



INITIATIVE ON
Gender Equality

Measuring gender and social norms in agrifood systems: Evidence from Nigeria and Tanzania

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December 2023



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Acronyms

AFSs..... Agrifood Systems

LMICs..... Low and Middle-Income Countries



Introduction

Social norms are the informal rules that influence and uphold acceptable, appropriate, and obligatory behavior within a group (Harper and Marcus 2018; Cislighi et al. 2019; Cislighi and Heise 2018; Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990; Social Norms Learning Collaborative 2021; Cislighi, Manji, and Heise 2018). Although expressed individually, social norms exist collectively, based on the shared ideals and beliefs within a particular group and social context (Harper and Marcus 2018; Pearse and Connell 2016; Edström et al. n.d.; McDougall et al. 2021) and influence behavior at all levels—individual, household, community, and institutional (FAO, IFAD, and WFP 2022).

Social norms are typically measured based on two types of beliefs. Descriptive norms are one's beliefs about what others do (i.e., typical behavior); injunctive norms are one's beliefs about what others think one should do (i.e., appropriate behavior) (Cialdini et al. 1991; Institute for Reproductive Health 2021). Both types of beliefs should be assessed to identify and measure a social norm (FAO, IFAD, and WFP 2022).

Gender norms (or gendered social norms) are the subset of social norms that define acceptable and appropriate behavior for men, women, girls, and boys (Cislighi and Heise 2020). Broadly speaking, gender norms matter because they dictate and reinforce social inequalities, particularly in relation to economic opportunities (Cislighi, Manji, and Heise 2018). Understanding how gender norms shape economic opportunities is especially important in the context of agrifood systems (AFSs) in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where small-scale and homestead production are common and the ability to produce larger quantities and increase value via processing and marketing is often dictated by access

to individual resources. The ability of women and men to be successful in such contexts is tied to deeply entrenched gender inequalities with regards to, for example, women's roles and the division of labor within households, as well as women's freedom of movement and the livelihoods and activities viewed as acceptable for women to engage in outside the household (FAO 2023).

Understanding gender norms is fundamental to addressing structural gender inequalities in AFSs and achieving sustained and lasting impacts through development programs. Transformative approaches aimed at changing discriminatory gender norms have been shown to have positive impact on, for example, women's empowerment (Cole et al. 2020; Lecoutere and Chu 2023), prevention of intimate partner violence (Semahegn et al. 2019; Jewkes, Flood, and Lang 2015), and women's and girls' health and nutrition (Weber et al. 2019; Heise et al. 2019; Farnworth et al. 2023). Such approaches thus hold potential for not only promoting gender equality but also improving other important development outcomes.

Understanding the impact of gender transformative interventions, as well as the links between gender norms and other AFS outcomes, requires high-quality data and measurement tools designed to measure changes in gendered norms. Yet, no tool exists to measure and track gender norms in AFSs and how these norms differ across AFSs, geographies, and among women and men working in different roles within the value chain (e.g., producers, processors, traders, input suppliers, extension workers).

To address this gap, we developed a survey instrument to measure gender norms in cassava, poultry, and fish AFSs in Tanzania and Nigeria, and piloted it with men and women working as producers, processors, marketers, and influencers and supporters of AFS policies and governance within each AFS.

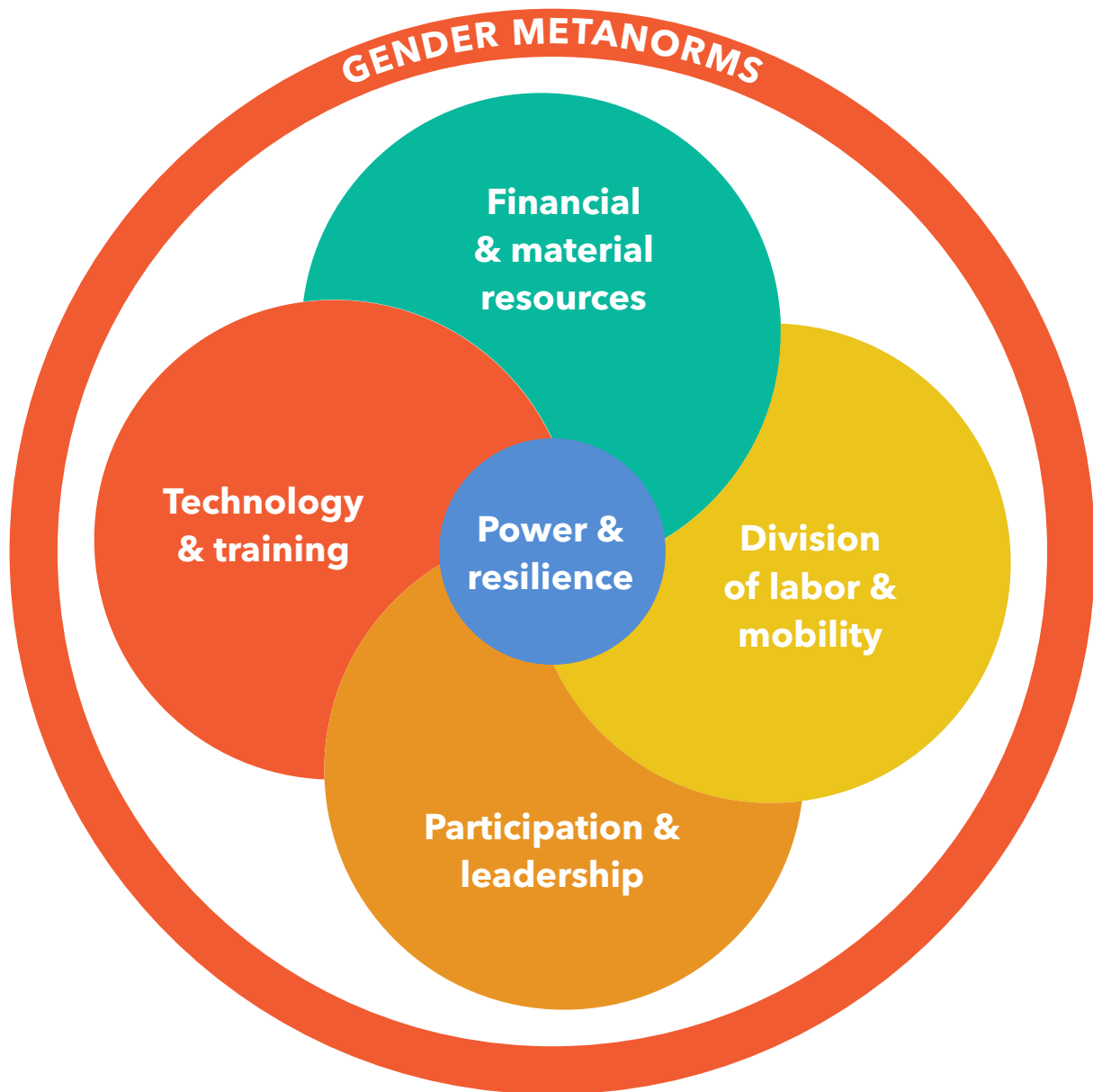
This policy brief presents findings from the survey on the prevalence of gendered social norms within the target AFSs in Tanzania and Nigeria and recommendations on potential actions or interventions to reduce normative constraints limiting women's capacities to build economic resilience against climate change challenges.

Methods

Tool development

We developed the survey instrument using an iterative, participatory approach. Based on an initial literature review, we drafted a framework to conceptualize how gendered social norms operate and affect AFS actors. We refined the framework based on two rounds of stakeholder consultation. Between December 2022 and February 2023, we conducted phone interviews and convened a stakeholder consultation workshop with AFS experts to solicit feedback on the framework and on the specific gendered social norms they perceived to operate in the target AFSs and be most critical to gender equity.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for gendered social norms critical to women’s power and resilience in AFSs.



The resultant framework, shown in Figure 1, contains five domains that organize and prioritize the gendered social norms we expect to be most prevalent or exert the strongest influence on women working in the target AFSs. The petals of the “flower” depict four central domains of norms: (1) financial and material resources, (2) technology and training, (3) division of labor and

mobility, and (4) participation and leadership. The center of the flower depicts how these norms interact to contribute to the empowerment and economic resilience of women working in AFSs. The outer circle wrapping around the flower depicts a fifth domain of gender metanorms (i.e., gendered social norms that exist for all women at a societal level).

Each of the five domains of norms is measured as a separate module in the survey instrument. For each norm, we include parallel questions that measure the norm descriptively and injunctively:

- Descriptive: "Of the women who you are aware of who work in the (AFS) in this community or who you support, how many do you think...?"
- Injunctive: "How many people in your community or network do you think would agree with the following statement? It is inappropriate for women who work in the (AFS) to..."

In total, the survey instrument included 74 questions, all of which were asked using the same five-point scale: 0 = no one; 1 = a few; 2 = some; 3 = most; and 4 = everyone.

Pilot survey

Between August and September 2023, we conducted a household survey, including the survey tool, with men and women working in the cassava, poultry, and fish AFSs in the regions of Kagera and Kigoma regions, in Tanzania, and Oyo and Ogun states, in Nigeria. These are among the largest cassava, fish, and chicken producing areas in both countries. Given differences in fishing production across the two countries, we focused on one species in each country: *dagaa* in Tanzania and catfish monoculture in Nigeria. In Tanzania, *dagaa* is a small fish caught using nets and often dried in the sun and is one of the leading commercial species of Lake Victoria. In Nigeria, catfish monoculture is typically carried out in earthen ponds and is the predominant aquaculture system in the country.

The survey sample included individuals working in different AFS roles including as producers, processors, marketers, and influencers and supporters of AFS policies and governance. Depending on the AFS and role, we followed different sampling strategies, including probability and non-probability (e.g., snowballing) methods, across the four AFS roles, based on distinctions in the size of the populations, as well as where and how to identify individuals, working in each role. In total, the survey included 637 women and 818 men in Tanzania and 929 women and 721 men in Nigeria.





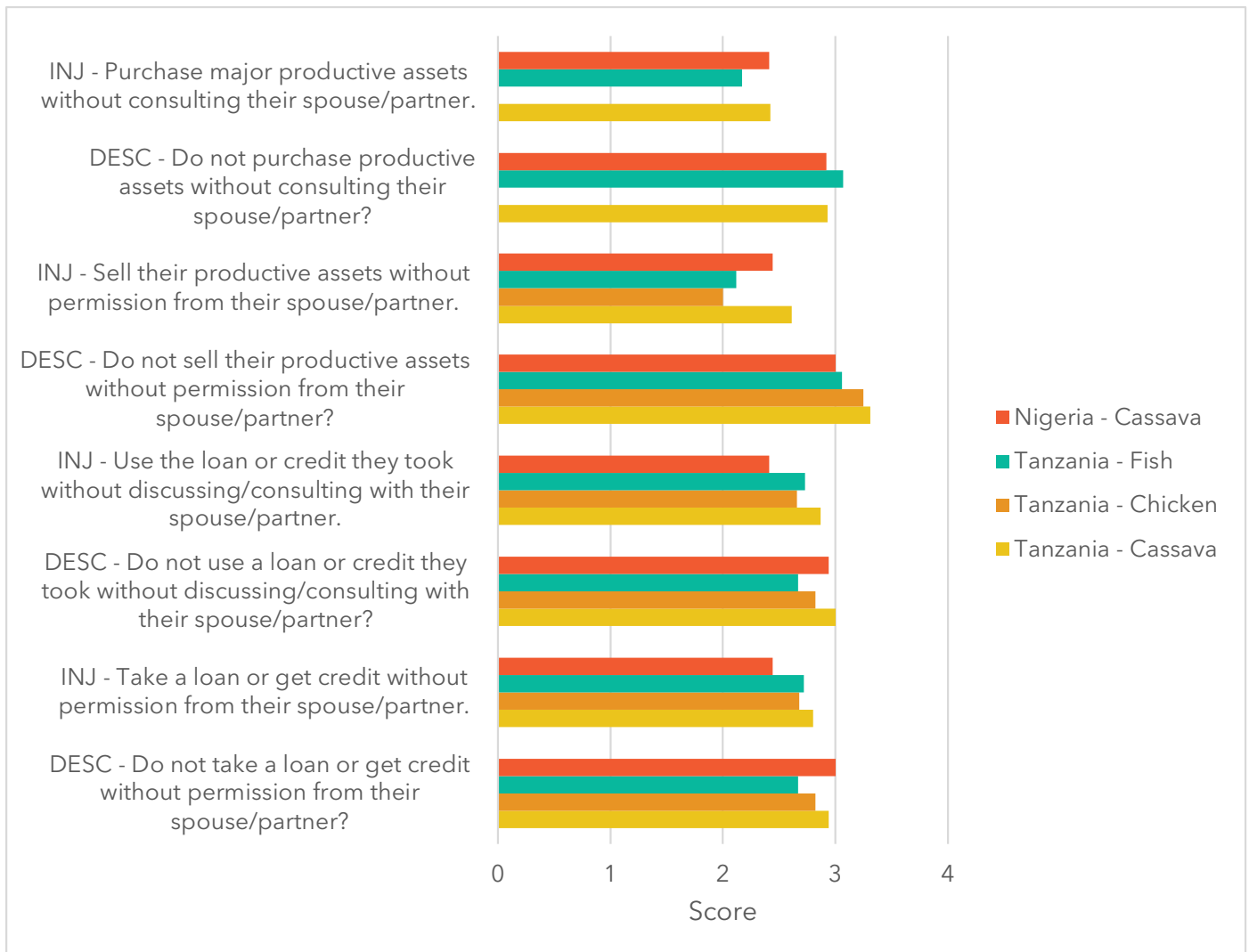
Prevalence of gendered social norms within AFSs in Tanzania and Nigeria

We analyzed the data in multiple ways, comparing the overall mean responses (or scores) to each survey item, as well as by sex and role within each AFS and country. We interpreted scores less than 2 as evidence of non-existence or low prevalence of restriction on women and scores greater than 2 as evidence of greater prevalence.¹

This policy brief presents select results from our analysis. In Figures 2 - 6, we show the mean scores for only those norms where both the descriptive and injunctive formulations were reported by women and men as highly prevalent (i.e., scores greater than 2). We interpreted such cases as strong evidence of the prevalence of a restrictive norm and constraint to the empowerment and economic resilience of women working in these AFSs.

Financial and material resources

Figure 2. Gendered social norms for financial and material resources: highly prevalent, restrictive to women.



Note: DESC = descriptive norm; INJ = injunctive norm

¹ The following three injunctive items within the gender meta-norms module are exceptions: It is inappropriate for women to (1) “tolerate violence from their spouse/partner,” (2) “carry out most of the routine chores within the household,” and (3) “perform most of the childcare duties within the household.” Given the formulation of these items, in terms of the absence rather than existence of a norm, the interpretation of low and high scores must be reversed. Hence, we interpret scores less than 2 as signifying greater prevalence of restriction on women.

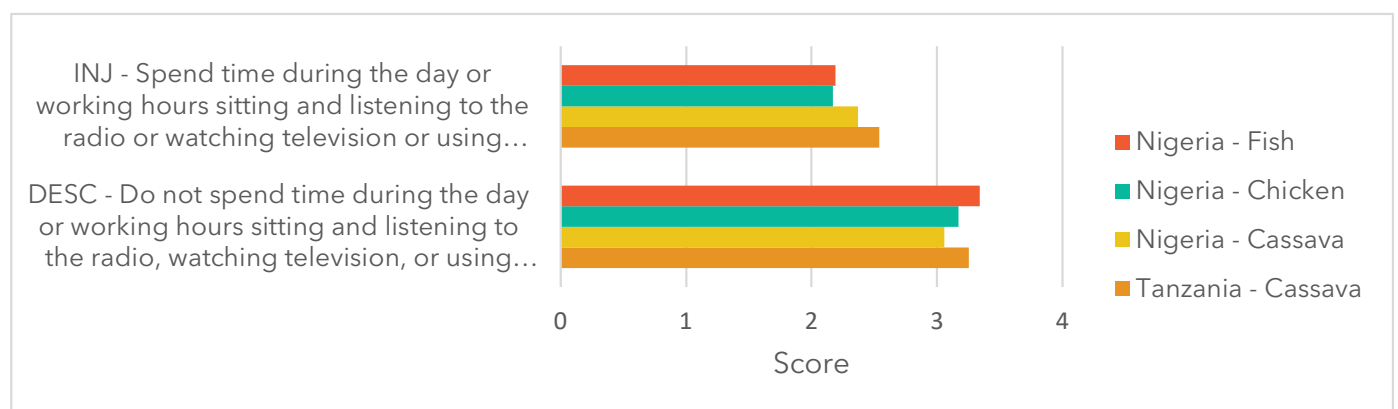


Within the financial and material resources domain, norms related to women’s access/use of credit and selling/purchasing of productive assets without the knowledge of their spouse/partner were consistently endorsed by respondents and emerged as consistent barriers to women (Figure 2). In contrast, norms related to women’s access to financial accounts (including mobile money) and ownership of land and productive

assets tended to be endorsed by respondents only when formulated descriptively (i.e., in terms of the number of women perceived to exhibit these behaviors). This suggests that gendered social norms governing women’s access to and ownership of financial and material resources may, in fact, be less restrictive compared with norms governing women’s use of these resources independent from their spouse/partner.

Technology and training

Figure 3. Gendered social norms for technology: highly prevalent, restrictive to women.



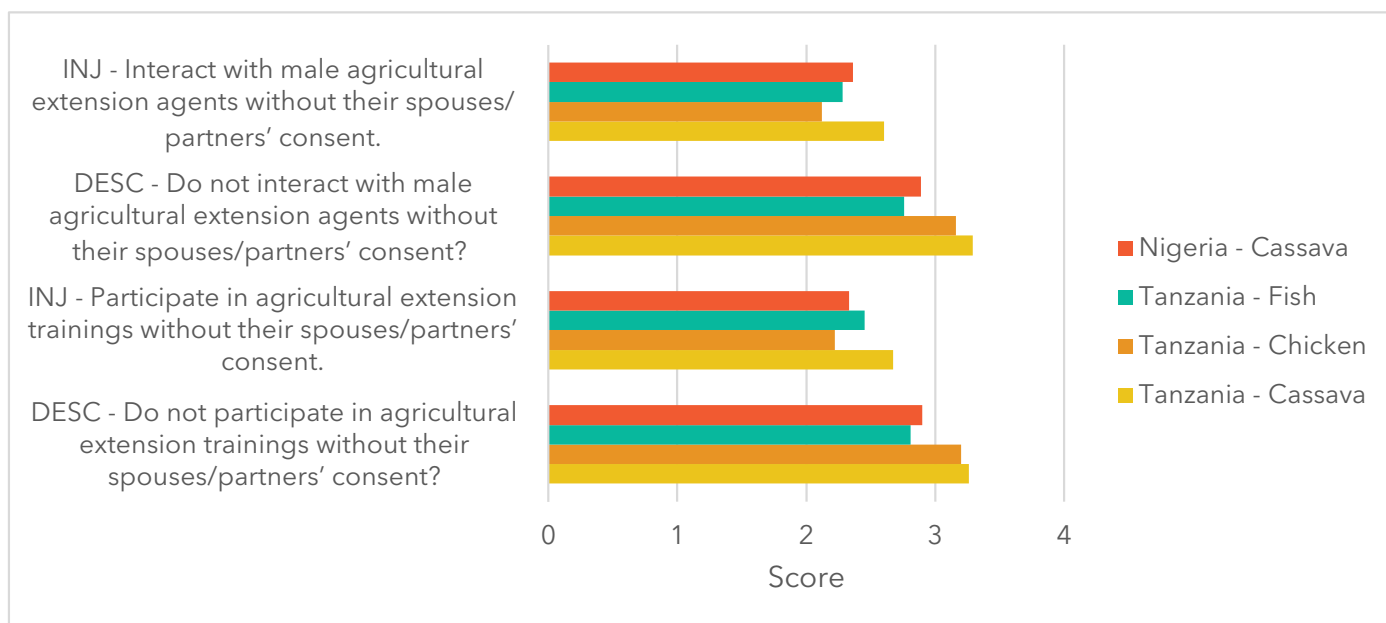
Note: DESC = descriptive norm; INJ = injunctive norm

Within the technology and training domain, the only norm that was consistently endorsed, descriptively and injunctively, by respondents relates to spending time during working hours listening to the radio, watching television, or using a mobile phone (Figure 3). Whether

this norm exists exclusively for women, however, or applies more broadly to men as well is not apparent in the data—a norm precluding idleness of any sort by any adult during working hours may be the case, and thus, would be a worthwhile consideration for a future study.

Participation and leadership

Figure 4. Gendered social norms for participation and leadership: highly prevalent, restrictive to women.



Note: DESC = descriptive norm; INJ = injunctive norm

Within the participation and leadership domain, the most restrictive norms to emerge as consistent barriers to women relate to their participation in agricultural extension training and/or interaction, in general, with male extension agents without their spouse/partner's consent (Figure 4). Given that agricultural extension agents in many societies continue to be predominantly

male, one possible implication is that women's access to agricultural extension would be significantly higher if more such agents were female. That is, women may not, per se, be constrained from accessing agricultural extension because of normative constraints against their participation in extension, but are rather constrained against interacting with male extension agents.

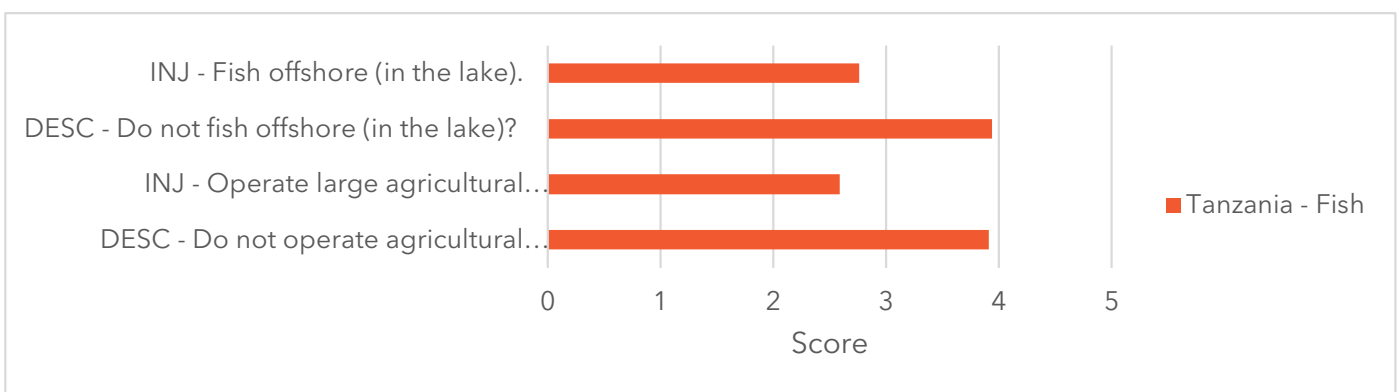




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Mobility and division of labor

Figure 5. Gendered social norms for mobility and division of labor: highly prevalent, restrictive to women.



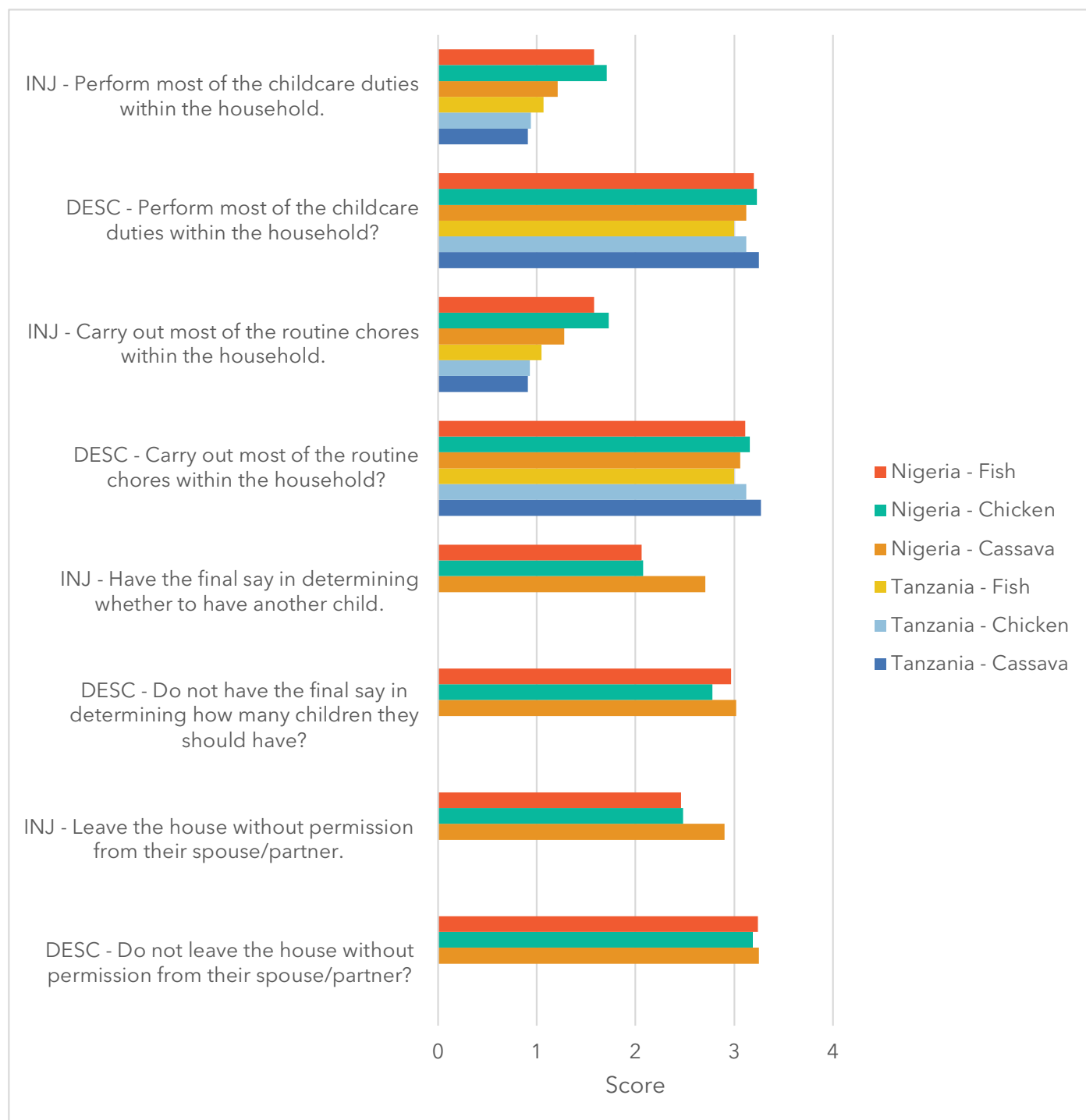
Note: DESC = descriptive norm; INJ = injunctive norm

Within the mobility and division of labor domain, the most restrictive norms to emerge concern offshore fishing, but only in Tanzania and only in relation to the dagaa AFS (Figure 5). Regarding other norms asked about in this domain, while women were perceived as unlikely to engage in market activities or run commercial agricultural businesses, these do not appear to be norms-based barriers. Respondents

did not recognize injunctive norms against women performing these activities. Except for offshore fishing in Tanzania, women’s mobility appears largely unhindered, at least as it relates to AFS activities. There is a lack of strong endorsements, either descriptive or injunctive, for items related to visiting other AFS-specific locations without a male spouse/partner/relative.

Gender metanorms

Figure 6. Gender metanorms: highly prevalent, restrictive to women.



Note: DESC = descriptive norm; INJ = injunctive norm

Among gender metanorms, the major normative constraints to emerge concerned the ability of women to leave the home without the permission of their spouse/partner and have final say in family planning decisions, as well as their responsibility for all domestic and childcare work within the household (Figure 6).

The existence of a normative constraint against women leaving the house without permission from their spouse/partner contrasts with our finding that women can visit AFS-specific locations (cassava field, chicken shed, fishing camp) without their spouse/partner or a male relative. Further investigation, using qualitative methods

and/or cognitive testing, is needed to understand what drives this difference; however, one possibility is that it has to do with the subtle nuance between asking permission from one's spouse/partner and visiting a location without them. That is, one possible explanation

for the lack of a normative constraint against women visiting AFS-specific locations is that the norm was understood by respondents as tacitly involving or being contingent upon the women obtaining permission from a male spouse/partner.

Policy implications

Considered as a whole, our study suggests several key areas, in which actions or interventions of potential benefit could reduce normative constraints limiting women's capacities to build economic resilience against climate change challenges. These include women's ability to access and use credit, sell and purchase productive assets, interact with male extension

agents, engage in offshore fishing in Tanzania, leave the home without expressed permission, and make family planning decisions. Our findings also speak to the importance of interventions related to the intrahousehold division of labor, especially those aimed at overturning norms that compel women to bear full responsibility for unpaid domestic and childcare work.



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