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Constraints to Occupational Diversification among Rural Women in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria to ascertain constraints to occupational diversification among rural women. Questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 462 rural women. Percentage, mean scores, standard deviation, factor analysis and student's t-test were used for data analysis. Major constraints to occupational diversification were grouped into labour, institutional, technical and social problems. The study identified solutions to problems to include provision of adequate physical infrastructure such as roads, electricity and pipe-borne water in rural areas (74.2%), provision of social amenities such as hospitals (73.6%), establishment of industries in rural areas to create job opportunities (72.9%) and appropriate government policy on women empowerment (65.8%), among others. There was a significant difference between means of farm and non-farm income. The mean of farm income was ₦31,022.8 while the mean of non-farm income was ₦125,364 ($t=12.136$; $p \leq 0.05$). The study recommends the inclusion of non-farm occupations in rural extension services especially value chain of cash crops as a means of improving income generation.

Key words: Occupation, diversification, rural women, Nigeria

Introduction

Rural households diversify income sources by combining two or more jobs (multiple job holding) to enhance food consumption and acquire other basic needs (Oluwatayo, 2009). Rural women need to diversify into various occupations since farming is rain-fed and therefore, seasonal. This is to enable them acquire additional income and meet up with economic responsibilities during off-season periods.

Tacoli (2004) defines occupational diversification as non-farm income generating activities undertaken by rural residents, and farming by urban residents. According to Mukhopadhyay and Lim (2005), occupational diversification comprises two types, namely: those ventures that are administered on an approximately steady basis with an objective of generating surplus and registering growth, hiring labour and with a certain degree of technical sophistication; and products or activities which are usually seasonal, managed exclusively with the help of unpaid family labour, relying on primal technology and catering mostly to the local market characterized primarily by petty production. From these definitions by different authors, occupational diversification in this context is defined as all economic activities which involve farm and non-farm activities in rural areas.

Occupational diversification among rural women is an increasingly important reality in Nigeria, especially in Anambra State where there is low level of development as a result of structural transformation and high population density. Recent trends in agricultural modernization have failed to improve the welfare of rural women. Advances in technology and labour market imperfections have accentuated the concentration of rural women in non-farm activities in rural sector. This has led to de-agrarianisation. De-agrarianisation offers rural women an opportunity for occupational adjustment, income-earning re-orientation, social identification and spatial relocation away from agricultural-based modes of livelihood (Bryceson, 2000).

Amidst high levels of uncertainty and risk in agricultural production, rural women have become occupationally flexible and increasingly dependent on non-agricultural income-generating activities. This is to overcome seasonality of farming activities, reduce poverty and vulnerability, which are often associated with undue reliance on agriculture (Ellis, 2004). High variability in crop yield and thus income variability arising from the vagaries of weather makes occupational diversification important for rural women in order to improve their economic status.

In Anambra State, several poverty reduction programmes designed for rural women have not yielded good results as regards reducing poverty. The failure of many poverty reduction programmes could be attributed to the fact that great diversity and heterogeneity in assets portfolios and range of activities engaged by rural women were ignored (De Janvry and Sadoulet, 2001).

There also exists lack of access to land or land ownership among rural women in Anambra State, which hinders access to credit and agricultural support services. With an increasing rural population amidst a non-expanding land area as in Anambra State, the study sort to answer the following questions: What are the various areas of occupations engaged by rural women? What are the problems encountered by rural women who diversify occupations? And what are the strategies for solving the problems encountered by rural women in occupational diversification?

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives were to:

1. identify areas of occupational diversification among rural women;
2. identify problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification; and
3. ascertain perceived strategies for solving problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification.

Hypothesis of the Study

There is no significant difference between farm income and non-farm income of rural women.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria. There are four agricultural zones in the state, namely; Aguata, Anambra, Awka and Onitsha. The estimated population of rural women in Anambra State is 1.44 million (NPC, 2006). Rural women in the four

agricultural zones formed the population of the study. All the four agricultural zones were purposively used for the study. Anambra zone is made up of four (4) extension blocks comprising 45 circles; Awka zone comprises five (5) blocks and 35 circles, while Aguata zone is made up of six (6) extension blocks, comprising 45 circles. There are also six (6) extension blocks comprising 30 circles in Onitsha zone. Two (2) rural blocks were selected from each of the zones, while three (3) circles were selected from each of the blocks using simple random sampling technique. In each of the circles, 20 rural women were selected using simple random sampling technique. Eight (8) blocks and 24 circles, comprising 480 respondents were supposed to be used for the study. Eighteen copies of the questionnaire were not filled properly and were dropped leaving 462 used for analysis. Interview schedule/questionnaire was used for data collection.

The first section sought information on areas of occupational diversification and was achieved by asking the respondents to indicate the occupations they engaged in, such as production, marketing and processing of farm produce; rearing of farm animals; handicrafts; petty trading; tailoring; hair dressing; catering services; teaching; public service; traditional health care services; wage labour, among others.

Problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification were the focus of the second section. The respondents reacted to twenty-seven factors such as poor educational attainment, social norms restricting female mobility and ability to work outside household, increase in work load of domestic chores alongside with occupations, unavailability of labour, domestic chores not leaving enough time to pursue other activities, inadequate labour saving technology, poor market information on prices of goods and services, high cost of production leading to less competitive prices, poor market networks, high cost of transportation, among others using a four-point Likert-type scale of "to a great extent (3)", "to some extent (2)", "to a little extent (1)" and "to no extent (0)". The values on the Likert-type scale were added to obtain 6, which was further divided by 4 to obtain a mean score of 1.5. Any mean score that was equal or higher than 1.5 was regarded as a major problem while a mean score of less than 1.5 was regarded as minor problem.

Section three which centered on perceived strategies for solving problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification was achieved by requesting the respondents to suggest possible solutions to the problems. Percentage, mean scores, standard deviation, factor analysis and student's t-test were used for data analysis.

Results and Discussion

Occupational diversification among rural women

Majority (88.1%) of the respondents were involved in planting of crops, 79.2% of them were involved in marketing of farm produce, about 42% kept goat and sheep, 40.5% kept chicken, among others (Table 1). This implies that the respondents were involved in mixed farming. This is to enable them sustain their families economically. This will also help them to guard against crop failure as well as providing safety nets for economic empowerment.

Table 1 also indicates that 88.7% of the respondents were involved in non-farm occupations, while 11.3% of them were not involved in non-farm occupations. This shows that there were respondents whose occupation was farming only. They did not have secondary occupation, thus engaging in full-time farming.

A greater proportion (60%) of the respondents were involved in petty trading, 11.5% were involved in tailoring, 7.8% were teachers, 7.1% were involved in making of confectioneries, while 6.4% of them were involved in hair dressing/weaving of hairs, among others (Table 1). This implies that the respondents were involved in both farm and non-farm occupations. This is to enable them obtain additional income to empower themselves financially. The findings are in line with Haggblade (1999) who reports that women dominate many of the non-farm activities such as petty trading, tailoring and many services that will grow most rapidly during structural transformation. Continuing, he notes that they also hold a major interest in many of the declining rural non-farm occupations such as basket making. Consequently, women will be key actors in the economic transition of Africa's rural economy.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents according to involvement in farm and non farm occupations

Areas of occupation*	Percentage (n=462)
Farm occupation	
Planting of arable crops such as yam, cocoyam, cassava, maize, vegetables and rice	88.1
Marketing of farm produce	79.2
Processing of cassava into gari	2.6
Processing of cassava into dough (fermented flour)	2.6
Processing of cassava into chips/flour	3.5
Processing of maize into pap and flour	4.7
Palm oil production	3.0
Palm kernel oil production	3.4
Rearing of farm animals such as goat and sheep	42.2
Rearing of chicken	40.5
Rearing of turkey	14.7
Pig farming	5.0
Snail farming	0.2
Fish farming	0.4
Involvement in non-farm occupation	
Yes	88.7
No	11.3
Non-farm occupation (n= 410)	
Handicrafts such as making of brooms	3.9
Making of baskets	3.2
Making of hand fans	1.0
Making of beads	0.5
Petty trading on food items such rice, beans, gari and palm oil	60.2
Tailoring/making of dresses	11.5
Making of confectioneries such as cake, <i>chin-chin</i> , <i>meat pie</i> and <i>buns</i>	7.1
Making of soap and pomade	2.9
Frying of beans balls, yams and potatoes	4.2
Hair dressing/weaving of hair	6.4
Teaching	7.8
Traditional birth attendance	1.0
Public service	6.0
Catering service	3.9
Wage labour	0.7

*Multiple responses

Problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification

Results in Table 2 represent factor analysis of problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification. The problems were named based on the item loadings. Factors 1, 2, 3 and 4 were named labour, institutional, technical and social problems, respectively. Factors which loaded under labour problems were increase in work load of domestic chores alongside with occupations (0.65), unavailability of labour (0.58), domestic chores not leaving enough time to pursue other activities (0.68), inadequate labour saving technology (0.48), poor market information on prices of goods and services (0.48), high cost of production leading to less competitive prices (0.61), poor market networks (0.57) and high cost of transportation (0.61). Unavailability of labour at times is a

binding constraint. In some cases, women have taken up and abandoned productivity enhancing crops and technologies due to their inability to mobilize sufficient labour resources to make them worthwhile. This agrees with Kumar and Banishree (2006) who observe that technology development and dissemination programmes have not been responsive to household drudgery associated with different production activities routinely undertaken by women. In particular, these programmes have failed to recognize rural women's demand for technology that improves their productivity.

Institutional problems include inadequate provision of loan (0.47), lack of enabling policy environment to promote women's entrepreneurship (-0.76) and lack of women empowerment training programmes in rural areas (-0.62). The finding confirms Barrett's (1997) report which states that lack of access to credit is a critical obstacle to successful engagement of rural women in non-farm economic activities.

Loadings under technical problems were poor educational attainment (-0.61), inadequate training opportunities (0.65), inadequate finance/credit facilities (0.53) and lack of access to modern technology/capital (0.61). Ranjan (2006) reports that lower educational status, village tradition and caste system are the main constraining factors for rural women in availing employment opportunities outside the village and carrying out non -farm activities.

Social problems comprised low wages/poor conditions of work (0.72), absence of social security benefits (0.69) and socio-cultural barriers such as exclusive responsibility for household work (0.41). The finding is in agreement with Michel (1997) who states that there is lack of training, job insecurity, health hazards, low wages, longer working hours, intensive supervision, contractual tasks, irregular salary and absence of social security benefits among women in sub-Saharan Africa.

The four factors which loaded high based on occupational diversification agrees with Bloom, Craig and Malaney (2001), who state that rural women continue to struggle with dual responsibilities of economic production and domestic labour, and most of them are confronted by poverty, illiteracy, high health risks, inadequate access to productive resources. Continuing, they note that rural women throughout sub-Saharan African region work long hours and confront drudgery as a reality of their daily existence.

Table 2: Problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification

Problem	Factor 1 (Labour problem)	Factor 2 (Institutional problem)	Factor 3 (Technical problem)	Factor 4 (Social problem)
Poor educational attainment	0.089	0.203	0.606	-0.110
Social norms restricting female mobility and ability to work outside household	0.187	0.196	0.301	0.289
Government policy due to taxes, licenses, roadblocks, residence permits (multiple taxation)	-0.207	-0.420	-0.322	0.443
Increase in workload of domestic chores alongside with occupations	0.651	0.136	0.370	-0.046
Inadequate provision of loan	0.295	0.468	0.123	0.120
Inadequate training opportunities	0.025	-0.081	0.653	0.173
Poor road networks	0.262	0.433	0.205	0.401
Unavailability of labour	0.582	-0.016	0.098	0.033
High cost of labour	0.295	0.040	-0.131	-0.032
Domestic chores not leaving enough time to pursue other activities	0.684	0.041	0.046	-0.048
Inadequate labour saving technology	0.480	0.017	0.085	0.073
Working longer hours	0.500	0.440	-0.191	0.214
Inadequate finance/credit facilities	0.150	0.002	0.528	-0.043
Low wages/poor conditions of work	-0.111	-0.042	-0.004	0.722
Absence of social security benefits	0.040	-0.003	-0.088	0.693
High health risks	0.296	0.249	-0.220	0.227
Lack of enabling policy environment to promote women's entrepreneurship	0.025	-0.761	-0.068	0.045
Lack of access to modern technology/capital	0.222	-0.380	0.614	0.166
Lack of personal security and risk of sexual harassment	0.310	0.508	0.210	0.422
Low level of self-confidence	0.455	0.627	0.033	0.233
Socio-cultural barriers such as exclusive responsibility for household work	0.347	0.056	0.074	0.412
Poor market information on prices of goods and services	0.484	0.361	0.187	0.231
High cost of production leading to less competitive prices	0.609	0.168	-0.003	-0.058
Lack of women empowerment training programmes in rural areas	0.011	-0.621	0.220	0.228
Poor market networks	0.572	0.277	0.251	0.170
High cost of transportation	0.610	0.125	0.135	0.216
Poor skill training	0.111	0.176	0.234	0.241

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Perceived strategies for solving problems encountered by the respondents in occupational diversification

The major strategies indicated by the respondents include providing adequate physical infrastructure such as roads, electricity and pipe-borne water in rural areas (74.2%), provision of social amenities such as hospitals (73.6%), establishment of industries in rural areas to create job opportunities (72.9%) and appropriate government policy on women empowerment (65.8%). About 62% of the respondents suggested adequate provision of labour saving devices, 57.1% suggested easy access to modern technologies, 53.5% suggested regular and timely supply of farm inputs such as fertilizers, while 52.6% suggested provision of credit facilities, among others (Table 3). Access to physical infrastructure such as roads and electricity; and establishment of rural industries will enhance greater involvement of rural women in occupational diversification

since access to good roads can open up opportunities for rural economic activities from urban centers. The perceived strategies if considered will go a long way to help alleviate the problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of perceived strategies for solving problems encountered by the respondents in occupational diversification

Strategies*	Percentage (n=462)
Adequate provision of physical infrastructure such as roads, electricity and pipe-borne water in rural areas	74.2
Improving access to primary health care services in hospitals	73.6
Provision of financial institutions in rural areas	49.6
Provision of ultra-modern markets	42.0
Adequate provision of labour saving devices	62.1
Adequate training opportunities	38.5
Improved working conditions of women	11.3
Lower cost of labour	34.6
Appropriate government policy on women empowerment	65.8
Provision of credit facilities	52.6
Easy access to modern technologies	57.1
Establishment of industries in rural areas to create job opportunities	72.9
Regular and timely supply of farm inputs such as fertilizers	53.5
Establishment of adult literacy programmes/schools for rural women	21.9
Economic empowerment of widows in rural areas for self empowerment	36.1

*Multiple responses

Differences between farm income and non-farm income

Table 4 represents t-test of difference between mean of farm and non-farm income. There was a significant difference between means of farm and non-farm income. The mean of farm income was ₦31,022.8 while the mean of non-farm income was ₦125,364 (t= 12.136; p≤0.05). This shows that the income realized from non-farm occupations was higher than that of farm occupations. This could be attributed to the fact that majority of the respondents were involved in non-farm occupations as seen on Table 1. Based on the results of the t-test, the null hypothesis was rejected for the variables indicated.

Table 4: Test of difference between farm and non-farm income

Variable	Mean (M)	t-value
Farm income	31022.8	
Non-farm income	125364.1	12.136*

*Significant

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the fact that farming activities were the primary occupation of the respondents, the returns were low as regards that from non-farm activities. This could be attributed to a number of factors, namely; poor yields of crops, high mortality of livestock, pests and diseases infestation, seasonality of farming activities, shortage of farm labour and inadequate labour saving technologies. Rural women's major roles in occupational diversification were affected by high barriers in education and training which limit the capacity to engage in more productive and remunerative work, perform managerial and leadership roles and participate fully in the development of their communities. However, the activities of rural women in various occupations were also constrained by labour, institutional, technical and social factors. Targeted actions are needed to overcome these barriers. The study concludes that adequate provision of physical infrastructure (roads, electricity and pipe-borne water); access to primary healthcare services; establishment of rural industries; appropriate government policy on women empowerment and human capacity building through vocational skill acquisition will help to ameliorate the problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification. The study recommends the inclusion of non-farm occupations in rural extension services especially value chain of cash crops as a means of improving income generation.

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