

ABSTRACT

Many households in the globe continue to depend on woodcarving and basketry among other forms of traditional material culture to support their daily activities despite competition from factory-made items, whether imported or local. In other countries studies have shown how governments support such an informal sector, yet that is not the case in Uganda. In particular, households in Kanoni and Engari-sya sub-counties, Kiruhura district have been reported to use woodcarvings and basketry items, yet existing literature do not tell about factors contributing to the continued use of such items. It is also not clear how households in Kiruhura district perceive the use of woodcarving and basketry items in their socio-economic enterprises. Similarly, the contribution of these items to household socio-economic activities is not presented in any official government statistics. Therefore, this study analyzed the factors influencing the production of woodcarving and basketry items, investigated the perceptions of household members towards use of woodcarving and basketry items, and assessed the contribution of woodcarving and basketry items to household socio-economic enterprises in Kanoni and Engari-sya sub-counties. The study was guided by the theory of practice by Pierre Bourdieu (1977). The study used ethnographic design. Study participants were selected using purposive and snow ball techniques. The study involved four key informants (two elders, one religious leader and one local leader), twelve informants (seven woodcarvers, five basket makers) who were interviewed in-depth and 36 people selected from households in Kanoni and Engari-sya sub-counties that use woodcarvings and basketry in their socio-economic enterprises who participated in three focus group discussions (FGDs). In addition, participant observation and photography were also used to collect data. These qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. The study found out that the production of basketry and woodcarving items persist in the study area because communities cannot afford modern technology, and that households need to preserve their identity and cultural pride. The local perceptions about the production of traditional artifacts and the use of woodcarving and basketry items in household livelihood enterprises is influenced by factors external to the local culture such as world religions, western formal education structures and government policies that do not promote use of woodcarving and basketry items. Woodcarving and basketry items contribute significantly to local household socio-economic activities, yet some households and policy makers were not aware of this. There is need to create awareness about the importance of woodcarving and basketry in contemporary household social and livelihood initiatives. This can be achieved through sensitization campaigns supported by education institutions; faith based organizations and local leaders because these are socio-economic development actors who are in touch with the households.