

Original Research Article

Contributions of Local Soap-Making to Livelihoods of Rural Women in Selected Local Government Areas of Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study assessed the contribution of local soap-making to the livelihood of rural women in selected local government area of Kwara State. One hundred and twenty women were selected from the selected local government areas. Data for the study was obtained with the aid of a well-structured questionnaire, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings show that majority were married (75.5%), were within the age range of 61-70 (36.7%) and had primary and secondary education (64.2%). Majority of the respondents (93.3%) indicated that soap-making contribute between 50% and 75% to the entire household income. All of the respondents (100%) indicated that profit made from soap-making was used to buy raw materials for more production while 98.3% of the women indicated that the business made purchase of their working equipment possible. Local soap was mainly used for bathing (98.3%). Moreover, the problem of long hours spent in production was the major constraint to soap making (100%). Respondents' age ($r = -0.207$), educational level ($r = 0.281$), and household size ($r = -0.281$) were significantly correlated with the contribution of local soap-making to livelihoods of the women. Therefore, the study recommends that the women be trained, and local market systems strengthened to promote high sales of, and profits from the local soap.

Keywords: Rural women, livelihood, Local soap-making,

Introduction

Women play a major role in traditional activities such as subsistence food production, household chores, food processing, home crafts, and marketing/trade among others. This is as a result of increase in migration of men to urban centers (FAO, 2015). Moreover, UN DESA (2008), found that women featured glaringly in several socio-economic activities such as local soap-making,

trading, farming, processing, and caring for children in the domestic economy. All these activities present a means for improvement of the family through provision of better skills and better equipment to women so that they may perform their traditional tasks efficiently (Adeyeye, 1992). Rural dwellers are principally engaged in farming, fishing, hunting and food processing (Ekong, 2010). However, occupations in rural areas are not all farm-oriented. Most rural women therefore attempt to supplement their incomes with petty jobs outside the farm. Ajani (2012) restated that non-farm occupations play a major role in generating high incomes for the rural women, and efforts should be made towards improving the activities of rural women in non-farm occupations through provision of rural industries, effective poverty reduction programmes and establishment of vocational skills acquisition centres in order to increase their incomes. Besides, Olawoye (1996) reported that the primary concern of women is usually the welfare of their families and would not spend money on personal items unless the family needs were met.

Soap is of great value in keeping the household a far better place to live and work in. Warra (2013) reported that soap was invented not only for the purpose of personal hygiene; but for some other purposes. Today, soap-making is a craft that turns what was essentially a waste into a household luxury. Black soap (BL), which is widely used by different tribes in Nigeria, has different names, such as *Ose Dudu* in Yoruba and *Eko Zhiko* in Nupe (Getradeghana, 2000). In the Western part of Africa, black soap is known as *Anago* soap or *Alata simena* in Ghana, and *Sabulun salo* in Hausa. The making of soaps from ash-derived alkali has been an age-old craft in Nigeria and in other West African countries African black soap is a natural source of vitamins A and E, and iron (Grieve, 1997). African black soap can be prepared from a mixture of cocoa pods ash and palm kernel oil (Ikotun et al., 2018).

Although many of the women are involved in small scale industries, and engage in excess workload, the average income range for women is relatively low. Moreover, rural women in Kwara state are faced with a lot of constraints which include difficulties in getting materials needed for production, and capital for expansion, among others.

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in the study area.
- ii. assess the percentage (%) contribution of soap-making to the income of the household.
- iii. examine the contribution of local soap-making to livelihood of rural women in the study area.
- iv. identify the uses of local soap.
- v. identify the constraints to local soap-making in the study area.

Methodology

Study areas

The study was carried out in Asa Local Government and Oke-ero Local Government area of Kwara state. Kwara state was created on 27th May 1967, when the Federal military government of General

Yakubu Gowon created twelve states out of the four regions that then constituted the Federation of Nigeria. Kwara state is a Yoruba-speaking state with 16 local government areas (LGAs).

Sampling procedure and sample size

The study population comprised of all women involved in local soap-making in the study areas. Two local government areas, Asa local government and Oke-ero local government, were purposely selected from the 16 LGAs due to the fact that local soap-making is prevalent there. Odo-owa community was selected in Oke-ero local government and Ogbondoroko community in Asa local government. Three (3) women groups, namely, Igbede social group, Ikotun social group and Ila social group were then randomly chosen in Oke-ero community, from where 25 respondents were chosen at random from each group to make a total of 75 respondents. From Ogbondoroko community, 3 groups were also chosen at random. The groups were Ila soap producer group, Olose soap producer group and Titun soap producer group from which and 15 respondents were selected at random in each group to make a total of 45 respondents. The total number of respondents selected was therefore 120.

Data analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean scores and frequency distributions, while inferential statistics used was the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic status of the respondents

Table 1 shows that 36.7% of the respondents fell within the age range of 61- 80 years, with a mean age value of 55 years. This implies that older people were involved in local soap production in the study area. This is contrary to the findings of Durston (1996) who had earlier reported that youths tended to be more involved in agriculture and related economic enterprises. Majority (72.5%) of the respondents were married, and household size was 6-8 members. This implies that the respondents, being married, had families to cater for. Moreover, the large household size could provide labour for soap production.

The proportions of the respondents that had primary and secondary education were 29.2% and 35% respectively. This implies that some of the women were fairly educated.

The mean value for the years of experience of the respondents was 31 years. This implies that the women had sufficient expertise in the art of local soap-making.

Soap production was the major source of income for 37.5% of the respondents while a few of the women (1.7%) had other sources of income apart from soap-making. Most (44.2%) of the respondents produced soap twice a week., while a few of the women (2.5%) produced four times

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by socio-economic characteristics (n =120)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Age			
≤30	20	16.7	55.1
31-40	13	10.8	
41-50	16	13.3	
51-60	19	15.8	
61-70	20	16.7	
71-80	24	20.0	
≥81	8	6.7	
Marital status			
Single	9	7.5	
Married	87	72.5	
Widow	24	20.0	
Household size			
≤5	43	35.8	5.96
6-8	74	61.7	
≥9	3	2.5	
Educational qualification			
Non formal education	40	33.3	
Primary	24	29.2	
Secondary	42	35.0	
Tertiary	9	7.5	
Year of experience			
≤10	22	18.3	31.79
11-20years	20	16.7	
21-30years	18	15.0	
31-40	18	15.0	
41-50	27	22.5	
51-60	14	11.7	
≥61	1	0.8	
Major Source of livelihood			
Soap making	45	37.5	
Farming	40	33.3	
Trading	33	27.5	
Others	2	1.7	
Production time per week			
1	48	40.0	
2	53	44.2	
3	16	13.3	
4	3	2.5	
Numbers of bowls produced per cycle			
1	92	76.7	1.27
2	24	20.0	
3	4	3.3	

per week. Table 1 further shows that majority of the respondents (76.7%) produced 1 bowl of soap per cycle, while a few (3.3%) produced 3 bowls of soap per cycle with a mean score of (1.27).

Percentage contribution of soap-making to household income

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondent (93.3%) reported that local soap-making contributed between 50% and 75% to their entire household income. This implies that soap making was an important source of livelihood to the women because money derived therefrom could be used to meet their needs.

Table 2: Percentage contribution of soap-making to household income (n=120)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
>50%	1	0.8
50%-75%	112	93.3
<75%	7	5.8

Source: Field survey, 2016

Contribution of proceeds of local soap-making to women's livelihoods

Table 3 shows the contribution of proceeds of local soap-making to the livelihood of the women in the study area. Out of all the contributions stated, use of the proceeds "For procurement of raw

Table 3: Contributions of local soap-making to their livelihoods (n =120)

Contributions of soap-making to livelihoods of the respondents	SA	A	U	SD	D	Mean	Rank
Reduces money spent on industrial soap	85(70.8)	35(29.2)	-	-	-	4.71	10 th
Buying of children's clothing	98(81.7)	18(15.0)	4(3.3)	-	-	4.78	8 th
Payment of children's school fees	99(82.5)	17(14.2)	4(3.3)	-	-	4.79	7 th
Payment of house rent	93(77.5)	25(20.8)	2(1.7)	-	-	4.76	9 th
Payment of hospital bills	67(55.8)	52(43.3)	1(0.8)	-	-	4.55	12 th
Replacement of working equipment	118(98.3)	2(1.7)	-	-	-	4.98	2 nd
Complimenting money dropped by husband	93(77.5)	19(15.8)	8(6.7)	-	-	4.71	10 th
Establishing of other local trades	64(53.3)	36(30.0)	20(16.7)	-	-	4.37	13 th
Improving level of thrift made on daily/weekly basis	118(98.3)	2(1.7)	-	-	-	4.98	2 nd
Payment of tax	26(21.7)	32(26.7)	28(23.3)	32(26.7)	2(1.7)	3.40	14 th
Buying of food stuff	117(97.5)	3(2.5)	-	-	-	4.98	2 nd
For ceremonial affairs	106(88.3)	14(11.7)	-	-	-	4.88	5 th
For changing of home appliances	102(85.0)	18(15.0)	-	-	-	4.85	6 th
For procurement of raw materials	120(100)	-	-	-	-	5.00	1 st
For training on how to improve production	26(21.7)	27(22.5)	35(29.2)	30(25.0)	2(1.7)	3.38	15 th

Source; Field survey, 2016. Percentages are in parenthesis.

materials” was ranked first ($x = 5.00$). This implies that the women used some of the profits realised to buy raw materials for the business. “Improving level of thrift made on daily/weekly basis” ($x = 4.98$) and “Replacement of working equipment” ($x = 4.98$) were ranked second. This implies that the women were able to improve their savings, maintain/replace their work tools from the sale of local soap. Use of the proceeds “For ceremonial affairs” ($x = 4.88$) was ranked fifth. This implies that the women used part of the profit realised for ceremonial purposes. From Table 3, it can also be seen that the respondents also utilized proceeds they derived from soap-making for “For changing of home appliances” ($x = 4.85$; ranked sixth). And for “Payment of children’s school fees” ($x = 4.79$; ranked seventh). The results in Table 3 have therefore revealed an overwhelming positive response of the women to the contribution of local soap to their livelihoods, and welfare. In other words, the production and sale of local soap by the respondents improved the economic status and welfare of the women. Aiyedun *et al.* (2008) reported that enhanced income from enterprises goes a long way to empower an entrepreneur to perform well economically, socially and enhances decision-making and ability to raise funds among others.

Uses of local soap by the respondents

Table 4 reveals that majority of the respondents (98.3%) used local soap for bathing, and for curing of skin rashes and stomach ache (ranked 1st). Majority of the respondents (95.8%) indicated that they used local soap for curing of dry itchy scalps and for prevention of skin diseases (ranked 4th). It was also revealed that 63.3% and 92.5% of the respondents indicated that they used local soap for spiritual purification, and to treat constipation respectively, This table also reveals that 48.3% of the respondents indicated that local soap can be used as a form of insecticides. This result is in line with the findings of Jones (2005) that African black soap has numerous benefits which include a reputation for improving or eliminating uneven skin tone, razor bumps caused by ingrown hairs and skin rashes. It is excellent for clearing up oily skin and acne, for its antiseptics properties and for its use for spiritual purification.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to uses of local soap (n =120)

Uses	Yes	No	Mean	Rank
1. For bathing.	118(98.3)	2(1.7)	4.98	1st
2. Curing of skin rashes.	118(98.3)	2(1.7)	4.98	1st
3. For insecticides.	58(48.3)	56(46.7)	4.43	8th
4. For spiritual purification.	76(63.3)	42(35.0)	4.62	7th
5. Avoiding dry itchy scalp.	115(95.8)	5(4.2)	4.96	4th
6. Preventing skin from ring worms, eczema, measles and body odour.	115(95.8)	5(4.2)	4.96	4th
7. For curing stomach ache.	118(98.3)	2(1.7)	4.98	1st
8. To help cure constipation.	111(92.5)	9(7.5)	4.92	6th

Source; Field survey, 2016 percentages are in parenthesis.

Constraints to local soap-making

Table 5 shows that “Long hours spent in production” ($\bar{x}$ =3.00) was ranked 1st as the major constraint confronting the women in local soap-making. This may be because of the fact that all their operations were done manually using local implements which may be cumbersome for the women. “Environmental pollution” ($\bar{x}$ =2.91) was ranked 2nd among the constraints facing the women. This is because the community lacks drainage facilities. Therefore, wastes generated during the production of soap pollute the environment and produce unpleasant odour, particularly in and around where the production takes place. The third constraint as indicated by the women was “lack of access to loans” ($\bar{x}$ =2.88). This implies that the women lacked sufficient capital for expansion of their businesses. This may be seen in the number of bowls they produced per week. Table 5 further shows that “Lack of access to raw materials” ($\bar{x}$ =1.00), ‘Lack of access to equipment’ ($\bar{x}$ =1.00) and “marketing” ($\bar{x}$ =1.28) were not major constraints to local soap production probably because women could get some of the materials needed for production in the environment. Moreover, there was sufficient awareness of the use of local soap among the people.

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents by their constraints and level of severity (n =120)

Constraints	Very Severe	Severe	Not Severe	Mean	Rank
1. Lack of access to loans	111(92.5)	4(3.3)	5(4.2)	2.88	3 rd
2. Lack of access to raw materials	-	-	120(100)	1.00	9th
3. Lack of access to equipment	-	-	120(100)	1.00	9th
4. Environmental pollution	109(90.8)	11(9.2)	-	2.91	2nd
5. Lack of awareness of products	-	23(19.2)	97(80.8)	1.19	7th
6. Rural urban drift	1(0.8)	103(85.8)	16(13.3)	1.88	4th
7. Rate of producers	-	17(14.2)	103(85.8)	1.14	8th
8. Bargaining power	29(24.2)	44(36.7)	47(39.2)	1.85	5th
9. Marketing	9(7.5)	16(13.3)	95(79.2)	1.28	6th
10. Long hours spent in production	120(100)	-	-	3.00	1 st

Source; Field survey, 2016. Percentages are in parenthesis

Result of Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation

Table 6 shows results of the Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) of the socio-economic characteristics of rural women and the contributions of local soap-making to the livelihood of the rural women. Age was negatively, but significantly, correlated with the contribution of local soap-making to livelihood of rural women. This implies that the older the women, the lower the contribution of soap-making to their livelihoods. This may be because the older women have diversified their sources of income through engagement in other vocational activities. Household size was also negatively correlated with the contribution of local soap-making to livelihood of the women. This means that the larger the household size, the smaller the contribution of local soap-making to the livelihood. This is because a big household would

translate to bigger household expenditure which, in turn, would reduce the amount of money available for production and expansion of the business to meet the increase in household expenditure. Education was positively (but significantly) correlated with the contribution of local soap-making to the livelihood of the women. This implies that the higher the level of education, the more soap-making contributed to their livelihoods. This is because women who are educated can access, comprehend and utilize available information and skills to optimize resource use, make soap-making easier and cheaper, and exploit market information for optimum profit. Soap production per week, and number of soap bowls produced per cycle were positively and significantly correlated with the contribution of local soap-making to livelihood. This may be because these variables can positively influence the income generated from soap-making.

Table 6: Correlation between the socio-economic characteristics of rural women and the contributions of local soap-making to the livelihood of the rural women

Variables	Correlation		Remarks
	Co-efficients (R)	P-Values	
Age	-0.207*	0.023	Significant
Marital Status	-0.031	0.740	Not Significant
Household Size	-0.281**	0.007	Significant
Educational Level	0.281**	0.002	Significant
Years of Experience	-0.211*	0.021	Significant
Times per week	0.319**	0.000	Significant
Bowls per cycle	0.362**	0.000	Significant
Major source	-0.085	0.358	Not Significant

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, it can be concluded that in addition to its use for bathing, the local soap producers also used the soap for treatment of skin infections, and for spiritual purification. Moreover, local soap-making contributed immensely to the livelihoods of the women in the study area. However, the three most important constraints to production were: long production hours, pollution of the environment and lack of access to loans.

It is therefore recommended that Government and non-government agencies should provide training centres where women can access modern soap production facilities and techniques for producing and better packaging the local black soap thereby reducing the long hours spent on production, and improving the quality of the final products. The local market systems should also be strengthened to promote high sales of local soap which will increase profit margins of women and in the long run, will increase incomes.

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