
Exploring Nupe girls' engagement in income generating activity of groundnut-based edible products

Sidikat Shitu

Department of Economics, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Nigeria

Corresponding email: siddyshitu@yahoo.com

Abstract

Nupe girls play essential role in complementing their family income. They are actively involved in various entrepreneurial activities and most importantly, activities related to processing and selling of farm products in which one of it is groundnut-based edible products. This is evident in their involvement in processing groundnut cake (kuli-kuli), Danka cookies and selling of mother's local spices that are made from groundnut. This paper has two objectives; firstly, to detect the level of involvement of Nupe girls in the production of groundnut-based edible products and secondly to examine the stimulating factors that influence Nupe girls' involvement in the production and selling of groundnut-based edible products. The study deployed ethnographic research methodology for data collection. Where participant observation strategy was used with semi-structured interview. A total number of 20 Nupe girls from Mokwa and Bokani (14 from Mokwa and 6 from Bokani) were interviewed. The research used qualitative research methodology with semi-structured interviews as the techniques for data collection. The results revealed that there are three essential motivating factors that can be ascribed to the involvement intentions of Nupe girls in the processing and selling of groundnut-based edible product. They are economic gain, social capital and keeping the Nupe value and tradition alive.

Keywords: Groundnut-based products, Income generating activity, Nupe girls.

1. Introduction

Mentioning the word *kuli-kuli* or groundnut cake would make most Nigerians think of the Nupe people. This is due to the fact that the Nupes are known with groundnut cake production and it serves as an important cultural identity of the tribe across three states in Nigeria, namely Niger, Kwara and Kogi. In Nigeria, groundnut seed is considered an important economic seed valued across many cultures. Traditionally, Afrians use groundnut paste to produce varieties of food (Prakash, 2003; Morgan, 2015). In addition, groundnut-based edible products produced by the Nupe girls have become household consumable products as they are being sold for direct consumption and souvenirs in supermarkets, shops, in the traditional domestic markets, wider domestic markets and internationally

(Hussein, 2021). The division of labour among the Nupe people is very clear when it comes to farming of groundnut seeds and processing of groundnut-based edible products. As Nupe men are responsible for planting and harvesting groundnut seeds, the girls shoulder the responsibility of producing groundnut-based edible products which is not only for their family consumption, but also as productive income-generating activities to support their family's income (Daudi et al., 2018; Hussein, 2021).

Common among the income-generating activities that Nupe girls engaged in, are the processing of groundnut-based products such as groundnut-cake (*kuli-kuli*), extraction of cooking oil (*emi-kuli*) from grinded groundnut paste, production of roasted peanuts (*gusha-sharuwa*),

powdered soft cookies referred to as (*dankwa*) and groundnut-based local spices. These income-generating activities are commonly performed within family circles, by extension to neighbourhood and sometimes within the traditional market places where buyers from their immediate environment and faraway localities converge for transaction purposes. The aim of this research is to examine the roles, relationship and the stimulating factors that influence Nupe girls' participation in the production and selling of groundnut-based edible products regardless of whether they do it on full period or part period bases.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What are the roles of Nupe girls in income generating activity of groundnut-based edible products?
2. What are their current practices and the types of relationship that the girls have with other internal actors in relation to groundnut value chain activities?

2. Literature Review

Motivation for Women's Involvement in Food Production

Research revealed that, rural women entrepreneurs who engage in activities related to value addition are gaining more recognition than ever before because in the rural communities, women and girls are found to be strong participants in chains of food production. According to (De Vita et al., 2014), the increased Involvement of women entrepreneurs is seen as a foremost development for socio-economic growth and progress. Research also revealed that girls participate in money making venture for so many reasons, particularly for the rural girls who live in locations where indigenous opportunities can simply be identified. In several cases, rural communities are seen to be characterised by upsurge of unemployment, high population growth and food insecurity especially with high level of insurgency and banditry.

Going by the fact that rural communities are considered as the hub for food production, it is expected that the rural girls must take advantage of forest resources and local technology for food production. Markets for processed foods are usually readily available for local consumption and probably export since population is growing and demand for food is increasing (Morgan, 2015). This opportunity enables many ethnic groups to maintain their cultural skills in food production to avert poverty and unemployment with women and girls taking the lead roles in food production, processing and selling.

Moreover, girls Involvement in food production depends on stimulating factors such as essentiality for survival, requirements for financial liberation, life experiences, family and social-cultural ties, food security and risk-taking ability, self-confidence and inventive ability (De Boer, 2007). The more family responsibility becomes so demanding, the more girls get motivated to start their own businesses by upholding their gender-specific roles in local food production (Morgan, 2015). Commonly, the social-cultural constructions in many societies that buttresses the continuous marginalisation of girls to hold development opportunities such as education and financial support do have major implications in their motives and level of Involvement in entrepreneurial activities as well as their level of success in such activities. Superficially, an inference can be derived by arguing that the level of girls' involvement in food production does not take its root from one stimulating factor but rather from collective motivating factors as it is discussed above.

3. Methodology

An ethnographic research methodology was deployed where two elements of ethnography was purposely used i.e. participant observation and semi-structured interview were the techniques used for data collection this is suitable because ethnography is usually inseparable from

case study research because the entire culture-sharing group in ethnography may be considered as a case (Creswell, 2012). Johnstone (2007) introduced ethnographic research strategy as a potential in providing insight into understanding entrepreneurship research even though, ethnography has its origin rooted in anthropology, but has also become popular in the social sciences (Wikipedia). Dezin and Lincoln (2003) argued that there is a revolution in qualitative research in the sense that social science and humanities have been strongly intertwined in a mutual focus on qualitative approaches to research and theory. A total of 20 Nupe girls were interviewed; 14 from Mokwa and 6 from Bokani respectively to find out about their current practices, their level of Involvement and the stimulating factors behind their engagement in income-generating activities of groundnut-based edible products. Using a semi-structured interview procedure, the interviewees were interviewed in different locations in Mokwa and Bokani where researchers were able to make an observation of the entire process involved in processing groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*). The site for the interview was usually at the locally constructed kitchen which are like the *production hubs within family houses* in Mokwa. A groundnut processing machine was seen in some localities within Mokwa such as in *Kpege, Eko-Rabah and Dzuko-Tetengi*. These interviews were conducted in a span of 9

days during two field trips to Mokwa and Bokani in January 2022.

3.1 Research Location

Mokwa is a Local Government Area in Niger State, Nigeria. It has its headquarters in the town of Mokwa on the A1 Kaduna-Ilorin –Lagos highway in the west of the area. Mokwa has an estimated population of 244,937 (2006). The long southern border of the Local Government Area is geographically formed by the Niger River from Lake Jebba in the west beyond the confluence of the Kaduna River to the east. Kwara State and Kogi State are across the Niger from the LGA. The A1 highway crosses the Niger at Gana to Jebba in Kwara State. Mokwa is part of the Nupe kingdom under the Bida Emirate led by the Ndalile (presently Lile Shaba Aliyu) and consisting of sub-districts such as Muwo, Bokani, Kudu, Kpaki, Jebba, Rabba, Ja'agi and others. The leadership style of Mokwa town is '*Hakimi*', and the head of the town is addressed as Ndalile. The town is known for its production of indigenous tradition crafts, notably for blacksmithing with production of farm implements and food such as groundnut and melon processing. Mokwa is occupied by vast tribes like the Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Gbagi and others. It has an estimated area of 4,338 km² and a population of 244,937 going by the 2006 census.

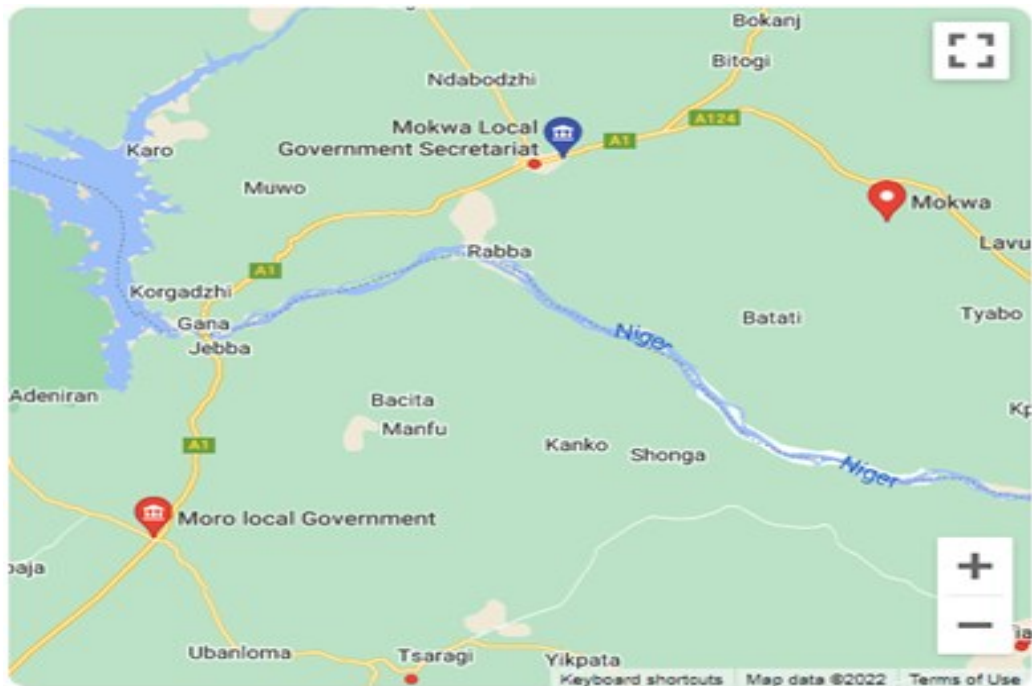


Figure 1: Map showing the location of Mokwa and surrounding Districts.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Profile of Participants

Data relating to the demographic profile of the participants in Bokani and Mokwa was collected. The ages indicate that the key participants are older girls who are of age 17 and 20 years with several years of groundnut processing experiences as either the makers of groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*) or groundnut-based condiments. Similarly, in Bokani and Mokwa some of the girls are married and are young mothers, while some are still single, some are engaged or either preparing to get married. The educational data revealed that the girls have low level of education or no education at all. The girls mostly engage in groundnut-based product processing activities in the *locally constructed kitchen* where activities such as roasting of groundnut, processing of groundnut cakes or selling groundnut-based products are carried out and they spend approximately between 6 hours to 16 hours on processing and selling of groundnut products and despite the long hours they

spend in the *locally constructed kitchen*, some of these girls only earn a minimum of ₦5,000 while those who earn more than ₦10,000 and above are mostly doing it on a full period basis, with the help of family members and a group of paid workers as it is revealed by one of the interviewees.

“I have to know how to manage the period between doing household chore and processing groundnut. I normally make groundnut during weekends with the help of my cousin because it involves long period of processing.” – R2, Mokwa

4.2 Level of Involvement

From the in-depth interviews conducted with the interviewees, it can be deduced that the Involvement of Nupe girls in the production of groundnut-based products is on full-time basis. This research revealed that majority of the interviewees spend a lot of period in this enterprise for instance the girls spend a whole day processing

groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*). However, the amount of period that they spent in the process of roasting groundnut is considered so long with minimum of 2 hours and maximum of 5 hours per day depending on the quantity. These girls start production as early as 6:00am in the morning and finish at 5:00pm in the evening. This lengthy process of processing groundnut involves several steps. Firstly, the *peanut butter* must be kneaded until oil is completely pressed out to ensure that it is ready for frying. Then, it must be well drained of oil. Normally, these girls will do drying of peanut few days earlier to enable facilitation of hitch free roasting.

Once this process is completed, the next step is grinding and after that sugar or salt will be added to the groundnut paste depending on the choice of processors of the buyers. Usually, this is done in a special bowl called *tarabi* which is made from plastic or steel. This equipment is used to shape the mixture of ingredients into a ball-shaped or flat groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*). The process of making groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*) does not end here. The actual frying of groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*) requires the girls to prepare fire at the *locally constructed kitchen*, making sure the heat is high before the frying process begins. This is the most challenging part of the whole process because they have to endure scorching heat from the fire in the small enclosure of the *locally constructed kitchen*. At the same period, they have to constantly stir the groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*) to ensure they fry evenly.

The tedious processes involved and the amount of period and energy spent on this activity can also be considered as one of the strongest reasons why not so many school-girls participate on part period basis. Not only that the girls have to be rational in managing their time. For instance, families with younger children in school needs to juggle between their family chores and their income generating activity. Working between 4 and 5 days a week was the only

option for them to help generate income for their families. As mentioned by these interviewees:

“I have to clean the household first thing in the morning and cook food for my entire household before I can start processing groundnut. When you start processing, it becomes very difficult to stop because it requires continuous steps. what time do I have to go to school?” – R6, Mokwa

While two young mother’s interviewees mentioned how very tedious the processing exercise could be:

“Usually, I will do the family chore at night and cook early in the morning before I start groundnut oil processing and then its cake. It is easier to give more time and attention because I can pay full concentration in the process and I don’t have to worry about cooking or cleaning afterwards.” - R6, Bokani

“I will prepare food for my family very early because I need the same cooking space for groundnut. After that I clean the house and begin the processing. When these two chores are completed, then I will prepare the raw materials for my groundnut production at the locally constructed kitchen.” - R10, Bokani

From the interviews, it clearly shows that time management and planning is important for the girls to ensure that they do not neglect their responsibilities as daughters,

wife and mothers while involving in their income-generating activities. Concentration while making groundnut cake is also important for them because they simply cannot leave the process of frying of groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*) halfway to avoid negative consequences.

However, only two interviewees in this research are participating fully in the processing of *dankwa* together with *kuli-kuli*. These two girls are the most successful among those interviewed from capital base perspective. Both of them have cottage industries with modern equipment to help them with the production of their *Danka* and groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*). The factory and equipment are part of the assistance received from the Government Agencies to aid the production of groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*) and *Danka* on a larger scale. At the same period, they also engaged local girls to work at their factory thus, this enables them to delegate tasks to their workers to ensure division of labour.

4.3 Motivating Factors

4.3.1 Income for the Family

Earning extra income to supplement family expenditure can be the most important and significant motivation for the girls interviewed because it helps them to improve the quality of their lifestyle. Various studies concentrating on what motivates girls to engage in entrepreneurial activities have been carried out for the past three decades. Hisrich (1990) in his research found out that male and female share quite similar motivations when it comes to participating in entrepreneurial activities and this, confirms the outcomes of Agarwal (2014) and Wilcox et al. (2015) which states that financial independence is a motivating factor for involvement in food processing activities. Similarly, Nupe girls shared the same motivation for their involvement in processing groundnut-based edible products. Earning income or extra income for the family has been cited as the most important factor by the interviewees during the interviews especially for those

whose parents had passed away. The role of income earner and care for the family falls on the shoulder of these girls as they have to support their family.

Some of these girls' male siblings do menial jobs for those who have something doing while, many of them are without jobs. When this happens, the family depends on the income which is generated from processing groundnut, selling groundnut and groundnut-based delicacies to supplement their daily family expenditure. Luckily for these girls, their family members also lend a helping hand during the process of processing groundnut cake either in the aspect of grinding or kneading which really help to reduce their workload. Two interviewees shared their life experiences with researcher on these:

"I started processing groundnut in 2019 when my mother passed away. Processing, selling and packaging groundnut give me a sense of relief as I can earn my own money. No distrust that I have a fiance who is already working but I don't want to rely on him or depend on my relatives for financial support." (I-15, Bokani).

*"My father is an odd-job worker. He used to work in Timber Company called saw-mill but was made redundant. He helped to build our own locally constructed kitchen way back in 1987 and by processing and selling groundnut, we managed to earn around ₦50,000 a month. That money was used for our family expenditure and buying raw materials for processing groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*)."* (I-11, Bokani).

4.3.2 Socialisation Purposes

The opportunity to meet older women from the same and nearby village and share information has become another motivating factor for the girls to get involved in the production of groundnut-based edible products. This was being mentioned by majority of the interviewees during the interview sessions. For them, groundnut processing activity has become an avenue for them to socialize with older women within the same or nearing villages. This is evident by the responses of some interviewees:

“We live in a small neighbourhood and not much activities were organised here. Meeting other girls while selling groundnut provides an opportunity for me to ask about their businesses and it gets us connected.” (I-7, Mokwa).

From the responses of the interviewees, it is understandable why these girls are always willing to participate in groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*) processing and selling despite the long and arduous processes involved. Getting connected with older women proved to be a good motivating factor for them to socialize and at the same period learning more skills to perfect their own method. The outcomes in this regard is similar to that of Anthopoulou (2010) that emphasized that stimulating factors are related to family ties and socio-cultural ties.

4.3.3 Keeping the Tradition Alive

The lack of interest among younger generation in Mokwa and Bokani to learn skills of how to make groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*) is causing concern among older generation about the future of Nupe tradition. During the interview, most of the interviewees expressed fear that the Nupe value and tradition will be vanishing if the younger generation do not show interest in

learning how to make groundnut cake. As mentioned by some of the interviewees:

“school girls are no longer following their mothers to the locally constructed kitchen to learn how to make groundnut cake. I did that when I was between 6-10 years old, following my grandmothers and my mother to the market for groundnut business but now that I am in a secondary school, I no longer participate

*“As a school girl, I still learn how to make groundnut cake (*kuli-kuli*) from my mother and grandmother. This is the least that I can do to generate income for my family. But I feel sad that my only sister does not show any interest to learn how to make groundnut cake. It will be a waste of indigenous skill if my own family members don't want to continue to keep our own tradition alive.”* (1-2, Mokwa)

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to examine the roles, relationships and the stimulating factors that influence Nupe girls to participate in the production and selling of groundnut-based edible products. In responding to the research questions the interviewees showed a tendency of being traditional and they bonded to their cultural values in answering the questions thrown to them by the interviewers. The aspect of groundnut value chain that was very important to the girls is the processing and selling of groundnut-based edible products and the top three motivating factors for the interviewees were to generate income for their families, for socialization purposes

and keeping their tradition alive. Although these reasons came mostly from girls with very low level of education or no education at all, who have only one source of income (groundnut), who are also making not so much money from groundnut production and selling.

Information gathered from the outcomes of this research needs to be expanded to the field of gender and entrepreneurship and used in various ways to gain better understanding of what motivates girls to participate in engendered entrepreneurship. Although, many studies have found different stimulating factors for girls Participation in food production ((Braun & Beckie, 2014; Morgan, 2015; Agarwal, 2014; Wilcox et al., 2015; De Boer, 2007; Anthopoulou, 2010; Prakash, 2003) but not many have looked at a core local food production such as groundnut based edible products. This research can help to arose the interest of the younger generation of girls who had lost interest in continuing with indigenous skills while the aged women can serve as role models and motivators to the younger girls and therefore promote indigenous entrepreneurship among the Nupe in Niger Nigeria.

Therefore, government and non-governmental organisations with interest in the empowerment and development of girls focused skills should design projects to intervene in this area of research. The outcomes in this research should be used to design policies that will resuscitate the interest of not only the younger generation of girls but middle-aged women.

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