

Man's Best Friend A Means Of Livelihood: The Sociology Of Dog Trade In Kanke Local Government Of Plateau State Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Dog meat is the flesh and other edible parts derived from Dogs. Historically, human consumption of Dog meat has been recorded in many parts of the world, Dog meat remains a particularly popular and traditional food in parts of various part of Nigeria, like Plateau and Akwa Ibom state. Dog trade in Nigeria has become so profitable that Dogs are now imported from neighboring countries like Niger and Chad to sustain the market demand. The study made use of a purely exploratory research design, with qualitative instruments being the method of data collection. The research conducted 27 in depth interviews and 2 key informant interviews among the study population. Purposive and snow balling sampling procedure guided this research work in the selection of participants. The data was analyzed through content analysis. The findings of the study revealed that more women than men are involved in the buying and selling of Dog meat. The study also revealed that Kanke is the major terminal where Dogs are distributed to the other parts of the country. Buyers from as far as the southern region get their supply of Dog flesh from Kanke. The study also revealed that the most frequent losses and risk incurred in the Dog trade are, accident, Dog theft, treatment of Dog bites and weight loss.

Key words: Dog, Dog meat, Kanke, Dog trade, Market, Livelihood, Sociology, Nigeria

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I. INTRODUCTION

Dog meat is consumed in several states in Nigeria, such as Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Plateau state. Consumption of Dog meat is a common practice in some parts of Nigeria, particularly in Plateau State, consequently, Dog trade is a thriving business with Dog markets in many local government areas of the state. Dog meat suya (barbecue) is a common delicacy among the people of Plateau State. It is eaten with burukutu (a local brew), beer, or any other preferred drink. A formal or informal gathering is incomplete without Dog meat suya (Shobayo 2014). Dog trade in Nigeria has become so profitable that Dogs are now imported from neighboring countries to sustain the market demand.

Plateau state has some of the most flourishing Dog markets in Nigeria. Dawaki and Amper markets in Kanke Local Government area are some of the popular ones. They receive Dogs from all the northern states and from Niger and Chad Republics (Sabo, 2009). It is clear that the issue of Dog Trade from the foregoing constitute an integral part of the social and economic life of people in kanke LGA. Therefore, this study is situated to examine the sociology of Dog trade in Kanke Local Government area of plateau state. History and literature reveals that the supply, slaughter and consumption of Dog meat was usually done by men. However, recently more women have ventured into the Dog business that was considered too brutal and cruel for women. But there is dearth of literature concerning the gender dimension with regards to the study area. The research will also attempt to investigate why there is an influx of women into the Dog business, the supply chain and the economic profitability of Dog trade.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is qualitative in nature hence it employed qualitative method of data collection (Key Informant Interview and in-depth interview). Data were obtained through field survey. A total of 29 participant were selected and interviewed based on their Dog trade. The study also employed non-participant observation to gather pictorial data. The analysis of the data commenced when data from the interviews had been transcribed by the researchers. It was thematically organized and analyzed using content analysis.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE STUDY AREA

The area of study for this research was Kanke Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria. The headquarters of Kanke Local Government Area is Kwal Town. It has an area of 926 km² and a projected population of 162,800 (NPC, 2016).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic Profitability of Dog Trade

This ancient market, situated in Dawaki town of Kanke local government area in Plateau state, is the major Dog market in the country. The market started out as a meeting point for travelers, during the slave trade era. Subsequently people started bringing items other than humans for sale and exchange. The market often generates between 70,000- 100,000 naira every market day (L. Sadiq & D. S. Adama 2017). In 2017, Daily Trust gathered that Dog transaction alone in the market amounts to over N3 million weekly. But this depends on the season, there is usually a boom in the market during the dry season and a decline in demand during the rainy season. The Ngas men have a reputation for facilitating healing and payment for such services rendered is sometimes done in kind, where the recovered patient gives Dogs and sometimes food items to the healers. (L. Sadiq & D. S. Adama 2017). In most northern states Dog are gotten relatively cheap because of the restriction that some religions place on Dogs and Dog meat consumption.

Thursdays are considered as market days in Dawaki, traders throng to the market, but business transaction often commences fully when the Calabar traders arrive. They usually come with hundreds of liters of palm oil to sell to their customers, and subsequently use the money to buy Dogs and other animals in return. (L. Sadiq & D. S. Adama 2017). Dog prices may range from between 11,000-17,000 Naira depending on the weight and size of the animal.

Gender Roles and Dynamics in Dog Trade

In African traditional societies, there are observed role differentiations which are based on sex. While sex roles are biologically determined, universal and unchangeable, gender based roles are often rooted in culture. Research has shown that traditional gender role beliefs are more strongly endorsed by men than women (Larsen and Long, 1988; Brewster and Padavic, 2000). These beliefs are linked to greater emphasis being put on men's and husbands'/fathers' careers than on women's and wives/mothers' careers. Such beliefs are then likely to be reflected in individual women's and men's social identities, anticipated future social roles, and short-and long-term goals (Eccles and Bryan, 1994; Eccles et al., 1999). From the foregoing clarifications, therefore, it can be said that the role men and women perform in society, especially in the traditional society, is based on the mere assumptions or perceptions of their skills and abilities as culturally constructed and determined by the society. (NWOSU, I. E. 2012)

Today, women venture into the Dog business that was once dominated by men (Shobayo 2014). In the past, Dog meat selling business was exclusively reserved for the men-folk, however, it has now become an "all embracing" trade for both men and women. In some cases, the men travel to northern part of the country in search for a greener pasture. This is in form of serving in most cases, the Hausa and Fulani man on their farms or with their livestock. In return for their services, they are given Dogs. Some men still stay back for more work while they send the Dogs back to Kanke LGA for their wives to sell and solve the family's needs. This is another reason why women became more actors in the Dog business.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Economic Profitability of Dog Trade

This section examines the economic profitability of Dog trade. The types of losses incurred in the business, their engagement into other businesses, if any, and also the types of risk involved in the Dog meat business.

There are certainly losses in this business, sometimes, the Dogs may fall sick after they are purchased, and if one doesn't get a buyer on time, such Dogs may lose weight or even die. And once the Dogs lose weight, the buyer will be forced to sell them cheaper, it is a major loss.

A participant said, when asked concerning the type of loss she incurs in the business.

Dog theft is also a serious issue here. There are a lot of Dogs here, so one has to be extra vigilant, if not your Dog may be stolen. (IDI/female/33 years/June 2021)

The problem of Dog theft was one issue that was raised by all the participants, they reported how Dogs were stolen on a regular basis in Kanke. Efforts had been put in place to try and curb the menace but all had proved abortive. In fact, the researchers witnessed two events of Dog owners coming all the way from Kano and Jos to look for their stolen Dogs in the Dawaki market in Kanke, the Dogs were found but the owners had to pay for them since the Dogs had already been sold. Apparently, such events were not new to the people when the

issue was queried by the researchers. There is a possibility that majority of the Dogs brought to markets in Kanke LGA were stolen, but the researchers has no evidence to back this up. Dogs dying and emaciating was also one of the factors that lead to profit loss in the business. It was observed that most of the Dogs seen around the market were sickly and looked unkempt. A participant said when asked about the observation You know Dogs have a mind of their own, they are stubborn and strong willed, some of them deliberately refuse to eat food after they are brought here. So when their weight reduces, one will be forced to sell them cheaper. (IDI/male/52 years/June 2021)

When asked further to explain what he meant by Dogs having a mind of their own, he said; Dogs are unique animals, they are strong willed and stubborn. Their refusal to eat is a demonstration of anger by them (Dogs) for being taken away from their homes. (IDI/male/52 years/June 2021) Kanke LGA seemed to have a lot of angry Dogs, based on what the participant said and also the researchers' observation. However another participant explained another reason for the unhealthy look of the Dogs. Sometimes the number of Dogs an individual has may also affect the quality and quantity of food a Dog is given. For example a person having over 100 Dogs, feeding them for a while can be problematic as attested by a participant who had over 100 Dogs. The competition for food may deprive some Dogs getting food even if the owner attempts to feed them.

Dogs dying while on transportation was a peculiar issue with the Calabar business men, and the major cause of that is, when unhealthy Dogs are sold to them, and also in a situation where the car breaks down in the course of transit, some Dogs may die of starvation and thirst

Sometimes, if our car spoils on the road and we are unable to transfer the Dogs to another one we are at a risk of losing some of them. Some may die of starvation or thirst, because we may spend days on the road, and by the time we get home, the Dogs must have lost weight, and that is a problem. (IKI/male/55 years/June 2021)

It is going to be quite difficult to feed such a large number of Dogs on the road, the transporter does not make plans of catering for the Dogs. So in a situation of a car breaking down, the Dogs are left at the mercy of fate. Also how the Dogs are kept will prove difficult for anyone attempting to feed them.

Dog bite was also a risk faced daily by the handlers of these Dogs. Untamed Dogs are often brought to the market. Such Dogs are usually aggressive, and may tend to bite their new owners. The Dog bites according to the handlers was the most risky aspect of the business.

I have been bitten several times by Dogs. The treatment is quite easy if you do it the traditional way. Hospital treatment is too expensive and it takes a longer period of time. (KII/male/ 47 years/June 2021)

Several other participants had similar opinions. They preferred to treat Dog bites traditionally. One would think the rate of death from rabies would be high in Kanke LGA. Rather reverse was the case, people rarely die from rabies infection in this community

There were also rare issues of Dogs cutting lose from chains and escaping during transportation. This is because more secure methods were devised for the transportation of the Dogs. The Dogs taken to Calabar are secured in cages and those within plateau were tied too low in the vehicles and also kept in the car trunks.

Supply Chain of Dogs in Kanke Local Government Area.

The study found that most of the Dogs brought to Kanke LGA are gotten from northern Nigeria in states like Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Kebbi, and Gombe. These Dogs are brought in large numbers each day to Kanke LGA from these states. There are those involved in the buying, selling, and transportation of the Dogs to the final consumers. However, the study found out that most individuals who are buyers of Dogs can also be sellers of Dogs and Dog meat.

Buyers

The buyers are also referred to as 'Yan Dilali'; these people are involved in the buying of Dogs in large numbers to sell. They usually travel to places like Borno state, Sokoto state, Kano state, Yobe state, Katsina state, Jigawa state, sometimes as far as chad, Niger republic and Libya to gather the Dog. The study found that more men than women actually travel to these states to get Dogs, It was also observed that there were more women than men in Kanke selling Dogs. That is to say that there is a gender dimension to the Dog business, men and women are ascribed separate and specific roles in the business. The researchers found out that most of the women selling the Dogs were wives or sisters to the men who travel to the northern states to get Dogs. Profit made from sales is sent back to the men so they can purchase more Dogs. A participant corroborated this finding

"Women are more involved in the selling of the Dogs here in Kanke, because their husbands and brothers are the ones who send them the Dogs to sell. For some it is a family business. The men travel to look for this Dogs and send, their women and children sell the Dogs. The men remain where they are, the men rarely come back home."(KII/male/47years/July 2021)

Another participant, stated that,

My brother is the one who sends me the Dogs to sell, he is in Kano presently. He sends to his wife too. (IDI/female/35 years/ July 2021)

When asked about the duration of his absence and the number of men he travels with she further said

He has been away for 3 weeks now, he was in Yobe state before leaving for Kano, a lot of our men travel, I don't have a specific number, but I know that they are plenty. He travels between states depending on the markets. (IDI/female/35 years/ July 2021)

Another participant when asked about the number of Dogs she gets weekly, declared the following

Sometimes, 5. Sometimes I don't get any it all depends on the market, if he does not get the Dogs to send, I buy from other people in the market to sell. (IDI/female/38 years/ July 2021)

From the quotation above, it can be inferred that getting Dogs and sending to families in Kanke every week is not definite.

Another category of buyers the researchers identified are those who come to Kanke LGA to buy Dogs. This category can also be further split into two, which is, those who come to buy from within plateau state and those who come to buy from all over Nigeria. Those who buy the most Dogs every week from Kanke are the "CALABAR" these group of people referred to CALABAR are buyers who come from the south-south region of Nigeria to Kanke LGA weekly to purchase Dogs and sell palm oil.

A participant who is part of the Calabar team affirmed this, by saying

"They call us Calabar because they think that all the Dogs we buy here are taken to Calabar, we make stops on the road, we supply Dogs to other states in the south, like Akwa Ibom State, Abia State, Ebonyi state and other states along the way. We have customers, who have joints that sell Dog meat, and also customers who sell Dogs. My wife has a joint that sell strictly Dog meat and palm wine. Our customers call us to make order, the number of Dogs we buy depends on the demand and orders by our customers in various states."(KII/male/53 years/June 2021)

It can be deduced from the assertion above that despite being called and referred to as Calabar, cross river state is not the final or only state the Dogs are taken to when bought from Kanke. When asked if Kanke was the only place where they can buy Dogs in large number, and how the Dogs are transported the participant said,

Yes, Kanke is the only place we get Dogs to meet the demands of our customers. There are smaller Dog markets back home, but most of the Dogs sold there are brought from Kanke. This market supplies the Dogs. No matter how many Dogs we demand for, we get it here in Kanke. Sometimes we can buy up to 600 Dogs per lorry (KII/male/ 53years/June 2021)

From the assertion, Kanke is the largest Dog market in Nigeria, and the market is large enough to meet the demand for the supply of Dogs to both the southern traders and indigenous traders. Also, the smaller Dog markets found around the southern region are fueled by the Dawaki market in Kanke.

Figure 1: picture showing caged Dogs ready for transportation to the southern region



Source: Field Survey, 2021. (12/7/2021)

Figure 1 shows some Dogs in a cage already sold to the Calabar. About ten Dogs are usually cramped in such cages. The number of Dogs kept in a cage depends on the size of the cage. These congestion may lead to some of the Dogs dying before reaching their destinations. Also three containers of palm oil can be seen in the picture. The palm oil is sometimes traded for Dogs. The Dog seller and palm oil seller usually come to an agreement whereby an equivalent of palm oil is exchanged for Dogs. There are also times whereby either the Dogs or palm oil will be sold on credit.

Buyers from within plateau state usually come to the market to buy Dogs for business. The number of Dogs they buy is usually much lesser compared to the Calabar buyers. These buyers are mostly individuals that sold Dog meat. It was also observed that most of this small scale buyers were men, who bought the Dogs from the women. A participant who buys and sells within the state affirmed this when he said

I buy just a few Dogs each week, to meet the demand of my customers, I sell Dog meat too, most of my customers are Dog meat sellers. I take the Dogs to Pankshin to sell. The Dogs are cheaper here in Kanke than anywhere in plateau. (IDI/male/35years/july2021)

Dog buyers and seller come from other local government areas within plateau state, and buy the Dogs in smaller quantities compared to the Calabar. These Dog buyers are mostly also Dog meat sellers. They either sell the Dog or prepare the meat for sale depending on the immediate demand by customers.

To Examine the Gender Dynamics in the Buying and Selling of Dogs

Studies have shown that the buying and selling of Dogs and Dog meat was initially dominated by men (Shoboyo, 2014). However now, more women have ventured into the business that was once thought to be too brutal for women to venture into.

The study found out that in Kanke, majority of Dog sellers were women, while more men seen selling Dog meat. Women were seen walking round with the Dogs tied to chains.

When a respondents asked had this to say,

More women are involved in the selling of the Dogs because they are usually the first contact, that is, the Dogs are mostly sent to them by their husband, or other relatives. Some of us buy from them and keep to sell to the Calabar (KII/male/47 years/June 2021)

From the assertion it can be deduced that the some men prefer to give their Dogs to women to sell for them. The women may not necessarily be members of their families. The Dogs are given to the women based on agreements between the Yan Dilali.

Figure 2 A section of the market showing a majority of women in the market



Source: Field Survey, 2021. (12/7/2021)

More Women can be seen in Figure 2 selling Dogs. Here, young and average Dogs, mostly locally bred with visible signs of malnourishment are seen chained by mostly women.

I sell the Dogs to anyone who wants to buy, I sometimes get the Dog from my brother in-law who is in Jigawa, he usually sends to his wife, and me. If I don't get from them I buy from anyone in the market. I usually buy and resell the Dogs sometimes I sell the meat. I only sell the meat if the Dog is not healthy and I have no buyer. (IDI/female/43 years/June 2021)

From the forgoing it can be deduced that most of the Dog sellers are also Dog meat sellers. The switch on business depended on the immediate demand of the market. And the role of selling and buying of Dog meat was not distinguished between the genders. All the participant interviewed were of the opinion that there was no gender bias. Both male and female sellers and buyers were treated equally.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study found that there is no gender bias in the buying and selling of Dog meat in kanke. The Dogs and Dog meat are bought from both men and women depending on whose Dog is bigger and healthier and who was willing to sell at a good price. However, more women than men were patronized because the women populated the market. Most of the Dogs brought to Kanke are gotten from northern Nigeria in states like Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Kebbi, and Gombe.

The researchers found out that most of the women selling the Dogs were wives or sisters to the men who travel to the northern states to get Dogs. The Dogs are usually sent to the women by the men to sell. Profit made by the sale is sent back to the men so they can purchase more Dogs. Buyers from southern Nigeria come

in trucks to buy Dogs. These buyers are referred to as Calabar, they come in big Lorries and in them, cages to keep the Dogs during transportation. Several Lorries come into the market. In a week about 3 or 5 Lorries may come to buy Dogs

The researchers also found out that the most frequent losses and risks incurred in the business, are Road accident, Dog theft within the market and on the roads by robbers, Mortality rate of the Dogs, Treatment of Dog bites, Dogs emaciating after being bought. The problem of Dog theft was one issue that was talked about by all the participants. Dogs dying and emaciating was also one of the factors that lead to profit loss in the business.

Dogs dying while on transportation was a peculiar issue with the Calabar business men, and the major causes of that is when unhealthy Dogs are sold to them and also in a situation where the car breaks down, in the course of transportation, some Dogs may die of starvation and thirst. Dog bite was also a risk faced daily by the handlers of these Dogs. Most Dog bites are treated traditionally. Only a few of the participants actually sought treatments in hospitals, the people were of the opinion that hospitals are expensive and the treatment of Dog bites most especially was quite expensive and unreliable.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

The dog market constitutes a major source of livelihood and income as uncovered by the study, and has contributed and still contributing to the general economic growth of Kanke LGA and the surrounding states as well as individuals who come from such places. Most of these dogs suffer harsh travelling conditions while on transit, and this accounts for their sickly outlook and in extreme cases, death a major determinant of this occurrence is the problem of bad roads, which slows movement. Thus, roads should be improved by the government. The researchers also recommend that states should key into this dog trade, because of the prospect it holds for improving state revenue and employment.

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