

Perception of Nomadic Household on Children Involvement in Animal Rearing Industry Among the Fulani Communities in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT A study was carried out to determine the nomadic heads perception of the children's involvement in animal rearing critical to entrepreneurial activities among some selected Fulani communities in Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, it identified some basic household demographic characteristics, examined the level of their children's involvement in what kind of animal rearing activities and; the relationships between the household perception of their children's involvement in animal rearing activities and level of involvement, education and income. Also, implication was drawn for nomadic children educational development. Pre-tested structured interview schedule, focus group discussion and tape recording were used to source from one hundred nomadic households, which are randomly and proportionately selected from three nomadic Fulani communities in Osun State. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to establish the relationships between the variables tested. The study revealed that ad 87 percent of the household heads had a very high favorable perception of their children's involvement in animal rearing activities. Age, financial gain and children's level of involvement were found to be positively contributors to their high favorable perception at 0.05 level of significance. However, high level of literacy was found to be a major factor that strengthened their favorable perception among others.

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of children as members of family labor force is generally regarded as an integral part of children's socialization process in Nigeria (Torimiro et al., 1999). Children in this case are conceptualized as young people either male or female from the time of birth to fifteen years. UNICEF/FOS (1997) estimated this category of the population in Nigeria as 45 percent.

Ojo (1999) revealed in his study that the Nomadic Fulani children in Nigeria are exposed to animal rearing activities right from age seven. This is because such activities are traditionally the basic features of nomadism for achieving economic and cultural survivals of the nomads. (Torimiro et al., 2002). The nomads constantly move from place to place in search of food, water and disease free zone for their animals (Ezeomah, 1989; Ogunmodede, 1991).

In many African countries, Odutola and

Ademola (1985) observed that each household normally produces the great bulk of its domestic requirements, builds its own huts and granaries, and does its own housework. In all these activities everybody except the infants take part, men, women and children, having specific occupations according to sex and age. However, perceptions of the various household units' involvement in one activity or another, vary depending on the household socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, the nomadic households inclusive. Since animal rearing has been found by Torimiro and Lawal (2002) to be a traditional occupation of nomadic households in which the children are culturally involved in Nigeria. It May be imperatively necessary to further critically examine the way the nomadic Fulani households perceive the involvement of their children in the rearing activities, that is keeping of cattle, sheep and goat.

The animal rearing activities, like any other agricultural activities are very strenuous and tedious in developing world because of the primitive and traditional methods popularly explored in managing animals. Mazard and Mejia (1998), in their studies of adolescents and post-harvest activities in rural communities of Bolivia,

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Philippines and Vietnam, for instance, found that whenever children are involved in agricultural labor, the impact on education is often negative. The low school grades were attributed to miss classes, inability to take special courses and no time for extra-curricular, civic or sports activities.

The nomadic situation is even worse in this respect, since they are not settled in a place, but rather, moves from one community to another seeking food and water for the survival of their animals, even at the expense of their children's future educational prospect. Okebukola (2001) summarized in his study that the nomads who are migratory, consider formal schooling (and also school science), non-relevant to daily living of pastoralism. Essentially, the perception of a particular situation or disposition is expected to constitute either, on impelling or impending force to perpetuate such situation of disposition.

The paper therefore, focused on the nomadic Fulani households. It accentuated on the perception of the Fulani households about their children's involvement in animal rearing activities in Nigeria. Specifically, it identified some basic demographic characteristics of the nomadic households, examined the level of their children's involvement in what kind of animal rearing activities and the relationships between the households perception of their children involvement in animal rearing activities and level of their involvement, literacy and income. Also, inflection was drawn for children educational development.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted on nomadic Fulani households selected from three local government areas in Osun State of Nigeria. These nomads are found in five out of the thirty local government areas (LGA's) in the State. The nomads Fulani community consists of many temporary tents where they usually pass the night. The size of each tenet depends on the number of nomads within the area.

Three L.G.A.'s namely, Ife North, Ede South and Ede North were randomly selected from the five LGA's. From each selected LGA's, the following nomadic Fulani communities were further randomly selected respectively: Edunabo, Oogi and Agbale nomadic Fulani communities. From these three communities, a total of one hundred nomadic Fulani households were randomly and then proportionally sampled as

follows: Edunabo (30), Oogi (35) and Agbale (35).

Pretested structured interview schedule, focus group discussion and tape recording were used to source information from the nomadic Fulani households. The interview was administered on each of the household heads, while the tape recording was used during the focus group discussion, which was organized through the consent and cooperation of each of the community's political head titled "Seriki".

Some of the information revolved around the households demographic characteristics, level of their children involvement in animal rearing activities, and their perception of their children's involvement in animal rearing activities. The focus group discussion was basically on the implication of their perception on their children's educational development. The study was conducted between March and April, 2002.

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical technique and; Pearson's correlation was used to establish the relationships between the nomadic households perception and other variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics

Half (50.00%) of the household heads were between the age of 36 and 51 years, 34 percent were between 52 and 66 years, while those between the age group of 20 and 35 were 14 percent and others, that is, those above 67 years old were only 2 percent. This shows that majority (64%) of the household heads are in the active of 51 years and below. Though, it was observed during the focus group discussion that the elderly ones were highly respected and their opinions were always unanimously supported. More so, the opinions of the young household heads were fully controlled by their elders and most specially their political head, known as "Seriki".

The entire household heads, at the focus group discussion forum, are males. Although, during the administration of the interview schedule on household heads in their various tents, women, both old and young were observed moving about the compound engaging in other household chores or the other, but they showed absolute nonchalant attitude to the interview. They all saw the entire discussions as men's affairs only. The study also revealed that all the

house-heads interviewed were practicing Muslims.

Though, the nomads were predominantly of Fulani tribe, but it was observed that only 90.00 percent are still able to speak the Fulani language very fluently. Other (10.00%) in the young age group can fairly speak the language. None of them can speak English or any foreign language. Also, 48.00 percent speak Yoruba language, that is, the predominant language spoken by the people in Osun State. It was also observed that those that can speak the Language belong to the young age category. This is not surprising, as Yoruba language is very important in transacting business with the Yoruba tribes, the major buyers of their animals and their animal products. More so, the young ones are more in contact with the Yorubas than the elderly ones and some of the younger ones were born in Yoruba land.

About 98 percent of the nomads were stack illiterates with no formal education at all. Two percent indicated that they obtained nomadic primary education. Also, 98 percent were married, while the remaining two percent were living without their wives. Majority (90%) had more than four children, while the remaining ten percent had less than four children. All (100%) the respondents indicated that their children are solely dependent on them for food, clothing and shelter, while only two percent indicated their children depended on them for schooling. It was further revealed that only the two percent of the respondents who had the nomadic primary education allow their children to attend nomadic primary schools.

The study also revealed that 62 percent realized moderate income between N7,500 and N27,500 per month, while 30 percent made high income of over N27,500 per month and eight percent made a very low income of less than N7,500 per month. The income level per month was based on the Nigeria's National minimum living wage (source) of N7,500 per month. It was revealed that the income generated by the household per month was through the combined efforts of the entire household members resulting from their full participation in animal rearing activities.

Children Involvement in Animal Rearing

The entire household heads indicated that they involved their children in animal rearing

activities on full time basis. All of them indicated that they involved their children in housing, grazing, milking and marketing activities of cattle, sheep and goat. Concerning their children's level of involvement in all these activities, it was further revealed that 85.00 per cent of the household highly involved their children in animal rearing with a mean score of greater than 12, while the remaining 15 per cent moderately involved their children with a mean score ranging from 8 to 12.

Perception of Children's Involvement in Animal Rearing

Ten perceptual statements, which have been tested and validated, were presented to the household heads for them to respond against a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Table 1). All (100.00%) of the respondents agreed that: involving their children in animal rearing activities has contributed to their household income and economic survival; it is cultural to involve their children in animal rearing activities as a way to teach them to be useful in the future; children's involvement in animal rearing activities can expose them to danger; and, they still like seeing their children involved.

Also, 70 per cent strongly disagreed that involving their children in such activities is immoral and child abuse. During the focus group discussion, it was revealed that the activities that are meant for female are quite different from those of males. While the males are involved in Activities such as housing, feeding and milking, their female counterparts are mostly involved in marketing of animal products, general cleaning of the housing environment and household chores.

The level of perception was determined using standard deviation plus or minus the mean score (X), that is, S.D. + X. The mean score was calculated as 45 and standard deviation value was 5. Hence, the study revealed that the Majority (87.00%) of the household heads had a very high ($50 > X$) favorable perception of their children's involvement in animal rearing activities, while the remaining 13.00 per cent had moderate ($40 - 50 = 5.0 \pm X$) perception level (Table 2).

Hypotheses Testing

The study revealed a positive and significant correlation between the level of perception and

Table 1: Distribution of household heads by their perceptions of their children

S.No.	Perception Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1.	Our children's involvement in ARAS has contributed to our household income.	100 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
2.	For use to survive our children must be involved in ARAS	100 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
3.	Our children must be involve in ARAS for our household to feed well.	60 (60.00)	35 (35.00)	5 (5.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
4.	It is immoral and child abuse for them to be involved.	0 (0.00)	5 (5.00)	25 (25.00)	0 (0.00)	70 (70.00)
5.	It is cultural to involve our children in ARAS.	100 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
6.	It is a way of teaching our children to be useful in the future.	100 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
7.	I like seeing my children involving in ARAS.	80 (80.00)	20 (20.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
8.	ARAS can expose out children to danger	0 (0.00)	100 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
9.	I don't like my children to be involved in ARAS.	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
10.	ARAS are meant for both male and female.	100 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)

Source: Field Survey 2000.
 SA= Strongly agree (5); A= Agree (4); U=Undecided (3);
 D=Disagree (2); S=Strongly Disagree (1)

Table 2: Summary of nomadic household heads' level of perception of their children's involvement in animal rearing activities.

Perception towards involvement	Fre- quency	Percent- age
<40 (low perception)	0	0.00
40-50 (Made note perception)	13	13.00
750 (High perception)	87	87.00
Total	100	100.00

Source: Field Survey 2002
 Note: Mean Score (7)= 45
 Standard derivation (S.D.) =5

Table 3: Summary of Pearson correlation between level of perception, children age, income and educational level in animal rearing activities

X-Variables	Correction co-efficient(r)	Co-efficient determine from(rs)
Age	0.262*	0.0686
Income	0.436	0.1901
Literacy Level	0.344*	0.1183

Source: field Survey 2002
 • Significant of 0.05 level; 2 tailed test critical values of r=0.155

age (r=0.262*), income level (r=0.436) and children's level of involvement in animal rearing activities (r=0.505*) at 0.05 level of significant (Table 3). This implies that the household heads' perception of their children involvement in animal rearing activities is a function of their age,

financial gain and their children's level of involvement. Old age and high income in this case, will render high favorable perception. Also, the more the children are involved in the animal rearing activities, the more favorable their level of perception.

There is however a negative but significant relationship between their perception level and their literacy level (=0.344*) (Table 4). This further shows that high level of illiteracy of the nomads is a major factor that strengthened their undaunted favorable perception of their children's

Table 4: Pearson correlation research between perception and level of involvement in animal rearing activities.

X-Variables	Correction co-efficient(r)	Co-efficient determine from(rs)
Level of Involvement	0.503	0.2530

Source: Field Survey 2002
 • Significant of 0.05 level; 2 tailed test critical values of r=0.155

involvement in animal rearing activities. As long as this situation persists, children will continually be involved in animal rearing activities.

CONCLUSION

As an effort to address the issue of formal education for the nomads, the Federal

Government of Nigeria established the National Commission for the Nomadic Education (NCNC) in 1989. Since its inception, it has focused on the provision of formal education to children of pastoral nomads. For instance in Osun State, there are two nomadic schools. However, it was observed that the schools enjoy less patronage of the nomads, basically because of the high value attached to the animal rearing than the formal education as revealed in this study.

In this situation, educational development of the nomadic Fulani children is expected to be very slow and poor for a very long time. However, there is a high level of conviction that with persistent continuous persuasion through specially trained extension agents, the nomadic Fulani community can still be made to realize the need for their children's educational development. This may further be gradually achieved the circle of young nomads who are more susceptible to external technological influences. Also, educational agenda integrated into Islamic culture may yield a rapid and more resourceful dividends if strategically explored.

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