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## Research Article

# Contribution of Soap Production to Livelihood of Rural Women in Selected Local Government Areas of Oyo State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined the contribution of soap production to the livelihood of rural women in some selected Local Government Areas of Oyo State, Nigeria. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select a sample size of 80 respondents for the study. Data were collected using questionnaire and interview schedule. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency, percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Finding of the study revealed that 63.8% of the women were within the age range of 26-45 years. Nearly all the respondents (97.5%) produce soap for commercial purpose. Earnings from the livelihood activity were relatively low due to small-scale nature of women enterprises in the area. The result also indicated that proceeds from the livelihood activity were used mostly for feeding (41.3%) and educating children (36.3%). Constraints faced by the respondents' were inadequate finance (65.0%) and scarcity of raw material (61.2%) as well as inadequate modern skills and lack of successor with 60.0% response each. The result further showed that age had significant relationship ( $r=0.288$ ) with the contribution of soap production to the livelihood of the respondents in the study area. Based on the findings, it was suggested that Microfinance Banks in the area should provide loans to women soap producers to enable them improve the productive capacity of their enterprises. While youths should be encouraged through extension education to participate in soap making in the area.

**Key words:** Contribution, enterprises, livelihood, soap production, women.

## INTRODUCTION

Empowerment Farming which use to be the mainstay of livelihood of rural farmers has failed to provide sufficient means of survival to them in recent times due to major shift of Nigerian economy to oil production. Farmers, women in particular have seek

after alternative means of survival through livelihood diversification with a view of engaging in more than one livelihood activities rather than reliance solely on the primary occupation which is farming (Sewanyana, 2002).

Livelihood is defined as the totality of the means by which people secure a living or acquire in one way or the other requirement for survival and satisfaction of needs as define by the people themselves in aspect of their lives. Livelihood of rural dwellers include income generation activities they engaged in and all other transactions and strategies through which they earn their living, livelihood is therefore different from job which is specific pieces of work or activity performed in exchange for payment (Loubster, 1993).

Livelihood activities vary from one rural area to the other depending on the available resources, infrastructure and climatic condition of the environment which may include off-farm activities in agriculture as well as wage work in non-farm activities, rural non-farm self-employment and remittances from urban areas. Women in the rural areas engaged in series of livelihood activities to augment their income among which is soap production (Ellis, 2000).

Soap production is a lucrative business opportunity that can be started on a small-scale with low startup capital. It is an essential commodity used on daily bases by millions of people worldwide for both domestic and industrial cleaning. Other economic importance of black soap ranged from its medicinal ability to its domestic use of washing of hair, skin amongst others and its job creation ability for rural women (Oyekanmiet al., 2014).

With the high rate of inflation and unemployment, coupled with the fall in oil price, there is the need to diversify Nigeria economy to non-oil sectors such as soap production for steady revenue generation to the producers and country at large. It is against this background that this study was carried out to ascertain the contribution of soap production to the livelihood of rural women and what need to be done to improve the contribution of soap production to Nigeria economy. The specific objectives of the study are to: describe socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in the study area; determine the enterprise characteristics of the soap production in the study area; determine the contributions of soap production to livelihood of the respondents and ascertain constraints encountered by respondents in soap production.

## Study Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics (age, marital status, household size, educational level) and the contribution of soap production to livelihood of the respondents.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Oyo State which is located within Latitude  $8^{\circ}20'10''$  North and Longitude  $3^{\circ}2'30''$  East. The climate is notable with wet and dry seasons with relatively high humidity. The wet season starts from April and ends in October while the dry season starts from November to March. The average daily temperature ranges between  $25^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $35^{\circ}\text{C}$  almost throughout the year. Farming is the main occupation of the people of the State. Crops such as maize, cassava, millet, yam and cocoa are cultivated in the State. Some of the animals reared in the State include cattle, sheep, goat and poultry. Other means of livelihood in the State especially among women include soap making, weaving and trading.

In order to have a representative sample for the study, purposive sampling technique was adopted to select two Local Government Areas where local soap production is common among women. Purposive sampling technique was further used to select two communities from each Local Government selected. Thereafter, simple random sampling technique was used to select 10% of soap makers from the sampling frame of soap producers in each community. In all, a total of 80 respondents were selected from the two Local Government Areas in the State for the study. Data for the study were collected using questionnaire and interview schedule of which data were collected on the socio-economic characteristics, enterprise characteristics, contributions of soap production to livelihood and constraints faced by respondents in soap production. Descriptive statistics were used to achieve the objectives of the study, while the study hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
15-25	5	6.2
26-35	12	15.0
36-45	28	35.0
46-55	23	28.8
56-65	7	8.8
66-75	4	5.0
Above 75	1	1.2
Total	80	100.0
<b>Education level</b>		
No formal Education	29	36.2
Adult Education	4	5.0
Primary Education	20	25.0
Secondary Education	22	27.5
Vocational Education	5	6.3
Total	80	100.0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	63	78.8
Single	5	6.2
Divorced	4	5.0
Widowed	6	7.5
Separated	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0
<b>Household size</b>		
1-5	32	40.0
6-10	45	56.3
11-15	3	3.7
Total	80	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2015.

Result in Table 1 showed that age group of 26-35 had the highest percentage of 35.0%, this was closely followed by age group of 36-45 with 28.8% response, which indicates that the age group actively involved in soap production activity as a source of livelihood in the study area were between 26-45 years in line with the work of Akingbile (2007) which indicated that the age range of 21-40 years constitutes the active workforce in most rural areas. Table 1 also indicated that 36.2% of the respondents had no formal education and a total of 36.3% of the respondents had some form of formal education although lower than secondary education, by implication it can be inferred that local soap production is dominated by low educated women in the study area thus, any innovation that would aid production should be disseminated at a level they can understand.

Finding in Table 1 further revealed that majority (78.8%) of the respondents were married. Married women have more responsibility to handle and that is why they seem to be the ones engaged in livelihood activity such as soap making to cater for their household needs. This finding affirms the report of Akingbile (2007) who stressed that marriage confers responsibility. It is obvious in Table 1 that more than half of the respondents (56.3%) had between 6 to 10 people living with them, while 40.0% had between 1 to 5 household members. Only 3.8% of the respondents had between 11-15 household sizes. Large household size is needed for family labour to assist in enterprise such as soap making which involve a lot of activities. Umar (2008) reported that household size helps to determine availability of labour for livelihood activities.

## Enterprise Characteristics of the Respondents

**Table 2:** Enterprise characteristics of soap production in the study area

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Years of experience</b>		
1-10	17	21.2
11-20	39	48.8
21-30	10	12.5
31-40	13	16.3
41-50	1	1.2
Total	80	100.0
<b>Frequency of production</b>		
Daily	40	50.0
Weekly	27	33.7
Forth nightly	11	13.8
Monthly	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0
<b>Purpose of production</b>		
Domestic use	2	2.5
For Sale	78	97.5
Total	80	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2015.

Finding in Table 2 indicated that 48.8% of the respondents had between 11 to 20 years of soap making experience, while 28.8% of the respondents had between 21 to 40 years of experience in soap production business. Most of the respondents reported that they were born and trained in this line of business which makes the years of experience for most of the respondents relatively high especially the older ones, which implies that their years of experience is a function of their age, with exception of few that started soap production at the later stage of their life. It is evident in Table 2 that 50.0% of the respondents produce soap on daily basis. This suggests that soap production is a primary occupation or major livelihood activity for half of the respondents in the study area. Similarly, 33.7%, 13.8% and 2.5% of the respondents produce soap weekly, fortnightly and monthly, respectively. This is attributed to series of activities involved in local soap production which demands a lot of time, coupled with the fact that some of the respondents took soap production as a secondary occupation in order to diversify. The implication of this finding tally with the assertion of Olaoye et al. (2012) who stressed that the rural farming families have diversified farming oriented economy to cope with raising vulnerability associated with farming.

Table 2 also revealed that nearly all the respondents (97.5%) produce soap for commercial purpose to generate income. This result agrees with the report of Ogunbameru et al. (2006) which indicated that rural women are involved in several non-farm livelihood activities such as local soap making in order to augment family income and sustenance.

**Contribution of Soap Production to Livelihood of the Respondents**

**Table 3:** Income realized from soap production livelihood activity

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Income</b>		
#1,000 - #10,000	8	10.0
#10,001 - #20,000	25	31.2
#20,001 - #30,000	27	33.8
#30,001 – #40,000	12	15.0
#40,001 – #50,000	5	6.3
Above #50,000	3	3.7
<b>Income Usage*</b>		
Feeding	33	41.3
Farm input purchase	15	18.8
Education	29	36.3
Medical bills	20	25.0
Social assets	14	17.5

\* Multiple responses, Source: Field survey, 2015

Result in Table 3 revealed that 31.2% of the respondents realized between #10,001 to #20,000 per month from soap making and income of about 34.0% of the respondents ranged from #20,000 to #30,000 per month. Only one quarter (25.0%) of the respondents earn above #30,000 per month which portend low income earnings. Low earnings from this livelihood activity depict small-scale nature of women enterprises in the study area which are not large enough to raise their income levels. In a related study, Nasai (2008) reported that rural households in Nigeria engaged in small-scale business enterprises in order to supplement incomes from agriculture. Findings in Table 3 further indicated that the respondents used proceeds for either feeding (41.3%) or to educate their children (36.3%). Proceeds from soap production were also utilized to take care of medical bills (25.0%), purchase farm inputs (18.8%) and social assets (17.5%). This suggests that soap production activity has contributed meaningfully to the livelihood of the women in the rural areas where alternative means of generating income apart from agriculture are uncommon.

**Constraints Affecting the Respondents**

**Table 4:** Constraints facing respondents in the study area

Constraint*	Frequency	Percentage
Scarcity of raw materials	49	61.2
Inadequate fund	52	65.0
Health problem	35	43.7
Inefficient market	37	46.2
Inadequate modern skills	48	60.0
Inadequate transport	28	35.0
Lack of successor	48	60.0

\* Multiple responses, Source: Field survey, 2015

Table 4 showed that 65.0% of the respondents had problem of financial inadequacy, which limited the scale of soap production of most women in the study area. Similarly, 61.2% of the respondents reported that they faced problem of scarcity of raw material, they stressed that getting cocoa pod is a tedious task because cocoa is not cultivated in the study area, thus respondents usually go far to source for raw material (cocoa pod) for soap production and if the respondents decided to use alternative raw material of wood ash instead of burnt cocoa pod, soap produce is not as efficacious as the one produce with cocoa pod. Also, 60.0% each indicated problem of inadequate modern skills and lack of successor, because most of their children have gone out of the soap making communities in search for green pasture and white collar jobs.

## Hypothesis testing

**Table 5:** Correlation between household size, educational level, age, marital status and contribution of soap production to livelihood of the respondents

Variables	Correlation	P-value	Decision
Household size	0.132	0.241	NS
Educational level	-0.142	0.208	NS
Age	0.288*	0.011	S
Marital status	0.179	0.113	NS

S= Significant, NS=Not significant, Source: Field survey, 2015

The result in Table 5 indicated that there was significant relationship between the age of the respondents and the contribution of soap production to their livelihood. This infers that age has a positive influence on soap production and its contribution to livelihood of women in the study area ( $r=0.288$ ,  $p=0.011$ ). However, household size, educational level and marital status has no significant relationship. This implies that local soap production and its contribution to livelihood are not affected by household size, educational level and marital status.

## CONCLUSION

From the finding of study, it can be concluded that the active age group involved in soap production activity in the study area were between 26-45 years. Soap is produce on daily basis for commercial purpose to generate income. Though earnings from the livelihood activity were relatively low due to small-scale nature of women enterprises in the area, Problems facing soap producers were financial inadequacy, scarcity of raw material, inadequate modern skills and lack of successor. Age of the respondents had significant relationship with the contribution of soap production to livelihood of women in the study area.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, it was recommended that Microfinance Banks through their Micro-Credit Programmes should provide loans to women soap producers in the area to enable them increase the productive capacity of their enterprises. Similarly, extension service package on modern techniques and skills of soap production should be delivered to women soap producers in the area using suitable extension teaching methods to improve the quality of their products. It was also advocated that youths should be encourage through extension education to participate in soap making in the study area.

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