

## Perceptions on Influence of Membership in Young Farmers Clubs on Career Interest and Participation in Agricultural Activities Among Secondary School Students in Nakuru North Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya

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### Abstract

Young Farmers' Club (YFC) activities globally have played a vital role in the mastery and attainment of knowledge in agriculture subject since it is best learned by use of practical activities. Increased youth participation in agricultural production is necessary and vital in facilitating food and nutritional security. In Kenya, Young Farmers Club of Kenya (YFCK) was established to help boys and girls to develop ideas for better farming, provide social and recreational activities, help give the necessary dignity to agriculture as an occupation and develop good and competent agricultural leadership. The objectives of YFCK included promoting interest in farming, sound training in advanced methods of crop and animal husbandry, leadership skills, self-reliance, self-confidence and responsibility. The purpose of this study was to determine the perception on influence of membership in young farmers clubs on career interest and participation in agricultural activities among day secondary schools' students in Nakuru North sub-county. A descriptive survey design was adopted with a target population of 2,660 agriculture students and 32 agriculture teachers. Proportionate random sampling was used to select a sample of 120 respondents from the 19-day public schools. Data was collected from the sampled heads of agriculture subject using a questionnaire. Content validity of the instrument was ascertained by two panels of experts from Department of Agricultural Education and Extension and the supervisors. Reliability of the instruments was ensured through a pilot-test using 40 agriculture students and four agriculture teachers from Nakuru East Sub- County. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha coefficient. A reliability coefficient was 0.76 and 0.73 for YFCK members and Agriculture teachers respectively, at a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The collected data was analyzed using descriptive with the aid of SPSS 20.0 for Windows. Data was analysed using various tables and graphs. The researcher recommends that Agriculture teachers in collaboration with school administration should enhance YFCK activities. This is for proper and effective practical activities in teaching of Agriculture subject according to the syllabus. The findings of the study will be of importance to secondary school teachers, students and other scholars of higher institutions of learning by emphasizing in formation of young farmers clubs in day secondary schools in Nakuru North Sub- County, Nakuru County Kenya.

**Keywords:** Young Farmers Club, Agricultural Society of Kenya, National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, Kenya Agricultural Livestock Research and Organization, Agricultural Education and Extension.

## Introduction

### Background Information

Young Farmers' Club in Kenya (YFCK) activities is important in the mastery and attainment of knowledge in the agriculture subject as it is found out by practicing it. Youth participation in agricultural production is important and necessary in facilitating food security. The main objective of YFCK is to train young people to be more productive future farmers. Since secondary school education is terminal to the majority of the youth, non-attainment of lifelong skills in agriculture may lead to low standards of living and a decline in agricultural productivity (Lewa & Ndung'u, 2011).

Mobilizing the youths for national development is a common phenomenon amongst the western and developing nations. In such nations as Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and the United States of America, the participation of youths in agricultural production through youth programs has contributed significantly to agricultural growth and empowering the citizen (Daudn *et al.*, 2009). Young farmers clubs can help youth see farming as a dignified profession from which people can make a decent livelihood and not where the practitioners are condemned to poverty (Olujide, 2008).

In many developed states, young farmers clubs are active and well established for instance: the Dominion Federation of Young Farmers Clubs (DFYFC) has served to establish young Farmers clubs throughout New Zealand (Mclintock, 2009). In England and Wales Young Farmers Club (YFC), activities encourage agriculture, athletics, community volunteering, environment and social activities (National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs (NFYFC), 2011). In the United States of America agricultural education at high school level focuses on three chief categories: classroom instruction, Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) and active participation in the National (Future Farmers of America) FFA organization (NFYFC, 2011).

Experiences acquired during the formative period of an individual's life leave their mark on personal efficacy, which may set the future direction of a person's life course by affecting the choices made and the achievements attained (Bandura, 1986). The perceived efficacy and academic orientations of youth determine their decisions to pursue different types of careers and also determine which careers they may avoid (Barbaranelli *et al.*, 2001). However, increased understanding is needed about the role played by youth organizations in fomenting the career interests of youth in developing countries, including their pursuit of post-secondary education in the agricultural disciplines and related careers. This study sought to describe the perceptions of YFC members in secondary schools to understand the impact of club participation on their career interests, especially in regard to preparing for and entering the agriculture sector.

### Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, YFCK were established to help boys and girls to develop ideas for better farming, help give the necessary dignity to agriculture as an occupation and develop good and competent agricultural leadership. Young farmers clubs therefore are expected to promote participation in agricultural activities and create a positive attitude towards agricultural careers among all the students who are members of the clubs. Granted that, Young Farmers Club were established to help boys and girls to develop ideas for better farming, help

give the necessary dignity to agriculture as an occupation and develop good and competent agricultural leadership. Young Farmers Clubs therefore are expected to promote participation in agricultural activities and create a positive attitude towards agricultural careers among all the students who are members of the clubs. However, it is not clear to what extent the clubs achieve these objectives among student members of young farmers club on students' career interest and participation in agricultural activities at home. In addition, available studies have not provided in-depth tracking of former young farmers club members pursuing careers in agriculture. Consequently, this study aimed to fill these gaps by investigating the influence of membership in young farmers clubs in students' participation in agriculture at home and future careers in agriculture day secondary school in Nakuru North Sub- County, Nakuru County, Kenya.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were:

- To profile the YFCs in day secondary schools in Nakuru North sub –county in terms of their membership and activities.
- To determine the perception of students on influence of membership in YFCs on participation in agricultural activities at home among students in day secondary schools in Nakuru North sub–county.
- To determine the influence of membership in YFCs on attitude towards agricultural careers among students in day secondary schools in Nakuru North sub–county.

### **Materials and Methods**

#### **Study Area Description**

The study was conducted in Nakuru North Sub- County of Nakuru County, Kenya, which stretches along the Eastern plateau around Ndundori forest, Bahati and Subukia Divisions. After independence many of the farms in the former white highlands were sub-divided through Government purchase, land buying companies and co-operatives (Nelson, 1995). Because of the membership of the co-operatives and companies buying the land largely determined the size of the parcels distributed, there are tracts of 0.9- and 1.2-acre farms in Nakuru North Sub- County. Most other farms have tracts of 3 to 5 acres (Nelson, 1995). The climate is cold and wet with a mean temperature of 10°C – 15°C and an annual rainfall of about 1200-1400mm. The area belongs mainly to Agro-Ecological Zone (AEZ) UH1 which is good agricultural activities (Jaetzold, 1983). The bordering sub counties include: Gilgil, Nakuru East, Rongai and Subukia. Nakuru North Sub –county has four (4) administrative wards namely, Ndundori, Lanet Umoja, Kabatini and Bahati. It has 19-day public secondary schools.

#### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The researcher obtained a clearance letter from the Graduate School of Egerton University, which enabled her to get a research permit from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Official request to undertake the study and to access the information from the teachers and students in their respective schools was sought from the County Director of Education, Nakuru County. Contacts of the schools principals in Nakuru North sub-County was sought and were informed in advance

accordingly about the study and through appointment. Questionnaires were given to all respondents to respond to and return to the researcher. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents who were assured of the confidentiality of the exercises.

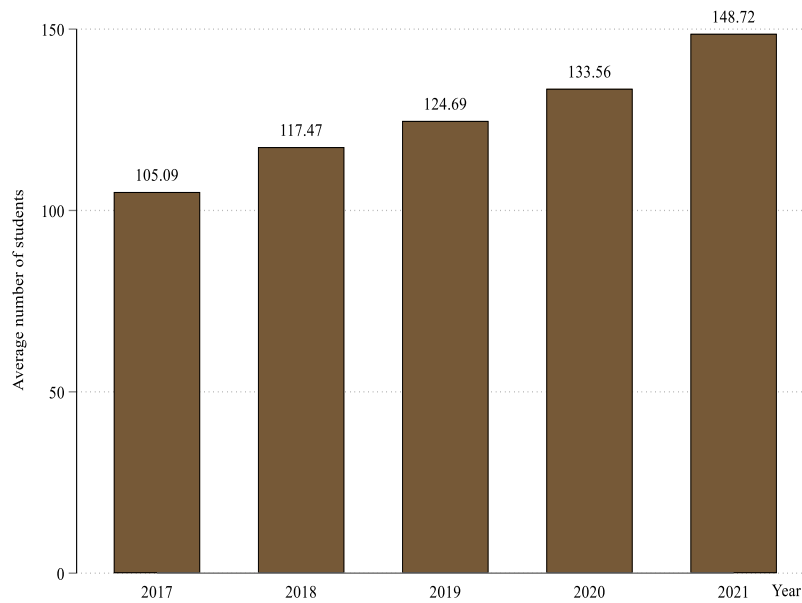
Raw data collected from the field was coded and classified according to the categories of respondents as guided by the objectives of the study. The data were classified into nominal and ordinal scales. The coded data were entered into a computer and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. The software was found to be efficient in handling large data (Martin & Acuna, 2002). The quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics i.e. means, frequencies and percentages and independent sample t-test.

## Results and Discussion

### Profile of Young Farmers Clubs

This section provides results and discussion of results pertaining the first objective of the study which was to profile the YFCs in day secondary schools in Nakuru North sub –county in terms of membership activities. Specifically, the section provides reasons for student membership in YFC and YFC club activities. Table 5 shows that three-quarters of students were members of young farmers’ club. Comparison by class of study showed a marginal significant difference in percentage of Form Three students (77%) and Form Four students (50%) that were registered members of clubs. Nonetheless, the rationale of membership did not differ by year of study.

Teachers were also asked to provide information about student membership in YFC in their respective schools. Teacher’s responses to the number of students who have been members of YFC from 2017 to 2021 are displayed in Figure 2. The results show a steady upward trend in YFC membership over the year. The average number of YFC registered students increased from 105 members in 2017 to 117 in 2018, before rising to 125 members in 2019 across the schools. YFC memberships in 2020 and 2021 increased to 134 and 149 students, respectively. The steady increase in the number of YFC members could be attributed to highly experienced teachers who have possibly devised and perfected techniques for attracting and sustaining membership in YFC. Furthermore, teachers were asked to estimate the number of former students who were pursuing careers in agriculture. The results provided in Appendix 2 show that 63 former students are pursuing careers in agriculture, with the least number being 20 and maximum 186 students.



*Figure 1: Trend in the number of student membership in YFC between 2017 and 2021*

### **The Perceptions on Influence of Membership in YFCs on Participation in Agricultural Activities at Home**

The second objective of the study was to determine the perception on influence of YFC on day secondary school students' participation in agricultural activities back home. The results are presented as pooled, that is, analysis was done on the entire sample. The results are then disaggregated by class of study to determine whether they existed any significant differences between Form Three and Form Four students.

The study conceptualized eight (8) pathways through which participation in YFC influence secondary school students' participation in agriculture activities back at home. The first parameter is practical skills in agriculture acquired from their participation in YFC activities. The second parameter is monitoring and evaluation of YFC activities are likely to positively impact students' attitude towards participation in agriculture away from school. Technical skills acquired by students due to their participation in YFC activities and hands-on use of farm equipment and machinery are third and fourth other pathways through which YFC influence students' participation in agriculture activities back home. Furthermore, it was expected that exposure to various activities under teachers' patron role is useful in students' participation in crop and livestock production at home (Parameter 5). In addition, YFC encourages students to appreciate agriculture (Parameter 6) and is a source of motivation and inspiration (Parameter 7) among students to take up agricultural activity away from school. The last parameter of the influence of YFC on students' participation in agriculture at home is through bridging their knowledge in agriculture and, in turn, create positive attitude.

Three levels of analysis were performed to present results for the perception on influence of YFC on student participation in agriculture at home. First, the analysis also compared responses of Form Three and Form Four students (Table 1).

**Table 1: Percentages on levels of agreement on role of YFC participation in agriculture at home**

Parameter	Percentage				
	SD	D	U	A	SA
1. Practical skills in agriculture	6.78	3.39	11.02	42.37	36.44
2. Monitoring and evaluation activities	3.51	7.02	12.28	46.49	30.70
3. Training and technical skills	6.90	17.24	11.21	36.21	28.45
4. Hands-on use of farm equipment and machinery	4.27	15.38	4.27	38.46	37.61
5. Patron influenced exposure to agricultural activities	8.47	3.39	5.08	35.59	47.46
6. Promoting appreciation of agricultural activities	3.45	6.90	6.90	34.48	48.28
7. Motivating, inspiring, and encouraging peer interactions	3.45	9.48	6.03	40.52	40.52
8. Bridging knowledge in agriculture	5.36	1.79	11.61	26.79	54.46

In general, and for ease of interpretation, percentages of agree and strongly agree responses are summed and interpreted as 'agree'. In the same way, strongly disagree and disagree responses are aggregated and interpreted as 'disagreed.' The neutral responses or undecided responses by students are not interpreted.

The results presented in Table 1 show that nearly 79% of the students agreed that YFCs enabled them to acquire skills in agriculture which influence their current and future participation in agriculture back at home. In contrast, only 10% disagreed that YFC have influenced their skills that can encourage them to participate in agriculture back at home. Whereas 77% of secondary school students agreed that monitoring and evaluation activities performed in YFC motivated them to appreciate agricultural activities as worth participating, 11% of them disagreed. About 65% and slightly less than one-quarter (24%) agreed and disagreed that trainings provided by YFC impacted their technical skills that they needed during their post-secondary agricultural activities, respectively. Furthermore, more than three-quarters (76%) of students agreed while one-fifth (20%) disagreed that YFC activities provided them ample opportunity of having hands-on use of farm equipment and machinery, thereby developing their interests of engaging in agricultural activities during and after exit from secondary schools as shown in Table 1.

Furthermore, results in Table 1 showed that a majority (83%) of students agreed that YFCs provided fora that allowed teachers or club patrons to expose students to various activities that are useful in encouraging their participation in crop and livestock production at home. In addition, another 83% of students agreed that YFC provided opportunities to students to appreciate agricultural activities hence encouraging them to participate in agricultural activities back at home. With regard to the seventh parameter, the percentage of students that agreed that YFC promoted interactions among students and therefore a source of motivation, inspiration, and encouragement to participate in agricultural activities today or in the future (81%) was higher than those that disagreed (11%) with the statement. The YFC activities also bridged knowledge in agriculture for about 81% of students compared to 7% that disagreed with the statement. Thus, the results show that YFC play a crucial role in equipping students with relevant skills and knowledge, and acquisition of requisite motivation to participate in agriculture at home during and after secondary school education. These results are in tandem with FAO (2015) analysis of role of young farmers' associations in agriculture and Kibwika *et al.* (2010) contribution that highlighted the post-secondary influence of YFC on young people's intentions to become small-scale professional farmers.

### **Perception on Influence of Membership in YFCs on Attitude Towards Agricultural Careers Among Students in Day Secondary Schools**

The third objective of the study was to determine the perception on influence of membership YFC on day secondary school students' attitudes towards future careers in agriculture. The results are presented as pooled, and then disaggregated by class of study.

Globally, secondary schools are preparatory gateways for future careers among young people. Over the years and as a matter of national policy, high schools are required to prepare students for careers in agriculture by teaching agriculture as a subject. This is informed by declining or predicted shortages of trained young professional in agriculture (Bowen, 2005; Esters & Usman *et al.*, 2021). Failure to bridge the gap in supply and demand for professions in agriculture would undermine the contribution of the sector towards meeting food production needs of the projected 10 billion people in the world by 2050 (Kim *et al.*, 2021). Educational activities offered in secondary schools under programs such as young farmers' clubs are designed to create interest and cause young people to appreciate agricultural careers by influencing their perceptions and attachments (Jeong *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, the study asked students whether they had career interest in agriculture and analysed how memberships in YFC influenced their agricultural career interests.

The results of comparison of female and male students having career intentions in agriculture are displayed in Figure 3. There was a marginal significant ( $p < 0.1$ ) difference in percentages of male and female students willing to have future careers in agriculture. About 87% of male students reported they had career interest in agriculture. In contrast, 73% of female students indicated that they aspired to be professionals in agriculture. Despite the gendered differences in career interest, the high number of students with careers interest in agriculture was expected because students came from agricultural backgrounds. For this reason, students possibly had higher attachment to future careers in agriculture.

The significant difference in career interest in agriculture by sex corroborate finding by Jeong *et al.* (2021) who found that male students in South Korea were more willing to choose a future career in agriculture than female students. Several constraints impede young females' choices of careers in agriculture. For instance, Eisser and Brennan (2015) linked fewer female students' willingness to take up careers in agriculture to underrepresentation of women in agricultural professions, gender insensitive training and opportunities, cultural issues, and gender information access gaps. In Cameroon, Mkong *et al.* (2021) also found that sex was an important determinant of students' choices of careers in agriculture. Other literature identifies perceptions and attitudes as possible explainers of the differences (Zaremohzzabiehn *et al.*, 2021).

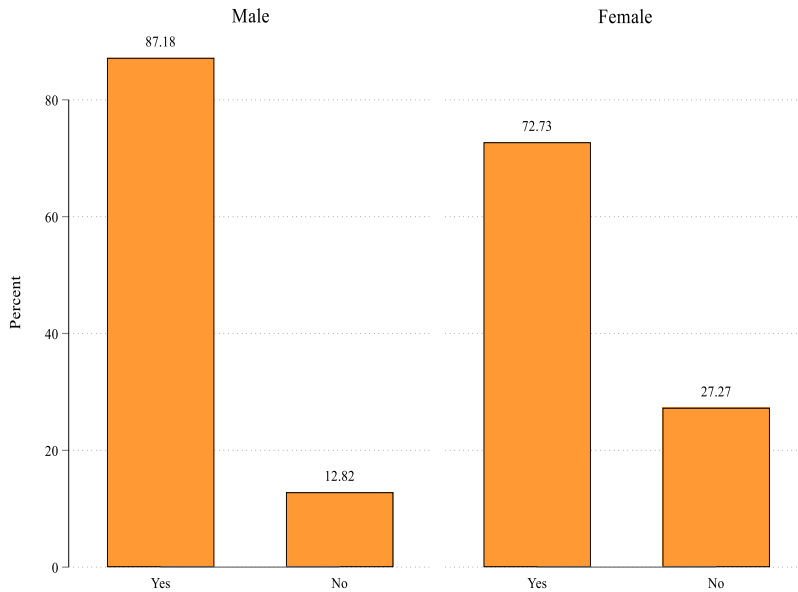


Figure 2: Proportions of students' career interests in agriculture by gender

## Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions are made:

Membership in YFCs is high because the targeted schools were in rural areas and most students come from agricultural backgrounds. The YFCs activities are diverse, ranging from academics and farm level activities to activities outside schools such as farm visits and trade fairs, membership in YFC has influenced students' participation in agriculture back home, albeit no significant differences by class or year of study, Participation in YFC activities, that is membership, positively and significantly influence students' attitudes towards having careers in agriculture.

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