

Assessment of the Perception of Farming Households on Off-Farm Activities as a Livelihood Coping Strategy in Wudil Lga of Kano State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The overall purpose of the study was to assess the perception of farming households on off-farm activities as a livelihood coping strategy in Wudil local government area of Kano State, Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was used for the study. At stage one, purposive sampling technique was used to select two (2) wards; cikingari and sabongari for the study. At stage two, seven (7) farmers' cooperatives were picked based on convenience and accessibility. At the final stage, simple random sampling was employed to select ten (10) respondents from each of the farmers' cooperatives, this give a total of seventy (70) sample size for the study. Both primary and secondary data were used, these were derived from administration of structured questionnaire and review of relevant literatures. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, ranking and standard deviation were used to analyze the four specific objectives. Findings of the research shows that majority (38.57%) of the respondents go into fishing activities during off-farm season, followed by those who diversify into clay pot making and carpentry work constituting (11.43%), and (10%) respectively. As regards the respondents' perception of off-farm income activities; those that strongly agreed to the statement "there was reduced level of idleness/crime rate as a result of involvement in off-farm activities" constitute the highest mean value of ($X=4.64$), followed by agreement to 'there was improvement in procurement of inputs as a result of involvement in off-farm activities' constitute ($X=4.37$). It was also revealed that there was a tangible increase in the annual income of respondents after involvement in off-farm activities. The major constraints identified were inadequate startup capital, high cost of equipment and transportation and inadequate storage facilities. It is therefore recommended that there should be provision of credit facilities to enable rural dwellers boost their income, subsidized prices of equipment and also provision of stable electricity supply and storage facilities to help preserve perishable products.

KEYWORDS: *Off farm, Household, Livelihood, Coping Strategies*

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding shocks and their consequences is essential for developing effective livelihood strategies that strengthen existing coping measures in developing economies like Nigeria; at present, a better understanding of this linkage is lacking because comprehensive empirical data are rare (Tongruksawattana, S., H. Waibel and E. Schmidt, 2010). In most developing countries, agriculture remains as one of the main sources of income for the majority of the population in rural areas. Although most of these households are agricultural producers, they also take part in other activities such as salaried employment in agriculture, trade, and other services as well as self-employment in small industries and commercial activities (micro-enterprises); the income generation opportunities of rural households are usually highly correlated.

The profitability and seasonality of agricultural production affect, in many ways, not just the lives of farmers but also the lives of other people in their communities, as a large proportion of the landless workers (peasants) also depend

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on the agricultural sector. Other activities, such as commerce or services, are also correlated to the main income generating activity of most of the households. Thus, the rural areas are particularly vulnerable to systemic shocks (Carlos Andrés Alpizar, 2007).

Off-farm activities have become an important component of livelihood strategies among rural households in most developing countries. Several studies have reported a substantial and increasing share of off-farm income in total household income (DeJanvry and Sadoulet, 2001; Ruben and Van den Berg, 2001; Haggblade, 2007). Reasons for this observed income diversification includes declining farm income and the desire to insure against agricultural production and market risks (Reardon, 1997; Ellis, 1998; Ellis and Freeman, 2004). That is, when farming becomes less profitable and riskier as a result of population growth and crop and market failures, households are pushed into off-farm activities, leading to "distress-push" diversification. In other cases, however, households are rather pulled into

the off-farm sector, especially when returns to off-farm employment are higher or less risky than in agriculture, resulting in “demand-pull” diversification. (Vanden Berg and Kumbi, 2006).

In addition to providing the much needed investment capital for the farm, off-farm occupation has been seen by some researchers as a risk minimizing strategy which is important, especially, to the small-scale farmers. This is, indeed, a sound safeguard against crop failure and market failure (Ellis & Freeman, 2004; Babatunde, Olagunju, Fakayode & Adejobi, 2010).

Agricultural production in Nigeria still relies heavily on the rural farmers who constituted about 90% of food producers for the nation (Rahji, 2000). World Bank (1996) described them as small scale operators, tenants or landless, characterized by low income and nutritional deficiencies, limited assets, large family size, high dependency ratio.

The above might have arisen because majority of Nigeria farmers live in rural areas with the practices being so primitive, subsistent and counterproductive that the nation has been found wanting in her effort toward making great supports in sufficient food production in quantity and quality for her fast growing population (Ekong, 2003). As a result of this problem of poor performance, many have put the blame solely on an average Nigerian farmer who is characterized as an irrational, conservative, ignorant and superstitious resource allocator

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Rural households in Sub Saharan Africa live in risky environments and very often they cannot protect their income fluctuation or consumption from shocks. Farming households are faced with several risks ranging from inadequate rains/drought, degraded land, input shortages, disease outbreak and low prices for agricultural products. For a variety of reasons, the poor are often the least equipped to weather the impact of aggregate shortage in their income; they have few assets which they could sell or use as a buffer, limited or no access to formal credit and insurance markets to help smooth income shortage over time, and often lack the education; where the consumption of the good or service (such as healthcare) is necessary, households may be faced with catastrophic spending burdens that drive them deep into debt and destitution. Furthermore, many of their coping strategies are either ineffective, or create harmful consequences, especially for children.

Also, these households have varying access to the resources that allow them to manage risk and cope with the consequences of shocks. Rural households not only have varying access to resources but also to other risk-coping mechanisms, such as informal financial transactions (in thrift and credit associations), migration, remittances etc. Christiansen and Subbarao (2001) as cited by Oyekale and Yusuf (2010) submitted that the need for addressing the issue of shocks becomes paramount because they lead to a wide variability in households in-comes. In the absence of sufficient assets or insurance to smoothing consumption, such shocks may lead to irreversible losses; such as distress sale of productive assets, reduced nutrient intake, increased crime rate or interruption of education the children.

Off-farm activities appeared to be prevalent through the developed and developing countries as alternatives measures through which rural farm households improve their income (Kinsella *et al*, 2000). However, the extent to which off-farm activities in recent decade have been embraced by most rural households deserves attention research-wise to understand why most household are gradually diverting their resources for investment into some non-farm income generating activities.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to assess the perception of farming households on off-farm activities as a livelihood coping strategy in Wudil Local Government of Kano state, Nigeria, the specific objectives were to;

- A. describe the socioeconomic characteristic of the farm households in the study area,
- B. describe the off-farm income activities carried out by farm household other than farming,
- C. determine the perception of farming households on off-farm income activities as a livelihood strategy, and
- D. describe the constraints to off-farm income activities by the farm households.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Description of the Study Area

The study was conducted in Wudil Local Government Area, Kano State, Nigeria.

Wudil is located 43Km South-East from the State capital and is one of the important commercial towns in Kano State. It covers an area extending between latitude 11° 37'N and latitude 11° 56'N as well as between longitude 8° 45'E and 8° 57'E and has a population of 105,106 (NPC, 2006). The rainy season lasts from April to September while the dry season begins from October to March (Olofin, E. A., Nabegu, A. B. and Dambazau, A. M. 2008).

The inhabitants of the area are diverse in occupation ranging from the elite to traders and artisans with majority of its populace using farming as a source of income. Major crops produce are corn, rice, sugar cane, groundnut, vegetables and with some few people engaged in fishing activities, cattle rearing and pottery (Olofin, E. A., Nabegu, A. B. and Dambazau, A. M. 2008).

2.2. Sampling Techniques

Multistage sampling technique was used for the study. At stage one, purposive sampling technique was used to select two (2) wards out of the ten (10) in Wudil Local Government Area, the wards are as follows; Cikingari, Sabongari, Dankaza, Kausani, Dagumawa, Utai, Darki, Achika, Lajawa and Indabo. The two (2) wards selected were Cikingari and Sabongari this was based on the high concentration of rural people who engage in off-farm income activities. At stage two, seven (7) farmers' associations/cooperative were picked based on convenience and accessibility. At the final stage, simple random sampling was employed to select ten (10) respondents from each of the farmers' association, this give a total of seventy (70) sample size for the study. The choice of the sampling technique was taken in a bid to avoid bias in the selection procedure in order to achieve precision for a given outlay of resources.

2.2.1. Sample Frame

A proportion of (10%) was taken and ten (10) respondents were chosen from each farmer’s association selected since the sample size is known.

2.3. Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were used for the research work. The primary data was a cross-sectional data obtained using structured questionnaire while secondary gotten by reviewing relevant literatures. Interview and questionnaire were used as data collection instrument. The questionnaire has four (4) sections; section one contains questions on socioeconomic characteristic of the respondents, section two on types of off-farm activities engaged, section three contains a 5 points Likert scale statements on perception of off-farm activities while the last section has provided parameter on the constraints faced by the respondents during the course of engaging in off-farm activities.

2.4. Analytical Techniques

The data collected from the field were entered into SPSS version 18 after coding and cleaning. Descriptive statistical tools were used to analyzed the data. Objective i, ii, iii and iv was analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and ranking.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Information on Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents.

An individual’s feelings, thought, understandings, predisposition, etc. are dependent on various aspects of that person’s mental makeup and situation. The socio-economic characteristics investigated includes age, marital status, gender, household size, level of education, farming experience, annual income and occupation they were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

3.1.1. Age

Age factor is very important in terms of labor especially where there are poor technologies. In such situations, one expects the young to be better position to be more productive ultimately. (Igben,1988). The result in table 1 below shows that most (30%) of the respondents were in the age category of 31-40 years, the age category of 41-50 years constituted (28.57%), the age category of 21-30years

3.1.5. Educational Level

Education is one of the factors that sometime affect production in a business. On the level of education, the study revealed that most of the respondent (35.71%) had Qur’anic education, those with secondary education constitute (25.71%), primary education constitutes (21.43%), adult education constitutes (10.00%), those with tertiary education constitute the least proportion (7.14%).

constitutes (22.86%) while age category of 51-60 years constitutes the least proportion (18.57%).

3.1.2. Gender

Gender refers to the natural segregation of the human race into male and females and represents the sex of the respondent under study (Web 2015). Majority (97.14%) were males while (2.86%) were found to be females. This implies that male engage more in off-farm income activities than female in the study area due to their attempt to diversify to meet households demand financially as household heads. This is in agreement with the finding of Shu’aib (2009) who found out that traditionally, gender segregation gives room for the division and assignment of responsibilities among people. According to the author, this led to the categorization of jobs and activities as males tend to undertake more tedious and outdoor jobs, females were left with simpler and indoor activities.

3.1.3. Marital Status

Marriage makes an individual more responsible and takes relatively technical decision more accurately. The result from the study shows that majority (58.57%) were found to be married, some of the respondents (20%) were divorced, those who are not married constitute (11.43%) and widowed constitute (10%) respectively. This implies that married people with many household members diversify more to find ways to cope with family living by engaging in off-farm activities other than farming as only source of income. The finding is in agreement with (Ekong, 2003) who reported marriage as a very important factor facilitating household farming and other off-farm activities

3.1.4. Household Size

Household size refers to the members of the family living together and feeding from a pot. (Web, 2015) Majority of the respondents (55.7%) were found to have a household size of 6-10 dependents. Household size of 1-5 constitute (30%), those with household size of 11-15 constitute (11.43%), while household size of 16-20 constitute the least proportion (2.86%) respectively. The largest proportion of those with household size of 6-10 dependents implies that they diversify most into off-farm activities to cope with the financial needs of the entire household such as food, clothing, hospital bills, school fees and purchase of other household equipment.

Table 1a: Distribution of Respondents According to their Socioeconomic Characteristics (n=70)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Age			
21-30	16	22.86	
31-40	21	30.00	
41-50	20	28.57	
51-60	13	18.57	40.17
Gender			
Male	68	97.14	
Female	2	2.86	

Marital status			
Single	8	11.43	
Married	41	58.57	
Divorced	14	20.00	
Widowed	7	10.00	
Household Size			
1-5	21	30.00	
6-10	39	55.71	
11-15	8	11.43	
16-20	2	2.86	8
Education level			
Adult Education	7	10.00	
Primary	15	21.43	
Secondary	18	25.71	
Tertiary	5	7.15	
Qur'anic Education	25	35.71	
Total	70	100	

Source: Survey data, 2014

3.1.6. Occupation

Occupation refers to the source of income of the respondents. Apart from the major source of income, respondents are involved in other generating activities to diversify their income sources. The result in the table 1 below revealed that majority of the respondent's (67.14%) primary occupation was farming, those with trading as occupation constitute (14.57%), respondents with civil servant constitute (10%) and with artisanal as occupation constitute the least proportion (8.57%) respectively.

3.1.7. Farming Experience

The years of experience affects the managerial ability and decision on farm operation of farmers (Idi, 2004). Although years of experience could positively affect the managerial ability and decision making enterprise, it could also hinder adoption of improved technologies. The result in the table 1b below revealed that most of the respondents (48.57%) were found to have 6-10 years' experience in off-farm activities, those with experience of 1-5 constitute (35.71%) while those with 11-15 experience constitute the least proportion (15.71%) respectively.

Table 1b; Socio-Economic Characteristics Continues...

Major Occupation	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Farming	47	67.14	
Trading	10	14.29	
Civil Servant	7	10.00	
Artisanal	6	8.57	
Years of Experience			
1-5	25	35.71	
6-10	34	48.57	
11-15	11	15.72	
Total	70	100	13.49

Source: Survey data, 2014

3.1.8. Annual Income

The result in table 2 below revealed the annual income of respondents before and after involvement in off-farm activities, before involvement in off-farm income activities most annual income of the respondents were found to be with the range of (₦51,000-100,000) constituting (34.29%), those whose annual income was within the range of (₦101,000 -150,000) constitute (28.56%), within the range of (₦151,000-200,000) constitute (21.43%), within the range of (₦201,000-250,000) constitute (11.43%) while those within the range of (₦251,000-300,000) constitute the least proportion.

After involvement in off-farm income activities respondent's annual income seems to have increased rapidly, most annual income of the respondents were found within the range of (₦201,000-250,000) constituting (28.57%), those whose annual income was within the range of (₦151,000-200,000) constitute (27.14%), within the range of (₦101,000 -150,000) constitute (15.71%), within the range of (₦51,000 - 100,000) and (₦251,000-300,000) constitute (14.29%) respectively. The increase in annual income of respondent after involvement in off-farm activities is an indication that income from off-farm activities could help to tackle financial problems apart from income from farm only. Winter *et al* (2007) and Davis *et al* (2008).

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents according to their Annual Income Before and after Involvement in Off-Farm Activities

Annual Income	Before	%BFOFA	After	%AFOFA
₦51,000 - 100,000	24	34.29	10	14.29
₦101,000 -150,000	20	28.56	11	15.71
₦151,000-200,000	15	21.43	19	27.14
₦201,000-250,000	8	11.43	20	28.57
₦251,000-300,000	3	4.29	10	14.29
Total	70	100	70	100

Source: Survey data, 2014

Mean annual income ₦150,500

BFOFA = Before involvement in off-farm activities

AFOFA= After involvement in off-farm activities

3.2. Identified off-farm Income Activities Carried out by the Respondents

The table 3 shows that most of the respondents were involved in fishing (38.57%), this is as a result of abundant river in the study area, those respondents into clay pot making constitute (11.43%), those respondents into carpentry constitute (10%), those into blacksmith constitute (4.29%), motorcycle riding/hiring (4.29%), tailoring (4.29%), hair salon (4.29%), G.S.M operation (4.29%) and laborer (brick-layers etc) (4.29%) respectively, those respondents engaged in sale of vegetables constitute (2.86%), sale of fruits (2.86%), welding (2.86%), beans cake frying (kwosai) (2.86%) respectively while those respondents into vulcanizing and mechanics constitute the least proportion (1.43%) respectively. Okali *et al* (2001), DFID (2004) and Oluwatayo (2009) in Idowuet *al* also suggested that income from household's members' participation in non-farm activities has been contributing significantly to farm household's welfare in Nigeria. Lanjouw and Lanjauw (2001), Reardon *et al* (2001), Haggblade *et al.* (2007), Winters *et al* (2007) and Davis *et al.* (2008), noted that non-farm employment serves as important source of raising the income level by complementing farm income of households in Nigeria.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents According to Various Off-Farm Income Activities Carried Out (n=70)

Identified off-farm activities	Frequency	Percentage
1. Fishing	27	38.57
2. Clay Pot moulding	8	11.43
3. Carpentry	7	10.00
4. Blacksmith	3	4.29
5. Motorcycle riding/Hiring	3	4.29
6. Tailoring	3	4.29
7. Hair salon (Barbers)	3	4.29
8. G.S.M Operation	3	4.29
9. Laborer (brick-layers etc)	3	4.29
10. Sale of Vegetables	2	2.86
11. Sale of fruits	2	2.86
12. Welding	2	2.86
13. Beans cake frying (kwosai)	2	2.86
14. Vulcanizing	1	1.43
15. Mechanics	1	1.43
Total	70	100.00

Source: Field survey data, 2015

3.3. Perception of Off-Farm Income Activities by the Respondents

The result in table 3 revealed the respondent perception; out of the ten statements, Most of the respondents strongly agreed with the statements, with the corresponding mean values as follows; 'That there was reduced level of idleness/crime rate as a result of involvement in off-farm activities' (X=4.64), 'There was improvement in procurement of inputs as a result of involvement in off-farm activities' (X=4.37), 'There was acquisition of more farmland as a result of involvement in off-farm activities' (X=4.21), 'My involvement in off-farm activities has made it easy for me to acquire more cooking utensils' (X=4.01), Some of the respondents agreed that 'they have purchased a house as a result of involvement in off-farm activities' (X=3.84), 'Income generated from off-farm activities has inspired me to married more wives' (X=3.8), 'purchased more work bull (animal traction) as a result of involvement in off-farm activities' (X=3.41), 'there was acquisition of more household items e.g electronics, beddings and chairs after engagement in off-farm activities' (X=3.44), while some of the respondents disagreed that 'off-farm activities have restricted me from acquiring motorcycle, trucks and wheel barrows.' (X=1.71), 'Encounter unease of sponsoring wards in school as a result of involvement in off-farm activities' (X=1.8). The highest mean of agreement with the statement implies that income from off-farm activities assist farmers cushion their productivity and over all welfare.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents According to Perception of Off-farm Activities

Statement	Mean	ST.D	Ranking
1. There was a reduced level of idleness/crime rate as a result of my involvement in off-farm activities.	4.64	0.64	1 st
2. There was improvement in procurement of inputs as a result of my involvement in off-farm activities	4.37	0.97	2 nd
3. I have acquired more farmland as a result of my involvement in off-farm activities	4.21	0.9	3 rd
4. My involvement in off-farm activities has made it easy for me to acquire more cooking utensils.	4.01	1.16	4 th
5. I have purchased a house as a result of my involvement in off-farm activities.	3.84	1.0	5 th
6. Income generated from off-farm activities has inspired me to married more wives.	3.80	1.22	6 th
7. I have acquired more household items e.g. electronics, beddings and chairs after engagement in off-farm activities	3.44	1.4	7 th
8. I have purchased more work bull (animal traction) as a result of my involvement in off-farm activities.	3.41	1.21	8 th
9. I encounter unease of sponsoring wards in school as a result of my involvement in off-farm activities.	1.80	0.63	9 th
10. Off-farm activities have restricted me from acquiring motorcycle, trucks and wheel barrows.	1.71	0.59	10 th

Source: Survey data, 2014

3.4. Information on Constraint of Off-Farm Income Activities Faced

The result in table 5 below revealed factors constraining off-farm activities, Majority of the respondents (52.85%) complain that inadequate capital is their biggest challenge faced in off-farm income activities, High cost of equipment constitute (27.14%) of the constraints faced, Poor patronage of customers constitute (14.28%), those who faces the problems of high cost of transportation constitute (15.71%), while lack of storage facilities constitute the least proportion (12.85%). The implication of the observed constraints above though that farm households derive interest and carry out off-farm income activities with financial capital accruing from such compliment income from sale of farm produce as observed by Kaija (2007).

Table 5: Distributions of Respondents According to Constraints Faced from Off-Farm Income Activities (n= 70)

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate capital	37	52.85
High cost of equipment	19	27.14
High cost of transportation	11	15.71
Poor patronage of customers	10	14.28
Inadequate of storage facilities	9	12.85

Source: Survey data, 2014

The total percentage is more than 100% because of multiple responses from the respondents.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that there was a tangible increase in the annual income of respondents after their involvement in off-farm activities. We could therefore could that diversification into off-farm activities is an effective livelihoods coping strategies as it provided additional income to the family thereby reducing over-reliance on the farm's income; hence farmers with off-farm work have enough money to purchase inputs which enhance on-farm productivity which translated to better standard of living. Also, income from off-farm activities assisted the farmers cushion their production expenses and over all welfare.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were suggested;

- Credit facilities should be made available and accessible to help boost farmers' income and enhance diversification into more off-farm activities.
- High cost of off-farm equipment such as fishing equipment, carpentry tools, tailoring materials etc. should be tackled.
- There should be provision of physical infrastructure that can reduce transportation cost.

- Storage facilities should be made available at affordable prices.

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