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CONTRIBUTIONS OF LOCAL SOAP ENTERPRISE TO LIVELIHOOD OF RURAL WOMEN IN SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

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ABSTRACT

The rural women engage in diverse livelihood activities to provide for their immediate family needs. This study examined the contributions of local soap enterprise to the livelihood of rural women in Oyo state. A purposive sampling technique was used to select two local government areas from which two communities each were selected. Snowball technique was used to generate list of women involved in the production and marketing of local soap. Thirty respondents were randomly selected from the list generated in each community to give total sample size of 120 respondents. Data collection was done through the use of interview schedule and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics (Chi-square). Results reveal that most of the respondents (62.4%) were in their active ages, 77.5% had formal education, and 71.9% belonged to an association. About 54.0% produced local soap on weekly basis and 98.2% produced for the purpose of generating income. Greater percentage (59.0%) used calabash as a unit of measurement while 43.0% were both processors and marketers of local soap. Also, 61.4% made use of family labour and 77.2% had high perception towards local soap enterprise's contribution to livelihood due to the high income generated from it. Level of education had significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 12.885$, $p\text{-value} = 0.024$) with contribution of local soap enterprise. Thus, the study concludes that local soap enterprise is an important contributor to livelihood in the study area. Hence, the activity should be given adequate attention in terms of provision of loans and promotion of local market for improved productivity and overall standard of living of the entrepreneurs.

Key words: Livelihood, local soap, enterprise, rural women

Introduction

The role of rural women in agricultural production, family as well as in the economic development and social transformation cannot be over-emphasized. Rural women's participation in agro-based activities is much more than what statistics revealed and this is mainly due to the fact that most of the works done by the women on the farm and home are regarded as daily chores. Rural women also engage in small-scale entrepreneurship programme; they use their free time and existing skills for setting and sustaining enterprises and through that they become economically empowered and attaining

status in family and community thus securing livelihood. Rural women engage in diverse livelihood activities to provide for their immediate family needs hence livelihood comprises people, capabilities and their means of living including food, income and assets. According to Graham, Harvey, Nick, Peter and Eric (2000), Ellis, (2000), livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital) and activities that are required for a means of living. The concept of 'livelihood' seeks to bring together the critical factors that affect the vulnerability or strength of individual or family survival strategies. Livelihood

activities may vary from one rural area to another depending on the available resources, infrastructure and climatic conditions of the environment. Meanwhile, farming which used to be the mainstay of the rural livelihood and economy is increasingly on its own unable to provide a sufficient means of survival to the farmers (Mbalewe, 2008). Consequently, farmers (women inclusive) have to seek alternate means of survival through livelihood diversification with a view to engaging in more than one livelihood activity. This would enable them earn more income to improve their general well-being and help them meet their livelihood goals (Ogunbameru et al 2006, Matthew-Njoku and Adesope 2007, Ogboh 2006).

In Oyo State, rural women engage in many livelihood activities such as farming, trading, knitting, stitching, weaving, embroidery, food preparation and preservation, hair dressing, teaching, local soap production and marketing etc though local soap production is peculiar to some communities within the state. Local soap production is much sought after on account of local lore surrounding its efficacious effects on the skin. It is also known for its great moisturizing content, sensitivity, and can be started on a small-scale. It is also recognized for the waste to wealth opportunities offered. Soap generally is an essential commodity used on a daily basis by people world-wide for both domestic and industrial cleaning. In fact, every household and office use soap in bathing, washing of utensils, laundry and dry cleaning of clothes, cleaning of offices and factory floor, cleaning of carpets and maintenance of a cleaner environment. With the continuous demand for soap all over the world, soap production is a promising venture in any locality. There are different types of soaps and these include bar soaps, liquid soap and the African local soap. While local soap is more natural in its ingredients and production process, the other types of soaps are synthetic. Women in the study area engage in local soap production and how it is contributing to their livelihood formed the focus of this study.

Objectives of the study

These specific objectives of the study are to determine the personal and enterprise characteristics of the respondents, identify livelihood activities being engaged in, examine the perception of the respondents about contribution of local soap to livelihood, investigate the constraints being faced by the local soap entrepreneur as well as determine the income generated from black soap production, compared to other livelihood activities.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Oyo State. The state has a population of 5,591,589 according to the 2006 census. It covers approximately an area of 28,454sq kilometers. Oyo State is located between coordinates 8°00N 4°00E. The state comprises 33 Local Government Areas and all women that were involved in local soap production i.e. producers and marketers in the local government areas constitute the population for this study.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select two local government areas namely Itesiwaju and Ibarapa Central LGA because of the presence of communities where the local soap is mainly produced in these local governments. Purposive sampling technique was further used to select two communities each from the two local government areas with concentration of local soap producers and marketers resulting in four communities. Snowball technique was then used to generate a list of women that were involved in local soap production and marketing in each community. From the list, thirty respondents were randomly selected giving a total sample size of 120 respondents. Data was collected using interview schedule while descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing and interpreting the data. Income was used as a proxy for the livelihood of women in the study area, and this was measured in terms of the Naira equivalent of local soap produced/marketed. Proportion of income derived from local soap enterprise, in comparison with other livelihood activities was used to assess the

contribution of local soap enterprise to the livelihood of rural women in the study area. Perceived contribution of local soap enterprise to livelihood was measured using Likert-type scale of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree with score of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively with the reverse order of the scores for the negative statement. Mean of the scores was obtained and used to categorise respondents' perception to favourable (high) perception) and unfavourable (low) contribution of local soap enterprise to livelihood.

Results and Discussion

Personal characteristics of the respondents

The Age distribution of respondents as shown in table 1 indicates that majority (62.4%) of the respondents were within the age group of 21-40years while the least group 5.3% comprised respondents whose age range is less than 20years. This implies that most of the respondents are in their

active ages and are therefore actively involved in local soap production as one of livelihood activities. The result conforms with Akinbile (2007) that the population within age 21-40yrs constitutes the active workforce. More than half of the respondents (52.3%) had a large household size (6-10members). This implies that members of household provide family labour to assist in the enterprise. This is in line with UNDP (1998) which reported that a positive relationship exists between household size and food security. Table 1 also reveals that 23.4% of the respondents had no formal education while others had one form of education or the other. However, 35.5% had secondary education. This shows that black soap production is not restricted to the non-literate women, but also practiced even among primary and secondary school holders. It therefore could be a livelihood activity with a lot of promises in terms of packaging and branding in the nearest future, since respondents will likely welcome innovations that aim at improving their livelihood activities.

Table 1: Personal characteristics of respondents

Variables	Category	Percentage
Household size	1-5	25.9
	6-10	52.3
	11-15	14.9
	15-20	6.9
Level of education	No formal education	23.4
	Adult education	2.8
	Primary education	19.6
	Secondary education	35.5
	Vocational education	17.8
	Tertiary education	0.9
Age	<20years	5.3
	21-40years	62.4
	41-60years	26.1
	>60years	6.2
Marital status	Married	57.0
	Single	30.7
	Widow	11.4
	Separated	0.9

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Enterprise characteristics

Table 2 shows that most of the processors of local soap at the two local governments

surveyed claimed that they were born and raised in this line of occupation. If this were true, a prior expectation is that their years of experience should be a function of their age although some of them later ventured into

local soap production. A minimum (7.9%) of the local soap producers/marketers, who can be regarded as elderly among the respondents, had over 30 years experience on the job. A higher proportion (40.6%) had 11-20 years of experience, a sizeable percentage (35.2%) who are mainly referred to as children in the family had less than 10 years of experience. This implies that most of the respondents have fairly high years of experience in local soap production.

Table 2 also reveals that majority (71.9%) of the respondents belonged to one association or the other. This could be due to the fact that it serves as a platform to access some facilities such as credit, input, marketing, price regulating, and access to information from extension agents and also as a result of the belief of the people that social groups are significant in their lives. This agrees with the work of Yahaya and Olowu (1998) that women farmers often belong to various cooperative societies.

Table 2: Enterprise Characteristics of Respondents

	Category	Percentage
Years of experience	≤10 years	35.2
	11-20 years	40.6
	21-30 years	16.7
	>30 years	7.9
Frequency of production	Daily	40.7
	Weekly	54.0
	Fortnightly	3.5
	Monthly	1.8
Unit of measurement for sale	Calabash	59.0
	Kilogram	29.5
	Bags	11.4
Purpose of production	Domestic use	1.8
	Sale	98.2
Other member of family engage in it	Yes	71.1
	No	28.9
Area of local soap enterprise	Production	19.3
	Marketing	37.7
	Both	43.0
Type of labour used	Hired labour	36.8
	Family labour	61.4
	Communal labour	1.8
Reasons for choice of labour	Large quantity production	5.4
	Lack of money	3.3
	Old age	15.2
	Interest	4.3
	Hereditary/family occupation	13.0
	Economic gain/cost reduction	58.7
Marketing channels	Point/place of production	77.5*
	Retail	81.4*
	Larger industries(<i>duduosun</i>)	75.2*
	Wholesale	86.7*
	City	78.6*
	Merchant	65.1*
Estimated income/Month (Naira)	≤5000	14.0
	5001 - 10,000	24.2
	10,001 - 20,000	42
	20,001 - 30,000	9.9
	>30,001	9.9

*= Multiple responses

It is evident that more than half of the respondents (54.0%) produced weekly while 40.0% of the respondents produced daily (Table 2). This might be due to the fact that local soap production involves series of activities which demand a lot of time. The study also revealed that majority (98.2%) of the respondents produce for the purpose of selling to generate income. Thus it is a livelihood activity which generates income as confirmed by the respondents. This is in line with Ogunbameru *et al.*, (2006) that women are involved in various livelihood activities to generate income to solve numerous family problems and to assist in supplementing the family income for sustenance. Table 2 further reveals that 59.0% of the respondents used calabash as a unit of measurement for the soap produced. Unit of measurement across the two local government surveyed was not the same. Some respondents measure the local soap produced in kilogram (29.5%). This is used mainly for retailing within the town while few (11.4%) measured with bags. However, 59.0% measured mainly with calabash. Also, 71.1% of the respondents had other people producing in their family. The implication of this is that local soap production in the area surveyed is regarded as a family business.

In the same table, 43.0% of the respondents were both processors and marketers of local soap while 19.3% and 37.7% were involved in production and marketing respectively. It therefore implies that it is profitable to process and market at the same time; hence production of the local soap was made on specific days of the week by majority of the respondents so as to leave the other days free for the marketing of the soap. Also, 61.4% of the respondents made use of family labour in their production while 36.8% indicated the use of hired labour. The implication of this is that family labour may be seen as an economic source of labour since majority of them would not be paid while those that are paid would be paid less than the actual value of their labour. Further results reveal that half (50.0%) of the respondents made their choice of labour from economic gain perspective. This may be due to the fact that people go into production for the purpose of making profit.

and use of family labour is seen as a cheap source of labour. Few (9.8%) of respondents however indicated relief from stress involved in the production of the soap as the reason why they used hired labour while only 13.0% indicated that the business is a family occupation thus all the family contribute their labour.

Majority (80.6%) of the respondents had estimated monthly income of not more than 20, 000 Naira.. Thus, women enterprise is always low as noted by Sallau and Rahman (2007) that annual income of less than ₦ 100,000 among rural women is common. Hence, it can be said to be unsustainable. Table 2 further reveals that larger percentage (86.7%) of the respondents' marketing channel was wholesale which could be attributed to the fact that buyers of local soap come from neighbouring towns to sell in towns/cities where value is added to the soap. Also, higher percentage of the respondents (81.7%) used retail market to dispose off their produce i.e. the local soap, implying that the respondents do sell directly to the end users and consumers.

Constraints facing respondents in local soap enterprise

Table 3 shows lack of honest dealers to be the most serious constraint facing majority of the respondents (60%) and it was ranked 1st. The implication is that the gains of the enterprise do not get to the women and thus their contribution to the household needs may be affected. Financial inadequacies (56.4%) were ranked second which means that those that want to produce on a large scale are limited due to financial constraints. Lack of modern equipment (50.0%) and scarcity of raw materials (49.1%) were ranked third and fourth respectively. This is because the cocoa husk used by the women is got from long distance, some of the respondents even go as far as Ondo state to get the cocoa husk used and where this is not available they make use of wood ash which is not really efficacious. Less prominent constraints were climate weather (0.0%) with none of the respondents

indicating it as a serious constraint, lack of human capital (19.1%), high transportation cost (20.9%) and inadequate skill (28.2%). This may be because the production of local soap does not require special skills, and

majority of the respondents have shed where they work, also local soap enterprise is usually a family venture hence less indication of these constraints by the respondents.

Table 3: Constraints faced by respondents in local soap production

Constraints	Yes	Serious Constraint	Mild constraint	Rank SC
Lack of human capital	59.1	19.1	40.0	11 th
Scarcity of raw material	62.7	49.1	13.6	4 th
Lack of financial capital	86.4	56.4	30.0	
Health problems	65.5	36.4	29.1	6 th
Inefficient market	79.8	32.1	47.7	8 th
Inadequate skill	68.2	28.2	40.0	9 th
High transportation cost	52.7	20.9	31.8	10 th
Lack of successor	59.0	34.5	24.5	7 th
Lack of modern equipment	70.0	50.0	20.0	
Weather/ Climate	100.0	0.0	100.0	12 th
Lack of honest dealers	60.0	60.0	0.0	
Lack of water	75.0	40.0	35.0	5 th

Source: Field Survey, 2011 SC = Serious Constraint

Perception of respondents on contribution of local Soap enterprise to livelihood

Information in Table 4 indicates that minimum perception scores was 20 while the maximum score was 55 and mean was 27.4. It shows that 77.2% of the respondents had favourable perception while 22.8% had

unfavourable perception of contribution of local soap enterprise to livelihood. It means that the respondents had favorable attitude (High perception) towards local soap production and its contribution to their livelihood. The favourable perception among majority of respondents explains the predominance of the venture in the study area. It also gives an indication of the contributions of the venture to sustenance of livelihoods of the women in the study area.

Table 4: Perception of respondents on contribution of local Soap enterprise to Livelihood

Variable	Categories	Freq.	%	Minimum Score	Maximum score	Mean	SD
Attitudinal statements	<27 (Low)	26	22.8	20	55	27.4	7.2
	27-55 (High)	88	77.2				

Source: Field survey, 2011

Respondents' livelihood activities and their level of involvement

From table 5, local soap production and farming can be regarded as the main livelihood activities involved in by the respondents accounting for 95.6% and 56.9% respectively. Thus, local soap enterprise is

the major livelihood activity engaged in by women in the study areas. Those that engaged in the production of local soap as their other livelihood activity also accounted for large percentage. Hence, local soap production is a well known enterprise with its contribution to livelihood in the study area. Table 5 further reveals that a larger percentage of the respondents (86.8%) were always engaged in local soap production and

selling thus it is a major livelihood enterprise and one of the major contributors to livelihood. Hence, there is an involvement of

more people in local soap production than in other livelihood activities in the area.

Table 5: Respondents level of involvement in livelihood activities

	Involvement	Category	Percentage
Farming	56.9	Always	33.4
		Seldom	23.5
		Never	43.1
Local soap production and selling	95.6	Always	86.8
		Seldom	8.8
		Never	4.4
Petty trading	52.3	Always	37.6
		Seldom	14.7
		Never	47.7
Tailoring/Hair dressing	32.1	Always	20.8
		Seldom	11.3
		Never	67.9
Paid employment	24.8	Always	19.3
		Seldom	5.5
		Never	75.2
Fuel wood selling	24.5	Always	12.7
		Seldom	11.8
		Never	75.5
Food vendor	14.5	Always	6.3
		Seldom	8.2
		Never	85.5
Food stuff milling	17.4	Always	7.3
		Seldom	10.1
		Never	82.6
Processing	35.8	Always	22.0
		Seldom	13.8
		Never	64.2
Daily collector	34.9	Always	31.1
		Seldom	3.8
		Never	65.1

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

*Multiple responses

Income derived from each livelihood activities

Table 6 presents the monthly income derived by respondents from their various livelihood activities, the result shows that majority derived less than N20,000 from all their livelihood activities e.g. crop farming, petty trading, tailoring, fire wood selling, food vending, thrift collection, hair dressing and local soap production. Only few derived about N30,000.00 from some livelihood activities. However, few (6.3%) of the respondents derived more than N30,000.00 from local soap production with none earning as much as that from other activities. The low earning from this livelihood

activities depicts small scale nature of women enterprise, thus this enterprise is not large enough to raise their income levels as noted by IFAD (2005) and Nakamichi (2000). The implication of this is that most of the livelihood activities the women in the study area are involved are not self-sustaining, as the income derived from them is small.

A further ranking of the livelihood activities of the respondents using the mean values for each of the livelihood activities reveals that local soap enterprise ranks highest in terms of contribution to income (used as proxy for livelihood). This is followed by paid employment and processing/selling of produce. This suggests the importance of paid income sources as a means of sustaining livelihoods in the rural area.

Table 6: Income derived from each livelihood activities

Livelihood activities	Income/Month			Mean \pm SD	Rank
	\leq 20,000 Naira	20,001-30,000 Naira	$>$ 30,000 Naira		
Crop farming	92.7	7.3	-	22,321.00 \pm 34.3	4
Local soap production	78.4	15.3	6.3	25,345.00 \pm 24.5	1 st
Petting Trading	100.0	-	-	14,356.00 \pm 35.3	11 th
Tailoring	100.0	-	-	9,657.00 \pm 29.3	13 th
Paid employment	79.0	23.0	-	24,457.00 \pm 13.3	2 nd
Fuel wood selling	100.0	-	-	6,329.00 \pm 12.4	14 th
Food vendor	100.0	-	-	19,992.00 \pm 21.3	7 th
Food stuff milling	100.0	-	-	18,021.00 \pm 102.2	8 th
Processing and selling	82.3	17.7	-	23,457.00 \pm 45.4	3 rd
Textile selling	85.0	15.0	-	21,900.00 \pm 37.2	5 th
Daily collector	88.4	11.6	-	20,457.00 \pm 21.4	6 th
Hair dressing	100.0	-	-	15,000.00 \pm 56.4	10 th
Craft weaving and selling	100.0	-	-	12,347.00 \pm 102.4	12 th
Call center operator	100.0	-	-	16,001.00 \pm 35.6	9 th

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Testing of Hypothesis

Table 7 below presents the results of the tested hypotheses. It reveals that there was a significant relationship between respondents' level of education and the contribution of local soap enterprise to their livelihood ($\chi^2=12.885$, $p=0.024$). Education can be a means of having opportunities of other income sources, such as paid employment and even credit facilities,

thereby, helping to expand an individual's livelihood. On the other hand, respondents' marital status had no significant relationship with contributions made by local soap to their livelihoods ($\chi^2=4.010$, $p>0.005$). This implies that the married, unmarried and the separated did not show any disparity in the level of income they derived from local soap enterprise. This suggests that the local soap enterprise is a formidable source of income among different categories of rural dwellers in the study area.

Table 7: Relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and contributions of local soap to their livelihoods

Socio economic characteristics	χ^2	P	Df	Decision
Marital status	4.010	0.260	3	NS
Level of education	12.885	0.024	5	S

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, it can be concluded that local soap enterprise is a major contributor to the livelihood of rural

women in the study area. The respondents also have high perception towards the enterprise. The income is low but better than what they obtained from other activities.

In order to boost production and improve standard of living of the women in the enterprise, research and extension services on modern production process should be channeled to local soap production. Proper registration of the local soap processors should be given urgent attention to enable local soap producers to access extension services and government loans. Credit should be provided by Government to solve financial constraint of the local soap producers. Local soap producers should be encouraged to have organised marketing system to combat activities of middlemen.

Therefore, enhancing and improving local soap enterprise in Nigerian societies will go a long way to diversify the peoples' livelihood and also provide a means of income generation and it will eventually contribute to the improvement of life in the communities, society as well as giving many citizens a means of livelihood.

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