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THE IFE LABOUR MARKET:
A NIGERIAN CASE STUDY

by

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THE IFE LABOUR MARKET: A NIGERIAN CASE STUDY

ABSTRACT

This essay is one of a series produced within the scope of the global project on women's roles and demographic issues supported by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. It is one of the recent micro studies demonstrating the processes and factors affecting sex segmentation in urban African labour markets (cf. Date-Bah, 1982). It combines a variety of data sources and methods of analysis including a survey of occupational experience, case studies of employers and establishments and a small select time budget study of hours allocated to women's several roles.

The setting is a fast growing and changing Yoruba university town, Ile-Ife, in a region where women have long been famous for their economic participation in trade, agricultural production and food processing. Mass formal education was introduced in 1955.

In the course of describing workers, employers and establishments, sex segregation in the labour market is depicted, where it appears to exist and the ways in which males have entered into jobs which were formerly dominated by females are explained. A particular concern is the potential conflicts between domestic activities and responsibilities and those of the work place. To study these, time allocation data are analysed within the context of family composition, formation and size.

The dichotomy in the division of labour in the Ile-Ife urban labour market is seen to persist, with high participation rates for both sexes continuing into late old age.

Constraints to women's employment are examined of various kinds, including the influence of husbands, domestic constraints and employers' views and strategies. A case study of a catering establishment provides an excellent

example of the way in which men may move into a formerly female dominated area as the size and formality of the work place change. Studies of two other medium sized privately run establishments show some of the factors predisposing employers to employ male labour. The small sample of time use data and women's activities show how occupational pursuits predominate while domestic and maternal activities vary considerably, depending upon the presence of infants and young children in the households and the presence or absence of husbands. If all types of activities are considered the women work long hours and their income earning activities are seen to be an important input into the domestic economy. Moreover current levels of role conflict are not sufficient to discourage women from participating in the labour force. However some aspects of the current situation are subject to change including the price of child-care which may affect women's perceptions and activities.

With regard to labour policies and programmes the point is made that with less than a quarter of the labour force in the modern non-agricultural sector, it is difficult to establish policies of universal relevance and applicability and the activities of labour unions are directed at the formal sector of employment. Again in a situation of surplus labour women are vulnerable and their absorption into the labour force will involve an expansion of employment opportunities. Any more widespread incorporation of women into the formal labour market will need to be accompanied by a parallel expansion of child-minding services.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study is to provide a description of the labour market in Ife, a Nigerian university town. In the course of describing workers, employers and establishments, sex segregation in the labour market is depicted, where it appears to exist, and the ways in which males have entered into jobs which were formerly dominated by females all explained. A particular concern is the potential conflicts between domestic activities and responsibilities and those of the work place. To study these, time allocation data are analysed within the context of family composition, formation and size.

In the course of the study the following types of information were obtained:

- (i) background information on the changes in sex and labour force activity before and after the establishment of the University of Ife, Ile-Ife;
- (ii) a sample survey of workers' histories, attitudes and responses to facets of the labour market;
- (iii) a profile of two employers, using in-depth interviews to illustrate the basis of the employers' policies in the private, non-service sector;
- (iv) a profile of an establishment to demonstrate features of the modern catering industry influencing employer and employees' choices of jobs and the clustering of one sex in given sectors of the industry; and
- (v) a time budget study of a panel of women within and outside the labour market, focusing on the allocation of time to domestic and non-domestic roles.

There are very few employers of labour in the formal sector in Ile Ife. The government is the dominant employer and the few private employers depend either on family or "servant" labour and are accordingly outside the formal

urban labour market. Consequently the study is denied the advantage of the questionnaire sample survey of employers of the type administered to workers. The solution adopted was the in-depth interview of a few employers and the use of such material, in conjunction with the perception and responses of workers, to determine the extent to which employers' policies wittingly or unwittingly produce sex segregation and discrimination.

Women's Multiple Roles

One issue which is relevant to the study of sex segregation and discrimination is the link between changes in women's statuses, especially their work status, their comparative levels of income and other rewards, their maternal status and the continuity or cessation of child labour, and changes in their reproductive behaviour and aspirations. In the context of role conflict theory women as multiple actors will, in the process of changing priorities and roles, face the problem of the allocation of time as a scarce resource to different potentially conflicting roles including the occupational and familial (Oppong, 1982). These conflicts too may be linked to changing perceptions of employment outside the home, work inside the home and childbearing and may thus affect family size values and achievements. Thus in the current study time budget data of a selected set of women were collected and analysed so as to improve understanding of the ways in which time is allocated to different and potentially time conflicting roles inside and outside the home and possible factors affecting differences in levels of strain or conflict experienced. Although this type of data does not lend itself to massive sampling, on the reasonable assumption that case studies are indicative of widely occurring experiences it is valid to draw some analytical and policy deductions from such a small sample.

For discriminatory practices to be revised a clear appreciation of the household tasks facing female employees is required. Fitting the occupational role into the matrix of female roles depends on knowledge of the job situation and those features of the production system which are truly unalterable and those which are conventions.

The Setting: Ile-Ife

Very rapid and often dramatic changes have occurred in the circumstances of Ile-Ife in the last decade. Ile-Ife is one of the most famous examples of Yoruba pre-industrial population agglomerations and, as described by Mabogunje (1968), owes its size to the cultural and ethnic history of the Yoruba people. Ile-Ife lies in the midst of a rich agricultural region and is located about 80 km east of the Oyo State capital, Ibadan, and 250 km from Lagos, the capital of Nigeria. The basis of agricultural prosperity in the area is cash crops, such as cocoa, which were introduced in the 1920s and enjoyed a period of peak production and high prices in the 1950s. Other cash crops are timber, palm oil, rubber and kola nut trees, which have been exploited partly by local people and also by the in-migrants of other Yoruba sub-ethnic groups who have moved into the suburbs of Ile-Ife.

In 1963 the population of Ile-Ife was 130,000 and of Ife Division 515,194.¹ Separate labour force figures are not available for Ife town in the breakdown of the 1963 population census and so the divisional figures will be used. Yorubas form 96.4 per cent of the Divisional population, although there is a marked presence of Hausas in Ife

1. With the cancellation of the 1973 census results, the 1963 data is the most recent available.

Sabo Quarters and in one or two kolanut concentration centres such as Olode village.

In 1963, the population aged 15 and over (and constituting the employable population) amounted to 342,840 out of which the labour force was 236,605 or 69 per cent. The female participation rate is consistently lower than the male, although the rates for the women are much higher than for many other countries with 60 per cent of women aged 15 or over being active. Because of the predominance of self-employment, and the absence of pension schemes, people work for as long as possible. Consequently, activity rates stay high even into the old ages of 65 or over.¹ But by far the most relevant information is the occupation groups shown by sex and occupation in table 1. The most crucial features are:

- a. that farmers and production process workers account for 75 per cent of all males in the labour force;
- b. very few women are in agriculture, but 68.5 per cent of the female labour force is in the sales group; and
- c. the large unspecified group is probably made up of self-employed housewives. In effect, it is as if the division of labour in the traditional situation has been that men farm and women sell farm surplus or perform small-scale retailing of manufactured goods.

Based on observations of the Ile-Ife labour market, the following points can be made.

Firstly, the dichotomy of farm/trade specialisation by male/female sex persists in Ile-Ife, with the modification that the sale of non-agricultural produce attracts many women and a few men who are located in part-residential structures which still dot the main streets of the town.

1. This high recorded female activity rate is peculiar to the southern parts of Nigeria. National female activity rate is much lower at 28 per cent, but as Pittin (1982) has illustrated much female work goes unrecorded.

Table 1: Labour Force in Major Occupation Groups by Sex - Ife Division, 1963

ISCO Code	Occupation Groups	M A L E S		F E M A L E S		T O T A L		% Female
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
0	Professional, Technical & Related	5,029	3.5	1,247	1.4	6,276	2.6	19.9
1	Administrative, Executive (includes Business Managers, Chiefs, etc.)	1,008	0.7	115	0.1	1,123	0.5	10.2
2	Clerical Workers	5,496	3.8	730	0.8	6,226	2.6	11.7
3	Sales Workers	13,586	9.4	62,937	68.5	76,523	32.3	82.2
4	Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters & Related	85,948	59.4	2,268	2.5	88,216	37.3	2.6
5	Miners, Quarrymen & Related	41	0.0	6	0.0	47	0.0	12.8
6	Transport and Communication Workers	4,973	3.4	71	0.0	5,044	2.1	1.4
7/8	Craftsmen, Production Process Workers & Labourers	22,368	15.5	4,113	4.5	26,481	11.2	15.5
9	Service, Sports and Recreation	4,390	3.0	2,930	3.2	7,320	3.1	40.0
-	Inadequately described occupations (includes housewives claiming vague forms of employment)	755	0.5	17,067	18.6	17,822	7.6	95.8
TOTAL EMPLOYED PERSONS		143,594	99.2	91,484	99.6	235,078	99.3	38.9
Unemployed persons		1,091	0.8	436	0.5	1,527	0.7	28.6
TOTAL LABOUR FORCE		144,685	100.0	91,920	100.0	236,605	100.0	38.8

Source: Federal Office of Statistics (1968), Vol. II, p. 171.