Entrepreneurial Skills of Poultry Farmers for Production Sustainability in Kwara Central Senatorial District, Nigeria

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Abstract
The importance of the poultry industry in meeting the nation's daily protein needs and ensuring that youth farmers remain in business has made it imperative to identify entrepreneurial skills for them. Consequently, this study investigated the entrepreneurial skills of poultry farmers for production sustainability in Kwara Central Senatorial District, Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study. The research design adopted was a descriptive survey. The population for the study comprised all poultry farmers in Kwara Central Senatorial District. A total of 118 poultry farmers were sampled for the study. The instrument used was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The instrument was validated by three experts, and its reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.86. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that youth poultry farmers in Kwara Central Senatorial District required 31 major entrepreneurial skills for sustainable poultry production. Based on these findings, it was recommended that youth poultry farmers improve their entrepreneurial skills by attending regular workshops, seminars, and conferences organised by relevant agricultural agencies on poultry production. Furthermore, the government should provide support to youths in acquiring relevant equipment, while banks should offer loans with low interest rates to registered youth poultry farmers to boost production.

Key words: Entrepreneurial Skill, Youth, Poultry production, Sustainability.

Introduction

Poultry encompasses a broad variety of domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowls, and ostriches. According to Omiti and Okuthe (2008), poultry is defined as all domesticated birds kept for their meat, eggs, feathers, aesthetic value, and other purposes. Poultry production is a crucial sector in livestock farming due to its high feed conversion rate, high fecundity, and significant contribution to the economic development of Nigeria (Ezeibe, 2010). It is an essential part of farming in Nigeria, serving as a primary food source and a secondary occupation to supplement the income of marginal farming families. The Poultry Association of Nigeria (PAN) reports that the poultry sub-sector contributes 25% to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annually, making it the largest single contributor to agriculture.

Poultry is one of the most important emerging agro-based industries in Nigeria. The apparent increase in poultry production can be attributed to its advantages over other livestock species, such as modest initial capital requirements, less labour intensity, smaller land requirements, and a short generation interval that allows a quick return on investment (Atteh, 2015). Poultry farming also requires relatively less capital and land compared to crop or dairy farming. It provides quick cash income, creates employment opportunities for small-scale farmers, landless labourers, unemployed individuals, and destitute women, and generates income from the sale of eggs and meat, which is used to meet household and farming expenses.

Poultry eggs and meat are important sources of human food. According to Olaiya, Yisa, Adelowo, Aka-Tanimo, and Emmenaa (2013), poultry provides a significant source of high-quality animal protein from meat and eggs, which have greater biological value than plant proteins. Poultry products are consumed across various cultural groups and are free from taboos. They are valued for their low cholesterol, abundance of minerals and vitamins, and lack of social obligations. Poultry is also relatively free from the pathological, ecological, and economic constraints that affect the production of other livestock species in Nigeria (Olaiya et al., 2013; Olaiya et al., 2014).

Beyond nutritional benefits, poultry plays a significant role in generating income for households. Kehinde, Aguihe, and Daniel (2012) highlighted that poultry provides a ready source of income and development for many Nigerian households due to its quick return on investment, ease of management, and minimal space requirements. Given its importance, individuals engaged

in poultry farming, particularly young farmers, should be equipped with the requisite skills to sustain their businesses, especially in the face of challenges.

The youthful age has been described by Akande (2016) as a phase of adventure and a bridge between adolescence and adulthood. Youths are agile and energetic individuals with active mental capabilities, making them suitable for training. The National Population Commission (2012) defines youths as individuals aged 18 to 35 years. Many in this age group have completed tertiary education and are ready for employment, often exploring ventures like poultry farming. However, when youths face challenges in business due to inexperience or other factors, they may abandon the venture and be drawn into criminal activities.

If not productively engaged, the energy of youths can be channelled into vices detrimental to society. The high rates of youth restiveness and criminal activities in Kwara Central Senatorial District underscore the need for productive engagement. Criminal acts such as cheating, kidnapping, cybercrimes, and armed robbery are prevalent, necessitating serious efforts to involve youths in positive ventures.

The Federal Government of Nigeria, in its bid to create jobs for youths and ensure sustainable development, has initiated numerous developmental projects aimed at equipping youths with relevant entrepreneurial and vocational skills (Nwaobiala, Ndukwe & Ekumankama, 2016). The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) (2019) encourages youths to explore agricultural opportunities such as poultry farming for wealth creation and employment. However, engaging in any business venture today requires a focus on sustainability, defined by UNESCO (2021) as a paradigm balancing environmental, societal, and economic considerations for improved quality of life. Sustainable poultry farming involves ensuring the enterprise generates continuous income, grows the entrepreneur's economic stability, and maintains the environment for future use.

Entrepreneurship involves identifying, developing, and employing innovative ideas for wealth creation (Ogedi & Ukandu, 2016). According to Monday (2012), entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. Skills, as defined by Okorie (2001), are human capacities to perform activities with agility and competence. Youth poultry farmers require entrepreneurial skills to make informed decisions, set goals, mobilise resources, manage risks, market their products, and maximise profits. The lack of these skills has led to the failure of many poultry ventures, leaving youths jobless and exacerbating unemployment.

The decline in the poultry industry, as noted by Oladiro (2006), is due to factors like high feed costs and poor management knowledge. These challenges have resulted in low productivity and disease outbreaks. Proper entrepreneurial skills are crucial for the sustainability and viability of poultry farming, shielding enterprises from common pitfalls. Challenges such as financial constraints, disease outbreaks, and lack of processing facilities can be mitigated with effective management and entrepreneurial skills (Otoo, 2009).

Poultry farming has the potential to yield high returns if managed with the appropriate entrepreneurial skills. Identifying and addressing the skill gaps among youth poultry farmers is crucial for sustaining their ventures. With proper training and entrepreneurial insight, poultry farming can become a viable source of wealth creation and employment. This study aims to identify the entrepreneurial skills required by youth poultry farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the entrepreneurial skills of poultry farmers for production sustainability in Kwara Central Senatorial District, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated:

1. The planning skills required by youth poultry farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District.
2. The production or technical skills required by youth poultry farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District.
3. The marketing skills required by youth poultry farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District.
4. The constraints encountered by youth farmers in poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the planning skills required by youth poultry farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District?
2. What are the production or technical skills required by youth poultry farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District?

3. What are the marketing skills required by youth poultry farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District?
4. What are the constraints encountered by youth farmers in poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District?

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey research method. Survey research design, as explained by Nworgu (2015), is a type of study aimed at collecting data on the characteristics, features, or facts about a given population and describing them systematically. This method usually involves the use of questionnaires to elicit information from respondents. The target population for the study consisted of youth poultry farmers in Kwara Central Senatorial District, Kwara State. One hundred and eighteen (118) registered youth poultry farmers with the State Ministry of Agriculture constituted the sample for this study. Respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for this study was a researcher-designed questionnaire entitled **"**Entrepreneurial Skills Required by Youth Poultry Farmers Questionnaire (ESRYPFQ)". The instrument had two sections: Section A: Demographic data of the respondents. Section B: Information on planning skills, management skills, marketing skills, and constraints related to poultry production. A Likert-type scale with the following response options was used for the questionnaire: Highly Required (4), Required (3), Slightly Required (2) and Not Required (1) and Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The instrument was validated by two experts in Agricultural Education and one expert from the Department of Animal Production, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. It was subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a reliability index of 0.86. The four research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the planning skills required by youth poultry farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Planning Skills Required in Poultry Production

S/N	Planning skills required in poultry production	M	SD	Remark
1.	Land acquisition for poultry production	3.77	0.50	HR

S/N	Planning skills required in poultry production	M	SD	Remark
2.	The skills to obtain credit and finance needed in poultry production	3.62	0.54	HR
3.	The skills to plan for facilities needed in poultry production	3.62	0.51	HR
4.	Expert consultation before starting poultry business	3.37	0.76	HR
5.	The ability to adopt new technologies in poultry production	3.26	0.81	HR
6.	The ability to identify labour requirements for poultry production	3.34	0.69	HR
7.	The ability to adhere to housing requirement for poultry production	3.61	0.56	HR
8.	The ability to identify the type and breed of poultry to rear	3.57	0.59	HR
9.	The skills to take community needs into consideration when planning	3.56	0.65	HR
10.	Skills required for formulating feed (standard but cost-effective feeds) for poultry birds.	3.64	0.61	HR

HR- Highly Required

Table 1 shows that items 1–10 are the planning skills required by youth poultry farmers in Kwara Central Senatorial District. From the table, it can be seen that all the listed skills were highly needed, as all 10 skills had high mean values ranging from 3.26 to 3.77. This implies that youth poultry farmers require all 10 planning skills for sustainable poultry production.

Research Question 2: What are the productions or technical skills required by youth poultry farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Production or Technical Skills Required for Sustainable Poultry Production

S/N	Production or technical skills required in poultry production	M	SD	Remark
1	Skills in managing the environment of poultry farm	3.80	0.40	HR
2	The ability to prepare poultry houses before stocking	3.61	0.57	HR
3	The skills to know the appropriate stocking density	3.41	0.76	HR
4	Skills for sanitary or biosecurity measures in poultry housing.	3.71	0.53	HR
5	Use of drugs and vaccines to prevent pests and diseases	3.74	0.48	HR
6	Good health management practices	3.79	0.43	HR
7	The ability to make use of modern equipment in poultry houses	3.48	0.65	HR
8	The ability to manage poultry waste/skills in converting waste to energy or animal manure	3.50	0.64	HR
9	Skills in managing pecking.	3.59	0.60	HR
10	Keeping of farm records.	3.58	0.62	HR

S/N	Production or technical skills required in poultry production	M	SD	Remark

HR- Highly Required

Table 2 shows that the production or technical skills required by youth poultry farmers in Kwara Central Senatorial District were highly necessary. This is evident as all the items on production or technical skills had high mean values ranging from 3.41 to 3.80. This implies that most of the youth poultry farmers who participated in the study believe that the listed production or technical skills are essential for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District.

Research Question 3: What are the marketing skills required by youth poultry farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on Marketing Skills Required in Poultry Production

S/N	Marketing skills required in poultry production	M	SD	Remark
1	Ability to choose best time to sell product	3.33	0.78	HR
2	Ability to analyze demand, supply and price trend of poultry products	3.30	0.82	HR
3	Familiarity with the modern style of packaging products	3.21	0.66	MR
4	Possibility to establish contractual agreement	3.21	0.72	MR
5	Ability to supply product directly to consumers (rather than selling to slaughter houses)	3.28	0.78	HR
6	Ability to analyze demand of poultry products	3.39	0.72	HR
7	The advertising skills (physical and online advertising skills) in marketing poultry products	3.25	0.75	HR
8	The ability of the poultry manager to relate with the customers	3.59	0.63	HR
9	Ability to prepare production towards festive periods	3.50	0.64	HR
10	Keeping accurate record of sale	3.58	0.71	HR
11	Skills to manage market in case of glut (excess)	3.42	0.80	HR

HR-Highly Required

Table 3 shows that 9 out of 11 marketing skills required by youth poultry farmers in Kwara Senatorial District were highly necessary, while the remaining 2 were moderately necessary, as listed under the marketing skills items in the table. The mean values, which range from 3.21 to 3.59, indicate that these skills are highly required. This implies that the majority of the youth poultry farmers who participated in this study consider these marketing skills essential for sustainable poultry production.

Research Question 4: What are the constraints encountered by youth farmers for sustainable poultry production in Kwara Central Senatorial District?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Constraints to Sustainable Poultry Production in Kwara Central Senatorial District

	ITEMS	M	SD	Remark
1.	Unhygienic environmental conditions/poor sanitation	3.43	0.69	SA
2.	High mortality rate	3.39	0.60	A
3.	Lack of quality day old chicks from local hatcheries	3.34	0.69	SA
4.	Product marketing constraints	3.34	0.64	A
5.	Lack of technical knowledge in poultry production on the part of farmers	3.51	0.62	SA
6.	High cost of feeds	3.55	0.56	SA
7.	High cost of drugs and vaccines	3.45	0.63	SA
8.	Competition from imported frozen chicken	3.39	0.67	SA
9.	Market/price fluctuation	3.27	0.62	A
10.	Poor marketing information	3.23	0.62	A
11.	Poor extension service	3.18	0.53	A
12.	Lack of training on modern poultry production practices	3.33	0.54	A
13.	Problem of storage facilities	3.29	0.62	A
14.	Inadequate training among poultry personnel	3.41	0.60	A
15.	Inadequate record keeping	3.35	0.60	A
16.	Lack of capital/fund	3.42	0.59	SA
17.	Lack of access to poultry production experts	3.16	0.66	A

SA: Strongly Agree & A: Agree

Table 4 shows that most of the constraints encountered by youth farmers in poultry production were as listed in the table. Six of the 17 constraints received a "strongly agreed" response, while 10 were simply "agreed upon." This indicates that most of the constraints, such as unhygienic environmental conditions/poor sanitation, high mortality rates, lack of quality day-old chicks from local hatcheries, product marketing challenges, lack of technical knowledge in poultry production on the part of farmers, high costs of feed, drugs, and vaccines, competition from imported frozen chicken, and market/price fluctuations, were significant barriers to sustainable poultry production for youth farmers.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that planning skills such as land acquisition for poultry production, obtaining credit and finance needed for poultry production, planning for facilities required in poultry production, consulting experts before starting a poultry business, adopting new technologies in poultry production, identifying labour requirements for poultry production, adhering to housing requirements for poultry production, identifying the type and breed of poultry

to rear, considering community needs during planning, and formulating standard yet cost-effective feed for poultry birds are highly required by youth poultry farmers in Kwara Central Senatorial District. This might be due to the fact that most youths venture into poultry production enterprises without formal training or orientation. This aligns with the findings of David (2013), who posited that entrepreneurship entails acquiring the managerial skills needed to successfully start and run a profitable farm business such as poultry farming. The author further stressed that this managerial skill development is achievable through education and training.

The findings also revealed that skills in managing the poultry farm environment, preparing poultry houses before stocking, knowing the appropriate stocking density, implementing sanitary or biosecurity measures in poultry housing, using drugs and vaccines to prevent pests and diseases, practising good health management, using modern equipment in poultry houses, managing poultry waste (including converting waste to energy or manure), managing pecking, and keeping farm records are the production or technical skills required for sustainable poultry production by youth farmers in Kwara Central Senatorial District. This response may stem from the fact that not all youths engaged in poultry farming have studied agriculture. Consequently, much of their poultry production knowledge is based on information from neighbours or farmers in their vicinity, which may not be sufficient for running a successful poultry enterprise. This concurs with the submissions of Ogbuanya and Bakare (2014), who stated that entrepreneurial skills needed by youths for successful enterprises include practical and technological/technical skills, among others.

The findings further showed that all the identified marketing skills are highly required by youth poultry farmers in Kwara Central Senatorial District. Among these skills are the ability to choose the best time to sell products, analyse demand, supply, and price trends of poultry products, utilise modern packaging methods, establish contractual agreements, supply products directly to consumers rather than through slaughterhouses, prepare production for festive periods, keep accurate sales records, and manage market conditions during a glut (excess). The findings align with the assertion of Ohaegbulem (2012), who classified entrepreneurship into four categories, including distribution and services. These distribution services, also referred to as marketing services, include wholesale and retail trading, advertising, transportation, and various communication businesses. Similarly, Ogieva (2003) outlined activities involved in marketing agricultural produce, such as assembling, canning, advertising, fixing prices, and keeping records.

The findings also revealed constraints to sustainable poultry production as identified by youth poultry farmers in Kwara Central Senatorial District. These constraints include unhygienic environmental conditions/poor sanitation, high mortality rates, lack of quality day-old chicks from local hatcheries, product marketing challenges, lack of technical knowledge among farmers, high costs of feed, and high costs of drugs and vaccines. This is likely due to a lack of adequate and basic knowledge before embarking on poultry production, which has cost many farmers their hard-earned money and led to financial bankruptcy, paralysing numerous poultry businesses. This is consistent with Asare (2010), who identified high poultry feed prices as a major cause of farm failure. Esiobu, Onubuogu, and Okoli (2014) similarly reported that medication, vaccination, and feed costs constitute substantial input expenses in poultry production. Otoo (2009) also explained that poultry farmers often exhaust their resources on feed and duties.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that youth farmers in poultry production require various entrepreneurial skills, including planning, management, and marketing skills. Furthermore, youths in poultry production face several constraints in Kwara Central Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

1. Youth farmers should endeavour to update their entrepreneurial skills by participating in workshops, seminars, and conferences.
2. The Government of Nigeria should organise programmes at national, state, and community levels to train farmers on improved rearing and production methods.
3. Efforts should be made by the government to establish and equip skill acquisition and training centres to enhance the effectiveness of small-scale poultry farmers.
4. The government should provide financial assistance to small-scale poultry farmers in the form of soft loans to prevent sector decline caused by unprofitable operations or increased product prices.
5. The identified entrepreneurial skills should be incorporated into the training modules of skill acquisition centres to train youth poultry farmers.

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