

FACTORS INFLUENCING RURAL HOUSEHOLDS' INVOLVEMENT IN INDIGENOUS BLACK-SOAP ENTERPRISE IN OYO STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

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ABSTRACT

Historically, black soap was a prominent indigenous enterprise in Oyo State, Nigeria where it was taken as a means of livelihood for the resource poor rural households, but gradually, becoming less popular within the rural populace. This study identified the crucial factors, the constraints faced by rural households in the production of black soap and the characteristics of the enterprise. Primary data were elicited from 210 members of rural households involved in black-soap business using interview schedule that was well validated. Data collected were summarised using descriptive statistics including percentages, means and standard deviation while factor analysis was used to identify key factors affecting rural households' involvement in black-soap enterprise. The results revealed that the mean age of respondents was 53.8 ± 15.5 years. Majority (96.2%) were females and majority (94.8%) inherited their skills from older family members. The identified characteristics of the enterprise include its compatibility with the local culture (mean = 3.88) and reliability as a source of income (mean = 3.71). Associated constraints include inadequate capital (mean = 2.20), drudgery operation (mean = 1.98) and lack of credit facilities (mean = 1.84). Factors influencing involvement include production regularity (19.9%), personal characteristics (15.4%), external influence (6.4%) and household strength (4.8%). It was concluded that the identified factors were germane to the involvement of rural households in the indigenous black soap enterprise.

Keywords: Black soap; indigenous; involvement; rural households

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is largely a rural phenomenon in Nigeria and according to Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (2021), 84.6 percent of Nigerians living below the international poverty line of \$1.90 as at 2018/2019 were rural dwellers. Sasu (2022) also reiterated that poverty mostly affect members of rural households. Even in the oil producing rural areas of Nigeria that is characterised with various economic activities of the oil and gas industries, rural poverty is still predominant (Ukpong *et al.*, 2019). Entrepreneurship is a reliable alternative to tackle the menace of unemployment that often led to poverty (Anekwe *et al.*, 2018). Rural entrepreneurship has great potentials in aiding the development of rural areas (Nwankwo and Okeke, 2017) while indigenous entrepreneurship is one of the effective ways to promote economic prosperity and reduce the problem of poverty (Ali and Ali, 2013). Development of indigenous entrepreneurship can enhance employment generation and technological development in Nigeria. This implies that the indigenous people, as custodians of indigenous knowledge, have the ability to identify and utilise local context-based solutions that are capable of bringing development to the society if adequately employed (Olutayo *et al.*, 2017; Aluko, 2018). Unfortunately, because the producers of indigenous knowledge are home-grown, with little or no recognition, their knowledge is often underrated and considered inferior.

Alao *et al.* (2017) identified black soap making as a homegrown income generating activity that enables producing households to be self-sufficiency and reduces rural poverty in Nigeria while

contributing more than two-third of their monthly oncome (Alabi and Makinde, 2022). In the context of the traditional beliefs, black soap is considered as an enterprise meant for the women only (Ogunbor, 2016). Umar *et al.* (2016) and Alao *et al.* (2017) reported that black- soap enterprise has contributed immensely to the livelihood of women in rural households. The major processes involved in black soap making include production of ash water, production of base oil and the soap (Alabi and Makinde, 2022). Jolayemi (2016) observed that the enterprise is going into extinction as the younger generation are not showing willingness to take over from the ageing household members. These observations necessitated this research. The study described the socioeconomic characteristics of rural households' members involved in black-soap enterprise; examined black-soap enterprise unique characteristics, constraints facing the enterprise and isolated factors influencing rural households' involvement in the enterprise. Knowing these factors could assist in forestalling the extinction of the enterprise and enhancing its potential for sustainable rural employment and income generation especially among rural women and youth.

METHODOLOGY

The study area was Oyo State, Nigeria. The State is located on latitude $7^{\circ} 30' 0''$ N and longitude $4^{\circ} 30' 0''$ E. It has a land mass of 27,249 square kilometres and a population of 5,5 91,589 people. The State is characterised with dry season that lasts from November to March, wet seasons from April to October and relatively high humidity. The study

population were all rural households who were involved in various activities of the black soap enterprise such as: sourcing for the raw materials (ash and palm kernel nut), production of base oil, production of ash water and making of the soap. Respondents for the study were selected through a four-stage sampling procedure. Firstly, the seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) leading in black-soap enterprise were purposively selected. At the second stage, a total of fourteen communities leading in black-soap enterprise activities were selected purposively from the 7 LGAs. The third stage was the selection of households involved in black-soap enterprise activities from every selected community using snowball technique which gave a total of 210 households. The final stage was the selection of one volunteer member from each of the 210 households who constituted the respondents for the study and participated in the interview. Well validated and structured interview schedule was used to collect primary data which was analysed by using SPSS software version 22. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages as well as means and standard deviation were used to summarise the data collected. Enterprise characteristics was measured on a 5-point scale by asking the respondents to indicate whether they strongly disagreed (1 points), disagreed (2 points), undecided (3 points), agreed (4 points) or strongly agreed (5 points) to eight characteristics of black-soap enterprise. The maximum and minimum obtainable scores were 40 and 8 respectively. The grand mean was generated to separate the characteristics that were more germane to the enterprise from those that were least. Constraints affecting the enterprise were also measured using a 4-point Likert-like scale (3=very severe, 2=severe, 1=less severe, 0=not at all). Factors influencing rural households' involvement in black-soap enterprise were isolated using factor analysis. Principal component analysis and varimax rotation were used to group the variables. The factors that were retained were determined using Kaiser's criterion; hence, factors that were retained were those that their Eigen values were greater than one. The following criteria employed by Famakinwa *et al.* (2019) were used to name the factors:

- i. The subjective interpretation of researcher's experiences from literature
- ii. Using the synonyms of the variables that have the highest loading on each factor.
- iii. Name the factor based on the similarity of the features of the contributing variables
- iv. Jointly interpret the meaning of the variables that have positive and high loading on each factor.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic characteristics

Table 1 shows that majority (96.2%) of the respondents were females which implies that the enterprise was female dominated. This result agrees with Oluwalana *et al.* (2016) that majority of black-soap producers were female with few males involving in it as minor occupation. Respondents mean age was 53.83 ± 15.47 years with only few (17.1%) belonging to the age bracket of 40 years and below. This implies that the majority of these entrepreneurs were older people and shows the need to improve on the indigenous methods of operating the enterprise so as to encourage younger hands to key into it thereby, preventing it from going into extinction. The finding disagrees with Umar *et al.* (2016) that those actively engaged in black-soap business as their livelihood choice were between the age group of 26 - 45 years while it agrees with Oluwalana *et al.* (2016) that the average age of the people engaged in black-soap was 53.7 years. Many (64.8%) of the respondents were married in line with Umar *et al.* (2016) that majority of rural households' members in black-soap business were married. Marriage is associated with responsibilities of providing for the needs of households' members especially the children. This may be one of the reasons why married people easily get involved in various livelihood activities including black soap enterprise. Almost half (49.0%) of the respondents had no formal education while the mean years of schooling was 1.9 ± 1.1 years indicating low literacy level that sets a limitation on the job opportunities they can engage in. The finding aligns with Oluwalana *et al.* (2016) and Umar *et al.* (2016) that most of the people involved in black-soap enterprise had no formal education. This observation may have negative implication on the development of the enterprise because it enhances job performance. Results also show that all (100%) of the respondents belonged to the Yoruba ethnic group. This implies that the enterprise is purely indigenous because it is dominated by the predominant indigenous people of the study area. The finding is supported by Spotlight on Inclusive Trade (2021) which stated that an indigenous enterprise is the one that is owned and managed by the indigenous people. Table 1 shows further that majority (94.3%) of the respondents inherited their skills from their parents, mother-in-law and relations. This implies that the enterprise is lineage specific and being inherited or passed down from one generation to another. The finding agreed with (Ogunbor, 2016) who stated that black soap business is an indigenous entrepreneurship and its often passed from older generation to the younger. About half (51%) of the sample indicated that their household size was between 6-10 persons. This is relatively large but could be an advantage to the

enterprise in terms of labour supply. The finding is in tandem with Umar *et al.* (2016) that household size of black-soap entrepreneurs is between 6 – 10

persons and that they form the source of labour needed in the multiple activities of the enterprise.

Table 1: Selected socioeconomic characteristics of respondents

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Sex | | | | |
| Male | 8 | 3.8 | | |
| Female | 202 | 96.2 | | |
| Age | | | | |
| 20 years and below | 7 | 3.3 | | |
| 20 – 40 years | 29 | 13.8 | 53.83 | 15.47 |
| 41 – 60 years | 93 | 44.3 | | |
| 61 – 80 years | 77 | 36.7 | | |
| Above 80 years | 4 | 1.9 | | |
| Marital status | | | | |
| Single | 22 | 10.5 | | |
| Married | 136 | 64.8 | | |
| Divorced | 11 | 5.2 | | |
| Widowed | 41 | 19.5 | | |
| Years spent in education | | | | |
| Not attended school | 103 | 49.0 | | |
| 1 - 6 | 57 | 27.1 | 1.94 | 1.08 |
| 7 - 12 | 35 | 16.7 | | |
| Above 12 | 8 | 3.8 | | |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| Yoruba | 210 | 100 | | |
| Means of acquiring skills | | | | |
| Through parents/family | 198 | 94.3 | | |
| Others | 12 | 5.7 | | |
| Household size | | | | |
| ≤ 5 | 86 | 41.0 | | |
| 6-10 | 107 | 51.0 | 7.0 | 4.0 |
| 11 and above | 17 | 8.0 | | |

Characteristics of black-soap enterprise

Based on the cut-off point of 3.0, results in Table 2 reveals that the following characteristics of black-soap enterprise identified by respondents were very important to their involvement in the enterprise and its development. These includes, enterprise compatibility with the local culture (mean = 3.88), reliability as a source of income (mean = 3.71), cost effectiveness compared with other indigenous enterprises (mean = 3.70), visibility in the locality (3.67), use of localised raw materials (mean = 3.53), its divisibility in operation (mean = 3.37), simplicity of learning (3.22) and relative advantage over other enterprises (mean = 3.17). The findings imply that compatibility of the enterprise with the culture of the people will enhance its acceptability in the locality and promote its patronage. Also, the ability of the enterprise to provide a reliable source of income for the entrepreneurs, ability to yield greater return on relatively minimum investment and the use of locally available raw materials; simpleness to learn and its perceived relative advantage would increase the potential for enterprise growth and development if well-harnessed by relevant stakeholders. The

finding agrees with Ukwendu (2019) that black soap production can be done easily with little capital and simple technology.

Constraints faced in production of black soap

Results in Table 3 show that inadequate capital (mean = 2.20) was the most severe constraint identified by the respondents to be limiting their involvement in black-soap enterprise. This was followed by drudgery operation (mean = 1.98), lack of credit facilities (mean = 1.84) and inadequate sources of water (mean = 1.61). On the other hand, constraints like time consuming activities involved (mean = 1.45), lack of training on improved technology (mean = 0.63) and marketing problem (0.55) were less severe while lack of successor (mean = 0.05) and inadequate transportation (mean = 0.04) were not severe. The implication of the finding is that those constraints that were identified to be severe could be responsible for the lack of growth and development of the enterprise despite its age long existence. This is because the combination of inadequate business capital, non-availability of credit facilities and drudgery operation could serve as discouragement (to younger people in particular)

from seeking employment opportunities in the enterprise. This finding is in support of Umar *et al.*

(2016) that the major problem facing black-soap producers was financial inadequacy.

Table 2: Selected characteristics of black soap enterprise

| Enterprise characteristics | Mean | Rank |
|----------------------------------|------|-----------------|
| Compatibility with local culture | 3.88 | 1 st |
| Reliability as an income source | 3.71 | 2 nd |
| Cost effectiveness | 3.70 | 3 rd |
| Visibility in the locality | 3.67 | 4 th |
| Localised raw materials | 3.53 | 5 th |
| Divisibility in operation | 3.37 | 6 th |
| Simplicity in learning | 3.22 | 7 th |
| Relative advantage over others | 3.17 | 8 th |

Grand mean: 2.33

Table 3: Constraints affecting production of black soap

| Constraints | Ranked Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|-------------|--------------------|
| Inadequate capital | 2.20 | 1.14 |
| Drudgery of operation | 1.98 | 1.31 |
| Lack of credit facilities | 1.84 | 1.19 |
| Lack of sources of water | 1.61 | 1.05 |
| Time consuming activities involved | 1.45 | 1.38 |
| Lack of training on improved technology | 0.63 | 0.89 |
| Marketing problem | 0.55 | 1.14 |
| Scarcity of raw materials | 0.32 | 0.83 |
| Availability of raw materials | 0.15 | 0.49 |
| Labour intensive | 0.07 | 0.35 |
| Lack of successors | 0.05 | 0.33 |
| Inadequate transportation | 0.04 | 0.23 |

Factors influencing rural households' involvement in black-soap enterprise

The results in Table 4 show that seven (7) factors with eigen values greater than 1 were isolated as done by Adetunji (2020) and considered to be influencing rural households' involvement in black-soap enterprise in Oyo State, Nigeria. The factors extracted were named as stated in Table 7. The first factor was called "production regularity" and it accounted for 19.9% variation; the second was

"personal characteristics" and accounted for 15.4% variation; the third was "community features" with 13.3% variation; the fourth was "income" with 9.0% variation; the fifth was "threats predisposition" with 6.2% variation; The sixth was "external influence" with 6.4% variation and the last was "household strength" with 4.8% variation. All the extracted factors accounted for 74.1 percent of the variance implying that unknown variables not captured in this study accounted for the remaining 25.9 percent.

Table 4: Analysis of principal components, initial eigen values and percentage variation in involvement of rural households in black-soap enterprise by each extracted factor

| Names of factors | Eigen value | % Variation | Cumulative var % |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Production regularity | 4.589 | 19.954 | 19.954 |
| Personal Characteristics | 3.536 | 15.372 | 35.327 |
| Community features | 3.056 | 13.289 | 48.616 |
| Income | 2.070 | 9.001 | 57.616 |
| Threat predisposition | 1.419 | 6.170 | 63.786 |
| External influence | 1.271 | 5.527 | 69.313 |
| Household strength | 1.105 | 4.803 | 74.116 |
| Others (not identified) | <1.000 | 25.884 | 100.000 |

Factor one: Production regularity

Results in Table 5 show that the factor has six loading variables with two of them positively loaded, namely: frequency of production ($L = 0.800$) and time dedicated to the enterprise ($L = 0.743$). It was named after the variable with the highest positive loading as stated in criterion two in the methodology. It implies that, the more frequent the production activities, the more the time that will be dedicated to the enterprise and consequently, the higher the level of rural households' involvement in the enterprise and vice-versa.

Factor two: Personal characteristics

Table 5 shows that five loading variables were identified with the factor and three of them were positively loaded, namely, age of the respondents ($L = 0.914$), years spent in the enterprise ($L = 0.845$) and marital status ($L = 0.675$). It was named based on the similarity of the features of contributing variables as stated in criterion three. This implies that, age of the entrepreneurs, their years of experience in the enterprise and their marital status are the important personal characteristics affecting their involvement in the black-soap enterprise.

Factor three: Community features

Table 5 reveals that the factor was defined by six positive loading variables. These were: climatic conditions ($L = -0.863$), reasons for involving in the enterprise ($L = 0.743$), infrastructural facilities ($L = 0.716$), willingness to continue ($L = 0.619$), number of workers ($L = 0.533$) and community attitude ($L = 0.442$). It was also named based on the similarity of the features of contributing variables. The climatic condition of the community, availability of infrastructural facilities and workers as well as favourable community attitude to black soap enterprise could sustain the willingness of rural entrepreneurs to continue in the enterprise and enhance their level of involvement.

Factor four: Income

Table 5 shows that total income from all sources ($L = 0.830$) and income from black-soap ($L = 0.590$) were the two loading variables that defined this factor. It was named after the variable with the highest positive loading and the similarity of the features of contributing variables as stated in criteria two and three. This implies that when the income from black soap enterprise accounted for a significant percentage of the total income of the entrepreneurs from all the livelihood sources, it could encourage higher level of involvement in the enterprise.

Factor five: Threat predisposition

Table 5 reveals that five loading variables which include three positively loaded identified the factor. They were constraints ($L = 0.791$), sex ($L = 0.491$) and willingness to continue ($L = 0.426$). It was named by given joint interpretation to the meaning of the variables with positive high loading

as stated in criterion four. The implication is that the constraints associated with the enterprise could serve as a threat that will affect the entrepreneurs' willingness to continue, more so, that they were mainly of female gender who are susceptible to threat.

Factor six: External influence

Table 5 shows further that five loading variables out of which two positively loaded, defined the factor. They were religion ($L = 0.765$) and number of workers ($L = 0.491$). Compatibility of black soap enterprise with the belief system of the people of the indigenous community and readily availability of labour will promote involvement in the enterprise.

Factor seven: Household strength

Table 5 reveals that household size ($L = 0.854$) was the only variable with positive loading out of the two that defined the factor. It was named after the variable with the highest positive loading as stated in criterion two. It implies that since the enterprise is household based in nature, ability of the household members to provide relevant assistances in form of labour, financial and moral supports could strengthen involvement in the enterprise.

Knowing these factors have implications for sustainable employment generation especially in the rural areas. Relevant stakeholders including the government and non-governmental development agencies could leverage on the identified factors in their efforts to providing enabling environment that could enhance the growth of black-soap and other indigenous enterprises. For instance, efforts to improve production frequency could include provision of modern equipment that would eliminate drudgery associated with the enterprise and making necessary facilities available within the rural communities. When frequency of production is enhanced, there will be increase in the income of the entrepreneur which could attract others to find employment in black soap, thereby, minimising the problem of unemployment that usually led to rural poverty and migration.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concluded that production regularity, personal characteristics of the entrepreneur, community features, income, threats predisposition, external influence and household strength were factors affecting rural households' involvement in black soap enterprise. It is therefore recommended that relevant stakeholders should leverage on these factors to providing enabling environment, capable of harnessing the hidden entrepreneurial opportunities in black soap enterprise for sustainable employment generation, thereby, assisting to minimise the problem of unemployment that usually led to rural poverty and migration.

Table 5: Factor analysis showing variables contributing to involvement in black-soap enterprise

| Variables | L | L ² | λ |
|---|--------|----------------|-------|
| Production regularity | | | |
| Means of acquiring skills | -0.898 | 0.806 | |
| Frequency of production | 0.800 | 0.640 | |
| Time dedicated to the enterprise | 0.743 | 0.552 | 3.100 |
| Enterprise characteristics | -0.723 | 0.523 | |
| Community attitudes | -0.638 | 0.407 | |
| Willingness to continue | -0.415 | 0.172 | |
| Personal characteristics | | | |
| Age | 0.914 | 0.835 | |
| Years spent in the enterprise | 0.845 | 0.714 | 2.937 |
| Years of formal education | -0.786 | 0.618 | |
| Marital status | 0.675 | 0.456 | |
| Initial capital | -0.560 | 0.314 | |
| Community features | | | |
| Climatic conditions | 0.863 | 0.745 | |
| Reasons for involving in the enterprise | 0.743 | 0.552 | 2.672 |
| Infrastructural facilities | 0.716 | 0.513 | |
| Willingness to continue | 0.619 | 0.383 | |
| Number of workers | 0.533 | 0.284 | |
| Community attitude | 0.442 | 0.195 | |
| Income | | | |
| Total income from all sources | 0.892 | 0.796 | 1.530 |
| Income from black soap | 0.856 | 0.733 | |
| Threats predisposition | | | |
| Constraints | 0.791 | 0.626 | |
| Indigene | -0.559 | 0.312 | 1.590 |
| Sex | 0.491 | 0.241 | |
| Willingness to continue | 0.426 | 0.181 | |
| Association membership | -0.480 | 0.230 | |
| External influence | | | |
| Number of workers | 0.491 | 0.241 | |
| Religion | 0.765 | 0.585 | 1.086 |
| Association membership | -0.510 | 0.260 | |
| Household strength | | | |
| Association membership | -0.419 | 0.176 | 0.905 |
| Household size | 0.854 | 0.729 | |

L = Loading value L² = Square of loading

λ = Summation of the square of loading

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