

ASSESSMENT OF ROLE PERFORMANCE OF OSUN STATE FARMERS' CONGRESS (OSFC) IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the role performance of Osun State Farmers' Congress (OSFC) on agricultural production in Osun State, Nigeria with a view to determining the expected and the actual roles of OSFC to its members. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select 126 congress members who served as respondents. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. Results revealed that the mean age of the members' was about 55 years \pm 9.74 years with mean income of about N76, 100.00K per annum \pm N8, 166.00k. The results indicated that 80 percent of the respondents enjoyed input supply services, 83 percent enjoyed linkage with relevant institutions while about 41.3 percent indicated that the congress occasionally facilitated marketing of farm produce or dissemination of information about good marketing outlets. Results also showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between role performance of OSFC and age ($r = 0.273$; $p \leq 0.01$), farm size ($r = 0.211$; $p \leq 0.01$) and income ($r = 0.396$; $p \leq 0.01$); and Spearman's rank order correlation between the expected and the actual performed roles was weak ($\rho =$

0.30). It was concluded that role performance of OSFC in agricultural production in Osun state is low, when compare to its' expected roles to its members. In view of this, the study recommended among others that the agricultural and rural development stakeholders in Osun state should encourage members by giving them relevant extension education, adequate and timely information on how to market their products in a way that will benefit members.

KEYWORDS: Assessment, farmers' congress, role performance, agricultural production

Introduction

Rural areas offer a lot of opportunities to people, among which are: stable social structures, close links to decision makers, people who know how to bring ideas into reality and an atmosphere full of creativity (World Bank, 2006). Mosley (2001) argued that the development of agriculture needs to be considered as a pivotal poverty reduction strategy in Africa in spite of the sector's erratic performance. Giwa (2008) discovered that investments in agricultural

research, education and rural roads have favourable impacts on agricultural development and poverty reduction in the country. Fan (2002) discovers that in addition to its large impact on rural poverty reduction agricultural research investments have also played a major role in the reduction of urban poverty because it increases agricultural production, which in turn lowers prices of food. The long period of neglect of practicing farmers by the government created creditability problem for government institutions that are connected to agriculture amongst the rural dwellers. This has paved way for numerous Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) in agricultural and rural development among which the Osun State Farmers' Congress (OSFC) is prominent.

OSFC is a grassroots farmer's organization in Osun state. Its aim is to assist members in their agricultural undertakings by linking them with government and other non-governmental organizations for necessary assistance. The complimentary efforts of all the NGOs and encouragement of agricultural development by national and international governmental agencies will ensure effective extension services, research-extension farmer linkage, input procurement, and distribution system supported by a rural infrastructures development programme geared toward the needs of the farmers and the rural people (Akpabio, 2007).

Establishment of Osun State Farmers' Congress (OSFC)

In response to the problem of unemployment and its serious negative implications in the country and rural areas in particular, the Osun State Farmers' Congress (OSFC) was founded in 1992. OSFC acts as an umbrella under which practicing farmers belonging to the organization in the state promote and safeguard the interest of members. The organization helps to pursue the goal of complete emancipation of members from all forms of exploitation and economic problem. It is an incorporated grassroots

organization of accredited farmers' from all the 30 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Osun state in Nigeria. The organization is an independent congress of practicing farmers who cultivate crops and practice any kind of animal husbandry but who are not involved in partisan politics. Its goal is to assist members in their individual as well as group agricultural practices in the interest of individual socio-economic development (OSFC constitution, 1999).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical formulation on which the study was based can be explained by role theory which was developed by sociological theorists (Karl Marx, 1818-1883; Ludwig Gumplovicz, Vilfredo Pareto, Georg Simmel, 1858-1918; and other founding fathers of European sociology) as quoted by Ritzer and Douglas (2003) posits that human behavior is guided by expectations held both by the individual and by other people. The expectations correspond to different roles individuals perform or enact in their daily lives, such as secretary, father, or friend. For instance, most people hold pre-conceived notions of the role expectations of a secretary, which might include: answering phones, making and managing appointments, filing paperwork, and typing memos. These role expectations would not be expected of individual from other professions. Roles consist of a set of rules or norms that function as plans or blueprints to guide behaviour. Roles specify what goals should be pursued, what tasks must be accomplished, and what performances are required in a given scenario or situation in rural society.

Role theory includes the following propositions: people spend much of their lives participating as members of groups and organizations; within these groups, people occupy distinct positions; each of these positions entails a role, which is a set of functions performed by the person for the group; groups often formalize role expectations

as norms or even codified rules, which include what rewards will result when roles are successfully performed and what punishments will result when roles are not successfully performed; individuals usually carry out their roles and perform in accordance with prevailing norms; in other words, role theory assumes that people are primarily conformists who try to live up to the norms that accompany their roles; group members check each individual's performance to determine whether it conforms with the norms; the anticipation that others will apply sanctions ensures role performance.

OSFC adopted the role theory process such as, communication pattern through which information, decisions and directives are transmitted within the group, decision-making process for choosing the best course of action from possible alternative courses, socialization process by providing written constitutions to its members in order to internalize the groups' values, beliefs and norms and social control through which it prevents members from deviating from the norms (e.g. sanction to enhance discipline).

Statement of problem

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and governmental agencies were found to be of assistance in areas of agriculture and rural development programmes. Many recent studies have shown that NGOs play important roles in the rural poverty alleviation (Fan, 2002, Chaturvedi, 2002 and Akpabio, 2007), in their studies of sources of agricultural credit and alleviation of rural poverty, observed that NGOs are mostly contributing to the goals of sustainable agriculture through helping farmers to focus development on activities that will alleviate poverty and help in the issue of domestic food security and sustainable agriculture. But then, the practicing farmers still complain of not being effectively reached with the developmental programmes of these organizations. This necessitated the renewed efforts of some NGOs such as the organized

practicing farmers group exemplified by OSFC to act as a change agent so as to multiply the influence of the innovations in the rural communities. The study provides answers to the following questions among others:

1. What are the socio-economic characteristics of members of OSFC?
2. Are the OSFC performing the roles listed by it in relation to agricultural production in Osun state?
3. What are the benefits farmers derived from the congress?

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to assess the role performance of OSFC in agricultural production in Osun state. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. identify the socio-economic characteristics of members of OSFC;
2. assess how OSFC is performing its stated roles in agricultural production in Osun state; and
3. identify benefits derived by farmers from the congress.

Hypotheses of the study

Age, sex, marital status, household size, religion, number of years spent in formal education, indigenous status, social status, years of residence in the community, occupation and income of members of rural based organization have been reported by many researchers to promote or inhibit involvement in development projects (Ekong, 2003 and Okorie et al., 2009). This study will determine the relationship between selected CBYOs members' characteristics and their level of involvement in rural development activities. Hence,

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between selected members socio-economic characteristics namely age, sex, marital status, number of years spent in formal education, indigenous status, social status, years of farming experience, income, farm size and

role performance of OSFC.

In any organization, employees are expected to discharge their duties in accordance with the goals/objectives of the organizations. This has no regard for the personal goal/objective(s) of the employee. However, the personal goals/objectives of the employee may influence his/her performance. Max Weber in his fusion theory postulates that organization (employers) tries to socialize the individuals (employees) while the individuals try to personalize the organization. It is through these processes, socialization and personalization that an individual within an organization will discharge the expected roles with enthusiasm. Hence,

Hypothesis two: There is no significant relationship between the expected roles and performed roles of OSFC.

Methodology

Study area

The study was carried out in Osun state. The state came into existence on 27th August 1991 as a result of the bifurcation of the former Oyo state by the Federal military government with its headquarters in Osogbo. The state has an area of approximately 8,602 square kilometers and is bounded in the south by Ogun state, in the north by Kwara, in the east by Ondo and Ekiti, and west by Oyo state. According to analytical reports of the National Population Commission (NPC) (2006), Osun State has 3,423, 535 people. The state is homogenous comprising the Oyo, Igbomina, Ife and Ijesha people all belonging to the Yoruba family and speaking the same Yoruba language of different dialects. However, traces of other tribes like Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Ebire and so on can be found in the state as immigrants. There are thirty (30) LGAs and one area office in the state.

Population for the study

The population for the study consists of practicing farmers who are registered members

of OSFC as at the time the study was conducted in 2006.

Sampling procedures and sampling size

Osun State Farmers' Congress (OSFC) members were selected as sample for this study. OSFC operates in the six administrative zones of the state. These zones are Iwo zone, which comprises six local government areas (LGAs); Ikirun zone, which comprises six LGAs; Ilesha zone, which comprises six LGAs; Ife zone, which comprises four LGAs; Ede zone, which comprises four LGAs and Osogbo zone, which comprises four LGAs. However, OSFC has members who spread across the villages in all the LGAs in the state.

A multi-stage random sampling procedure was used to select the samples. The first stage involved using simple random sampling technique to select four zones out of the existing six. Two LGAs were selected from each zone using simple random sampling technique at the second stage. In all, eight LGAs were selected. Two villages where members were found were purposively selected in each of selected LGAs at the third stage. In all, 16 villages were selected for the study. Purposive selection was used because only financial members whose names appeared in the group register were the target of the study, since some of the members were not financial members.

Systematic and proportionate sampling method, using the register of members in each selected village was used to proportionally select twenty percent (20%) of members that had been in the organization since 1999. This was because it is believed that, they were in the better position to adequately evaluate the role performance of OSFC. In addition, group participant observation was conducted through attendance at group meetings. In all, 126 respondents were selected and interviewed for the study. Hypothesis was tested using Spearman's rank order correlation analysis, which is a non-parametric correlation because it is a

distribution free data in the sense that no assumptions are made about the parent population. It deals with frequency counts or ranked or ordered set of data and not with the exact raw scores. Eleven variables were used for each expected roles and performed roles and the total responses for each variable were summed and ranked.

Measurement of variables

Dependent variable: The dependent variable for the study was the role performance by the OSFC. The number of roles performed by the OSFC as indicated by its members after they had been validated at the meeting of the executive members were taking as standard of measurement for the role performance of OSFC. The total identified roles performed by the OSFC were summarized into 11 roles. These include; extension education, provision of improved seed and seedlings, giving loans, provision of farm input at reduced costs, linkage with relevant organizations, facilitating cooperative activities, facilitating marketing outlet, provision of legal assistance, promotion of leadership skill, introduction of better farming method and promotion of group administration. Each of these roles was assigned one point. Possible maximum score that a respondent could have was eleven (11) points while minimum score was zero (0).

Independent variables: Structured interview schedule containing open and close- ended questions were administered to the farmers to collect the following information; Farmers' demographic characteristics such as age, sex, marital status, years of formal education and so on; farmers' participation and involvement in congress activities (i.e. group commitment in form of how often they met, how often they attended meetings and their contributions towards group progress), types and number of improved practices and technological materials such as improved seedlings, modern farm implements and so on introduced to the farmers among others.

Results and discussion

Personal and socio-economic characteristics of the OSFC members

The socio-economic characteristics of OSFC members in the study area are presented in Table 1. Results show that the mean age of the members' was about 55 years with standard deviation of 9.74 years, 70.6% were male, 92.9% were married, mean years of formal education was 3.14 years with standard deviation of 2.53 years, mean years of farming experience was 15.08 years with standard deviation of 4.72 years with mean income was N76, 100.00K per annum with standard deviation of N8,166.00k and the mean hectares of land possessed by each member was 3.02 hectares with standard deviation of 0.76 hectare. This reflects the fact that rural areas in which the OSFC groups are located has been deserted by young people who probably might have moved to the cities in search of white collar job. The results also show that education broadens individual horizon to decide his/her level of participation in any organization, which will be of direct benefit to him or her. However, majority of low and middle income earners would likely join the congress to gain from the experiences of the founding members who were perceived as contact farmers because of their status, which might have positive implication on agricultural development

Distribution of respondents by benefits derived as a member of OSFC

Results in Table 2 show that majority (72.2%) of the respondents did not benefit from the extension education the congress members claimed they were imparting. Majority (75.4%) of the respondents benefited from the supply of improved seeds/seedlings such as maize seeds, undertaken by the congress. About 73.8 percent did not benefit from the loan scheme the congress claimed it introduced. This shows that the loan was limited to few members and this might affect the production capacity of the members because they might not have enough

money to procure necessary farm input at the required time, knowing very well that agricultural operations are time bound. Majority (78.6%), enjoyed supply of farm implements from the congress at reduced cost. About 77.8 percent enjoyed the benefits from congress' linkage with relevant institutions. About 35 percent indicated that the congress rarely facilitated cooperative activities, 32.5 percent indicated that the congress occasionally facilitated cooperative activities, 24.7 percent indicated that the congress did not facilitate cooperative activities while only 7.9 percent indicated that the congress facilitated cooperative activities.

About 41.3 percent indicated that the congress occasionally facilitated marketing of farm produce or dissemination of information about good marketing outlets; 34.1 percent indicated that the congress rarely gave information leading to marketing of their farm produce and 23 percent indicated that they did not give information in this regard while 1.6 percent indicated that they always gave information that led to effective marketing of their farm products. This might also affect the production capacity of the members because their profit might be negatively affected from unsold produce, hence, reduced income and discourage agricultural production which might cause food scarcity in the country. About 54.8 percent indicated that the congress encouraged better farming system. Also, 49.2 percent indicated that the congress occasionally promoted better group administration. Majority (85.7%) indicated that the congress rarely provided legal assistance to individual members. This implies that OSFC performed nearly all its expected roles but members opined that certain roles needed to be given more attention.

Hypothesis testing:

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between some selected members socio-economic characteristics namely age, sex, marital status, number of years spent in

formal education, indigenous status, social status, years of farming experience, income, farm size and role performance of OSFC.

Results in Table 3 show the result of the hypothesis testing. There is a positive and significant relationship between role performance of OSFC and age ($r = 0.273$; $p \leq 0.01$), farm size ($r = 0.211$; $p \leq 0.01$) and income ($r = 0.396$; $p \leq 0.01$). This finding implies that socio-economic characteristics of members like age, farm size and income were significant and explained 7%, 4% and 16% respectively. This means that as age, farm size and income of members increases, the role performance of OSFC will also improve.

Assessment of role performance by OSFC

Hypothesis two: There is no significant relationship between the expected roles and performed roles of OSFC.

Data in Table 4 show the value of r (rho) ranges from -1 through 0 to +1. The value between +0.20 to +0.39 is regarded as weak relationship between frequency counts or ranked or ordered set of data. Results in Table 4 show the results of Spearman's rank order correlation used for testing congruency between the expected roles and performed roles of OSFC. The Table revealed that, there was relationship between the expected roles and performed roles but the relationship was weak ($r(\rho) = 0.27$). With this outcome, the null hypothesis of no congruence could not be accepted. This implies that role performance of OSFC in agricultural production in Osun State is low, when compared to the expectation of members.

Summary and conclusion

Majority of the members derived low benefits from the OSFC when compared to their expectations, particularly in area of facilitating market information to sell their farm produce. Although OSFC played the roles of agent, target and medium of change to its members particularly in areas of facilitating extension education, input supply services, linkages with relevant institutions and encouragement of

better farming system.

Recommendations

OSFC members should be more focused on issues relating to extension education among its members so as to increase the sources of planting materials and sources of credit from personal source to other sources such as bank, cooperative thrifts and credit societies thereby enhancing their agricultural production. In addition, since modern agricultural practices adequately facilitated by OSFC were less than 5 out of the 15 listed by the executives, as indicated by majority (80.2%) of the members, therefore, agricultural technologies to be facilitated by OSFC should be able to meet the specific needs of the members to enhance benefits to be derived in agricultural production in Osun state.

The Congress (OSFC) and other agricultural development stakeholders in Osun state should encourage members by giving them adequate and timely information on how to market their products in a way that will enhance the income of the members to enhance benefits to be derived by members. This will invariably enhance agricultural production in Nigeria.

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Table 1: Distribution of respondents by personal and socio-economic characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Central Tendency
Age			
21-30	4	3.2	
31-40	14	11.2	
41-50	30	23.9	
51-60	35	26.8	
61 and above	43	34.0	x = 55.08
Total	126	100.0	S.D=9.74
Sex			
Male	89	70.6	
Female	37	29.4	
Total	126	100.0	
Marital Status			
Single	1	0.8	
Married	117	92.9	
Widow/widower	8	6.3	
Total	126	100.0	
Years of formal education			
No formal education	50	39.7	
1 – 6 (primary)	51	40.5	
7 – 12 (Secondary)	18	14.3	
Above 13 (Tertiary)	7	5.6	x = 3.14
Total	126	100.0	S.D=2.53
Years of farming experience			
6- 10	17	13.5	
11-15	18	14.4	
16- 20	26	20.6	
21 and above	65	51.5	x = 15.08
Total	126	100.0	S.D=4.73
Level of Income (#)			
50,000 and below	60	47.7	
51,000-100,000	41	32.5	
100,001-150,000	17	13.5	
150,001 and above	8	6.4	x=76,100.00k
Total	126	100.0	S.D=8,166.00k
Size of farmland			
Less than 1	10	7.9	
1-5	94	74.5	
6- 10	17	13.5	
11 and above	5	4.0	x = 3.02
Total	126	100.0	S.D=0.76

Source: Field survey, 2006

x = Mean

S.D= Standard deviation

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by evaluation of roles performed by OSFC against their expected roles (n = 126)

Role performed against the expected roles	Always freq.	%	Occasionally freq.	%	Rarely freq.	%	Not at all freq.	%
Extension education.	1	0.8	4	3.2	30	23.8	91	72.2
Supply of improved seeds/seedlings.	6	4.8	95	75.4	10	7.9	15	11.9
Giving loan in kind/cash.	4	3.2	11	8.7	18	14.3	93	73.8
Supply of farm implement at reduced cost.	16	12.7	99	78.6	8	6.3	3	2.3
Linkage with relevant institutions.	6	4.8	98	77.8	10	7.9	12	9.5
Facilitating cooperative activities.	10	7.9	41	32.5	44	34.9	31	24.7
Facilitating marketing of farm produce (information).	2	1.6	52	41.3	43	34.1	29	2.3
Encouraging better farming system.	69	54.8	38	30.1	10	7.9	9	7.1
Promoting better group administration.	6	4.8	62	49.2	30	23.8	28	22.2
Provision of legal assistance.	-	-	7	5.6	108	85.7	11	8.7
Promote leadership skill/training.	-	-	4	3.2	30	23.8	91	72.2

Source: Field survey, 2006.

Table 3: Correlation analysis between youth accessibility to rural infrastructure and their socio-economic characteristics

Variables	Correlation co-eff. (r)	Co-eff. of determination (r ²)	Remarks
Age	0.273**	0.07452	Significant
Farm size	0.211**	0.04452	Significant
Level of income	0.396**	0.15681	Significant

Source: Field survey, 2006.

** Correlation is significant = 0.01

Number of respondents = 126

Degree of freedom = 125

Table 4: Summary of spearman's rank order correlation coefficient of determination of the congruence between expected roles and performed roles of OSFC (n = 126)

	Activities	Expected roles score	Rank	performed roles score	Rank	D	d ²
	Increased food production	121	2 nd	46	8 th	-6	36
2.	Increased household income	126	1 st	76	5 th	-4	16
3.	Improved group organization	93	11 th	50	7 th	4	16
4	Improved farming knowledge/skill	114	5 th	116	3 rd	2	4
5	Better access to loan	102	6 th	59	6 th	1	1
6	Supply improved seeds/seedlings	120	3 rd	102	4 th	-1	1
7	Supply of farm tools	117	4 th	120	1 st	3	9
8	Enhanced cooperative activities	97	8 th	19	11 th	-3	9
9	Give information on market outlet	99	7 th	39	9 th	-2	4
10	Promoted linkage with relevant institutions	95	9 th	120	1 st	8	64
11	Promoted leadership skill/training	94	10 th	27	10 th	0	0
Total							160

Source: Field survey, 2006.

$$r(\rho) = 1 - \frac{1}{n} \sum \frac{d^2}{n}$$

$$r(\rho) = 1 - \frac{11(11^2 - 1)}{11(121 - 1)}$$

$$= 1 - \frac{960}{11(120)}$$

$$= 1 - \frac{960}{1320}$$

$$= 1 - 0.73, r(\rho) = 0.27$$