Organization and Management of Farmer’s Groups under University Based Integrated Rural Development Project of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Nigeria

B.O. Adisa and K.A. Adeloye

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Abstract: The study investigated organization and management of farmer’s groups under University based integrated rural development project of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Data were gathered through structured interview schedule from 109 members of farmer’s groups under Isoya Rural Development Project of Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics such as correlation and chi square were used to test the hypotheses set. The results of the study showed that the mean age of members of farmer’s group under Isoya Rural Development Project was 67.2±6.8 years. Majority (72.0%) of them were males who spent an average of 6.0±4.5 years in formal school. Their average farm size in acres was 9.0±3.8. Vast majority (91.0%) of the respondents engaged in farming, while only few engaged in trading (21.0%) and civil service (12.0%). Furthermore, the average annual income of the respondent was N68,000±15,000 and vast majority (91.0%) of them source their business fund from cooperatives. Some of the benefits derived by the respondents as a result of the group were increased income, increased access to agricultural inputs and increased access to agricultural innovations in that rank order. There were positive and significant relationship between management styles used by the groups and their increased income (r= 0.392; p≤ 0.05); increased access to agricultural inputs(r= 0.501; p≤ 0.05); increased access to agricultural innovations(r= 0.503; p≤ 0.05) and access to processing and storage facilities (r=0.357; p≤ 0.05). Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the farmer’s group were operating with management styles that were effective as the group achieved most of their objectives. It was also recommended that youth should be encouraged to get involved to safeguard the future of the groups.

Key words: Farmer’s group • Organization • Management

INTRODUCTION

The importance of rural areas cannot be over emphasized in the developing nation’s economy because rural areas are predominantly producers of food for teeming population and raw materials for agricultural based industries. In general, the rural areas engage in primary activities that form the foundation of any developing nation’s economy. Unfortunately, in some developing nations like Nigeria, rural area has suffered long time neglect in such a way that has created wide gap between the rural and urban areas most especially in the area of social and economic opportunities, physical development and available infrastructural facilities.

The situation of rural areas above call for its development that involves the transformation of the rural community into a socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly and materially desirable condition, with a purpose of improving the quality of life of the rural population [1]. This idea has led to the invention of the concept called “Integrated Rural Development” (IRD) which uses holistic approach model and attempt to develop all the sectors (agriculture, education, health, nutrition, rural electrification, good road and regular water supply among others) in a given area about the same time rather than concentrating on one aspect [1, 2].

Corresponding Author: B.O. Adisa, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Tel: +08034238364.
Nigeria past government had committed commensurable effort and resources toward the development of rural areas. Some of the strategies used in the past in Nigeria are the creation of Farm Settlement Schemes (1950s and 1960s), the establishment of Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in 1964 along side with the Ministry of Economic Planning. The ministry was later renamed Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in 1970 (now Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources). Others are; National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) establish in 1973, Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) formed in 1985, Rural Agro-based Industrial Development (RAID) in 1981 and Agricultural Development Project (ADP) in 1975.

One of the features of the ADP is the integrated approach to the supply of inputs, infrastructure, rural road, small dams, farm services centre, seed multiplication, farm input distribution and extension services. The project-coordinating unit (PCU), which was formed through the merging of Federal Agricultural Coordinating Unit (FACU) and the Agricultural Project Monitoring and Evaluating Unit (APMEU), coordinate the project. ADP was initially (1975) established in three pilots ADPs namely: Funtua (Kaduna State), Gombe (Gombe State) and Gussau (Zamfara State). The success of these ADPs has led to establishment of six more pilots in Ayangda, Lafia, Bida, Ilorin, Ekiti and Oyo north between 1979 and 1982 before becoming nation-wide projects.

However, increasing need for rural development had led to the involvement of universities in the strategies used by the government. Although the Universities has three tripod mandate of teaching, research and community services, five Universities are the first set of university to start the project and others follow later. As part of the services, some of the projects are: Isoya Project of Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife (OAU); Okpeju Project of University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), Badaku Project of University of Ibadan and Kwara Project of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria.

The University-based IRD embarked on by OAU is called “Isoya Rural Development Project. This project is directed at improving the economic and social conditions in selected villages using the holistic approach model. The head of the project report directly to the Head of Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology (now Agricultural Extension and Rural development).

The University of Ife (now OAU) financed the project at the initial stages. However, later in 1972, a cooperative relationship was established between University of Ife and the Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Center, University of Reading, United Kingdom to finance the project. In addition to this, financial aid was obtained from the British Overseas Development Administration (ODA) through the Inter-University Council [3-6].

The following are some of the objectives of the project as stated by Laogun et al., [7]:

- Developing a model for approaching rural development in the selected villages that could be applied later and on wider scale;
- Field-testing and demonstrating innovations;
- Serving as a research center for testing and applying methods of community development and extension; and
- Assisting the inhabitants of the area to improve their level of living.

Furthermore, villages under Isoya project has form cooperative groups with nine been registered with state Ministry of Economic Development while eight are yet to be registered. The names are: Okolere-agbe I Cooperative Group in Isoya-Ife; Okolere-agbe II Cooperative Group in Olorunbo-Ife; Okolere-agbe III in Akeredolu-Ife; Okolere-agbe IV Cooperative Group in Walode-Ife; Okolere-agbe V in Esera; Ifedapo Cooperative Group in Erefe-Ife; Irewolu Women in Olorunbo-Ife; Ifelodun I in Iyanfoworogi-Ife; Ojo Cooperative Society in Ojo-Ede; Awo Cooperative Society in Awo-Ede; Agbeloba in Aro-Ede; Binukonu in Abudo-Ede; Peace of Joy in Isoya-Ife; Irewolu Women Society in Aganran; Irewolu Women Society Aroko; Ifelodun IV in Aroko. These cooperative groups serve as an avenue for transferring new technologies from the University to the village farmers.

**Purpose of the Study:** The success of a project lies much on its organization and management styles employed and to serve as a guide to change agents. There is need to examine the organization and management of farmer’s groups under University Based Integrated Rural Development Project of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to

- Examine the farmer’s group characteristics in the study area;
- Examine the organization and management style employed by the farmer’s groups;
- Examine the benefits derived by the respondents as a result of their membership of the groups;
Hypotheses for the Study

H$_1$: There is no significant relationship between the characteristics of the groups and management style employed by the farmer’s groups under the Integrated Rural Development Project in the study area.

H$_2$: There is no significant relationship between the benefits derived and management style employed by the farmer’s groups under the Integrated Rural Development Project in the study area.

Methodology for the Study: The study was conducted in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Osun State, Nigeria (Ife East, Ife South and Egbedore LGAs) which were the coverage of Isoya Rural Development Project under Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Fifty percent of farmer’s cooperative groups were proportionally selected from each LGA (4 from Ife-East, 2 from Egbedore and 1 from Ife South). The selected farmer’s groups with their numerical strength are: Ifelodun I Ereje (80); Ifelodun II Iyanfoworogi (85); Ifelodun III Ladin (60); Ifelodun IV Aroko (15); Awo cooperative society I (15); Awo cooperative society II (90); and Okolere Agbe III Akeredolu (15). Finally, a systematic random sampling technique with a random start at an interval of two using farmers’ register as sampling frame was used to select thirty percent of farmers from each group. A total of 109 respondents were interviewed for the study. Validated and pre-tested interview schedule was used to elicit information on socio-economic characteristics. The data were summarized using descriptive statistics while chi-square and correlation analyses were used to make inferences from the hypotheses.

Measurement of Variable: The dependent variable for the study is conceptualized as management style used by the farmer’s cooperative groups. The management style was measured using five management processes of an organization which are: planning, organizing, influence, control and decision making. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their group possesses the following effective managerial set-up using 4-point scale: Always (4), Often (3), Rarely (2), Never (1). However, the questions are my group engage in planning process before executing any project, my group organize the people and resources in the best way that will enable the group to achieve its objectives, management lead by example and take corrective action and every members of the group participate in decision making.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results in Table 1 revealed that majority (60.0%) of the respondents were at their old age, while 3.0 percent were youth; the mean age of the respondents was 67.2 with standard deviation of 6.8. This implies that the groups have few numbers of active men, which might be because of high rate of rural-urban migration of able bodies in search of white-collar jobs. Furthermore, it was revealed that majority (72.0%) of the respondents were male, this indicates that there are more males than females in the groups. Data in Table 1 also showed that the mean of years spent in formal schools was 6 with standard deviation of 4.5; this revealed that majority could not read nor write which would affect their understanding of extension recommendations negatively. Vast majority (91.0%) of them were farmers by occupation while few engaged in trading and public service. Data also revealed that majority (88.0%) of the respondents were married, this implies that high percentage of married were in the group. This findings is in consonance with earlier reported by Adisa [8] who pointed that high percentage of married in the rural communities of Osun State are involved in the cooperative societies since it serves as a means of achieving group goals.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<th>Standard deviation</th>
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Source: Field survey, 2012 *Multiple choices
Results in Table 2 revealed that the average annual income of the respondents was N68,000 with standard deviation of 15,000. This implies that majority of the respondent were still living below the poverty line. These findings are in line with those reported by Torimiro et al. [9]. The average farm size of the respondents was nine acres with standard deviation of 5.2. This implies that cultivable land is abundant in the study area. Furthermore, vast majority (91.0%) of the respondents cultivate arable crops, many (72.5%) also cultivate permanent crops. Table 2 also revealed that majority (91.0%) got fund for business through cooperative. This result is in agreement with the findings of Torimiro et al., [9] which reported that the cooperative had been the major support to over (97 percent) of the household heads in rural communities of Osun State.

Results in Table 3 revealed that the average numerical strength of the group was 38 with standard deviation of 9.4. This falls in line with the recommendation of Sonia et al. [10] of 25-40 participants per group. This range of number enhances manageability and maximizes participation in the group. Furthermore, the table shows that all the selected groups composed of both male and female. This implies that the groups selected for this study are not gender bias and they recognize the role of female in team building. Experience of the researcher on the field shows that female occupies most of the key positions in some groups. The table also revealed that the group meet averagely once in a month with standard deviation of 0.6. As majority of the group hold their meeting regularly, very few (7.0%) do not hold meeting which implies that very few of the groups are folding up due to old age of majority of the members. Also many (62.2%) of the executives of the groups emerge through selection of reputable and responsible members; this has great effect on the public faces of the groups. In addition, the table revealed that bulk (100.0%) of the groups’ income comes from the membership levy while the least (15.0%) of the groups’ income comes from the voluntary contribution.

Results in Table 4 revealed that the respondents agreed that the all the following management styles were possessed by their groups: planning; organizing; positive influence on members and decision making processes. This implies that the groups uses effective management styles in running the affair of the group and as a result has the tendency of achieving it objectives.

Results in Table 5 revealed that increase income, increase access to agricultural inputs and increase access to agricultural innovations, were ranked first (95.4%) second (85.3%) and third (75.2%), respectively. This implies that the groups stay focused on their primary objective of assisting its members to improve their level of living and concentrate all effort toward achieving it as stated by Laogun et al., [7].

**Hypotheses Testing:** Results in Table 6 revealed that at significant level of 0.05, the Chi-square calculated is greater than the Chi-square tabulated for the group characteristics such as sex composition, membership
strength, emergence of executives, time(s) of meeting in a month and sources of income. This implies that there is significant association between the management styles and the characteristics of the group.

Result in Table 7 revealed that at 0.05 level of significance, increase in income ($r=0.392$); increase in access to agricultural inputs ($r=0.501$); increase in access to agricultural innovations ($r=0.503$); access to adult education programme ($r=0.310$); access to processing and storage facilities ($r=0.357$) and improved household food and nutrition ($r=0.394$) of the members of the group had significant and positive relationship with management styles used in the group. Thus the more effective the management styles, the more the increase in income, increase in access to agricultural inputs, increase in access to agricultural innovations, access to processing...
and storage facility and improve household food and nutrition. Furthermore, at 0.05 level of significance, the respondents’ socialization \((r=0.109)\), leadership training \((r=-0.054)\) and offer of better clothing \((r=-0.100)\) does not have any significant relationship with management styles used in the groups. This shows that respondents’ socialization, leadership training and offer of better clothing does not have anything to do with management styles used in the groups.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the farmer’s group were operating with management styles that were effective as the group achieved most of their objectives. It is also recommended that youth should be encouraged to get involved to safeguard the future of the groups.

**REFERENCES**