

INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY FACTORS INFLUENCING ACTORS' INVOLVEMENT IN ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES ALONG OIL PALM FRUIT VALUE CHAIN IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the institutional and community factors influencing actors' involvement in entrepreneurial activities along oil palm fruit value chain in Osun State, Nigeria. A validated interview schedule was used to collect quantitative data, which were then summarised using percentages, means, and correlation analysis. The results show that the family type (mean = 2.66), from which the oil palm fruit entrepreneurs came, exerted the strongest influence on respondents' involvement in oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities. The market has the highest (74.6%) productive resources that were available in the different communities of the actors, which is favourable to oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities. The cultural statement that ranked highest among respondents was the opinion that their community values a thrifty spending and saving culture (mean=3.08). This study revealed that at $P \leq 0.01$, a positive and significant relationship existed between family variable ($r=2.57$), religion variable ($r=0.335$), community cultural variable ($r=0.188$), and community attitudinal variable ($r=0.168$) and actors' socio-economic status. This study concludes that the influence of institutions and communities on entrepreneurial involvement is generally strong, with the family, socio-cultural factors, and other informal sources of institutions being the main drivers.

Keywords: Actors, oil palm fruit, involvement, entrepreneurial activities.

INTRODUCTION

Oil palm is still one of the most significant enterprises in tropical countries, with West Africa being the source of oil palm. In the old times, Nigeria was considered to be one of the major producers and exporters of palm oil, but with the discovery of crude oil, the country's focus has been diverted from agriculture. The oil palm subsector, however, remains an important source of rural livelihoods, food security, jobs and household income in many parts of the country, despite this reduction. The value chain of oil palm, including crude palm oil, palm kernel oil, palm wine, and other by-products, is not only economically significant for sustainable rural development but also has applications in both the domestic and industrial sectors (Ogunleye and Kehinde, 2020; Pashkevich et al., 2024).

The value chain of the oil palm industry involves a series of inter-dependent entrepreneurial activities of producers, processors, marketers, transporters, input suppliers and retailers. All of these actors contribute towards the conversion of oil palm fruits into consumable and marketable products. The focus has now been moved from just agricultural production to value chain development since value chains provide employment, generate income diversification, foster agribusiness growth and promote rural industrialization in recent years.

Thus, agricultural value chains have emerged as a significant avenue for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria (Foong and Ng, 2022; Adikaibe et al., 2024).

The entrepreneurial activities of oil palm farmers in Nigeria are mainly undertaken by smallholder farmers and processors in the rural areas with different institutional and community environments. These are conditions that impact access to productive resources, markets, finance, information, innovation and social support systems. The level of involvement of actors in the oil palm value chain is shaped by institutional factors, including the government's policies, extension services, cooperatives, access to credit facilities, land tenure systems, infrastructural development and market regulations. The main constraints to the participation and coordination of effective value chain actors are reported to be poor institutional mechanisms, financial constraints and weak governance institutions (Goodluck and Joseph, 2024).

In addition to institutional factors, community factors also influence the level of entrepreneurial involvement (LBI) of actors of the oil palm industry. Community factors also affect the level of LBI in the oil palm industry, in addition to institutional factors. Some of the factors that impact on the participation of individuals in entrepreneurial activities may be linked to community norms, cultural beliefs, leadership structures, social networks, gender relations, trust and communal support networks. Some rural communities are characterized by a high level of social cohesion and cooperation, and offer conducive conditions for agribusiness development activities, while other communities with less developed infrastructure, insecurity or social organization may result in less participation of entrepreneurs in the activities of the agribusiness. Thus, social capital in the communities is an important asset that boosts innovation, information sharing, labour mobilization and market access for rural entrepreneurs (Aondoseer and Ifeoma, 2018; Ikenga, 2025).

Oil palm enterprise is one of the key livelihood activities among the rural households in Osun State, Nigeria. The state has good ecological conditions that are conducive to oil palm cultivation and processing, and a high level of dependence of households on the subsector for their livelihood and employment. But the oil palm actors in the entire value chain are still encountering many problems, such as lack of processing technology, volatile market prices, access to institutional support, inadequate rural infrastructure and entrepreneurial skills. The level of engagement of actors in entrepreneurship can be linked to the level of challenges faced in various parts of the value chain (Ogunleye and Kehinde, 2020).

While some studies have focused on the profitability aspect, value addition, processing constraints or participation in the market, fewer empirical studies have focused on the combined effect of institutional and community factors on actors' involvement in the entrepreneurial activities in the oil palm fruit value chain, especially in Osun State. Previous research has tended to focus on the economic returns and production constraints, but not enough on the institutional framework and the community environment that influence entrepreneurial involvement and sustainability in the value chain (Ogunleye and Kehinde, 2020).

To develop policy and interventions that will support value chain actors and enhance the livelihoods of rural actors, it is important to understand the institutional and community factors that affect entrepreneurial involvement. This kind of knowledge can help the formulation of strategies to increase access to support services, improve social inclusion, improve cooperative systems and foster sustainable entrepreneurship in the oil palm industry by the policy maker, extension services, financial institutions and the development organizations. This background sets a foundation for this study that investigates inhibitors of actors' participation in the oil palm fruit value chain in Osun State, Nigeria, from the institutional and community perspectives.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Osun State, in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Osun is an agricultural state where the climate is favourable for the growth of various tree and arable crops, including oil palm. A multi-stage sampling method was used to choose the respondents. The actors were divided into four categories in the first stage using the stratified sampling technique. At the second stage, three LGAs were purposively selected from each of the three senatorial districts based on the relative abundance of oil palm production to give a total of nine LGAs, namely Obokun, Ife North, and Ife South LGAs from Osun East; Ejigbo, Ayedaade, and Iwo LGAs from Osun West; and Orolu, Ila, and Odo-Otin LGAs from Osun Central.

At the third stage, four communities that are actively involved in oil palm production were selected in each of the nine LGAs, making a total of thirty-six communities. At the fourth stage, five oil palm processors and two harvesters were selected through the snowball sampling technique. This gave a total of 180 oil palm processors and 72 harvesters. For the marketers' category, three communities that have periodic markets were selected from each LGA to give twenty-seven communities. For the marketing category, three marketers were selected through the snowball sampling technique to give a total of 81 marketers. Lastly, for the machine operators' category, five oil palm processing machine operators were selected from each LGA using snowball sampling, for a total of 45 machine operators. The snowball sampling technique was used to identify the actors due to the lack of a definite number of respondents in the study area. The total number of actors that were chosen for the study was 378.

A validated interview schedule was used to collect quantitative data alongside Kaiser's criterion of retaining factors with eigenvalue > 1, which were then summarised using percentages, means, and principal components analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Institutional and Community Related Variables Influencing Actors' Involvement in Entrepreneurial Activities along the Oil Palm Fruit Value Chain

Institutional variables

Evoma (2017) asserted that social institutions play important roles in an individual's entrepreneurial capabilities; this study, therefore, considered the institutions of family and religion. The results in Table 1 show that the family type (mean = 2.66), from which the oil palm fruit entrepreneurs came, exerted the strongest influence on respondents' involvement in oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities. This is followed by family expenditure (mean = 2.56), family size (2.54), family income (2.42), and the level of education of family members

(1.86). For religious institutions, results showed that the type of religious institution had the highest influence (mean = 1.89), followed by the type of religious leadership (mean = 1.36), type of denomination (1.27), and group offering (mean = 1.13).

This implies that family size, type of family, and family expenditure have a strong influence on their involvement in oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities. Based on the scale of measurement used, level of education of family members, the income of family members and the type of religious institution exert an average level of influence on respondents' involvement in oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities is exerted, while the type of denomination of the religious institution, its leadership structures, and how rich the congregation are exerting a low level of influence on the actors.

This assertion was also corroborated by Ajani *et al.* (2012), who stated that family size was important to the oil palm business as family members could serve as a reliable and cheap source of labour.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by the influence of family and religious institutions on their levels of involvement in oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities n=378

Institutional variables	No influence F (%)	Low influence F (%)	Average influence F (%)	High influence F (%)	Ranked mean
Family					
Type of family	6(1.6)	24(6.3)	64(16.9)	284(75.1)	2.66
Family expenditure	21(5.6)	12(3.2)	79(20.9)	266(70.3)	2.56
Family size	15(4.0)	23(6.1)	82(21.7)	258(68.2)	2.54
Family income	21(5.6)	26(6.9)	106(28.0)	225(59.5)	2.42
Level of education of family members	58(15.3)	69(18.3)	120(31.7)	131(34.5)	1.86
Religious institution					
Type of religion	88(23.3)	46(12.2)	364(16.9)	136(36.0)	1.89
Leadership	138(35.7)	40(10.6)	136(36.0)	131(34.5)	1.36
Denomination	136(36)	83(22.0)	80(21.22)	79(20.9)	1.27
Group wealth	135(35.7)	110(29.1)	80(21.2)	53(14.0)	1.13

Strong influence=3; Average influence=2; Low influence=1 and No influence=0

Grand mean score of family institution=2.40

Grand mean score of religious institution=1.42

Source: Field survey, 2025

Institutional roles

Roles played by the family, religious body, and the government in the involvement of the actors in their entrepreneurial activities were examined.

Family roles: Table 2 shows the identified roles that were played by the family, and these include provision of initial capital (30.9%), provision of labour (53.2%), provision of moral and advisory roles (49.2%), supply of financial support (14.3%), administrative role (15.9%) and provision of assistance during product sales (12.0%). About 45.0% claimed a lack of support from their family.

Religious institution roles: In addition, Table 2 shows that 10.3 percent of the actors had support from their religious organizations in the area of provision of loans. Other roles recognized by actors as played by religious institutions included moral and advisory roles (28.6%), provision of subsidies and funds for business (10.0%) and formation of cooperative societies (20.0%). However, the majority (62.7%) reported a lack of support from religious institutions.

Government roles: Table 2 further shows that the roles played by the government in assisting the oil palm actors were very negligible. The roles recognized as played by the government included favourable regulations (7.1%), loan provision (1.6%), extension services (2.5%), provision of subsidy (1.8%), organizations of cooperatives (8.0%), provision of training facilities (1.2%), and produce inspection (1.0%). Provision of infrastructural facilities and sales facilities were identified by 30.0 and 15.5 percent, respectively.

The major support is obtained from the family, and this shows the importance of the family to the overall well-being of society. This implies that efforts to promote the well-being of the family should be encouraged by both the religious and governmental institutions. These findings align with studies reporting that family networks remain the primary source of entrepreneurial support, while inadequate institutional and government assistance limit agribusiness development in Nigeria (Oguegbe and Iloke, 2024).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by roles played by institutions in their involvement in oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities **n=378**

Institutional roles	Freq	%
Family		
Provision of initial capital	117	30.9
Provision of labour	201	53.2
Moral and advisory roles	186	49.2
Financial support	54	14.3
Administrative role	60	15.9
Products sales	45	12.0
Lack of support	170	45.0
Religious institution		
Provision of a loan	39	10.3
Moral and advisory roles	108	28.6
Provision of subsidy and funds	38	10.0
Formation of cooperatives	76	20.0

Lack of support	237	62.7
Government		
Product inspection	4	1.0
Training	5	1.2
Provision of a loan	6	1.6
Provision of subsidy and funds	7	1.8
Extension services	9	2.5
Favourable regulations	27	7.1
Formation of cooperatives	30	8.0
Sales facilities	59	15.5
Infrastructural facilities	113	30.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

Availability of productive resources

Results in Table 3 show the productive resources that were available in the different communities of the actors and which were favourable to oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities. These resources were market (74.6%), health centers (62.7%), communication facilities (73.0%), schools (88.1%), labour (85.7%), and land (59.4%). Others were raw materials (45.2%), appropriate technology (33.3%), credit facilities (35.7%), electricity (38.9%), road (32.5%), police station (38.9%), and banks (43.7%).

The presence of these productive resources is directly proportional to the ease with which processing and marketing activities take place in the study area. In-depth analysis shows that the resources controlled by the government were not readily available as compared to privately controlled resources, which were, however, not free. These findings corroborate studies indicating that access to infrastructure, markets, labour, and credit enhances agribusiness performance, whereas inadequate government-provided facilities constrain rural entrepreneurial development in Nigeria (Akinwale et al., 2022).

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to productive resources available in their communities **n=378**

Productive resources	Freq	%
Market	282	74.6
Health centers	237	62.7
Communication facilities	276	73.0
Schools	333	88.1
Labour	324	85.7
Land	225	59.4
Raw materials	171	45.2
Appropriate technology	126	33.3
Credit facilities	135	35.7
Electricity	147	38.9
Road	123	32.5
Police station	147	38.9
Banks	165	43.7

Source: Field survey, 2025

Influence of the culture of community members on entrepreneurial activities of actors along the oil palm fruit processing and marketing value chain

Results in Table 4 shows that cultural statement that ranked highest among respondents was the opinion that their community value thrifty spending and saving culture (mean=3.08), followed by there were no taboos that prevent people from engaging in oil palm business (mean=2.94), the people of the community had a high affinity for observing cultural norms (mean=2.74), the community people were innovative (mean=2.71) and that their community encourage cooperative lives (mean=2.71). Others were community belief in accumulating material possessions (mean=2.57), value on members meeting their financial responsibilities (mean=2.56), risks taking (mean=2.53), having a high level of social differentiation (mean=1.83), and the oil palm business being a community business (1.44).

The implication of this is that oil palm fruit entrepreneurs all agreed that their community value thrifty spending and saving culture, that there were no taboos that prevent people from engaging in oil palm business, the people of their community had a high affinity for observing cultural norms, the community people were innovative, their community encourage cooperative lives, believe in possession of material possession, places value on members meeting their financial responsibilities and take risks.

This agrees with Tanner (2017), who enumerated thrifty living, conformity to cultural laws, risk propensity, and collectivism as socio-cultural values that influence entrepreneurship.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by their ranked mean scores of community's cultural influence on oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities n=378

Statements	SD F (%)	D F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Ranked mean
Community culture					
Our community values a thrifty spending and saving culture	25 (6.6)	63 (16.7)	145 (38.4)	145 (38.4)	3.08
There are no taboos in my community that prevent oil palm entrepreneurs' involvement in oil palm activities	33 (8.7)	96 (25.4)	105 (27.8)	144 (38.1)	2.95
Conformity to cultural norms is high in my community	60 (15.9)	75 (19.8)	147 (38.9)	96 (25.4)	2.74
My community members are innovative by readily accepting new ideas	15 (4.0)	135 (35.7)	171 (45.2)	57 (15.1)	2.71
My community encourages the formation of cooperative	15 (4.0)	159 (42.1)	126 (33.3)	78 (20.6)	2.71
My community believes in the possession of material possessions	69 (18.3)	87 (23.0)	159 (42.1)	63 (16.7)	2.57
My community places value on members meeting their financial responsibilities	97 (25.7)	73 (19.3)	106 (28.0)	102 (27.0)	2.56
My community members do not mind taking risks	57 (15.1)	129 (34.1)	126 (33.3)	66 (17.5)	2.53
My community has a high level of social differentiation	180 (47.6)	105 (27.8)	67 (17.7)	26 (6.9)	1.84
	229	78	54	17	1.63

The oil palm business is my community business (60.6) (20.6) (14.3) (4.5)

Strongly agreed=4; Agreed=3; Disagreed=2 and Strongly disagreed=1

Grand mean score =2.53

Source: Field survey, 2025

Influence of the attitude of community members towards entrepreneurial of oil palm actors along the oil palm fruit processing and marketing value chain

The community strongly agreed that oil palm workers could contribute to community development (mean= 3.70) and were honest and hardworking (mean=3.42). The actors agreed that the community believed they could lift their community out of poverty (mean=2.62) and were respectable members of the society (mean=2.59) (Table 5). These positive statements show that actors in the oil palm processing and marketing value chains are accepted and viewed by the community as people with decent jobs and contributors to the social and economic development of the rural communities. They, however, also agreed that the community viewed them as diabolical (mean=2.52). The community members did not regard their activities as polluting the environment (mean=2.27), time-consuming (2.15), and filthy (2.07) according to the actors (Table 5).

The above result implies that the community members had a positive attitude (grand mean score=2.67) towards the activities of the oil palm entrepreneurs (Table 5). This implies that oil palm activities in the study area have a sure footing as a result of the positive attitude of the community members.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by their ranked mean scores of communities' attitudinal influence on oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities n=378

Statements	SD F (%)	D F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Ranked mean
Community attitude					
Oil palm entrepreneurs contribute to the development of the community	4 (1.1)	17 (4.5)	66 (17.5)	291 (77.0)	3.70
Oil palm entrepreneurs are honest and hardworking people	12 (3.29)	49 (13.0)	84 (22.2)	233 (61.6)	3.42
Oil palm processing and marketing can lift the community out of poverty	39 (10.3)	126 (33.3)	153 (40.5)	60 (15.9)	2.62
Oil palm entrepreneurs are respectable members of the community	36 (9.5)	156 (41.3)	114 (30.2)	72 (19.0)	2.59
Oil palm workers are diabolical	100 (26.5)	58 (15.3)	159 (42.1)	61 (16.1)	2.52
Oil palm processing pollutes the environment	33 (8.7)	96 (25.4)	189 (50.0)	60 (15.9)	2.27

Oil palm entrepreneurs do not have time for their families	17 (4.5)	76 (20.1)	230 (60.8)	55 (14.6)	2.15
Oil palm workers are dirty people	15 (4.0)	57 (15.1)	246 (65.1)	60 (15.9)	2.07

Strongly agreed=4; Agreed=3; Disagreed=2 and Strongly disagreed=1

Grand mean score =2.67

Source: Field survey, 2025

Level of community and institutional influence on actors' involvement

Results from Table 6 show the overall influence exerted by community and social institution actors' involvement in oil palm entrepreneurial activities. The total influence score obtained from family, religious, government, community culture and attitude, and the productive resources available in the entrepreneurs' community is grouped into high (above 78), average (66-77), and low (below 66) levels of influence. The mean overall influence is 76.73 with a standard deviation of 9.26, while the minimum and maximum scores were 50 and 99, respectively. Almost half (47.9%) of the respondents had a high level of influence exerted on their oil palm entrepreneurial involvement, while 39.4 percent and 12.7 percent had average and low levels of influence, respectively (Table 6).

Implications drawn from the above findings are that oil palm entrepreneurs in the study area were largely positively influenced, that is, encouraged by the variables in their social environment to become actively involved in oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities. Actors have the support of their families, religious institutions, and their communities, and this can be harnessed by government and non-governmental organizations to bring about development to the communities. These findings align with evidence that community embeddedness and institutional support significantly enhance rural entrepreneurial engagement through social capital, resource access, and legitimacy in agribusiness systems (Korsgaard et al., 2015; Stephan et al., 2019).

Table 6: Distribution of respondents by level of influence exerted by community and social institutions on their involvement in oil palm fruit entrepreneurial activities n=378

Level of influence	Percentage %	Frequencies
High (Above 77)	47.9	181
Average (66-77)	39.4	149
Low (Below 66)	12.7	48
Total	100.0	378

Source: Field survey, 2025

Hypothesis Testing

Correlation analysis showing the relationship between the community and institutional variables and the socio-economic status of actors in entrepreneurial activities

Evidence presented in Table 7 revealed that at $P \leq 0.01$, a positive and significant relationship existed between family variable ($r=2.57$), religion variable ($r=0.335$), community cultural variable ($r=0.188$), and community attitudinal variable ($r=0.168$) and actors' socio-economic status. This implies that the family and the religious institutions of the actors favour their

involvement in oil palm entrepreneurial activities. Also, the culture and the attitude of the communities the actors inhabit also positively impact their involvement in oil palm entrepreneurial activities. The roles of government ($r=-0.02$) had a negative relationship, and the presence of productive resources in the community ($r=0.008$) had a positive but not significant relationship with the actors' SES.

Table 7: Correlation analysis showing the relationship between community and institutional variables and the socio-economic status of actors in entrepreneurial activities

Community and institutional Variables	Correlation (r)	Coefficient of determination (r^2)	P-value
Family variable	0.257**	0.066	0.000
Religious variable	.335**	0.112	0.000
Role of government	-0.002	0.004	0.966
Availability of productive resources	0.008	0.000	0.883
Cultural variable	0.188**	0.035	0.000
Attitude variable	0.168**	0.028	0.001

** Significant at $P \leq 0.01$ (2-tailed)

Source: Field survey, 2025

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study analyzed the effect of institutional and community factors on the participation of actors in entrepreneurial activities in the value chain of oil palm fruits in the study area. The results indicated that family conditions, especially family type, family size, and family income and expenditure, had the most significant impact on entrepreneurial participation, with religious institutions having relatively low impacts. There was little evidence of government support for actors, particularly in terms of access to loans, extension services, and infrastructure, among others. The support of productive community resources (markets, labour, land, communication facilities, and schools) was, however, a positive influence on entrepreneurial engagement. Cultural values and community attitudes were largely supportive, fostering a spirit of thrift, cooperation, innovation, and positive social acceptance of the oil palm entrepreneurs.

The overall results suggest that the influence of institutions and communities on entrepreneurial involvement is generally strong, with the family, socio-cultural factors, and other informal sources of institutions being the main drivers. This highlights the need for building institutional support systems to complement existing informal vertical links and improve value chain development in achieving sustainable rural development and growth. Increased support for oil palm entrepreneurs should be achieved through improving access to credit, infrastructure, extension, cooperative development, and policy frameworks that facilitate institutional collaboration and sustainable value chain development in Nigeria.

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