

Youths Perception of Agriculture in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined youth's perception of Agriculture in Ondo State of Nigeria. Considering the fact that secondary school students constitute the majority of the targeted youths, 150 randomly selected secondary school students from 150 randomly selected schools in Ondo State of Nigeria were considered for the study. Questionnaire was used to gather data. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. Data analysis involved the use of frequency and percentage, likert-type scale and mean. Results indicated that students perceive practicing Agriculture as a poor and unbecoming profession, seeing it as a kind of profession that is only useful for retirees to while away time. Parents' socio-economic statuses had a significant relationship with students' perception of Agriculture. The implications of the findings were listed, and suggestions were made for stakeholders in education industry to adopt in other to improve the perception of students so as to improve the agriculture industry.

Keyword: Youth, Agriculture, Profession, Perception.

Introduction

Agriculture is a vital tool an individual can use for personal economic development and growth. It facilitates the training of individuals for useful employment in trade, industries, agriculture, and business. A focus on agriculture is generally believed to be a panacea for sustainable developments of any nation (Barbu & Capusneanu 2012). This is because agricultural sector amongst other potentials, offer a wide range of employment opportunities particularly because of the multifaceted and multi-functional nature of the sector. However, the oil boom in the 1970s submerged the agricultural sector (Olajide *et al.*, 2012). In the early stages of economic development, agriculture plays a dominant role in the employment of resource and generation of income. This was the case prior to oil era when agriculture employed more than 2/3 of the labour force and contribute about 1/3 of gross domestic products (Akpokadge, 1991).

Agriculture is the base through which most developed nations achieved their industrialization. The need to emphasize large participation in agriculture/agribusiness sector to enhance food

security cannot be overemphasized. This is because the future of agriculture in most developing countries might be bleak if the bulk of the production efforts were relinquished to the aged farming population. Moreover, Adekunle *et al.*, (2009) stipulate that most of the aged are less or even, not educated.

One of the youth’s greatest problem is that of decision making on career choice. They place value on adult world work and may want to acquire the required education that would accomplish their wishes. But some are eliminated based on factors within and outside the individual which could be intra-personal, inter-personal, and extra-personal (Hewitt, 2010).

Chen (2008) noted that human development is affected by its socialization with other people in the environment. Specifically the academic achievements of students are conjectured to be correlational by the support given by the parents, the teachers and the peer of teenagers that affect their level of academic performance. Studies have also shown that the influence of peer groups among student can boost their anxiety especially pertaining to their education (Kadir *et al.*, 2018). The relationship within the group with its peers are co-related with each other, hence the direction of this particular relationship should be monitored were these relationships should go considering all possible factors correlated within the groups outcome (Wilson, 2016). Such factors could be responsible for the erroneous perception that agricultural science has no future prospects for those who choose to further their education in agriculture as they will only end up as mere farmers, as further affected the growth of agricultural industries. In the opinion of Orodho (2014), students are of the perception that agricultural science has no future prospects for them.

According to World Bank (2012), the youths 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 motor able roads, financial institutions which makes it unattractive to live in.

Methodology

The population for the study was the secondary school SSS 3 students in Ondo State. Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The items in the questionnaire were developed to provide answers to research questions in order to measure the youth’s perception of agriculture. The research questions contained five items each. The questionnaires had four sections. The statement was on four-point rating scale where strongly-Agree = 4 points, Agree =3 points, Disagree =2 points, Strongly-Disagree =1 point. Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the given statement.

Data Collection and Analysis

The mean was calculated for each item using the formula

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N} \quad \text{where } \bar{X} = \text{mean}$$

\sum = summation sign
 X = Nominal value (rating)
 N = total number of respondents.

The grand mean score for each selection of items were calculated by summing up the mean ratings of all items in the group divided by the total number of items in the group using the formula.

$$M_s = \frac{\sum M_r}{N} \quad \text{Where } \sum = \text{summation sign}$$

M_s = mean score for each group
 N = number of items in the group.

A cut off point was determined for minimum score, any item obtain to be accepted as satisfactory or important. This was obtained by adding up all the nominal values assigned to the response codes and dividing by the number of response categories as follows:

$$\frac{\text{total nominal value assigned}}{\text{number of response categories}} = \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

The real limits of 2.5 which was half a measurement unit above and one half a measurement unit below, were calculated to represent the upper limit of the cut-off point and the lower limit of the cut-off point respectively using the interval scale of 0.05 therefore, the upper limit of the cut-off point is $2.5 + 0.05 = 2.55$.

Thus, mean values 2.55 or greater imply Agree while those less than 2.55 imply Disagree.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Percentage and frequency of respondents by sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	87	58%
Female	63	42%
Total	150	100%

Source: Field work, 2019.

The demographic results from table 1 shows that 87 (58%) of the respondents are male while 63 (42%) are female.

Table 2: Attitude towards Agriculture

1	I do not like Agriculture because of too much work	70	41	28	11	3.13	Agree
2	I enjoy working on the farm	37	13	79	21	2.44	Disagree
3	I believe that studying agriculture is a waste of my time	102	25	14	3	3.42	Agree
4	I do not like agriculture because it is a poor and dirty job	131	10	8	1	3.80	Agree
5	I like Agricultural Science during harvesting only.	100	30	15	5	3.50	Agree

Source: Field work, 2019.

Result shows that youths do not like agriculture because of too much work and hence they do not find it enjoyable working on the farm. Results also shows that respondents agreed that studying agriculture is a waste of time. According to Ovwigho & Ifie (2009), Nigeria youngsters have the potentials to promote agriculture but most of them are not interested in agricultural activities. These lack of interest is probably because of ineffective pedagogic approaches from both teachers and students. This calls a rethink for effective engagement of the youths, since they are a sector of the population who possess higher drive for development and are most found in schools (Paisley, 2014).

In the course of this research, it was also discovered that agriculture is perceived as a poor and dirty job. However, majority of the respondents responded to have liked agriculture during harvest time. Food security may easily be achieved when the masses are encouraged to participate in agricultural activities using mechanized implements, having access to agricultural credit facilities, the provision of safety nets as well as health care facilities for farmers. All these will help transform the agricultural sector, increase productivity and ensure food security (Osabohien *et al.*, 2020). Correspondingly, Chee and Leong-Yong, (2011) noted that students have misconceptions of agriculture work-related careers because they have the impression that all jobs in this area have very low pay which calls for the need on advocacy on youth empowerment because they are the most critical as agents of change in every society (Njeru, 2017).

Table 3: Socio-Economic status on Pupil Perception on Study of Agriculture

1.	Rich parents do not want their children to study agriculture	58	75	10	7	3.22	Agree
2.	Rich parents wants their children to go for courses that dwell more on white collar jobs	100	21	20	9	3.41	Agree
3.	Poor parents do not care about the courses their children study even if it is agriculture	95	48	5	2	3.57	Agree
4.	Rich parents see agriculture as a course that would not make their children to be recognized in the society	100	20	16	14	3.37	Agree
5.	Rich parents see agriculture as a dirty man’s job	105	35	7	3	3.61	Agree

Source: Field work, 2019.

Results from socio-economic status influence on the perception on the study of Agriculture revealed that rich parents do not want their children to study agriculture. This is because rich parents prefer their children study courses which will provide their wards white collar jobs related. This corresponds with the findings of Owoyele and Toyobo (2008) that there is a direct relationship between parents and career choice among children. Ezzarooki (2016) also explained that there are different factors that could affects student’s academic performance in school such as family guidance and motivation. The result revealed further that rich parents see agriculture as a course that would not make their children to be recognized in the society as it is regarded as a dirty man’s job Azuibike (2011) noted that parents are strong determining factors in the choice of career of their children.

Table 4: Comparison of Agriculture with other programs of Study

1	Agriculture is a simple subject compared to other science subjects	99	25	16	10	3.42	Agree
2	Agriculture is practical oriented	105	43	2	0	3.68	Agree
3	Practical agriculture is a means of punishment for students	67	52	24	7	3.19	Agree
4	Agriculture is easy to read and pass compared with physics and chemistry	95	50	3	2	3.58	Agree
5	Agriculture is a difficult subject	30	19	71	30	2.32	Disagree

Source: Field work, 2019.

In comparing agricultural science with other science subjects, findings revealed that students agreed that agriculture is a simple subject compared with other science subjects. While agriculture is practical oriented, it is easy to comprehend compared to subjects like physics and chemistry. This explains the notions students have in common regarding agriculture compared to other science subjects. Porter and Umbach (2006) stated that choosing major courses within an institution are major choices a student intends to make but it is affected by their interactions among other students. Results also shows that students disagree agriculture is a difficult subject and it is not considered as important as any other science subjects.

According to Apori *et al;* (2003) in reference to Ghana, established that a student’s decision to choose agricultural science subjects is influenced by gender, and socio-economic background of students, the level of knowledge about prospects in choosing agriculture as a vocation. The terminal nature at agricultural at agricultural colleges, the influence of parents, guardians and peers who accord agriculture low recognition compared with other professions such as law, pharmacy, engineering and architecture designs. In addition, Olalekan (2016) assert that getting the support needed coming from

the peer group, student tend to excel and exceed its capability and concentrate more pertaining to his studies and do good in the academic tasks in school. This implies that peer pressure could influence student decision on subject comparison and excellence.

Table 5: Youth Preference of other Occupations than Agriculture

1	It is a poor man’s job	91	41	14	4	3.46	Agree
2	It make me feel inferior among my peers	72	37	26	15	3.10	Agree
3	Other students look down on students studying agriculture	39	70	15	26	2.81	Agree
4	Agriculture is unbecoming and best practiced after retirement	79	15	36	20	3.02	Agree
5	Farmers are not recognized in the society	60	45	26	19	2.97	Agree

Source: Field work, 2019.

On the choice of youth preference of other occupations than agriculture. The result revealed that students agreed that it is a poor man’s job which makes them feel inferior among their peers. Uslu (2013) said peer pressure could easily affect the self-esteem of students. Kolawole (2015) also noted that peer pressure is often seen during the adolescence stage of a teenagers because they often seek comfort among their peers and intend to do what their peers does without knowing if it is good or bad for them.

Further findings shows respondents agreed that other students look down on students studying agriculture because it is seen as unbecoming and best practiced after retirement. Azubuike (2011) noted that influence of peer groups is also an important factor in choosing a professional subject/career like agriculture. Respondents also agreed that farmers are not recognized in the society which influences their decision of it not been seen as a profitable occupation. This could be linked to the findings of Obiunu & Ebinu (2010) where they noted that individuals often determine the kind of job or career they may like to engage in based on the view of the society.

Conclusion

Agriculture as a lifetime vocation would never take a stand if the poor perception remains as discovered. Youths do not want agriculture as a lifetime because the types of farmers they have seen in their lifetime are poor. This has brought a lot of misconceptions and stereotypes about agriculture as a profession. Youths should recognize the fact that wealth does not come over night. There is need for hard work, persistence and doggedness in order to achieve. All profession are profit and wealth creating only if youths can see the wealth in farming and embrace it with all its drudgery so as to evolve strategies to overcome the problems of agriculture.

For these reasons, I wish to recommend that Nigerian farmers should be given a place in society by making available interest free loans to interested young people who are interested in farming.

Government should give special attention to people in the agricultural sector in order to motivate future prospective farmers and agriculture should be held in high esteem so as to give people in the sector a sense of belonging which will help to attract more people into the industry.

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