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Breaking the Myth of Women's Business Culture through Skills Training-Development in Bawku West District, Ghana

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Abstract:
The study was on skills training for selected rural women farmers who engage in the sale of water-melon in the use of the seed in making jewellery accessories to serve as additional income to cater for the losses they encounter on breakages during transportation and perish. The pilot project which focused on the harvesting and processing of Guinea corn straw and water-melon seeds into useable materials, was aimed at equipping participants on dye application, drilling and threading, varnishing, assemblage and packaging into finished product. The study was experimental in nature, with a focal resource person as the principal demonstrator. The participants at the end of the exercise, were able to design and produce fashionable accessories including necklace, hand bangles, earrings and value-added sandals. It was recommended for the replication of the training to cover other dealers.

Keywords: *Bangles, water-melon, straw, value-added, adornment, dyes, drilling, accessories, fashion, design, business culture, monofilament wire*

1. Introduction

There is this rural settlement in the Bawku West District for the production of two local cash crops being the (Citrullus lanatus) commonly known as Watermelon (a creeping plant) and a cereal known as Guinea corn. The season comes once a year, stretching nearly one-quarter of the whole year period. It attracts a lot of market women along the value chain from production centres to various locations of the country and beyond. Known in that rural parlance as the "cocoa" of the area, the women have taken the retailing of the fruits as their permanent seasonal source of livelihood to the extent that they sink all their business capital obtained through the Medium and Small Loans Centre (MASLOC) with the hope of bettering their lots (MASLOC, 2017).

At the peak of the watermelon season of bumper harvest there is always lack of ready transport to cart the produce to the major trunk roads. The perishable goods get rotten due to delay while others break due to deplorable roads from production centres during transportation. They become hard hit by massive losses and can only console themselves with very little returns. The women therefore remain impoverished year-in year-out. Against this background of abundance, coupled with the lack of storage facilities and consequent losses have necessitated the need to develop their skills through training in using the seeds in making jewelry and general apparel accessories.

On the other hand, when the women harvest the cereal, their husbands store then in the bands to be thrust later while the stalks are left of the farms at the mercy of the weather. They are sometimes gathered and used as shed for the outside place of relaxation (see figure 9) or left at the mercy of fire. There is immense economic value in the field of jewellery accessories that need to be tapped in order to supplement the income level of the women

2. Background

It had been a myth for rural women to be engaged in any vibrant business that was likely to economically empower them over their husbands. Such women suffered the scorn of witchcraft that sort to suppress the wealth fortunes of their husbands (Bannerman, 1984). To a wider extent even, in those traditional areas, women are perceived as strangers and are not allowed to own any property (Bame, 1991).The situation has put rural women in the background leading to abject poverty. The poverty alleviation strategy which was initiated by the Government of Ghana in the early 1990s to address some of these human rights shortfalls, and continued by successive regimes was underpinned by the saying that Skills and knowledge are the engines of economic growth and social development of any country. Countries with higher and better levels of knowledge and skills respond more effectively to the development trends in businesses and industry (Kottak, 2000).

This policy, poised to energize the private sector and to make it truly the engine of growth, saw the establishment of the new Ministry of Private Sector Development (MPSD)to champion and advocate for businesses and remove bottlenecks and frustrations in the faces of business women (Ghana Positive Change (GPC), 2002). Therefore, successive governments have always pledged to restore micro-economic stability at the grassroots levels of the nation. Attention was given to communities along the White Volta in the Bawku West District that often suffer from the spillage of the Bagre Dam in Burkina Fasso.

In rural communities, the possession of wealth among the rural dwellers is linked to the type of economic activities they engage in. There is however, an existing disparity in bargaining power for better pricing between women in Cocoa business in the southern sector, and the woman in water-melon and straw business in Northern and Upper part of Ghana especially the Bawku West District. The area is noted for the cultivation of the guinea corn which is said to be used in brewing local alcoholic beverage called Pito. They also grow Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*) along the White Volta. The proceeds come in large quantities at its peak season confronted with the lack of storage facilities to store and get market when the season goes lean. A large number of the women around those communities engage in the business as their main source of livelihood, yet end up losing their capital due the high rates of destruction. Also, in recent years the area abounds the production of watermelon especially in the three northern regions and the guinea corn grain

Whereas the watermelon business lacks storages to avoid perishing, the guinea corn after harvesting, the stalks remain at the mercy of wild fire and wind to carry the ashes into the atmosphere. Regrettably, at production sites, market centres and lorry stations, are often flooded with prevalence of watermelon wastes including the soft shell, fruit sap and seeds. In a survey, it came to light that the women traders are unable to salvage the situation neither are they able to derive maximum benefit from the by-products such as the seed and the residue (Duut, 2017). Just a few of them are able to collect the residue from the broken fruits for the feeding of their piggery, others discard them along the highway there by increasing the organic waste level in the area. Elsewhere in the outside world, watermelon is one of the crops with high medicinal value. It says that contrary to numerous beliefs, the seeds are not poisonous, they are beneficial as they are rich in nutrients. Eating enough of the fruit daily produces good amount of potassium and lycopene. Other health importance includes better blood sugar control (Nifty, 2009). The fact that these women cannot derive maximum benefit from the plant, the health point of view requires the study into the other economic benefits especially in the field of social functions

The District was adjudged the best producing Guinea grain (sorghum) for the local pito brewing industry. It is regrettable to state that during the years of poor crop yield due to insufficient rainfall, the stalks and straw would have been the alternative compensation but the untapped precious straws from guinea stalks get consumed by fire when Bolga have had to import from the southern part of the country on extra cost for the weaving of their popular baskets. The proximity of exporting straw and straw accessories from Bawku West District to Bolgatanga will be a very brilliant booster to the economic situation of the women. The plight of these rural women was revealed in a survey conducted by the Medium and Small Loan Centre (MASLOC) of the Bawku West District in 2016 on the low recovery retrieval rates of Small Loans granted to retailers in watermelon and Guinea corn (the commonest consumable fruit crop commodity and grain in the months of March to December) in the Upper East Region in particular and Northern parts of Ghana in general (MASLOC, 2016).

The core objective of the survey was to identify and form rural women's groups in the area to empower them with employable skills in local resources to augment the micro credit to do businesses in the watermelon industry to improve their living standard. More to the rationale according to Duut (2007) was to salvage the plight of rural women in abject poverty whose relations have often blamed their poverty on purported witchcraft. Despite the good intention of the centre of the NGO to better the living condition of the women, the programme lacked subsidiary strategies to serve as shockers to the concomitant challenges. The Centre admonished that in advanced countries where women are more empowered with manufacturing skills and have access to business funding are able to support the growth of their families and also take part in local governance (Nsiah-Gyabaah, 2011). There could not have been any business, much better that the indigenous crop of the people.

3. The Raw Materials

3.1. The Watermelon (Citrullus lanatus) Plant

Watermelon (Citrullus lanatus); a scrambling and trailing vine in the flowering plant family of Cucurbitaceous. The species originated in southern Africa, with evidence of its cultivation in Ancient Egypt. It is grown in tropical and subtropical areas worldwide for its large edible fruit (Obiri-Opareh et al, 2008). Though, in 2016, the global production of watermelons was 117 million tonnes, with China alone accounting for 68% of the total and secondary producers with more than 1% of world production in countries such as Turkey, Iran, Brazil, Uzbekistan, Algeria, the United States, Russia, Egypt, Mexico, and Kazakhstan (FAOSTAT, 2018).

These seeds are flat in nature, shiny and round and mostly used as nutrient supplements in foods (Tabiri 2016), source of oil (Biswas *et al.,* 2017), as a potential coagulant (Muhammad *et al.,* 2015), blood glucose reduction and as herbal medicine (Islam *et al.,* 2015). However, the potential utilization of the seeds by way of value addition to make it a suitable raw material for accessories production in the fashion industry remains unexploited. It is against this backdrop that the study sought to experiment the viability of watermelon seeds as accessories material

3.2. Watermelon Seeds as Materials for Making Adorning Accessory

Adornment is a worldwide phenomenal culture for occasional and ordinary sessions. So, what is an accessory then? Fisher, (1987) attempts to offer a definition after touring the continent of Africa that an accessory is an item that contributes in a secondary manner to the wearer's outfit often used to accomplish the dress code of an individual. Precisely, fashion accessories can be loosely categorized into two general areas: those that are carried; including purses, handbags, eyewear, hand fans, parasols, umbrellas, canes, wallets, ceremonial swords Maya (2017). Also, worn accessories include hand bags, boots and shoes, cravats, ties, hats, belts, necklaces, hand bangles, gloves, muffs, watches, sashes, shawls, scarves, lanyards, socks and stockings (Cumming*et al.,* 2012). Most of these accessories are mostly designed from various sources of metals and rubber products. Nonetheless, recycled materials are also significantly used. For instance, recycled glass bottle and soda can be used in casting earrings, newspaper bags and recycled license plate necklaces have been identified as sources of material. (Chandler, 2008).

Elsewhere domestic access to raw materials for the design of jewellery accessories is from cotton, leather and silk. Others have relied on the use of environment-friendly materials such as jute or bamboo in their designs. Some companies are adopting natural dyes made from beetroot, turmeric, indigo and other plants (NASDAQ:GSOL, 2017).Yet, for some observers, fashion is still regarded as simultaneously frivolous and indulgent; and many of the sources of raw materials for the industry is fragmented, incomplete, or unreliable (Amed and Berg, 2016). Therefore, using more locally available materials such as water melon seeds to expand the frontiers of accessories production to boast local and international markets to promote fashion is thus imperative.

3.3. The Guinea Corn Plant and Uses of the Stalks

Dahlberg et al. (2011) opines that Sorghum is the fifth most important cereal crop in the world. That only maize, rice, potatoes and wheat, are more highly consumed than sorghum than cereal crop. It is said to be the most important cereal crop in Nigeria (Agboola, 1979). The Ministry of Agriculture also ranks it very high in Ghana as one of the most valuable cereals that serve the food welfare of mankind (FAO, 1995). The cereal was domesticated in north eastern part of Africa or at the Egyptian-Sudanese border and has been noted to be the origin (Wendorff *et al.,* 1992). Damania (2002) holds a contrary view and maintains that sorghum originated in the Indian subcontinent. The sorghum kernel varies in colour from white through shades of red and brown to pale yellow to deep purple- brown, however, the most common colours are white and brown. The dominant colour variety is the most suitable crop in the Bawku West District where this study was conducted.

Traditionally, sorghum is used in unfermented and fermented breads, porridges, couscous, and rice-like products, snacks, and malted alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages in many African and Asian countries. Rooney and Waniska (2000) however provide a tremendous overview of the uses of sorghum stalks in food and housing industry. He sides with the assertion that, the stalks and seed have been used for human food, animal feed, building material and fencing (House 1985, Doggett 1988). Sorghum can be used to produce foods that are gluten free and in this respect the potential for new food uses exists for both the US and Europe(Berenji & Kisgeci 1996).

4. Objectives of the Project

- According to Bloom's Taxonomy of learning (1956) involving three domains of Affective, cognitive and Psychomotor, the aim of the workshop was to equip participants with skills in and knowledge in the area of identification, understanding the concepts, analyzing the concepts and applying the skills in processing guinea stalks by harvesting cutting dyeing and using them in making jewelry accessories.
- Organize seeds or straw sequentially according to desired design. Equipping them with skill of dyeing water melon seed with basic dyes and processing them into jewelry accessories.

The specific Objectives were to assess the affective and psychomotor domains in grasping employable skills for the field of business career.

It was also to assess their analytical domain in the viability of business promotion so that recommendations could be made to the funding agencies to grant them micro credit to expand their businesses.

5. Methodology

This Case-study was practically demonstrational and participant-focused Witmer et al (1999). In this case, the resource person offered practical tutorials while participants observed and took tends to practice for assessment to determine their levels of understanding at each stage and mastery of skills (Oakley, 1999).Modules were presented stages-by-stage, consisting of three parts namely Tools and materials used, Seed Processing, Drilling and dyeing of seeds and finally the Design process being the production of fashion accessories using the dyed perforated seeds.

5.1. Materials/Tools

The major raw materials used in this study were the water melon seeds. The seeds were obtained from waste watermelon at various sale points in the Bolgatanga Municipality, Ghana. Apart from the water melon seeds, technical tools used are listed in table 1.

Materials /Tools	Uses
Watermelon seeds	Was used as main medium in making the necklaces, earrings, bangles, and to decorate the sandals
Synthetic Yarns	for threading the seed
PVA thread	used as the main string to hold the mass of the work
Wire lockers	used as fasteners of the earrings and the necklaces.
Basic dyes	for dying the seeds into various colours
Lacquer and thinner	as vanish to protect the coloured seeds
Glue	used in mending parts of the stalks that may crack
Pencils	used for sketching the various designs of the accessories
Needle	for penetrating holes in the seeds and threading the seeds
Tape measure	was used for taking measurement
Brush	applying lacquer on the seed
Thimble	asafety gadget worn on the finger during the drilling of seeds
Empty containers	Used for the dyeing process of the beads

Table 1: Materials/Tools and Their Relative Function

5.2. Demonstrational Procedure

The research used demonstration technique to achieve the desired objectives. It is a systematic and scientific approach to research in which the researcher manipulates one or more variables, controls and measure any change in other variables (Opoko, 2005). Variables in this case refers to the stage-by-stage practicum, at the end of which participants ask questions for clarifications. The reason for choosing this method was to predict phenomenon or typically explain some kind of potential in the water melon seed as viable source of raw material for the fashion industry.

5.2.1. Step 1 Extracting and Processing Seeds for the Fruits

Tools needed: basin, big ladle, sieve, toilet soap, clean water

5.2.1.1. Procedure

First of all, partially rotten watermelon fruits were collected in basins from various depots around their transit centres. After all participants were seated and taken through introduction and areas to cover. The seeds were scooped out by the demonstrator into another basin with some appreciable quantity of water. Thorough mashing was done to clear the seeds from excess residue. The solution was then sieved to drain the water away leaving the seed (Ariel, 2008). It was then dried for about 10 minutes and screened of non-seeds items and unwholesome particles. While the seeds were at about halfway dried, they were collected in readiness for the second step of coloring by dyeing process. The demonstrator separated the unwanted seeds and impurities as the participants stood in a semi-cycle with rapped attention.

Figure 1: Screened Water-Melon Seeds

5.2.2. Sep 2: The Dyeing Process.

Materials needed: Warm water, basic dyes, water-melon seeds, lacquer,

5.2.2.1. Procedure

The dye was dissolved into a basin of some desired quantity of warm water and stirred for about five minutes. The seeds were then poured into the dissolved solution and allowed absorption of dye for 5 minutes. After the period elapsed, the seeds were removed and rinsed in clean water before it was dried in the sun for nearly 10 minutes. A simple tooth-brush spraying technique was used to apply Lacquer on the seeds to obtain the luster effect. The figure below shows the dyeing process.

Figure 2: Dying of the Melon Seeds

Figure 3: Dyed Water Melon Seeds

5.2.3. Step 3: Drilling and Threading of Seeds

- Tools used: 17mm Needle and thimble Materials needed: Seeds and thread.

5.2.3.1. Procedure

The third step was the drilling**.** Holes were drilled through the middle portions of the individual seeds at their wet state for the purpose of threading. Drilling seeds at their wet state was to prevent seed breakages and poor drilling outcomes. This stage was very crucial as there was the need to demonstrate precision in the drilling process and also the observance of safety precautions. Hence, the demonstrator firmly held a threaded needle in-between the thumb and the fore-finger firmly; with the seeds placed in a concave bona sheet, she gauged each seed and piercedthe threaded needle through. She drew the seeds off onto the thread closed to each other where a knot had been tied. She continued to bore holes in each of the seeds and shifted them to close up, ensuring that there were no gaps in between them. She repeated that procedure till the required quantity was obtained.

5.2.4. Step 4: Threading the Seed to for Accessories

- Materials uses: Thread, earring wire locks and different colours of drilled seeds

5.2.4.1. Procedure

The basic articles that were to be made were necklace, earrings and hand bangles and to decorate ready-made footwear. So, using the threaded needle, the demonstrator tied a knot at one end of the thread to prevent seeds from falling off. She loaded the drilled seeds onto the thread up to some substantial length bearing in mind the choice of colours and lengths desired for each accessory. In-between each length required, two knots were tied leaving allowed space of 2cm apart for distinctive separation.

5.2.5. Step 5: Fixing the Locks to the (Necklace, Earrings and Bangles)

- Materials needed: Wire, earring lock, wire ring, hook, and any suitable pendant with loop.

5.2.5.1. Procedure

Pick one full length of threaded beads (be it any of the two accessories) and draw the two ends together. Connect one end of the threaded beads to the metal wire hook. Then also turn to the other end same article and connect it to a wire ring. With all two different accessories (necklace and bangles), the locking system may be similar; one side is connected to the hook while the opposite side is connected to the ring. In the case of earring, only the hook is connected. Then the other

type which used pin and lock may also be used. Where that type is to be affixed to the earring, only the pin is connected while the lock fixed on after it has been put-on, on the ear.

Two types of earrings were produced in this demonstrational workshop. One was ring-like and the other was strips-hunging. In both cases, the method of fixing the hook, ring and knotting were the same.

Pairs of bungle and necklace were produced at the workshop. The figures below show the outcome of the exercise.

Figure 4: Ring Type of Earring, Strip-Hang Type of Earring Completed Earrings of Different Styles Using Melon Seeds and Wire

Figure 5: Multiple-Coil Type of Bangle

Figure 6: Hook-To-Lock Type of Necklace

5.2.6. Step 6: Fixing the Sandal Crowns

- *Materials needed: Ready made sandal, threaded seed, assorted buttoms Tools needed: Bodkin and needle*

5.2.6.1. Procedure

The ready-made sandal was decorated with well-designed lustrous watermelon seeds. This provided the sandals conspicuous appeal and strength. The bag, made from hard voile with an attached fabric to stiffen it had watermelon seeds placed parallel on the bag in strips. This provided the bag with a complete unique feature. Though some bags, sandals and other accessories have been decorated using rubber or crystal beads, the use of the watermelon seeds had similar features except durability. It was observed that the watermelon seeds appeared more beautiful but susceptible to breakages compared to rubber beads.

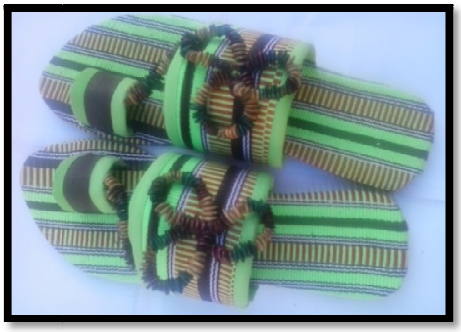

Figure 7: Sandals with Melon Seeds

6. Lesson Two of the Workshop

This session was set aside foer the resource person to demonstrate the production of jewellery accessories using guinea corn straw in particular, which happens to be the commonest parenial cereal crop of the area. According to the local food vendors, the leave-stalks of the plant is a very effective organic food colourant that is commonly used in the preparation of Waache (rice & Beans) cooked together, to give it the brownish colour looks. That colour property of the crop will be dealt with in another research somewhere in future.

Figure 8: Straw Left on the Farm after Harvest

Figure 9: Straw Used as a Shed at Home

6.1. Steps in Processing the Straw

6.1.1.Procedure 1

- Gather as many straws as possibly so as to select the medium-sized ones that are about equal in size.
- Peal off all unwanted coverings and leave the straw bare.
- Use knife to scrap off any form of particles to make the surfaces smooth
- Select the straws that are of equal sizes and cut enough pieces into equall lenghts of about 2cm
- Fetch enough quantities of the cut pieces onto about 3 or 4 different plastic containers
- Pour some basic swidish dye in the container and add some appreciable quantity of water to desolve the dye.
- Use a long stick to stir the solution, ensuring that all the pieces of straws are fully submerged.
- Do same to the other containers with different colour dyes depending on your choice of colours.
- Allow the mixture for some 10 munites before you sieve out the straw from each container and thoroughly dry them saparately.

To organise any of the accessories, refer to your preliminary sketch design (if any) and pick what ever colour you wish to use. If the design shows a multi colour, you select the colours accordingly

- Get two(2) needles and thread them with a monofilament wire leaving a substancial length in-between them
- Pierce through the pieaces of straw with the two needles from opposite ends.

Continue the same process as you pull the thread to close up all gabs between each straw bead untill you obtain the desired length of assembled beads

6.2.2. Procedure 2

You may decide to assemble the particular accessory before you apply dyes. This is how it goes:

- Cut the straw to desired sizes of equal lenghts.
- Get two 2 needles and thread them with a monofilament wire leaving a substancial length inbetween them
- Pierce through the pieaces of straw with the two needles from opposite ends.
- Continue the same process as you pull the thread (monofilament wire) to close up all gabs between each straw bead untill you obtain the desired length of assembled beads. See figure

Figure 10: Threading the Straw Beeds to form Hand Bangle

Figure 11: Coloring the Threaded Bangle with Acrylic Paint

6.2. Procedure to Make Earrings

- Get a flexible wire and cut them to short lengh that can be manipulated.
- Select the coloured pieces of straw you desire.
- Tie a ball knot at one end of a monofilament wire threaded needle.
- Piece either the sideways or through the soft fibre tissue of the straws according to the design.
- After obtaing the desired length and shape, tie and stopper knot
- Twist a hook using the wire and connect it with the stopper knot to form a locker.

6.3 Procedure to Make Necklace

- Get a flexible wire and cut them to short lengh that can be manipulated.
- Select the coloured pieces of straw you desire.
- Tie a ball knot. At one end of a monofilament wire threaded needle.
- Priece either the sideways or through the soft fibre tissue of the straws according to the design.
- After obtaing the desired length and shape tie and stopper naught,
- Twist a hook using the wire and connect it with the stopper knot to form a locker.
- This is a necklace, so fix pandants of your choice half-way the entire length of the necklace to hang at the frontage of the neck.
- Affix a wire hook at one side and the a ring to the opposite side.The necklace is complete.

Figure 12: Completed Hand Bangles, Necklace and Earring Made of Straw

64. Modelling the Products

In conducting the accessories through exhibition for the assessment,appreciation and competency levels of the women, the demonstrator was made to adorn in the accessories and model as is normally done in fashion show. In the evaluation process, the products were assessed for appearance (attractiveness), durability, potential utilization of the straw seeds as suitable accessories raw material and possible economic viability. The evaluation was subjected to levels of agreement as Excellent, Good and Bad.

Figure 13: The Resource Person Modelling the Accessories

It is not for nothing that the researcher intends recommending for the development of the raw material in question for use as a commercial commodity in the Talensi area. When young women in the area realised that the tree-ply-necklace was made of straw, taken through artistic tranformation into a jewelry, they were facinated and attracted to want to also learn how to process the raw material for sale. Figure 13 shows the modeller in a catwalk nicely dressed in the necklace, bungles and earrings.

The multi-pendant necklace was designed with different colour pieces of straw to show colour diversity. It signifies royalty. This kind of accessory is mostly used by wives from the chiefdom paramountcy (Awedoba, 2010). The multiple colours signifies right of chief to enjoy polygamy. The wearer on the other hand also has the attributes of tolerance as it is erroneously perceived that polygamous homes are hostile. Also, multiple coloursare linked to masculine energy and the power of the sun, compared to silver which is associated with feminine energy and the sensitivity of the moon (ibid).

Variables	**Number of participants**	**Response of Assessment**		
		Excellent %	Good %	Bad %
Attractiveness of the accessories	35	34(97.1%)	1(2.9%)	---
Economic viability	35	31 (88.5%)	4(11.4%)	---
Durability	35	---	13(37.1%)	22(62.9%)
Potential of straw &seeds	35	---	35 (100%)	---
Waste minimization	35	29 (82.5%)	6 (17.1%)	---
Total	100%			

Table 2: Observation of Responses of Participants

7. Discussions

- Attractiveness: 34 participants representing 97.1% ranked the product as excellent in attractiveness. 1 person expressed his reservation on the contrary. It suggests that when the product is put out for sale, there will be large patronage.
- Economic viability: 31 out of the 35 respondents representing 88.5% agreed that the product is economically viable. The implication is that, the rural women can take it as a career to augment their income levels aside the dealing in the water melon and guinea corn grain businesses. 11% however had little fate in the product with the view that the product is not viable.
- Durability: Two-thirds (22) of the respondentsrepresenting62.9% contended that the product will not last giving verbal explanation that when the accessories attract a little dampness, the basic dyes stain on the body of the user. Besides that, they observed that, the materials used were very perishable with any little pressure exerted to it. Thirteen (13) respondents representing 37.1% argued that, the products could be durable if they are handled with optimum care citing examples like the face make-ups which are very temporarily used. Their views were that, the products be used as one-time kind of adornment; once a week or once a month.
- Potentiality of the Straw and Seed as Raw materials: Here, though they did not agree that the raw materials are excellently having the potential, all of them agreed that the materials were suitable for the intended purposes aside what they were traditionally used for. From verbal contributions in support of the potentiality of the material, the ladies noted that the new designs of accessories could be given a booster to bring dynamism into their traditional adornment culture. The admonished one another to start putting on their specimens to social gatherings in order to market the products in advance.
- Waste Minimization: Twenty-nine (29) of them representingup to 82.5%graded it excellent. They said they were witnesses of the Junk of rubbish that is created during watermelon season which sometimes leave stench in the communities. On the part of the straw, they noted that, apart from collecting them to make shed, the farms get burnt by fire emanating from hunters thereby denying the farm lands from getting manure from the decayed straw. Six (6) respondents representing 17.1% argued that, both materials are biodegradable and therefore do not contribute to any waste pile up in the communities.

8. Conclusion

This workshop has been an eye opener to the rural women and their agents against the erroneous perception of women in business. The study found very keen interest in the women in putting the skills learnt to use to dispel the mixed-feeling in their husbands. They saw that water melon seeds and guinea corn straw which are prevalent in the Upper East Region due to high production and consumption rate are viable materials that when they exploit with their skills, will better their lots. These seeds are underutilized but have the potential to be turned into various fashion accessories. The study found that not only imported materials can be relied upon but water melon seeds and straw can also be used to design necklaces, hand bangles and earrings. Apart from these products, the seeds can be used to add beauty to bags and sandals. The study exploited the full utilization of seeds and straw as useful media in producing jewellery accessories. However, further research should be conducted through chemical augmentation to keep the dyed colour from fading out and maintain the durability. The study was therefore successful since the objectives were met.

9. Recommendations

The study recommends that based on the assessment of the participants on the viability and prospects of the business, the funding agencies should support them with credit to venture into the business to reduce perennial job losses and increase revenue for poverty alleviation.

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