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ASSESSMENT OF RURAL YOUTHS INVOLVEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study analysed the rural youths' involvement in agricultural activities in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. A multi stage sampling technique was used for the study. First Stage involved selection of three agricultural zones in the state. Second stage involved random selection of two Local Government Areas from each zone to give a total of six LGAs. In the third stage, 10% of the villages were randomly sampled. A total of 554 respondents out of 2,770 (sampling frame) were used for this study. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and logit regression analyses. The result reveals that farmers mean age was 40 years, 88.5% were single, 83% had formal education, 95.7% were farmers with mean farming experience of 20 years and 87% of them did not owned land. Youth perceived farming as stressful ($\overline{X}$ = 4.06), agriculture is meant for aged ($\overline{X}$ = 3.60) and agriculture should be practiced by less privilege ($\overline{X}$ = 3.44). The result of logit regression analysis showed that there was statistically significant between age, household size, farming experience, access to credits, awareness to agriculture; (z=-1.93; P>0.010); (z= 1.88; P>0.010); (z= 5.91; P>0.001); (z=1.86; P>0.010); (z=2.96; P>0.05) and youths involvement in agricultural activities, respectively. The attitudinal disposition of youth towards agricultural activities is energy sapping (X=4.06). Major constraints faced by the farmers were; in adequate initial capital ($\overline{X}$ = 2.35), youths were considered irrational to make decision ($\overline{X}$ = 2.22) drudgery associated with farming ($\overline{X}$ = 2.14). The study concludes that youths were actively involved in agricultural activities. Youths should be given the necessary orientation and input support for sustainable agricultural growth.

Keywords: Youths; involvement; agricultural activities

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has huge, diverse and potential opportunities that cannot only transform the national economy but also tremendously impact the personal lives of the farmers particularly the youths. Bahaman *et al*. (2010) refer the youth as men and women who are young and have abundant energy and strength both mentally and physically. Youths are all people aged 15 to 24 years old (Afande *et al*., 2015). Globally, youth population aged 15 to 24 is more than 1 billion and by approximation 85% live in developing countries (World

Programme of Action for Youth -WPAY, 2012). In many countries, youth integration in agricultural activities is important for the development of agricultural sector. This is because youth have potentials to overcome some major constraints in agricultural development as they are more open to new ideas and practices than adult farmers (Daudu, 2009). According to Ataneh (2012), involvement entails the ability of individuals to have an input in the decision-making process and to play a role in measures aimed at improving their quality of life. However, despite the perceived success of Federal Government agricultural programmes the drift of youths from farming to less tedious and more lucrative jobs are on the rise. Furthermore, if agricultural extension is to be repositioned for effective agricultural economic development there is need to identify predictors for youth participation in order to increase youth participation in agricultural programmes.

However, irrespective of these arrays of advantage, the goal of self-sufficiency in food production in Nigeria remains an elusive target. One of the problems for non-realization of our goal for food sufficiency is the condition of the Nigeria farmers and their farming environment. The Nigerian agricultural sector is confronted with a critical challenge, an ageing farm population that is fast depleting (Aphunu and Atoma, 2010). Unfortunately, the youths who are supposed to replace them are either withdrawing from or reluctant to engage into farming as a profession. Youths are the future of a country with their limitless energy and aspiration. Based on the above premise it becomes pertinent to identify factors that could model youth's behaviour towards their participation in agricultural activities (Daudu *et al.*, 2009). It is imperative to motivate these youths to actively participate in agricultural activities so as to boast Nations GDP. This study tends to examine youth attitudinal disposition on agricultural activities; examine the determinants of rural youth involvement in agricultural activities; and identify constraints to rural youth involvement in agricultural activities.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Study Area

This study was conducted in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The area is centrally located in the North central Nigeria. The State lies between latitude $7^0 45^{'}$ to $9^0 25^{'}$ North and longitude 7^0 to $9^0 37^{'}$ East of the Greenwich meridian. It lies within the Guinea Savanna Agro-ecological zone of Nigeria. The state has total land area of 26,875.59 square kilometres and a projected population of about 2,523,400. It has an average temperature of 28.4^0C. Rainfall varies from place to place with annual average of between 1100mm to about 2000mm. The State is characterized by two distinct seasons: dry and rainy season. Agriculture is the dominant source of livelihood. Mixed farming is widely practiced.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

A multi stage sampling technique was used for the study. First Stage involves selection of three agricultural zones in the state namely; Southern, Western and Northern agricultural zones. Second stage involved random selection of two Local Government Areas from each zone to give a total of six (6) LGAs. The third stage, involved the sampling of all the villages in each of the sampled LGA and 10% of the villages were randomly sampled. The fourth stage, involve use of 20% of the sampling frame (2770) to draw sample size of 554 respondents for the study.

Primary data were used for the study. The data were collected using structured questionnaire complemented with an interview schedule which was administered through the assistance of trained enumerators under the supervision of the researcher.

Measurement of Study Variables

Dependent variable for the study is the level of rural youths' involvements in agricultural activities and it was measured as High (1) and Low (0) which was derived from the cut off mean of 5-point Likert scale rating. The level of rural youths' involvement was measured through the presentation of twelve (12) agricultural activities on a 5-point Likert scale of strongly agreed (SA) (5), Agreed (A) (4), Undecided (UD) (3), Disagree (DA) (2) and Strongly Disagreed (1). 5+4+3+2+1 =15/5 =3. The cut of mean is 3. Any respondent that score from 3 and above is said to be High (H) and was assigned value of 1 and any respondent that score less than 3 is said to be low (L) and was assigned value of 0. The constraints were measured as very serious (VS) =3; Serious (S) =2 and Not Serious (NS) =1; 3+2+1=6/3=2. Any mean score of 2 and above is said to be serious constraint and any mean score below 2 is not serious constraint.

The independent variables were measured as follows: Age was measured in years, household size in number, education in years and farming experience in years

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage and mean scores, index and logit regression model.

$$Y=Ln(P/1-P) \quad (1)$$

$$Ln\ (P/1-P) = bo + b_1x_1 + b_2\ x_2+b_3x_3+b_4x_4+b_5x_5 \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ b_{14}x_{14} + e \quad (2)$$

Y = Level of rural youth involvement in agriculture (High = 1, Low= 0)
Ln= Natural logarithm function
P = probability of participation in agriculture;
bo = constant
b_1 - b_{14} = Regression coefficients
$X_1 – X_{14}$ = Explanatory variables,
X_1= Age, (years)
X_2= Sex (dummy, Male=1, Female=0)
X_3= Marital status (dummy, Married=1, Single=0)
X_4= Educational level (number of years of formal schooling),
X_5= Employment status (dummy, employed =1, Not employ=0)
X_6= Household size (number of persons' in a household),
X_7= Interest in agriculture (dummy Yes=1, No=0),
X_8= Farming experience (years of farming),
X_9= Access to credit (Yes=1, No=0)
X_{10} = Land ownership (Owned=1, Otherwise=0).
X_{11}= Having agricultural role model (dummy Yes= 1, No = 0)
X_{12}= Membership of youth organization (Yes=1, No=0)

X_{13}=Awareness on agricultural activities (dummy, Yes=1, No=0)
X_{14}=Decision to migrate to urban centre (dummy, Yes=1, No=0)
e = error term.
(P/1-p) = odd ratio (odds in favour of participation).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Youths

Table 1 reveals that, the mean age of the respondents was 40 years. This implies that the respondents were still in their active and productive age, hence the probability of greater involvement in farming activities for economic empowerment.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to socio economic characteristics (n = 554)

Variables	Frequency	Percentages	Mean
Age			
1-39	470	84.8	
40-79	84	15.2	40years
Gender			
Male	500	90.3	
Female	54	9.7	
Marital status			
Single	490	88.5	
Married	60	10.8	
Divorced	4	0.7	
Educational Status			
Formal	460	83.0	
Non-Formal	94	17.0	
Major occupation			
Farming	530	95.7	
Civil servant	24	4.3	
Household size			
1-5	550	99.3	
6-10	4	0.7	5persons
Farming experience			
1-10	30	5.4	
11-20	470	84.8	
21-40	54	9.7	20years
Membership of Youths Organization			
Member	74	13.4	
Non-Member	480	86.7	
Land ownership			
Owned land	70	12.6	
Otherwise	484	87.4	

Source: Field Survey, 2019

This finding agrees with Okwoche *et al.* (2012) who stated that youths in their active years are energetic and innovative to participate more in agricultural activities. Majority (90.3%) of the respondents were males. This may be as a result of drudgery associated with agricultural activities. This finding agrees with Okogun (2004) and Jibowo (1996) who stated that males are more involved in agricultural activities compared to their female counterpart because of drudgery associated with farming. Majority (88.5%) of the respondents were single, this call for low house hold size. This finding is in contrast with Proctor *et al.* (2015) who revealed that married youths have the potentials to participate more in agricultural activities due to the fact that they have more family responsibilities than unmarried youths.

Majority 83.0% of the youths had formal education and can easily be receptive to innovations (Table 1). The findings contradict Abdullahi *et al.* (2010) who noted that farmers do not need any formal education before making progress. Significant percentage (95.7%) of respondents had farming as their major occupation; this could be reason for their high involvement in agricultural activities. Majority (99.3%) of the youths had a household size of 1-5 persons because only few of them have married. Mean farming experience was 20years, this means that respondent have been in to the occupation for long which will enable them to overcome some challenges associated with the occupation. This implies that youths in the study area had been involved in agricultural activities for quite a number of years and have acquired knowledge and experience in agriculture. This finding corroborates with Abdullahi *et al.* (2010) who reported that a good number of youths in agriculture had enough farming experience and acquired skills through informal sources such as parents, relatives and neighbours. The result further revealed that 86.7% of the youths did not belong to any formal organization. Membership of formal organization could enhance their togetherness for easy access to production inputs and training opportunities for improved productivity. This study contradicts Mangal (2009) who stated that most youths in rice production were members of formal organization. Majority 87.4% of youths did not own because land belong to their family and individual cannot have control over the land. The findings contradict Nnadi and Akwiwu (2008) who indicated that the high rate of youth involvement in agricultural activities was as a result of land title.

Youths Attitudinal Disposition on Agricultural Activities

Table 2 shows rural youth's perceptions towards agriculture. Majority of youths perceived that agriculture is stressful and energy sapping (Mean=4.06), agriculture is meant for the aged (Mean=3.60), agriculture is for the less privileged in the society (Mean=3.44), agriculture is for the school drop-outs and illiterates (Mean = 3.38), farming reduces someone status in the society (Mean=3.35), and that farming generates low income (Mean =(3.27). The consequences, according to Waldie (2001) is that, in as much as youths still continue to see agricultural practice as inferior, unfulfilling and very hard, they would seek whatever seem good for them especially in other non-agricultural sectors in the cities.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their attitudinal disposition on agricultural activities

Variables	SA F*5	A F*4	UD F*3	D F*2	SD F*1	WS	WM	REMARK	RANK
Agriculture is for school dropped out and illiterate	58 (20.9)	81 (29.2)	67 (24.2)	49 (17.7)	22 (7.9)	935	3.38	Agreed	4
Agriculture should be practice by the less privileged	45 (16.2)	90 (32.5)	94 (33.9)	38 (13.7)	10 (3.6)	953	3.44	Agreed	3
Agriculture promotes enough incentives to rural youths	16 (5.8)	32 (11.6)	49 (17.7)	88 (31.8)	92 (33.2)	623	2.25	Disagree	12
Farming reduces someone status	48 (17.3)	79 (28.5)	85 (30.7)	51(18.4)	14 (5.1)	927	3.35	Agreed	5
Agriculture is a profitable enterprise	24 (8.7)	42 (15.2)	58 (20.9)	83 (30.0)	70 (25.3)	698	2.52	Disagree	8
Farming promotes poverty	20 (7.2)	38 (13.7)	86 (31.0)	81 (29.2)	52 (18.8)	724	2.61	Disagree	7
Farming is stressful and energy sapping	104(37.5)	95 (34.3)	69 (24.9)	9 (3.2)	0 (0.0)	1128	4.06	Agreed	1
Agriculture improve standard of living	9 (3.2)	29 (10.5)	81 (29.2)	123 (44.4)	35 (12.6)	685	2.47	Disagree	9
Agriculture is meant for the aged	71 (25.6)	93 (33.6)	64 (23.1)	29 (10.5)	20 (7.2)	997	3.60	Agreed	2
Farming generate low income	37 (13.4)	76 (27.4)	101 (36.5)	51 (18.4)	12 (4.3)	906	3.27	Agreed	6
I like agriculture as primary occupation	0 (0.0)	36 (13.0)	96 (34.7)	101 (36.5)	44 (15.9)	678	2.45	Disagree	10
Farming is a bad business	12 (4.3)	33 (11.9)	79 (28.5)	94 (33.9)	59 (21.3)	676	2.44	Disagree	11

Source: Field survey, 2019; *Values in Parenthesis are percentages; SA=Strongly agreed, A=Agreed, UD=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly disagree; WS= Weighted Sum; WM=Weighted Mean

Determinants of Rural Youths Involvement in Agricultural Activities

The logit model is appropriate and is generally good (0.7377), because 73% of explanatory variables were explained by the model. Age of respondents was significant (z=-1.93; P>0.084) with youths' involvement in agricultural activities but with a negative coefficient. The negative association between the age of the respondents and youths involvement implies that an increase in the age of respondents will decrease the probability of youth involvement in agricultural activities. This finding is in contrast with Nnadi and Akwiwu (2008), Muhammad-Lawal *et al.* (2009), Abdul-Hakim and Che-Mat (2011) and Akudugu (2012) who reported age to be significant and positively related to youth involvement agricultural activities.

Table 3: Determinants of rural youths' involvement in agricultural Activities

Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z-value	P>/z/
Age	-0.1565	0.0906	-1.73*	0.084
Sex	0.4784	0.6611	0.72^{NS}	0.469
Marital status	-1.4155	1.0447	-1.35^{NS}	0.175
Education	0.0379	0.1262	-0.30^{NS}	0.764
Occupation	-1.5204	0.9684	-1.57^{NS}	0.116
Household size	-0.2363	0.1382	-1.71*	0.087
Interest in agriculture	0.3117	0.8213	0.38^{NS}	0.704
Farming experience	1.1935	0.2019	5.91***	0.000
Access to credit	-2.7921	1.4979	1.86*	0.062
Land ownership	2.2779	0.8923	2.55**	0.110
Having role model	0.5663	0.9329	0.61^{NS}	0.544
Cooperative membership	-1.1362	0.9892	1.15^{NS}	0.251
Awareness on agriculture	2.7512	0.9279	2.96***	0.003
Decision to migrate	0.2759	0.7174	-0.38^{NS}	0.700
Constant	2.7098	2.5684	1.06	0.291
Log likelihood = -44.1332				
LR chi square (14) =248.27				
Prob>chi = 0.000				
Pseudo R^2 = 0.7377				

Source: Field Survey, 2019; *** =Significant at 1%; ** = significant at 5% and * =significant at 1% level of probability; NS = Not Significant

The household size variable was significant (z=-1.88; P>0.087) with youths' involvement, because the higher the household size the higher the probability of involvement because they may influence each other. The coefficient is negative meaning it is inversely associated to the probability of youth involvement in agricultural activities. This result corroborates to the findings by Abdul-Hakim and Che-Mat (2011) who posited that as the family size increase the willingness to involve in on-farm activities reduces because each family member will be looking for areas where to showcase their talents. The coefficient of farming experience was statistically significant (z=5.91; P>0.000). with youths' involvements. This implies that increase in the farming experience increases the probability of high level of youth involvement in agricultural activities. This buttress the fact that as youth involvement in agricultural productions over time they acquired enough experience that will enable them to cope with the drudgery associated with farming. Land ownership is significant (z=2.55; P>0.011). with youth's involvement in agricultural activities. Owing land by youths increases the probability of youth involvement in agricultural activities.

Constraints Militating against Rural Youths Involvement in Agricultural Activities

Table 4 reveals that that lack of initial capital (Mean=2.35), inadequate credit facilities (Mean=2.05), farmers are not respected (Mean=2.22), negative perceptions of farmers (Mean=2.06), farming is energy demanding (Mean=2.14), insufficient land (Mean=2.08), continuous poor production (Mean=2.14), no incentives for farmers (Mean=2.09) and inadequate training and extension services (Mean=2.08) were perceived serious factors hindering youth's involvements in agricultural activities. The result is in line with Nor and Madukwe (2000) who assertion that increased agricultural productivity and enhanced farmers income are only attainable when an effective agricultural extension system is put in place. Lack of infrastructure and essential inputs also hinders youth's participation in agricultural and rural development activities (Onuekwusi and Ottah, 2006 in Matthews-Njoku and Ajaero, 2007). Adekunle *et al.* (2009)asserted that there are economic factors which includes inadequate credit facilities, low farming profit margins and lack of agricultural insurance, initial capital and production inputs; social factors which includes public perception about farming and parental influence to move out of agriculture and environmental factors which includes inadequate land, continuous poor harvests and soil degradation all are limiting youth's involvement in agricultural activities in Nigeria.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to constraints militating against their participation in agricultural activities

Variables	Very serious f*3	Serious f*2	Not serious f*1	Ws	Wm	Remarks	Rank
inadequate initial capital	33(48.0)	109(39.4)	35(12.6)	652	2.35	Serious	1
Inadequate credit facilities	96(34.7)	99(35.7)	82(29.6)	568	2.05	Serious	7
No agricultural insurance	24(8.7)	122(44.0)	131(47.3)	447	1.61	Not Serious	14
Farmers are not respected	114(41.2)	109(39.4)	54(19.5)	614	2.22	Serious	2
People perceptions of farmers	82(29.6)	131(47.3)	64(23.1)	572	2.06	Serious	6
No ready market for agriculture produce	39(14.1)	75(27.1)	163(58.8)	430	1.55	Not Serious	15
It is energy demanding	106(38.3)	104(37.5)	67(24.2)	593	2.14	Serious	3
Poor basic knowledge	54(19.5)	118(42.6)	104(37.5)	502	1.81	Not Serious	10
Non lucrativeness of agriculture	60(21.7)	117(42.2)	100(36.1)	514	1.86	Not Serious	8
Insufficient land	89(32.1)	121(43.7)	67(24.2)	576	2.08	Serious	5
Parental influence	57(20.6)	82(29.6)	138(49.8)	473	1.71	Not Serious	13
Insufficient access to production inputs	42(15.2)	115(54.5)	84(30.3)	512	1.85	Not Serious	9
Continuous poor production	98(35.4)	120(43.3)	59(21.3)	593	2.14	Serious	3
No incentives for farmers	88(31.8)	127(45.8)	62922.4)	580	2.09	Serious	4
No future in agriculture	36(13.0)	148(53.4)	((93(33.6)	497	1.79	Not Serious	11
Inadequate training and extension	94(33.9)	111(40.1)	72(26.0)	576	2.08	Serious	5
Lack of infrastructure in the rural areas	48(17.3)	114(41.2)	115(41.5)	487	1.76	Not Serious	12

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

*Values in Parenthesis are percentage

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that youths considered agriculture as energy sapping, which generate low income. From the study, Age, household size, farming experience, access to credit facilities, land ownership and awareness on the opportunities embedded in agriculture were the main determinants of youths' participation in agricultural production. Initial capital formation and drudgery associated with farming were major constraints.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that: Youths should be given the necessary orientation through the extension services and mass media on agricultural activities; there should be availability of enough inputs and capital through soft loans to youths; and farm implements needed to be procured by the youths to reduce drudgery associated with farming activities.

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