

ASSESSMENT OF DETERMINANTS OF OCCUPATIONAL DIVERSIFICATION AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN AKURE NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study examined determinants of occupational diversification among rural women in Akure North Local Government Area of Ondo State. The objectives of the study were to examine the socio-economic characteristics of rural women, ascertain area of occupational diversification among rural women, examine the determinant of occupational diversification among rural women, determine the effects of occupational diversification on the income of rural women and identify problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification in the study area. Primary data were collected with the aid of well-structured questionnaire from one hundred (100) randomly selected rural women. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that the average age of the respondents was 42 years, 64% of the respondents were married, 91% of the respondents had household size of less than 9 (average of 5 persons). The findings further revealed that 58% had formal education while 40% of the respondents are into farming. The regression result showed that age(X_2), educational level(X_6), monthly non-farm income (X_7) and months devoted for secondary occupation (X_8) were important factors determining occupational diversification of rural women in the study area. However, major problems encountered by rural women in the study area were inadequate access to loan, poor educational attainment and social norms. It was concluded that occupational diversification is an important strategy employed by rural women in order to cope with crisis and seasonal stress in both farm and non-farm activities. It was therefore recommended among others that there should be inclusion of non-farm occupations in rural extension service by the government.

Keywords: Assessment, Determinants, Diversification and Rural women

IJAFS 2021 (5).11:1634-1642

Accepted for Publication

September, 2021

Introduction

Occupational diversification in rural areas is the reallocation and recombination of all economic activities which display sufficiently strong rural linkages, irrespective of whether they are located in designated areas or not (Saith, 2002). The concept of occupational diversification is emerging as a survival strategy of rural household in developing countries (Bryceson, 2000 and Ellis, 2000) where 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. Tacolic (2004) defined occupational diversification as non-farm income generating activities undertaken by rural residents, and farming by urban residents. Occupational diversification among rural women is an increasingly important reality in Nigeria because of 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-government income generating activities. This is to overcome seasonality of farming activities, reduce poverty and vulnerability which are 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 to rural woman in order to improve their economic status.

In Nigeria, 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 (Alain De Janvry and Sadoulet, 2001). According to Ellis (2004), occupational diversification possesses positive attributes for poverty and vulnerability reduction. It is partly predicated and itself increases human capital in term of experience, skill and willingness to innovate. It generates earnings and remittances that alter the options open to the household by providing it with cash resources that can be flexibly deployed. It contributes to lessening vulnerability by ameliorating risk and reducing to adverse consumption effects of seasonality.

The impact of occupational diversification varies from negative effect the withdrawal of critical of labour from the family farm to positive effects the alleviation of credit constraints and a reduction in the risk of innovation. The contribution made by occupational diversification to rural occupational is a significant one which has often been ignored by policy makers who have chosen to focus their activities on agriculture (Ellis, (1998); Reardon (1997) and Turner *et al.*, (1993). Occupational diversification becomes pertinent in order for the rural women to cope with the aforementioned factors. Occupational diversification involves incorporating all economic activities in rural areas, except crop and livestock production, fishing and hunting. Agriculture led growth is an important role in reducing poverty and transforming the economics of rural communities in many developing countries, but the same has not yet occurred in Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA). Most countries in SSA are yet to meet the criteria for a successful agricultural revolution. This has led to growing doubt about the relevance of agriculture to growth and poverty reduction in the region, especially in Nigeria. There also exists lack of access to land or land ownership among rural women in Nigeria with an increasing rural population amidst a non-expanding land area as in the country.

Rural areas are the economic backbone in most developing countries, and they enhance economic growth through Job creation, labour supply, provide food and raw materials to other growing sectors of economy, and help generate foreign exchange. Rural households diversify income source 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 to acquire additional income and meet up with economic responsibilities during off-season periodic. This study will help to identify areas of occupational diversification among rural women, effects of occupational diversification and various governmental and non-governmental programmes/effects for economic empowerment of rural women. It will also suggest strategies for improving the rural women by diversify to different types of occupation.

Hypothesis of the Study

H₀: There is no significant relationship between occupational diversification and socio-economic characteristics of rural women in the study area.

Methodology

Study Area

The study was carried out in Akure North Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Its headquarters is in Iju/Itaogbolu. It has a total land mass of 660km² and a population of 131,387 (NPC 2006). The state has 18 local government areas and lies between latitude 7^o10' north and longitude 5^o05' east with a landmass of 15,300km². The local government comprises of both Christians and Muslims. Airegbe festival and the odunina festival are known to be popular festivals held in Akure North. Akure and its environment experience a frequent annual rainfall of over 1500mm with short August break. The average temperature is about 22^oC during hamattan (December-February) and 32^oC in March. Major communities under Akure North include; Eleyewo, Ogbese, Igoba, Oba-ile, Ayede, Iluabo, Isinigbo among others. Farming is the major occupation of the people in the area. They mostly engaged in small scale farming and marketing of many agricultural products such as rice, watermelon, plantain, pepper, cocoyam, potato, cassava and kinds of fruits and vegetables.

Sampling Techniques

A multi-stage sampling technique was used for the study. Purposive sampling technique was first used to select 10 communities from the Local Government Area. Ten (10) respondents each were randomly selected from each of the ten communities making a total of one hundred respondents. Data were collected from the respondents through the use of structured questionnaire supplemented with oral interview. Questions were asked to draw out information relevant to the study. Responses provided information on the type of occupational diversification among rural women, socio-economic characteristics of the women and problems faced by rural women in occupational diversification.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution table, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data collected from the field. Also, inferential statistics such as regression was used to determine occupational diversification among rural women in the study area. The implicit form of the regression model is specified below:

$$Y = F(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4 \dots X_n) \quad (1)$$

Where Y = Numbers of Occupation engaged in by respondents

X₁ = Marital status (Married = 1, Otherwise = 2)

X₂ = Age (Years)

X₃ = Household size (Number of persons)

X₄ = Family structure (Monogamy=1, Polygamy=2)

X₅ = Religion (Christian = 1, Islamic = 2, Traditional =3)

X₆ = Educational status (Years spent in school)

X₇ = Monthly non-farm income

X₈ = Months devoted for secondary occupation

Chi-square was used to test the hypothesis of the study. The formular for Chi-square is given below:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e} \quad (2)$$

Where \sum = Summation

X^2 = Chi-square

F_o = Observed frequency

F_e = Expected frequency

Results and Discussion

Table 1 reveals that 64% of the women were married, while 93% of the respondents were below 60 years, with an average of 42 years, this implies that the respondents are in their active age and very energetic to diversify into different occupations. Moreover, the findings showed that 91% of the respondents had household size of less than 9 with an average of 5 persons imply that the respondents will have more workforce and helping hand if they diversify on their occupation. The findings also revealed that 58% of the respondents has tertiary education which implies that they can engage in white collar job with their certificate and can also diversify their occupation by engaging in vocational job after normal working hour. The respondents had different occupation where farming ranked highest 40%, trading and Civil service ranked second with 25% each and Artisan was just 10%, this is because majority of the respondents do not depend solely on one source of income.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that approximately 77% of the rural women generate a monthly income above 200,000-naira monthlies in their farm with an average of N746, 570 (Table 2) while 68% of the rural women earn above N200,000 per month from non-farm activities with an average of N624,340. This implies that the respondents' diversity will help to improve their standard of living. Table 3 showed major problems encountered by rural women in the study area as Poor educational attainment and access to credit facilities which implies that the respondents may not be able to diversify their occupation because of low level of education and inadequate fund.

Table1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage Mean	(%)
Age (Years)			
20-29	4	4.0	
30-39	30	30.0	
40-49	42	42.0	42
50-59	17	17.0	
60 and above	7	7.0	
Marital Status			
Single	18	18.0	
Married	64	64.0	
Divorced	12	12.0	
Widowed	6	6.0	
Total	100	100.0	
Household Size			
Less than 5	37	37.0	
5-8	54	54.0	5
9-12	5	5.0	
13 and above	4	4.0	
Total	100	100.0	
Educational level			
No Formal education	22	22.0	
Primary	16	16.0	
Tertiary	58	58.0	
Adult literacy	4	4.0a	
Total	100	100.0	
Occupation			
Farming	40	40.0	
Artisan	10	10.0	
Trading	25	25.0	
Civil Service	25	25.0	
Total	100	100.0	

Source: Computed from Field, Survey Data, 2019

Table 2: Monthly Farm Income of the Respondents

Amount	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Less than 100,000	4	4.0
100,001 - 200,000	19	19.0
200,001 – 300,000	13	13.0
300,001 – 400,000	12	12.0
400,001 – 500,000	15	15.0
500,001 and above	37	37.0
Total	100	100.0

Mean: N746, 570, Standard Deviation: N1, 1074

Source: Computed from Field, Survey Data, 2019

Table 3: Monthly Non-Farm Income of the Respondents

Amount	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Less than 100,000	8	8.0
100,001 - 200,000	24	24.0
200,001 - 300,000	18	18.0
30,001 - 400,000	9	9.0
400,001 and above	41	41.0
Total	100	100.0

Mean: N624, 340, Standard Deviation: N95, 792

Source: Computed from Field, Survey Data, 2019

Interpretation of the result of Chi-Square Analysis

The result shows that Age, Marital Status, Household size and Monthly farm income have significant effect on occupational diversification among women in the study area. The higher the age of the women the more they tend to diversity their occupation since they can learn more skills as they are growing older. The Marital status contributes to occupational diversification this is because the women will need to ensure food security and improve their standard of living. The more the women had more household the more they need to meet the needs of their family, in view of this, they had to diversify their occupation. The Monthly farm income also have a significant effect on occupational diversification, this is because the more the income from the farm, the more the respondent's diversity to other sector to ensure sustainability of farm activities and improve their standard of living.

Table 4: Result of Chi –Square Analysis

Relationship	X2	DF	P-value	Decision
Age	77.800	34	0.0000	S
Marital Status	85.062	3	0.0000	S
Household Size	112.571	13	0.0000	S
Monthly farm income	116.596	31	0.0000	S

Significant @ 5%

Source: Computed from Field, Survey Data, 2019

Interpretation of the result of regression analysis

The regression result shows that R^2 is 0.646 which imply that 64.6% variation in the dependent variable is being accounted for by the independent variables in the specified model. The independent variables such as age(X_2), education level (X_6), monthly non-farm income (X_7) and months devoted for secondary occupation were significant at 5% level implying that they are important variables found to significantly influence livelihood diversification among rural women. Moreover, the positive sign associated with variable such as marital status (X_1), family structure (X_4), religion (X_5), monthly non-farm income (X_7) and months devoted for secondary occupation (X_8) implies that they are the major factor determining the number of occupation respondents engaged themselves in while the negative sign associated age (X_2), household size (X_3) and educational level (X_6) implies that increase in value of these variables will result to decrease in the number of occupation engaged by the respondents.

Table 5: Result of Regression Analysis

Variables	Co-efficient (Standard error)	t-value
Constant	65386.327 (69931.90)	-0.935
Marital Status	14801.896 (29603.79)	0.500
Age	1175.164 (539.56)	-2.178*
Household size	3038.765 (6798.13)	-0.447
Family structure	22027.298 (107976.95)	0.204
Religion	19123.348 (20045.44)	0.954
Educational level	13343.854 (6079.20)	-2.195*
Monthly non-farm income	0.096 (0.01240)	7.74*
Months devoted for secondary education	3301.269 (1634.29)	2.02*

$R^2 = 0.646$

$R^{-2} = 0.389$

F-Value = 7.934

Source: Computed from Field, Survey Data, 2019

Table 6: Constraints faced by Respondents

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor education attainment	18	18.0
Social norms	13	13.0
Poor road network	12	12.0
High cost of labour	17	17.0
Government policy	11	11.0
Inadequate access to loan	18	18.0
Domestic chores	5	5.0
Working longer hours	6	6.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Computed from Field, Survey Data, 2019

Conclusion

Occupational diversification is an important strategy employed by rural women in Sub-Sahara Africa in order to cope with crisis and seasonal stress in both farm and non-farm activities. The spread of non-agricultural employment among rural women reflects their growing desperation for income generating opportunities. Evaluating occupational diversification of rural women, reasons for diversification areas of diversification and the perceived effect of diversification is crucial for assessing poverty level and gender responsive research for development. Non-agricultural employment arises from the survival strategies of rural women unable to obtain employment or self-employment in agriculture despite the fact that the rural women are involved in non-farm activities, in order to earn additional income to meet up with family responsibilities, farming still remains the dominant occupation of the rural women. Sequel to the findings of this study it is concluded that rural women are largely employed or occupied in agricultural activities to earn their daily income.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are hereby made:

- i. There should be inclusion of non-farm occupations in rural extension services by the government.
- ii. Government and other stakeholders should organize more relevant training programmes on occupational strategies for rural women.
- iii. Government should enlighten the rural women through the extension agents not to let their social norms to be an hindrance to their occupational diversification.
- iv. Government and other stakeholders need to open up opportunities for rural women to participate in non-farm employment through development of rural industrialization.

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