Attitudinal Disposition of Children towards Participation in Cassava Processing Activities in Oyo State

*Olaniyi, O. A., J. G. Adewale and A. R. Ayoade
Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension,
Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso
*Correspondent author
e-mail: dayomuyiwa@yahoo.com

Abstract: The study focused on the attitudinal disposition of children towards participation in cassava processing activities in Oyo state. Data collection was made using interview schedule from eighty children participating in cassava processing activities. Also forty parents were cross-interviewed in order to validate the children's responses on attitude to participation in cassava processing activities. The result of the analysis revealed that children had positive or favourable attitude towards participation in cassava processing activities. The study reveals that there was significant difference between children's and their parents' attitude to participation in cassava processing activities (t=5.367).The result of correlation analysis showed that there exists positive and significant relationship between age and attitude to participation in cassava processing activities (r=0.297). It is therefore recommended among others that appropriate cassava processing technology should be developed for children that would make cassava processing activities interesting.

Keywords: Attitude, children, participation, cassava, processing activities.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is one of the economic sectors where child labour is common (FAO 2006). ILO (2006) suggested that at least 120 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are fully at work and more than twice as many (or about 250 million of those for whom work is secondary activity are included. Of these 61percent were found in Asia, 32 percent in Africa and 7 in Latin America and at least 5% were found in developing countries. Although, Asia has the largest absolute number of children workers; the proportion of working children between 5 and 14 year is highest in Africa.

The largest proportion of children workers is in economic activities and occupations related to agriculture. Although, the average proportion of children in agricultural activities is between 70 to 74 percent it can be as high as 90 to 95 percent in some countries. According to ILO (1999) rural children particularly girls tend to begin to engage themselves in economic activities at an early age under the age of 10 years. In Bangladesh, 82 percent of the country's 6.1 million economically active children work in the country's sisal, tea, sugarcane and tobacco plantations. Children are believed to comprise a quarter of all agricultural workers in Kenya. A study in Malawi found that majority of children living on tobacco estates were working full or part time (78 percent of 10 to 14 years old and 55 percent of 7 to 9 years old respectively) (Bitter Harvest, 2006).

Nigeria is one of the major producer and consumer of cassava in the world today. The recent revolution in Nigeria's agriculture has led to discoveries of numerous important uses of cassava, locally as food crop and internationally as an export crop. It has been established that the post harvest system of cassava requires more labour than most other staple crops (IITA, 1996). One hectare of cassava containing 10tons of root (the average root yield in Africa) needs approximately 721 man hours to harvest and process. This labour 212 man-hours are needed for harvesting, 156 for handling and 353 for processing. The Collaborative Study of Cassava in Africa (COCSA) has shown that women along with children participated up to 92 percent in cassava processing activities, although, children's contribution to economic development goes unrecognised. Therefore, children are seen as providing a silent and obedient labour force. At times large numbers of these children are forced to work in the farm sector. In addition, children who live in poor rural communities are exposed to great risks from hazardous and exploitative agricultural labour. Children involved in processing crops such as cassava suffer respiratory problems due to inhalation of smoke and other poisonous substances such as cyanide, skin problems from handling sharp tools such as knife and burn to mention a few.

It is worthy of note that it is the nature and conditions of children's work which determines whether they are exploited or not; but the fact is that, if they work for a few hours a day to contribute to the family's well being, whether by performing domestic duties or helping in the family fields, this is more likely to foster a child's development than damage it (New Agriculturist, 2006). It is against this background that the following research questions were addressed.

i. What are the personal characteristics of the children participating in cassava processing activities in the study area?
ii. When do the children participate in the processing activities?
iii. What is the attitude of children towards participation in cassava processing activities?

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is to determine the attitude of children towards participation in cassava processing activities in Ogbomoso zone of Oyo state.

The Special objectives are to:

i. identify the personal characteristics of the children in the study area,
ii. ascertain period / time of participation in cassava processing activities, and
iii. determine the attitude of children towards participating in cassava processing activities in the study area.

Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study, the following were hypothesised:

i. There is no significant relationship between children's personal characteristics and attitudinal disposition towards cassava processing activities.
ii. There are no significant differences between children's and their parents' attitude to participation in cassava processing activities.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Ogbomoso agricultural zone of Oyo state, Nigeria. The zone comprises five local government areas from which

two were randomly selected namely: Ogbomoso South and Ogbomoso North local government areas. From each of the local government areas selected, two major cassava processing centres were purposively selected due to high concentration of the processors. The centres sampled are: Aarada market processing centre, Isale-ora processing centre, and cooperative society's gaari processing centre Molete and Ora-processing centre. Proportionate sampling technique was used in the selection of the respondents based on the population of children in each of the selected processing centres. A total of 80 children whose age falls between four (4) and 15 years old were interviewed from one hundred and twenty children in the study area for this study. Forty parents were also randomly selected who were also cross-interviewed in order to validate some of responses gathered from the children on attitudinal disposition towards participation in cassava processing activities.

Data were collected through structured and validated interview schedule. Data analysis was carried out using frequency counts, percentages and mean as descriptive statistics while t- test and Pearson Moment correlation analysis were used as inferential statistical tools.

The dependent variable of the study is the attitude of children toward participation in cassava processing activities. This was measured on 5 – point Likert scale for 10 attitudinal statements with 5 stated as positive and others stated as negative statements. The maximum attitudinal score for a respondent was calculated by multiplying the number of attitudinal statement with highest point on the rating scale to make a total of fifty (50) and the minimum score to be ten (10).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics of the respondents

The result reveals that majority (61.2%) of the sampled children were between the ages of 12 and 15 years while more than one-quarter (28.8%) were between the ages of 8 and 11 years and the remaining 10.0% were between the ages of 4 and 7 years (Table 1). The mean age is 11.7years. This finding shows that majority of the sampled children are still in their childhood tending towards adolescent stage of life.

About two-thirds (67.5%) of the respondents interviewed were females while the remaining (32.5%) were males. This shows that female children dominated the processing activities in the study area. This finding tally with the findings of ILO (1999) and Awoyinka and Ogunba (1999) who reported that high proportion of female children in the rural areas predominantly carries out processing activities.

About 48.8% of the children had primary education, 36.2% are in junior secondary schools, 8.7% of them are in senior secondary schools while only few 6.3% of the sampled children were either in Nursery school or had no formal education. This implies that majority of the sampled children were engaged in educational activities. The relative high level of educational engagement among the children-respondents would eventually contribute to their proneness to adoption of modern technologies in agriculture especially processing technologies. This assertion is in line with the fact established by Obibuaku (1983) that farming population, which has higher concentration of young people (children), accepts new ideas more rapidly than older (parents)

who are influenced by their low level of education. Conversely, relative high level of education may have implication on migration of the respondents to larger cities for better opportunities.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to personal characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
4-7	08	10.0
8-11	23	28.8
12-15	49	61.2
Gender		
Male	26	32.5
Female	54	67.5
Education		
No formal education	03	3.8
Nursery	02	2.5
Primary education	39	48.8
Junior education	29	36.2
Senior secondary education	07	8.7

Source: Field survey, 2006

Period of participation in cassava processing activities

Majority (68.7%) of the respondents indicated the time of participation in the processing activities as daily after the school hours, 15.0% indicated weekends while about 13.8% indicated holidays and only few (2.5%) participated in the processing activities daily before they go to school (Table 2). This implies that period of children's participation in the processing activities does not affect their schooling activities; although their participation in such activities could be termed exploitative because they cannot exercise their liberty since part of their leisure time is being spent on cassava processing activities. This findings tally with the assertion of ILO (2006) that children in rural communities face great risks especially in terms of exploitative agricultural labour.

Table 2: Distribution of sampled children according to period of participation in cassava processing activities

Period of participation	Frequency	Percentage
Daily before school	2	2.5
Daily after school	55	68.8
Weekends	12	15.0
Holiday	11	13.8
Total	80	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2006

Attitudinal disposition towards cassava processing activities

The result in Table 3 shows that 71.6% of the children-respondents have favourable disposition to participation in cassava processing activities. This indicated that majority of the children were favourably disposed to participation in cassava processing activities. This could be as a result of their early life exposure to processing activities by their parents, which probably stimulated their interests in the cassava processing activities. Meanwhile, 65.7 percent of the parent-respondents fell within the unfavourable zone. This indicated that majority of the children and parents are favourably and unfavourably disposed to participation in cassava processing activities respectively. Table 3 further revealed that the attitudinal statement: 'cassava processing activities has economic gains' were ranked first and 'children's participation could be hazardous to their health' was ranked the least. This implies that even though, there is economic gains in children's participation in cassava processing activities but children are not aware of the health implication associated with cassava processing activities. It was also revealed that there was a significant difference in the attitude of children and their parents' attitude towards their participation in cassava processing activities ($t=5.367$, $p< 0.05$)

Table 3: Distribution of sampled children according to attitude towards participation in cassava processing activities

Attitudinal Statements	Mean Score	Rank	Standard Deviation
Children's participation in cassava processing activities is a way of training children in agriculture while they are young	3.96	2	0.803
Cassava processing has improved children's knowledge in modern processing methods	3.91	3	0.860
Cassava processing has economic gains hence children involvement.	4.30	1	0.644
Children's participation in cassava processing activities is only for leisure	2.89	7	1.079
Cassava processing activities has exposed children that want to become future processors	2.59	8	0.990
Children's participation in cassava processing activities affects children's educational performance	3.72	4	0.729
Children's participation in cassava processing activities is a form of child labour	3.65	5	0.828
Children's participation in cassava processing can be hazardous to their health	1.80	10	1.011
Children's participation in cassava processing may increase production output of parents	1.86	9	0.413
The problem of children participation in cassava processing activities is enormous since they been force to do what they do not like	3.44	6	0.939

Grand Mean of the total scale item X = 3.21 S.D =0.365
Source: Field survey, 2006

Results from Table 4 indicate that the parents were not favourably disposed to their children's participation in cassava processing activities. The parents did not really like their children's participation in cassava processing activities but may have engaged the children in the activities due to their poor economic conditions. Also, it simply means that parents have higher visions for their children rather than been a life time cassava processors.

Table 4: Result of t- test analysis showing significant differences between attitude of children and their parents

Variables	Mean Score	Std. Dev	t - cal	df	t - tab	Remark
Attitude (parent) Attitude (children)	33.00 34.00	3.742	5.367	3	3.182	Significant

Source: Field survey, 2006 S – significant

The result of the correlation analysis revealed that age (r = 0.297) has positive and significant relationship with attitude towards participation in cassava processing activities. This implies that as the age of the respondents advance, they have favourable disposition towards participation in cassava processing activities (Table 5).

Table 5: Result of Correlation analysis showing relationship between selected variables and attitude towards participation in cassava processing activities.

Variables	r - value	Remark
Age	0.297*	Significant
Sex	0.125	Not Significant
Education	0.170	Not Significant
Time of participation	0.066	Not Significant

Source: Field survey. 2006

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that female respondents dominated the processing activities in the study area and most of the children participate in cassava processing activities daily after the school hours. Generally, the participating children had positive and favourable attitude towards participation in cassava processing activities.

Based on these findings it was recommended that

(i) Enlightenment programme should be put in place by the government for the parents in order to create awareness on the implications of child labour.

(ii) There is need to intensify the on going poverty alleviation programme in the study area by the government in order to boost the economy of individual families in order to discourage parents in involving their children in an exploitative works in the study area.

(iii) Age as an important factor in determining the disposition towards participation in cassava processing activities should be considered by the extension institution in promoting programmes for children.

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