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Motivational Factors and Obstacles among Nigerian Agripreneurs: Empirical Evidence from Port Harcourt, Rivers State

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to determine the motivational factors and obstacles among agriculturally based SMES in Rivers State, Nigeria. Seventy (70) SMEs that have operated for at least four years were selected from the population using simply random sampling. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaire. Statistical analysis was conducted to determine the mean scores and standard deviations of indicators of motivation and obstacles. The analysis reveals that factors related to business achievement (such as: to increase my income) constitute the highest motivation for owners of SMEs, while factors concerning financing problems, and infrastructural problems (such as: obtaining long term financial capital and electricity problems) ranked highest on the scale of obstacles. It was recommended that agro-based firms and associations should collaborate with relevant agencies to provide more training to SMEs owners. Government should also work out adequate mechanisms with banks to provide soft loans, and put in place sustainable infrastructure for agriculturally based enterprises to thrive.

Keywords: Motivational Factors, Obstacles, Agripreneurs, SMEs.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship, as an area of study and practice, has continued to attract the attention of scholars, organizations and nations. This is underscored by its role in the development of Small and Medium size sector which translates to economic growth as social progress (Quadir and Jahur, 2011; Chu, Kara and Benzing, 2008). Ihugba, Odii and Njoku (2013) submit that ability of any country to create business opportunities is a function of the volume of entrepreneurial activities it can generate. These entrepreneurial activities constitute the soul of SMEs. In the European Union, 28% of the direct total exports from member countries to the United States are from SMEs. More significantly, 633,000 SMEs of the European Union, which represent 80% of all EU exporting firms, yearly push their products to the rest of the planet (European Union, 2015).

The economic and social importance of SMEs cannot be overemphasized such enterprises constitute approximately 99% of all firms across countries and contribute 50%-75% of value added (Mazzarol, 2014).

A typical example of a developing economy is that of Nigeria a country which is blessed with human and natural resources, coupled with enormous business potentials (Ihugba, et al 2013; Ehui and Tsigas, 2009). Despite this positive attributes, the country still totters on the fringes of poverty, mass unemployment, and economic decay. Thus, successive administrations have put up varying efforts to champion entrepreneurship in order to reverse the negative socio-economic indices that bedevil the country. In recent years, entrepreneurial consciousness and activities have been on the increase in Nigeria. Universities in the country have introduced Entrepreneurship as a compulsory course and several households and individuals are getting more and more involved in entrepreneurship by establishing SMEs. The importance of SMEs in Nigeria is reflected in its contribution to industrial employment which stands at 70% and a GDP output of 10% - 15% (Ogbo and Nwachukwu, 2012).

The Nigerian Gross Domestic Product Report for quarter two, 2015 (2010 constant basic process) shows that the service sector contributed 54.36% followed by industries and agricultural sector which contributed 24.52% and 21.12% respectively. Notwithstanding its relatively low contribution, the Agricultural sector in Nigeria increased from ₦3176598.13 in first quarter of 2015 to 3477845.24 (₦ million) in 2nd quarter of 2015.

This increase in GDP contribution from the Agricultural Sector may have been possible due to a scourge in the number of agro based SMEs, as well as the unrelenting efforts of the government in sensitizing the citizens on the need to diversify the economy along the path of agriculture, bearing in mind that the oil sector can no longer guaranty economic viability and sustainability (Akinlo, 2012).

Otunaruke and Chinwuba (2015) submit that well integrated agro-based firms have the capacity to reduce poverty, and create employment in Nigeria if adequately funded. In same line of argument, Ehui and Tsigas (2009) opine that the agricultural sector of Nigeria has a remarkable capacity for growth but the reality on ground is dismal as the sector is still largely operating at subsistence level coupled with unfocused and sterile government policies.

Despite this scenario, the government of the day continues to work out strategies that will catapult the agricultural sector into a platform of optimal productivity by encouraging the growth of agripreneurship (Olukunle, 2013). From the foregoing, it can be stated that the creation of a more robust enabling environment which serves as a fertile ground for the proliferation of Agrobased SMEs is urgent and of primary importance to the Nigerian economy.

Since there is the need for more participation in agripreneurship in Nigeria, an understanding of the reasons why people go into agrobased business as well as an investigation into the factors that constitute stumbling blocks is of critical importance. It is based on this that this study seeks to investigate the motivational factors and obstacles among Agripreneurs using Port Harcourt as the study site. There exist a plethora of literature on motivation, success, and challenges, prospects and barriers among entrepreneurs both in developed and developing countries (eg, in Chu, et al, 2008; Stefanovic, Rankovic and Prokic, 2011; Zimmerman and Chu, 2013; Ikeje and Onuta, 2015). Also, literature is interlaced with scholarly works on the role, challenges and prospects of Agriculture in the economy of nations (eg, in Omorogiuwa et al, 2014 and Farhan, et al, 2012). However, there appears to be scanty studies specifically on the motivational factors and obstacles among agripreneurs in Nigeria. Thus, this study is being conducted to determine the motivational factors as well as obstacles in agripreneurial enterprises in Port Harcourt with a view to making recommendations on areas for action and improvement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Entrepreneur

There is no unified definition that captures all the features of an entrepreneur (Ringwald, et al, 2014). Schumpeter (1934) described entrepreneurs as innovators who disrupt the existing order to introduce new products or services, while McClelland (1961) submits that an entrepreneur is one who has a high need for achievement. Others have described entrepreneurs as one, who sees opportunity in change, takes risk and commercializes innovation or invention (eg, in Drucker, 1964; Stevenson, et al 1975). Generally, entrepreneurs are individuals that see business opportunities where others do not take advantage of such opportunity by harnessing resources to grow a business amid challenges which finally culminates to success.

2.2. Agripreneur

Sudharain (n. d) defined agripreneurship as generally sustainable, community oriented directly marketed agriculture. Agripreneurs are a special category of entrepreneurs who have a love for agriculture and apply their acquired skills and competencies to leverage potentials of the agricultural sector of the economy (Mital, 2015). Agripreneurs are highly innovative agriculturally directed change agents who share entrepreneurial characteristics agents. Bairwa, et al (2014) submitted that agripreneurship is the amalgamation of agriculture and entrepreneurship.

The role of agripreneurship cannot be overemphasized as it has the capacity to increase wealth, step up employment, enhance income, cut down urban to rural drift and generally reduce the burdensomeness of agriculture (Sah and Kashyah 2009).

2.3. Motivational Factors among Agripreneurs

The fact that agripreneurs are agriculturally oriented entrepreneurs, the same motivational factors for entrepreneurs equally applies to them. An understanding of the motivational factors that surround entrepreneurial decision making is key in appreciating the dynamics of the entrepreneurial process and behavior (Kuratko, Horns and Nafziger, 1997; Robichaud, Cachon and Haq, 2010). Several factors have been identified as the motivators for entrepreneurial engagement. An empirical study of Nigeria entrepreneurs by Chu, Kara and Benzing (2008) reveals that “to be my own boss”, “for my own satisfaction and growth”, “to increase my income” and “to be able to use my past experience and training” fall within the principal categories of motivators. In a similar study conducted by Stefanovic, Rankovic and Prokic (2011), it was found out that “to increase my income” is the greatest motivator for people to go into business in Serbia. This was followed by “to be able to use past experience” and “so I will always have a job”. After conducting a Factor Analysis, Stefanovic, et al (2011) classified the first and second items as ‘greater business achievement factors’. The case of Turkey presents a scenario whereby job security and increased income rank as the critical motivators for entrepreneurial activity, whereas in India people go into business due to the need for autonomy and increase in income (Benzing and Chu, 2005).

Generally in Africa, the motivating factors for entrepreneurs are to increase income or make money, provision of employment and the desire to satisfy the basic needs of food and shelter (Bewayo, 1995; Chu, Benzing and McGee, 2007; Roy and Wheeler, 2006). From the above literature, it could be inferred that in as much as the motivating factors across nations appear to be generic, there exists some observable slight differences (e.g, Zimmerman and Chu, 2013).

2.4. Obstacles among Agripreneurs

Agripreneurs face the same barriers or challenges that confront entrepreneurs. Key among the barriers and developmental challenges of agripreneurship in Nigeria are marketing problem, storage and processing, poor infrastructure, volatility of input and output prices, labour shortage, technological backwardness and policy implementation gap (Olukunle, 2012). Ifeanyi and Okechukwu (2014) submit that difficulty in obtaining loans, ignorance and lack of experience, lack of good business models, infrastructure constraints, stiff government policies and corruption are the major factors that militate against entrepreneurial progress in Nigeria. In an earlier study, Ihugba, Odii and Njoku (2013) submitted that inadequate credit facilities, graft policy summersault, multiple taxation, poor infrastructure, poor adaptability and resilience are among the numerous barriers to the growth and development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

An empirical study by Chu, et al (2008) revealed that unreliable employees, weak state of the economy and deficit in electricity, insecure location and lack of managerial capacity are the most critical barriers among Nigerian entrepreneurs. In Bangladesh, obsolete plant and equipment, lack of planning, power failure, power management, lack of adequate finance, labour shortages and poor marketing strategies account for the reason why entrepreneurs fail in their businesses (Quadir and Jahur, 2011).

In a related study on the motives, success factors, and barriers among Canadian female entrepreneurs, Robichaud, et al (2010) concluded that obtaining short term and long term financial capital, and availability of skilled labour - which were factored as “financing and training problems” – constituted the greatest obstacles to entrepreneurs. This was followed the “inability to maintain accurate accounting records” and “complex and confusing tax structure” which were factored as “tax and accounting problems”. The third component as submitted by Robichaud, et al (2010) was that of infrastructural problems which comprised “electricity problems”, “poor roads/transportation” and “foreign exchange limitations”.

3. Methodology

A cross sectional survey of the population was considered for the study due to the heterogeneous nature of the study elements and because observations had to be carried out at one point in time (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The population of study consists of 85 agrobusinesses in Port Harcourt which are found in the Business List Directory. Sample size of 70 was determined by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Primary data was collected through 70 copies of questionnaires that were randomly administered to the agropreneurs. Analysis was conducted for 50 copies that were filled and returned.

The survey instruments developed by Chu, et al (2008), Robichaud, et al (2010) and the study by Olukunle (2013) were combined and modified to derive a thirty six (36) items instrument for this study, this satisfies face and content validity. Reliability for motivational factors and obstacles recorded $\alpha = 0.730$ and $\alpha = 0.819$ on the Cronbach Scale respectively.

The preliminary questions has ten items which elicited responses concerning gender, marital status, educational level, types of business ownership and types of business. The second section comprises of eleven (11) items related to motivation while the last section consists of fifteen (15) items related to obstacles. The motivation items were operationalized by eleven (11) statement indicators (eg, to increase my income). While the obstacles items were operationalized by fifteen (15) statement items (eg, obtaining short term financial capital). Both the motivational and obstacles items were measured on a five-point-likert scale. The mean score and standard deviation of each item was determined through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 20. Where a higher mean score suggest greater relevance.

4. Results and Discussion of Findings

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	33	66%
Female	17	34%
Marital Status		
Married	36	72%
Single	14	28%
Educational Level Attained		
WASSCE/OND	6	12%
HND/B.Sc	27	54%
M.Sc/MBA	9	18%
Ph.D	8	16%
Types of Business Ownership		
Established by you	36	72%
Bought from another	5	10%
Inherited	9	18%
Types of Business		
Veterinary services and drugs	6	12%
Poultry and livestock feed	11	22%
Poultry and/or livestock farming	18	36%
Aqua-culture	9	18%
1,2,3 and 4 above	2	4%
Training and consultancy services	4	8%
Average		
Age of agripreneurs	37.66	
Number of employees	3.42	
Years in Operation	7.74	

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Table 1 shows the demographical details of the sample agripreneurs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The table reveals percentage of men and women agripreneurs as 66% and 34% respectively. This result is in tandem with the earlier findings of Chu, Kara and Benzing (2008) which shows 69% for men, and 31% for women. It however appears that there is an increased participation of women. The result also shows that 72% of the respondents are married while only 28% are single. With regard to educational level attained, 54% reported that they have obtained a Bachelors degree, 18% have obtained M.Sc or MBA degrees, 8% have doctorate degrees, while 6% have acquired SSCE/WASSCE. This is a clear indication that Nigerian agripreneurs are highly educated. This is in agreement with the studies of Chu, Kara and Szabo (2005), and Chu, Kara and Benzing (2008) who found that Nigerian entrepreneurs are highly educated when compared to other developing countries.

When asked the type of business ownership, the responses show 72% of the agripreneurs established the businesses themselves, 10% bought from existing businesses, while 18% inherited their businesses. The results imply that most of the Nigerian agri-enterprises are established by first generation business owners, followed by a less significant number of these ventures which actually survived from parents' generations to the next generation. This may be connected with the fact that the survival rate of entrepreneurial businesses is quite low in developing countries including Nigeria (e.g. in Adetosio, Akesinro and Oladejo, 2013; Onodugo and Ewurum, 2013).

The survey result also shows that most of the agripreneurs practise poultry and/or livestock farming which accounts for the highest percentage (36%) of agripreneurs in Port Harcourt. There are more agripreneurs in this segment due to perhaps the ban on the importation of poultry products by the Federal Government in the year 2003, which has led to increase patronage of locally produced poultry products (Sahel Report, 2015). Damisa and Hassan (2009) also report that the need to bridge the animal protein deficiency gap is a critical reason for the increase in consumption of poultry products. The subsequent contributions on the types of businesses are: poultry and livestock feed (22%) and aqua-culture (18%), while veterinary services and drugs has (12%), followed by training and consultancy services. A few (4%) of the respondents combined poultry/livestock farming/feed, aqua-culture and veterinary and drugs services. The average age of 37.66 years was reported, indicating that the younger generation predominantly participates in agribusinesses. This finding is supported by the earlier results of Chu, et al (2013) who found out that the average age of Nigerian entrepreneurs is 36.7. Comparatively, the average age of Nigerian agripreneurs differs from that of other developing countries like Romania and Turkey that have average ages of entrepreneurs as 41.5 years (Benzing, Chu, and Szabo, 2005) and 41.2 years (Chu, Kara, and Benzing, 2007) respectively. Nigeria can be said to have a very youthful population as showed in the 2006 Census.

The average number of employees of the agripreneurial firms was reported as 3.42 while the average years of existence was 7.74. This may be attributed to the inability of most agripreneurs to expand their business or employ more workers owing to low capital base (Zimmerman and Chu, 2013) or lack of government interest and support for entrepreneurship (Ariyo, 2005).

S/N	Motivational Factors	Mean	St. Dev.
1	To be my own boss	4.18	.800
2	To be able to use my past experience and training	3.06	.913
3	To prove I can do it	3.02	1.186
4	To increase my income	4.36	.749
5	To provide jobs for family members	2.76	1.098
6	For my own satisfaction and growth	4.18	.748
7	So I will always have job security	3.98	.795
8	To build a business to pass on	3.32	.891
9	To maintain my personal freedom	3.56	.884
10	To be closer to my family	3.26	.944
11	To have fun	2.48	1.074

Table 2: Motivational Factors among Nigerian Agripreneurs

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the responses given by agripreneurs as to what motivated them to venture into agribusinesses. They were asked to rate eleven reasons for starting their own businesses on a five-point Likert scale of (5=extremely important, 4=very important, 3=mildly important, 2=not very important, 1 =unimportant).

Result showed that the most important factor is "to increase my income". This may be as a result of the level of unemployment in the country and the need to increase income as opined by (Anomo, 2007) This is also in alliance with the study of (Akande, 1994; Yalcin and Kapu, 2008) who found out that the desire to earn more money is the most motivating factor for entrepreneurs. Closely followed were "to be my own boss" and "for my own satisfaction and growth". The first and second principal motivators fall under the Greater Business Factors (Stefanovic, et al 2011). The result finds a common ground with the work of Chu, et al (2008), who also found out that "to be my own boss" and "for my own satisfaction and growth" are important motivating reasons why most persons go into business. The least motivating factor for agripreneurs in Nigeria is "to have fun".

S/N	Obstacles	Mean	St. Dev.
1	Weak economy	3.98	.795
2	Unavailability of skilled labour	3.02	1.186
3	Obtaining short term financial capital	4.36	.749
4	Obtaining long term financial capital	4.06	.818
5	Inability to maintain accurate accounting records	2.76	1.098
6	Lack of marketing training	3.26	.944
7	Lack of management training	2.48	1.074
8	Complicated business registration process	3.02	1.186
9	Complex and confusing tax structure	2.48	1.074
10	Poor roads/transportation	4.22	.790
11	Electricity/power supply problems	4.18	.748
12	Storage and processing problems	3.56	.884
13	Unstable inputs and outputs prices	3.26	.944
14	Inadequacies of past policies and programmes of the government	3.30	.931
15	Poor technology and poor supply of modern inputs	3.26	.944

Table 3: Obstacles among Nigerian Agripreneur

Data on Table 3 shows the responses from the sampled agripreneurs on the obstacles they encountered in starting and sustaining their businesses. As shown on the table “Obtaining short term financial capital” was ranked highest among the obstacles. This is supported by the findings of (Garba, 2011; Ihugba, Odii and Njoku, 2013) who opined “poor access to finance” as the biggest barrier to entrepreneurial success in Nigeria. The above stated obstacles as well as “unavailability of skilled labour”, “lack of marketing training” and “lack of management training” fall under “financial and training problems” (Robichaud, et al, 2010). This was followed by “poor roads/transportation” and “electricity/power supply problems” which are within the classification of infrastructural problems (Robichaud, et al, 2010). This is a real reflection of the Nigerian State, where most road networks within cities are bad thereby hindering the free movement of agricultural products from the farms to the final consumers. Electricity is another feasible problem that is noticed everywhere within the country. This finding is in tandem with earlier study of Chu, et al (2008) who rate electricity problem as the second among the barriers to entrepreneurship in Nigeria. In the same vein, Wine (2007) reports that due to failure of power plants in Nigeria, virtually all businesses have to purchase their own generators in order to meet their electricity needs. The table also shows that “lack of management training” and “complex and confusing tax structure” are the least factors causing barriers to agripreneurs in the country. This may be connected with the fact that most of the agripreneurs are well educated (Chu, et al 2008).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Results of this study have shown that, for agri-enterprises to function efficiently and effectively, the government must create an enabling environment for them. Based on the results, infrastructural development and maintenance should be the focal point at all levels of Government. This will further lead to the growth of the economy and create more employment opportunities for the growing youthful population which are mostly unemployed or under-employed. As shown by studies in other developing countries like Venezuela and India, agri-enterprises are capable of contributing immensely to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As submitted by Chu, et al (2008), the development of any economy depends on the prosperity of its entrepreneurs, because they contribute a large percent to the employment rate. Nigeria, as the rest of the world, needs an energetic private sector which will give rise to effective entrepreneurs. A class of well trained, highly motivated entrepreneurs should be established to lead medium and small scale enterprises to a higher level of growth which would significantly contribute to the country's economic prosperity.

6. Recommendations

As can be deduced from the findings of the study, it is imperative that the following recommendations should be considered and implemented for a more effective and efficient agripreneurial sector:

1. Government should liaise with financial institutions in the country to make fund easily accessible to agripreneurs, this will encourage more young graduates that are unemployed/underemployed to go into agripreneurship.
2. Government should take necessary steps in addressing the problems of power generation and distribution in the country to encourage local agripreneurs to perform optimally.
3. Government should improve governance at all levels so as to improve infrastructural development especially in the area of road construction and maintenance to make transportation of the agri-enterprises products to consumers faster.
4. Educational institutions and financial institutions should be encouraged to provide professional marketing and management training to current and prospective agripreneurs in the country.
5. Government should make policies that will help stabilized prices in the market.
6. In line with the recommendation of Mambula (2002), promising candidates should be recommended for soft loans to establish their businesses, after the completion of marketing/management training.
7. Agripreneurs should make proper feasibility study before embarking on their intended line of businesses.

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