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ASSESSING THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE HANDS OF RURAL YOUTH IN ORIADE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the perception of rural youths toward Agriculture as a profession in Oriade local government of Osun State. Data for the study were obtained through interview and structured questionnaires administered to one hundred and twenty respondents. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents (81.7%) were young and vibrant falling under age bracket of 15 – 25 years. However, only 2.5% of the respondents were into farming while many of them engage in various types of business. The findings further showed that majority of the respondents were secondary school leavers and this accounts for 40%. Although 80.8% of the respondents were of the opinion that farming can be considered as business but still have a negative perception about farming as a profession considering the grand mean value of 4.06 of those that said farming work is tedious and does not bring daily income, agriculture is for old people, making a choice of career in agriculture is tantamount to choosing to be poor. Access to loans, land, infrastructures, etc. also indicated negative perception of respondents in the study area. Based on these findings, it is recommended that land should be made available to rural youths; it will still be of good advantage if the government can help in the provision of farm machineries and basic social amenities like adequate water supply, good electricity, good road network linking rural-urban areas so as to facilitate efficient marketing of agricultural products.

Keywords: Future, Agriculture, youths, assessment and Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the main economic activity in the rural sector of Nigeria but has suffered negligence from the demographic shifts which characterized the changes in the political structure of the federation as fuelled by the huge revenues from crude oil exports (Iwuagu, 2006, Akpan, 2012). These have two consequences which are: Firstly, there is depopulation of the rural sector as the virile and educated youths drift to the urban centers where numerous construction and capital investment projects offer more remunerative employment opportunities. These rural residents, which made up 80.7% of the population in 1963 reduced to 70.1, 53.0 and 51.6% in 1985, 2005, and 2012 respectively, such that the estimated rural population growth is 1.1% compared to 4.0% urban population growth (World

Bank, 2012). The farmer population is ageing such that per capital productivity and output have declined. The effect of ageing could be a loss of at least 30% of the rural sector workforce over the next ten years (Bloom *et al.*, 2011).

Thus, despite the contribution to economic growth, there are skill and labour shortages in the sector which ensue from the youth's lack of interest in choosing agriculture as a professional career. The youth perceive agriculture as an exclusive activity of the rural sector whose lack of basic social infrastructure and amenities- electricity, pipe borne water, educational and health care institutes, motorable roads, financial institutions etc. (World Bank, 2012) makes it unattractive to live in. Certain factors influence career choice among rural youths. Ferry (2006) identified schooling as one of the cultural and socio-economic factors affecting the choice of a career. Farming is considered a default career for villagers

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with little or no education in many third-world countries. Even in developed countries, youths in rural areas with limited access to higher education may simply choose to inherit the family farm, and continue to raise cattle, manage chicken coops or tend to the corn crops (Wilson, 2008). Resources availability especially land and access to credit facilities may influence the choice of agriculture as a career. The influence of peer groups is also an important factor in choosing a professional career (Esters & Bowen, 2004; Azubuike, 2011). The role of youths in agriculture in Nigeria has been down played. As reported by Asaju *et al.* (2014) and Iwayemi (2014), employment data are very hard to obtain and even where unemployment registers exist at all, it is always limited to the urban areas alone leaving rural populace to feel inferior in the development of Nigeria agriculture.

It is unfortunate that our youths that ought to carry on with agriculture in rural areas are now escaping to urban areas in search of white collar job. Rather than contribute to the development of agriculture by investing money into the sector, they have almost succeeded in increasing the population of the urban society and putting more barrier to rural agricultural development (Eboh, 2008). The recent trend in terms of industrialisation and modernization of urban areas to the neglect of rural areas is also affecting the rural areas in terms of agriculture. This is most especially in the area of the labour force.

Problem of the Study: The continuous decline in agricultural production over the years has been a major source of concern to both government and the nation at large. The role which youths have played in this situation in terms of their attitude towards agriculture is no longer news. With industrialisation and modernisation of the urban centres, most youths have left the rural areas in pursuit of greener pastures and improved social life. African farmers are ageing and the implications are negatively staggering; not only for food security but also for transfer of necessary knowledge, skills, expertise and techniques and for employment and economic development. According to average age of a farmer are 52 in Brazil, 57 in the USA and 60 in Africa (World Bank, 2008).

It is the realization of the importance of youth in increasing Agricultural production that necessitated this study. Since the foremost turning point in rural youths lives involves the career choice they make.

Objectives of the Study: The general objective of the study was to assess the Future of Agriculture in the hands of Rural Youths in Oriade Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. ascertain the socio-economic attributes of the respondent in the study area,
2. determine factors influencing their choice to build career in agriculture,
3. identify the aspect(s) of agriculture that rural youths in the study locale have interest in,
4. assess the perception of respondents towards making a choice of career in agriculture and to
5. determine other profession apart from agriculture that respondents prefer to engage in.

Hypotheses testing: H₀1: There is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their perception towards agriculture as a profession.

H₀2: There is no significant relationship between the availability of other jobs and the perception of respondents towards agriculture as a profession.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Osun State, Nigeria, located on latitude 7.5000°N and longitude 4.5000°E of the equator. It has sixteen local government areas and the major occupation is agriculture as the inhabitants engaged mainly in the production of sufficient food crops such as tubers (yam, cassava, cocoyam and potato), grains (maize, guinea corn) and cash crops like cocoa, oil palm, kolanut, coconut and varieties of fruits for domestic consumption and as inputs for agro allied industries and for export. It has a land area of 9,251 km² of land area with a total population of two million, two hundred and three thousand and sixteen (1991 census) but increased to four million, one hundred and thirty seven thousand, six hundred and twenty seven as at 2005 census report (lawnigeria.com). Study employed the use of a well-structured interview schedule and questionnaire which made use of both open and close ended questions.

A multistage random sampling procedure was used to select one hundred and twenty respondents for the study. The first stage involved random selection of four communities from the study area; the second stage involved the division of each of the community into five wards. The third stage captured the random selection of three wards out of the five wards while the fifth

stage involved the random selection of ten (10) respondents from each ward making forty (40) respondents per community and a total of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents for the study. The data were analysed using statistical package for social science (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents:

The result from Table 3.1 revealed that the largest percentage of the age distribution of the respondents fell between ages 15 and 25 accounting for 81.7 % of the total distribution. This implies that majority of the youths were very agile to engage in farming activities in the study area. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Abdullahi (2010) in his work on the attitude of rural youths towards farming, who found out that 55.8% of respondents fell between the ages of 15 and 25 and disagrees with Ayanda *et al.* (2012) who revealed in his work on Perception of Kwara State University Agricultural Students on Farming that majority of their respondents fell between the ages of 16 to 20. The distribution shown in Table 3.1 show that 55.0 percent of the respondents were males while 45.0 percent were females, this shows that majority of the

respondents were male probably because of the persistent traditional method of farming in the study area. This is line with Adebo & Sekumade (2013) who also found out that 55% of their respondents were males and 45% were females.

Majority (70.8) of the respondents were Christians while only 29.2 percent were Muslims. Table 3.1 indicated that 75.8 percent of the respondents were single while 24.2 percent were married, this finding pointed that they were single youths in the study area that can dedicate their time to farming and this disagrees with Sunday, 2011 who found out that 70% of His respondents were married and 30% were single.

The distribution in Table 3.1 shows that 40.0 percent of the respondents had secondary school education while 19.2 percent of them had university education and only 0.8 percent had modern/technical school education. This implies that majority of the respondents in the study area were educated and this will help in the adoption of innovation. This is in line with the assertion of Abdullahi (2010) who reported that 35.8% of his respondents had secondary school education which is the highest.

Table 1. Respondent's distribution by socio-economic characteristics.

Socio-economic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
15-25	98	81.7
26-35	20	16.7
36-45	02	1.7
Sex		
Male	66	55.0
Female	54	45.0
Religion		
Christianity	85	70.8
Islam	35	29.2
Marital status		
Single	91	75.8
Married	29	24.2
Educational status		
No formal education/non-literate	4	3.3
Primary school education	5	4.2
Secondary school education	48	40.0
Modern /technical school education	01	0.8
Ordinary national diploma/Higher national Diploma	29	32.5
University education	23	19.2
Total	120	100.0

Table 2. Factors affecting respondents' choice of career in agriculture.

Model Summary							
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
					R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.394a	.155	.110	.474	.155	3.458	.004
a. Predictors: (Constant), friends, gender, age, lack of jobs, personality, parents							
b. Dependent Variable: agriculture							

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.654	6	.776	3.458	.004b
	Residual	25.346	113	.224		
	Total	30.000	119			

a. Dependent Variable: agriculture

b. Predictors: (Constant), friends, gender, age, lack of other jobs, personality, parents

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.	
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.378	.071	.351	.000	
	Age	-.092	.192	-.043	.433	
	Gender	.122	.247	.044	.322	
	Personality	.560	.138	.381	.000	
	Parents	.153	.110	.136	.164	
	Lack of other jobs	-.078	.166	-.043	.639	
	Friends	.289	.206	.126	.163	

a. Dependent Variable: agriculture

$$Y = X1 + X2 + X3 + X4 + X5 + X6 + C$$

C = Agriculture

X1 = age

X2 = gender

X3 = personality

X4 = parents

X5 = lack of jobs

X6 = friends

R² = 0.155

R = 0.394

Adjusted R² = 0.110

The regression results revealed the Factors affecting respondent choice of career in agriculture was significant. This implies that age, gender, personality, parents, lack of other jobs and friend are the major factors that determine respondents' choice of career in agriculture.

Constraints to Rural Youth Participation in Farming Activities: Findings from Table 3.2 revealed that majority of the respondents identified lack of good road /storage facilities and loan from Government with the mean of 4.37 and 4.36 as the major constraints preventing them from participating in Agricultural activities.

Table 3. Constraint to rural youth participation.

Constraints	Mean	Standard dev.
Provision of good roads and storage facilities	4.37	0.97
Loan from government	4.36	0.95
Land	4.26	1.04
Farm machineries	4.16	1.07
Adequate training by extension agents	3.93	1.29
Agro-chemical	3.88	0.97

Continue...

New technologies should be communication	3.82	1.05
Constant information on agriculture	3.46	1.12
Irrigation	3.26	1.10
Extension work	3.25	1.29

Table 3.3 below shows that rural youth has negative perception on agriculture looking at the grand mean value of 4.06 in which they are of the general view that farming is a tedious profession. This shows the obvious reason why youth do not want to participate in agrarian activities and does not want any occupation in agriculture at all.

Table 4. Perception on agriculture as a profession.

Perception	Mean
Farming is tedious	4.06
Farming is lucrative	3.83
Agriculture is very key to my community	3.81
Agriculture is a part of my everyday life	3.78
It doesn't bring daily income like other job	3.76
Farmers still use crude implements	3.63
I prefer other degrading jobs than engaging in agriculture	3.63
Farm work is a dirty job	3.58
Farming work cannot be completely depended on	3.43
Profitability is very low	3.38
Farmers are notable people	3.02
Farming is regarded as a dumping ground for people that could not secure non-agriculture jobs	2.79
Farming is a waste of precious time that can be used for other promising activities	2.72
Farming is for old ones	2.32
Farming is for poor people	2.30

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristic of the respondents and their perception towards agriculture as a profession.

Hypothesis tested (Table 4) showed that socio-economic characteristics which include sex (X² = 1.857), age (X² = 18.600), and occupation (X² = 48.809) has a significant relationship with the perception of youth towards agriculture as a profession. Religion and marital status with (X² = 6.132) and (X² = 7.699) respectively are not significant which implies that they does have any effect on the perception of youth towards agriculture as a profession.

Table 5. Chi-square Analysis of the Relationship between socio-economic characteristic of the respondents and their perception towards agriculture as a profession.

Variable	Chi-square	Df	p-value	Decision
Sex	1.857	4	0.000	Sig
Age	18.600	8	0.017	Sig
Occupation	48.809	2	0.000	Sig
Marital status	7.699	4	0.103	Not sig
Religion	6.132	4	0.762	Not sig

Key: Significant at 0.05 level

H₀3: There is no significant relationship between the availability of other jobs and the perception of respondents towards agriculture as a profession

Hypothesis tested (Table 5) showed that socio-economic characteristics of availability (X² = 76.660) has a significant relationship with the perception of youth towards agriculture as a profession. This implies that if other jobs that are less tedious and income motivated are available, the respondent won't consider agriculture as a profession.

Table 6. Chi-square Analysis of the Relationship availability and their perception towards agriculture as a profession

Variable	Chi-square	Df	p-value	Decision
Availability of other job	76.660	7	0.000	Sig

Key: Significant at 0.05 level

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The general perception and participation of youths in agriculture has been a major concern for the nation as youths involvement in agriculture could have been an additional boost for the economy and thereby improving the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Based on the findings of this research, it was clearly found out that age, sex, occupation, level of education and availability of other jobs has a significant relationship with the level of respondents' perception on agriculture as a profession. Furthermore, the perception of farming work being tedious, it does not bring daily income, agriculture is for old people, making a choice of career in agriculture is tantamount to choosing to be poor, etc. are the numerous reasons why rural youths do not want to make a choice of career in agriculture. Further investigation is required of the role of parents' interventions in the continuum of Agriculture in Nigeria and also the role of teacher consultation interventions needs to be examined and evaluated.

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