function as tools, enabling farmers to be satisfied, contented and optimistic about their livelihood.

References

- Adebisi, T. A., and C. S. Oni. "Availability of vocational training facilities for the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Nigeria." *International Journal of Development and Sustainability* 1, no. 3 (2012): 889–902.
- Adogame, Afe. "Aiye loja, orun nile: The appropriation of ritual space-time in the cosmology of the Celestial Church of Christ." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30, no. Fasc. 1 (2000): 3–29.

- Akerele, Dare, Siaka Momoh, Adebayo B. Aromolaran, Clara RB Oguntona, and Adebayo Musediku Shittu. "Food insecurity and coping strategies in South-West Nigeria." *Food security* 5, no. 3 (2013): 407–414.
- Arnoldi, Mary Jo, and Christine Mullen Kreamer. "Crowning achievements: African arts of dressing the head." *African Arts* 28, no. 1 (1995): 22–98.
- Babatunde, Raphael O., and Matin Qaim. "Impact of off-farm income on food security and nutrition in Nigeria." *Food policy* 35, no. 4 (2010): 303–311.
- Barber, Karin. "How man makes god in West Africa: Yoruba attitudes towards the Orisa." *Africa* 51, no. 3 (1981): 724–745.
- Davis, Thomas J., and Azubike Kalu-Nwiwu. "Education, ethnicity and national integration in the history of Nigeria: Continuing problems of Africa's colonial legacy." *The Journal of Negro History* 86, no. 1 (2001): 1–11.
- Van der Ploeg, Jan Douwe. "Poverty alleviation and smallholder agriculture: The rural poverty report 2011." *Development and Change* 43, no. 1 (2012): 439–448.
- Fadipe, Nathaniel Akinremi. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan: Ibadan University press, 1970.
- FAO, IFAD and WFP. (2015). "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015. Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress." *Food and Agriculture Organization Publications*, Rome.
- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. (2018). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018. Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition*. Rome, FAO. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.
- IFAD, (2010). *Rural Poverty Report 2011*, Rome: International Fund for Agricultural Development.
- Jabo, M., Amin Mahir Abdullah, and Mad Nasir Shamsudin. "Is the Participation in the Non-farm Income Generating Activities Help Smooth Food Consumption? Evidence From Rural Nigeria." *Australian Journal of Sustainable Business and Society* 1, no. 2 (2015).
- Lawal, Babatunde. "Aworan: representing the self and its metaphysical other in Yoruba art." *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 3 (2001): 498–526.
- McMichael, Philip. "Banking on agriculture: a review of the World Development Report 2008." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 9, no. 2 (2009): 235–246.
- Morton-Williams, Peter. "The Yoruba Ogboni Cult in Oyo." *Africa* 30, no. 4 (1960): 362–374.
- Obayelu, Oluwakemi Adeola, and Olufunke Rachael Orosile. "Rural livelihood and food poverty in Ekiti State, Nigeria." *Journal of Agriculture and Environment for International Development (JAEID)* 109, no. 2 (2015): 307–23.
- Olurode, Lai and P. O. Olusanya. *Nigerian heritage: the Yoruba example*. Lagos: Rebonik Publications Ltd, 1994.
- Oluyole, Kayode Akanni, O. A. Oni, B. T. Omonona, and K. O. Adenegan. "Food security among cocoa farming households of Ondo State, Nigeria." *ARNP Journal of Agricultural and Biological Science* 4, no. 5 (2009): 7–13.
- Orewa, S. I., and C. Iyangbe. "The struggle against hunger: the victims and the food security strategies adopted in adverse conditions." *World Journal of Agricultural Sciences* 6, no. 6 (2010): 740–745.

Rigg, Jonathan. "Land, farming, livelihoods, and poverty: rethinking the links in the rural South." *World development* 34, no. 1 (2006): 180–202.

Wallace, Adryan. "Holistic Development: Muslim Women's Civil Society Groups in Nigeria, Ghana and Tanzania." *African Sociological Review/Revue Africaine de Sociologie* 19, no. 2 (2015): 53–74.

World Bank, 2007. *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Primljeno: 27.05.2019.

Odobreno: 26.09.2019.

Fausat Motunrayo Ibrahim

Àgbèlọba: Optimizam u životnoj dinamici Joruba zemljoradnika jugozapadne Nigerije.

Apstrakt: Ovo istraživanje je izvedeno s ciljem da istraži životnu dinamiku Joruba zemljoradnika koristeći se triangulacijom kvalitativnih metoda. Nalazi pokazuju da su Joruba zemljoradnici većinom optimistični kada je reč o njihovoj egzistenciji. Očigledno je da streme višoj životnoj sigurnosti i s tim ciljem na umu posežu za religijom i upražnjavanjem raznovrsnih poslova kojim pospešuju prihode.

Gljučne reči: Životna sigurnost, božanstva, diverzifikacija, zemljoradnici, Jorube.