

Involvement of Rural Women in Off-Farm Enterprises in Ibadan/Ibarapa Agricultural Zones of Oyo State

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Abstract

The involvement of rural women in off-farm enterprises was assessed in Ibadan/Ibarapa Agricultural Development Zone (ADP) of Oyo state. The multistage sampling procedure was used to select 103 out of 120 respondents from the study area. A structured interview schedule was used to elicit information from the respondents. Data obtained were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics at $P < 0.05$. Results showed that the mean age of the rural women was 42.8 years and 68.9% had a primary education. The majority (72.0%) had between 10 and 20 years of occupational experience, while 63.1% of them had medium scale enterprises. More than half (63.1%) of the women were involved in off-farm enterprises. Most of the respondents (90.3%) were involved in off-farm income generating activities in order to have an additional source of income. Furthermore, constraints faced by most of the entrepreneurs were geographical proximity (85.4%), insufficient capital (58.3%) and heavy workload (57.3%). A significant relationship existed between involvement in enterprises and household size ($r = -0.268$, $p = 0.006$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the rural women were engaged in off-farm enterprises to generate an additional source of income in order to improve their standard of living with the identified constraint being addressed in the study area.

Keywords: Involvement, Off-farm activities, Rural women, Ibadan/Ibarapa, Oyo State.

Introduction

Women are found to make an important contribution to agricultural and rural economies throughout the regions of the world in their roles as farmers, labourers and entrepreneurs (Oyediji *et al.*, 2015). Also, they constitute between 60 and 80 percent of the agricultural labour force in the developing countries. According to Taiwo and Fasoyiro (2015), women account for 70% of agricultural workers, 80% of food producers, 100% of those who process basic foodstuffs and they undertake 60% to 90% of marketing. Women perform activities which include processing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing

and preparing food as well as working for wages in the agricultural sector. They engage in rural enterprises such as collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their home (Pal and Haldar, 2016).

The rural areas accommodate a great percentage of the Nigerian population and their livelihood activities are intricately tied to the economy. Rural enterprises typically revolve around agricultural production, agro-processing, fishing, lumbering and quarrying. Other ancillary activities include craft making (such as weaving, smith work, tannery, basketry, mat making, carving, brass casting), palm wine tapping, bicycle repairing, shoemaking,

hairdressing, petty trading, traditional medicine practice, carpentry, driving, money lending among others (Rahman, 2008).

Research has shown that rural businesses can support rural people and their communities (Bruce and Halseth, 2004) bringing outputs for local development. Also, rural businesses contribute to local resilience in both direct and indirect ways. Direct contributions include, the creation of local employment and local product and service delivery. Indirect contributions can be understood as the added value to primary business activities. For example, the provision of employment opportunities help to reduce the risk of out-migration and depopulation (Steiner and Atterton, 2015).

Most Nigerian farmers live in rural areas and practice peasant farming with low productivity. Small farmland size among other problems, leads to involvement in income generating from non-farm activities. In most rural areas, the people's livelihood depends largely on agriculture with 85% of the women engaging in agricultural production (Agumagu *et al.*, 2014). The several uncertainties farmers face justify the reason for their diversification from farming activities into non-farm income-generating activities. Different studies have reported an increasing share of non-farm income in total household income (De Janvry and Sadoulet, 2001; Ruben, 2001; Haggblade *et al.*, 2010). Findings show that women are still particularly limited in terms of access to resources (Watch, 2012), which is expected to limit their involvements and/or its outcome (UN, 2005). It is thus important to probe how women, as important factors in rural development equation, cope with the reality of their entrepreneurial circumstances. This is more important as the women in agrarian communities make inadequate income from farming and as a result are below the standard

of living. Therefore an off-farm enterprise is an attractive way to augment and boost their income levels (Taiwo and Kuponiyi, 2013). This study was conducted to assess the off-farm entrepreneurial activities of rural women in the study area. The specific objectives were to: identify the enterprise characteristics of the respondents; ascertain their involvement in off-farm activities; determine reasons for their involvement in the various activities; and determine constraints to involvement in the off-farm enterprises.

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Ibadan/Ibarapa agricultural zone of Oyo State, Nigeria. It is one of the four agricultural zones of the Oyo State Agricultural Development Programme (OYSADEP). The climate is equatorial, notably with dry and wet seasons and relatively high humidity. The dry season lasts from November to March while the wet season starts from April and ends in October. The vegetation of the zone is mostly Evergreen forest. The main occupation of the inhabitants is farming and both men and women are involved. Arable crops cultivated in the zone include cassava, maize, melon, soybean and cowpea while tree crops are cocoa, oil palm and cashew. The zone is blessed with state, federal and international agencies that provide advisory services and technical support to farmers. The zone is made up of eight local government areas comprising Lagelu, Ido, Akinyele, Egbeda, OnaAra, Ibarapa North, Ibarapa Central and Ibarapa East. All rural women in Ibadan/Ibarapa agricultural zone of Oyo state constituted the target population for the study.

The multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents. Four ADP blocks from the zone were selected out of the six zones

namely; Lagelu, Ona-Ara, Akinyele and Ibarapa Central. One village was then randomly chosen from each of the selected blocks. Thereafter, systematic sampling technique (selecting every third household in the community) was used to select 30 households in each of the selected villages, where a woman was sampled per household; this gave a total sample size of 120 respondents, from which 103 instruments were found usable.

Data were collected with the use of interview schedule administered to the respondents. The extent of involvement in off-farm activities as rural enterprises was the dependent variable of the study. This was measured by asking the respondents to indicate the extent to which they were involved in the listed activities such as drying, buying and selling of farm produce, transportation of goods etc., from a list of options; mostly involved, rarely involved or not involved. Adding up the responses gave the score of involvement in the off-farm rural enterprises, which was categorised into low and high, using the mean as the benchmark. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages and means were used to report the objectives of the study and Pearson product moment correlation were used to test the relationship between the variables in the stated hypothesis for the study.

Results

Personal characteristics of the rural women enterprises

The respondents were between the ages of 40 and 49 years (39.9%) with 68.9% of them having primary school education, which shows they are able to read and write (Table 1). Household size with at most six persons was 27.4% while households with more than seven people were 72.6%.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by their personal characteristics

Variables	Percentage
Age	
< 29	1.9
30-39	34.8
40-49	39.9
50-59	19.5
60-69	2.9
>70	1.0
Educational status	
Non-formal education	2.9
Primary education	68.9
Secondary education	28.2
Household size	
1-3	1.2
4-6	26.2
7-10	45.3
Above 11	27.3
Total	100.0

Enterprise characteristics

Results from Table 2 shows that about half (52.1%) of the respondents had between 11 and 20 years of experience in their major enterprises, while 63.1% of them indicated that their major activities were medium scale enterprises (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by their enterprise characteristics

Variable	Percentage
Years of experience	
2 – 10	37.1
11 – 20	52.1
>20	10.8
Enterprise scale	
Small	17.5
Medium	63.1
Large	19.4

Involvement in off-farm rural enterprises

Table 3 shows that the off-farm activities in which respondents were mostly involved in were drying (185.4), buying and selling of farm produce (180.6) and gathering of farm produce. Respondents were also sometimes involved in storage and processing of produce.

Categorisation of the respondents' involvement in off-farm activities given in Table 4 shows that more (63.1%) of them were highly involved in the off-farm enterprises. Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents (90.2%) got involved in off-farm activities in order to improve their income. The constraints encountered by most of the respondents were far distances to off-farm activities (185.4) and insufficient capital (158.3) (Table 6). They also faced challenges with infrastructure, high cost of raw materials for their processing activities and heavy workload.

When the respondents' index of involvement in off-farm enterprises was tested against their household size using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), there was a significant relationship ($r = -0.268$, $p = 0.006$) between the rural women involvement in off-farm enterprise and household size.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by involvements in off-farm activities

Activities	Weighted mean score	Level
Drying	1.85	H
Buying and selling of farm produce	1.81	H
Gathering of farm produce	1.74	H
Storage of crops	1.66	M
Winnowing	1.51	M
Shelling	1.47	M
Threshing	1.282	L
Transportation of goods	1.252	L
Grating	1.243	L

Weighted Mean Score categorized into H= High, M=Medium, L= Low

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by categories of involvements in off-farm activities

Level of involvement	Percent
Low	36.9
High	63.1
Total	100.0

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by reasons for involvement in off-farm activities

Reasons	Percent
Change in role	4.9
Improvement in income	90.2
Just seeking other employment option	4.9

Table 6: Distribution of respondents by constraints to involvement in off-farm activities

Constraints	Weighted mean score	Level
Distance to off-farm activities	1.854	H
Insufficient capital	1.583	M
Inadequate infrastructure	1.583	M
High cost of raw materials	1.544	M
Heavy workload	1.515	M
Trade competition/rivalry	1.476	M
Regulation/entry requirements	1.476	M
Labour shortage	1.408	L
Inadequate skill	1.359	L

Weighted Mean Score categorized into H= High, M=Medium, L= Low

Discussion

The study reveals that most of the women were still in their active ages indicating that they were proactive and were likely to be involved in off-farm enterprises. This agrees with FAO (2001) that women in their active age are more

involved in off-farm enterprises. The number of years spent on formal education indicated that the women had the ability to read and write. Household size in the study area was relatively large which shows demand and responsibility placed on the women to cater for family needs and forms a basis for their involvement in off-farm enterprises. This corroborates the findings of Obayelu (2017) and Binuomote *et al.* (2017) who stated that Nigerian rural families diversify to off-farm income generating activities as a coping strategy to meet their needs. The respondents had many years of experience in their chosen enterprise showing that the rural women in the study area have benefited from the activity. Enterprise was mainly done on a medium scale. This can be traceable to insufficient funds mentioned as one of the major constraints to involvement in off-farm activities in the study area. The women were mostly involved in off-farm activities such as drying, buying and selling of farm produce among others. This supports the study of Ajani, (2012) who stated that rural women are mostly involved in petty trading and other public services. The level of involvement in the enterprise was indicated as high and the majority stated that the reason for involvement was to improve their level of income. The need to improve income is thus the greatest motivation to seek other engagements by rural women in the study area. Pur *et al.* (2016) also reported that rural dwellers diversify their income generating activities to contribute to household expenses.

Constraints encountered in the off-farm enterprise was geographical proximity and insufficient capital which have limited the level of enterprise scale of the rural women and have not permitted these women to widen the scale of their enterprise beyond the rural communities. Household size negatively

influenced involvement in an enterprise which shows how the family size level determines the women involved in the off-farm enterprise. The study revealed the household size of at most six persons which shows that in agrarian communities the higher the household size the higher the availability of family labour in off-farm activities of the rural women (Kehinde *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, rural women diversification to off-farm enterprises improves their income as well as their standard of living.

Conclusion

There was high involvement of the rural women in off-farm enterprises, which assisted them to improve their income levels. The constraint encountered by the women in off-farm enterprises were distance to location of enterprise and insufficient funds among others. It was concluded that diversification into off-farms activities has the potential to promote the livelihood of households in the rural areas, as women empowerment is synonymous to household empowerment. The study recommends provision of start off capital for women involvement in off-farm enterprises as well as entrepreneurial training.

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