

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC FEATURES AND YOUTHS PARTICIPATION IN
AGRICULTURE IN SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS IN EKITI-
STATE**

by

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Abstract

Out of many other options to increase sustainable production of foods to feed its teeming population, Nigerian academics now focus on the possibility of motivating the youths into action in a labour intensive drive; finding reasons why Nigerian youths are not taking to farming. It is well known that a lot of young college and university graduates left the shores of Nigeria only to be engaged by strangers in cultivating plantations in foreign lands as a mean of livelihood. The shame of their discovery and the inability to raise adequate funds with which they would return home eventually keep them in long servitude abroad. Moreover, a lot of studies have ensued in regard of this, but none has been done or reported on Ekiti youths. This study fills the gap. A sample of 300 respondents from the population of youths was drawn using multistage sampling method. Five focal questions were raised in the study and two hypotheses were generated and tested using the binary probit regression analysis. Data were collected using a well-structured questionnaire; the research design could be described as a descriptive survey. Study unveiled that the identified socio-economic determinants youth participation in agriculture are gender, age, marital status, religion, household size and their personal pleasure derivable from agricultural activities. It was also discovered that other things youths also need in Ekiti to encourage them in taking on agriculture include finance, awareness, training, fertile land, loan facility, power supply, loan facility, power supply, improved seedlings, fertilizer/agrochemicals availability, and machinery among others.

Keywords: agriculture; youth; agribusiness; farming

Introduction

Out of many other options to increase sustainable production of foods to feed its teeming population, Nigerian academics now focus on the possibility of motivating the youths into action in a labour intensive drive; finding reasons why Nigerian youths are not taking to farming. Youth has been defined by Djurfeldt et al (2019) as young people that have not attained adulthood and independence. In the words of Rasak et al (2019), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (2013) recognizes the fact that this group of people constitute a large share of the population in many less developed countries. Yet, only few of this huge proportion partake in agriculture (Essiet, 2014). Despite the fact that many of these young people were trained with money earned via farm practice, many of them after graduation detest farming. Some see it as very degrading. Some that take to if complain of the low rate of returns accruable from farming. They fail to see how rewarding cash cropping and agro-business could be.

It disheartens that a lot of young college and university graduates left the shores of Nigeria only to be engaged by strangers in cultivating plantations in foreign lands as a mean of livelihood. The shame of their discovery and the inability to raise adequate funds with which they would return home eventually keep them in long servitude abroad. Conversely, expatriates are here establishing agro allied ventures and making their million dollar rewards fast here in Nigeria. Hence, correcting the anomaly is so imperative.

For Africa to develop agriculture, the youth must be dully recognised and given adequate attention (Kelly, Singh and Zvenyika, 2017). They are catalysts in developing countries. It is well known that African youth are very talented, energetic and passionate in their commitments. If these attributes are diverted to agriculture, the youth can surmount whatever problems facing agriculture and thereby achieve food security. Kelly et al (2017) asserts that the youth is critical to agriculture development and must be accorded special attention.

Moreover, a lot of studies have ensued in regard of this, but none has been done or reported on Ekiti youths. This study fills the gap. There is dearth of empirical data on the determinants of youths' participation in agriculture in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Yet, agricultural development remains one of the most powerful trappings to end poverty and boost prosperity (World Bank, 2016). Moreover, Ekiti State comprises about 151 communities in 16 local government council areas. The economy enjoys tropical climate with substantial rainfalls every year. Moreover, the land yields bountifully in agricultural resources with a lot of food and cash crops. It is well known that Ekiti land constituted over 40% of the cocoa products of the famous old Western Region. Food crops like yam, cassava, and grains are grown in large quantities. Other notable crops such as kola-nuts and various fruits are also cultivated in commercial quantities. The State, which was created in 1996, has a total population of about 2.4 million (2006 Population Census) and covers a land area of about 6,353KM². The state has a per capita income of US\$1,169.

Nnadi and Akwiwu (2008) investigate the rate of youth's participation in agriculture, agro ventures participated in and the factors that determine their participation in Imo State, Nigeria. Data were generated from 230 youths from the three agricultural zones of the state using questionnaire and interview schedule. These were analysed with the aid of frequency tables, simple percentage counts and logit regression model. The results show about 84% participation in land clearing, planting, fertilizer application, collection of fodder for livestock etc. The participation was determined by their ages, education, marital status, parents' income, parents' occupation, household size and youths' dependence status. Study recommends institutional support services to the youths in agriculture and intervention strategies for youths' agricultural activities to be guided.

Nwaogwugwu and Obele (2017) studied the factors that limit youth's participation in agro-allied ventures in Eleme local government area of Niger Delta, Nigeria. Data were collected from a sample size of 112 respondents selected from a population of 1,895 (one thousand, eight hundred and ninety-five) youths in the 17 registered youth associations in the study area using 2-stage random sampling technique. 64% of the respondents are males; about 39.0% falls within the age of 26 and 30 years; about 54.0% of them are single. Data analysis was by the use of frequency, percentage, mean and factor analysis. The predominant Agrico based activities identified in the study area includes: crop farming, livestock farming, fish farming, fuel wood gathering and sales, farm labour services, agriculture product processing. Factor analysis result showed seven major factors that limit youth participation in agriculture as poor social values, poor agriculture support services, environment related land degradation factors, poor agricultural policies, industrialization, inadequate arable land and poor health conditions. The study recommends that credit facilities should be made available through micro-credit agencies and banks to whichever capable youth that wants to take on agriculture.

Prosper et al (2015) finds that age, sex, marital status, education level, family background, availability of rural credit facilities, land, agricultural knowledge, lack of job alternatives and perceptions are important factors associated with rural youth's participation in agricultural activities. The study set out to find the role played by agriculture to rural youth socioeconomic needs, types of agricultural activities which are engaged by rural youth and the factors which influence youth's participation in agriculture. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Study found that majority of the respondents were attracted to invest more in their own farms rather than being employed as labour or involved in family farms. The study also reveals that rural youth in Kahe are provided with their socioeconomic needs through their participation in agriculture.

Cheteni (2016) uses a binary logistic model to analyse the determinants of youth participation in agriculture in the Nkonkobe Municipality, South Africa. A total of 140 youth were purposively selected for the study to complete a survey. The results show that the variables; youth programmes, programme availability, and resources were statistically significant in explaining the factors that affect youth participation in agricultural activities. Based on the study findings, it is recommended that in order to influence youth participation, they should be provided with youth programmes and resources.

Study Objectives

To investigate reasons for low participation in agriculture by youths in Ekiti

To identify the determinants of youth participation in agriculture in Ekiti

To investigate the possibility of reversing the trend

Research Methods

This study employed the primary method of data collection. The study was conducted in Ekiti State, Nigeria. To address the specific objectives of the study, three local government council areas were selected at random from the existing 16 local government council areas that make the State. Using Cochran's (1977) formula for selecting sample size, a sample of 100 respondents was decided and selected from the youths' population in each of the local government council areas that the study covers. Data were collected with copies of a well-structured questionnaire.

Three local government council areas (Oye, Ido/Osi, and Moba local government) of the state were selected for this study. It was believed that this would enable a rich harvest of the inherent peculiarities of the target population relative to agriculture. Cogent focal research questions were raised in the study and two hypotheses were generated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopts table and percentages to describe the socio-economic characteristics of Ekiti state youths and their level of participation in agriculture. Also, econometrics analysis was adopted using binary regression to estimate the level of impact of each of the identified socio-economic factors on youth participation in agriculture.

Econometric model

$$Y-AGRIC = \alpha + \beta_1GEN + \beta_2AGE + \beta_3MAR + \beta_4OCC + \beta_5REL + \beta_6EDU + \beta_7HHS + \beta_8EMP + \beta_9INC + \beta_{10}WIS + \beta_{11}ENJ + \mu$$

Table 1: Binary Regression Variable Description and their Measurements

Variable	Variable Description	Variable Structure Questionnaire	Response Categories and their codes
<i>Y-AGRIC</i>	Youth participation in agriculture	Have you engaged yourself in agriculture/agriculture related activities before?	1=If engaging in agriculture, 0= If otherwise
<i>GEN</i>	Gender	Gender	1= If male, 0= If otherwise
<i>AGE</i>	Age	Age bracket in year	1= If between 15 – 25, 2= If between 25 – 35, 3= If between 45 – 55, 4=If above 55
<i>MAR</i>	Marital status	Marital Status	1=If single, 2=If married, 3=If divorce, 4=If cohabiting
<i>OCC</i>	Occupation	Occupation	7= If public servant, 6=if trader, 5=If artisan, 4=If transporter/okada, 3=If student, 2=If unemployed , 1=If others
<i>REL</i>	Religion	Religion	3=If Christianity, 2=If Islam, 1=If Traditional Worshiper, 0=If others
<i>EDU</i>	Education	Highest Educational level	6=If postgraduate, 5=If HND/Degree, 4=If undergraduate, 3=If NCE/OND/Diploma ,

			2=If School Cert/SSCE, 1= If Primary School, 0=If No School
<i>HHS</i>	Household Size	Number of people in your family	Open ended
<i>EMP</i>	Employment status	Are you currently employed?	1=If Yes, 0=If otherwise
<i>INC</i>	Income from employment	If you work with government or private sector, what is your total income per month?	1= if Less than 20,000, 2= if between 21000-50000, 3= if between 51,000 and above
<i>WIS</i>	Preferred Job/Wish	What kinds of employment do wish to fully settle down with if you are opportune?	1= If Salary job, 2=if Personal business, 3= if others
<i>ENY</i>	Employment Enjoy	What nature of employment do you enjoy?	1= If full time, 2= If part time 3, If casual labour
α	Intercept		
$\beta_1 - \beta_{11}$	Parameter Estimates		
μ	Error Term		

Source: Authors' Computation, 2020

Table 2: Results of the Regression Analysis

Variable	Co-Efficient	Robust Standard Error	Z-Statistics	P-Value
<i>GEN</i> *	-0.827931	0.476377	-1.737973	0.0822
<i>AGE</i> ***	-1.297380	0.462453	-2.805431	0.0050
<i>MAR</i> **	1.654874	0.690870	2.395348	0.0166
<i>OCC</i>	-0.140225	0.127177	-1.102593	0.2702
<i>REL</i> *	-1.031395	0.530760	-1.943242	0.0520
<i>EDU</i>	0.088528	0.151304	0.585101	0.5585
<i>HHS</i> **	0.310571	0.123491	2.514929	0.0119
<i>EMP</i>	0.087704	0.336001	0.261022	0.7941
<i>INC</i>	-0.571636	0.400539	-1.427169	0.1535
<i>WIS</i>	0.545176	0.433100	1.258778	0.2081
<i>EJY</i> *	0.630480	0.323863	1.946751	0.0516
<i>Intercept</i>	1.887690	1.999160	0.944242	0.3450

*** Statistically significant at 10 percent level of significance

** Statistically significant at 5 percent level of significance

* Statistically significant at 1 percent level of significance

Table 3: Percentage distribution Showing the Socio-demographic and economic Characteristics of the Respondents on Socio-Economic Determinants of Youth Participation in Agriculture in Oye, Ido/Osi and Moba Local Government Areas of Ekiti State, Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age Brackets		
15 – 20	199	67.46
25 – 35	79	26.78
36 – 55	11	3.73
Above 55	6	2.03
Total	295	100.00

Responses to the question on if agriculture be left for old people alone		
No		
Yes	201	80.40
Total	49	19.60
	250	100.00
Education		
No school	7	2.46
Primary school	4	1.40
SSCE	50	17.54
NCE/OND/Diploma	82	28.77
Undergraduate	31	10.88
HND/Degree	72	25.26
Postgraduate	39	13.68
Total	285	100.00
Gender		
Male	153	51.87
Female	142	48.14
Total	295	100.00
Religion		
Others	2	0.67
Traditional Worshiper	8	2.69
Islam	49	16.50
Christianity	238	80.13
Total	297	100.00
Marital Status		
Single	249	83.56
Married	36	12.08
Divorced	9	3.02
Cohabiting	4	1.35
Total	298	100.00
Responses to the question: Are you aware that you can be self employed through agriculture/agric related business?		
No	46	15.45
Yes	252	84.56
Total	298	100.00
Responses to the question: what nature of employment do you enjoy?		
Casual Labour		
Part time	14	4.96
Full time	56	19.86
Total	212	75.17
	282	100.00
Responses to the question: what kinds of employment do wish to fully settle down with if you are opportune?		
Salary job	147	53.07
Personal business	116	41.88
Others	14	5.05
Total	277	100.00
Responses to the question: are you currently employed?		
No	179	61.51
Yes	112	38.49
Total	291	100.00

Occupation of the respondent		
Unemployed	28	9.59
Student	28	9.59
Transporter/Okada	117	40.07
Artisan	31	10.62
Trader	9	3.08
Public servant	25	8.56
Total	54	18.49
	292	100.00
Average monthly income ff employed		
Less than ₦20,000	82	57.75
₦21,000 – ₦50,000	35	24.65
₦51,000 and above	25	17.60
Total	142	100.00
Responses to the question on what youths really need to make agriculture interest them		
Awareness	84	28.67
Training	69	23.55
Fertile Land	39	13.31
Loan facility	53	18.09
Power supply	4	1.37
Improved seedlings	10	3.41
Fertilizer/Agrochemicals availability	11	3.75
Machinery	21	7.17
Others	2	0.68
Total	293	100.00
Responses to the question on why youths abstain from agriculture		
Stressful		
Dirty	31	13.48
Unprofitable	17	7.39
No land	51	22.17
No access to fund	35	15.22
No access to farm machinery	62	26.96
Low market demand for agriculture produce	9	3.91
Poor yields	12	5.22
All of the above	4	1.74
Others	4	1.74
Total	5	2.17
	230	100.00
Responses to further question on why most youth refuse to engage in agriculture		
No access to land	65	22.26
Lack of interest	67	22.95
Lack of finance	90	30.82
Laziness	50	17.12
Low profit prospects	16	5.48
Others	4	1.37
Total	292	100.00

Source: Authors' Computation, 2020

Age

Age is a crucial factor to reckon with in farming. Labour intensive farming requires vigour and vitality; such that are found in African youths. In the words of Djurfeldt, et al. (2019), youths are perceived within the villages to be hardworking, capable, strong, and eager to improve their farms. Even when grown, the 'older farmers are expected to make sound farming decisions, ensuring sustainability of their projects; forecasting and guarding against risks' (Douglas et al, 2017). Ekiti State can be described as a growing economy. As Table 3 above indicates, 67% of responses classifies under age 20. Study found the highest frequency between 15 and 20 years old. The remaining 31% constitute the youth. Only 2% is above 55 years of age. Also, the regression result in Table 2 above shows that the age is one of the statistically significant socio-economic determinants of agricultural

participation. Hence there is well over 100 percent probability that a randomly selected individual from among the respondents will not engage in agriculture as they reach certain age.

The perception of the population regarding the embrace of agriculture by the youth and the elderly was also revealed in Table 3 above. Out of the 250 that responded to the question on if agriculture should be left for the aged people alone, 201 did not support the idea of leaving farming to the aged people alone. African youths are very energetic and could therefore execute labour intensive farming practice that the system promotes. This figure represents over 80% of the respondents. Precisely, 84.56% responded to affirm that agriculture could make them self-employed, while 91% of the respondents believe that agriculture could turn around the nation Nigeria's fortune.

Education

Table 3 above also shows the level of literacy of Ekiti youths. Out of 285 respondents to the question, only 7 (2.46%) did not obtain or complete formal education. Probably, these seven respondents took to trade apprenticeship very early in life; or that they attended Islamic schools. The table shows that the youths in Ekiti are of the elite class. Approximately 80% attended higher institutions, with 67% already with their certificates obtained. This is out of the entire population of 285 respondents, 97% of which has formal education. It should be noted that despite their chosen professions and mandatory education, the tendency is very high that these personalities still practice farming. They are better enlightened on modern farm technology that improves production. This is contrary to the opinion of Ahaibwe et al (2013) that the agriculture sector employs the least educated labour force.

Gender

Data collected on the gender balance of respondents and their religious affiliations are also revealed in Table 3 above. Even though male youths are more energetic in the fields, Ekiti women are known for animal husbandry, bees and poultry keeping. Among the 295 respondents, 153 (51.87%) are male, while 142 (48.14%) are female. Out of these, 249 (83.56%) are not married. Even though there are Muslim youths and youths from other religions, Christian youths dominate the survey. 238 (80.13%) Christian youths partook in the survey. While 16.50% were Muslims, 8% were traditional worshippers; and others atheists. Religion has nothing to influence Ekiti youths' participation in agriculture. The youths were seen to be more concerned with their economic relevance to their households and the society at large rather than to religious affiliations. In their common parlance, affluence propels a gratifying heart. In the same vein, the regression result shown in Table 1 above reveals that there is about 83 percent probability that a selected youth engaging in agriculture in Ekiti state will be male as again 17 per cent probability for female.

Marital status

Moreover, majority of the respondents were not yet married. This is shown in Table 3. Out of 298 respondents, only 36 (i.e. 12.08%) were married. What a growing population Ekiti has. This is an indicant of a bright future for food security in Ekiti, if the youths' conscience could be captured now and convinced to take up lucrative career in agriculture. It can also be established in the econometric result that there is also higher probability that youth engaging in agriculture in the state will be married.

Social economic factors of influence

In consideration of the key social economic factors that we believe could influence youth participation in agriculture; we put forth a question on what youths really need most that could encourage them to engage in agriculture. The responses obtained are as presented in Table 3 above.

The factors as shown in the table include youths' awareness of government backing them up to involve themselves in agriculture. Others include special trainings organised to enlighten them on various modern techniques to handle the different areas of farming; availability of fertile land that they could cultivate; finance; power supply; provision of improved seedlings; provision of fertilizers and other agro-chemicals; and the provision of requisite machinery and other farm implements that can make agriculture less risky and more appealing to take up as a career. 293 respondents attended the question, among whom 84 (i.e. 28.67%) affirm that the awareness that government want them in agriculture would boost youth partaking in agriculture.

As shown in the table, 23.55% responses chose that trainings (organised) are needed to boost their interest in agriculture. Trainings in this regard have to do with being able to read the reasons for planting and for harvesting profitably. It involves being trained to efficiently handle each crop and the farm implements with which the crops are produced.

Next to this is the issue of agriculture finance. The unwillingness of banks and finance houses to advance credits to farmers is on the increase due to the inherent risks involved. The youths in Ekiti, as shown in the collated data,

preferred that adequate provision of agriculture loans would grossly encourage them to go into agriculture. Such funds could be used to go into agro-business, purchase fertile lands, purchase the necessary farm implements and obtain requisite agro-chemicals.

The relevance of fertile land to farming, as preferred by the respondents, is further stressed by 39 respondents that chose fertile land as the most needed factor to engage the youths in agriculture. That is 13.31% of the 293 respondents. The other influential factors include the provision of requisite machinery to aid cultivation, weeding, and harvesting. 21 (7.71%) respondents desired this. Then, is the provision of improved seedlings, fertilizers, and agro-chemicals, which the respondents believed could be bought individually if they have the means. The provision of electricity to farms they believed would enhance farm settlements, and promote irrigation systems on the farms.

Challenges faced by youths in farming

The study traced out the problems that Ekiti youths face in agriculture to include paucity of funds and non-profitability of farming, others include lack of access to fertile lands and inherent stressfulness of farming; dirtiness and low market demand for farm produce. Equally added to these is the fact that they lack the financial capability to possess modern machinery and poor farm yield. All these are captured as reported in Table 3. These claims are further buttressed in the same Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, from 292 responses to youths' impediment to agriculture, 90 responses indicate lack of finance. That is about 31% of the total responses. 22.26% claims no access to land, and about 23% responses claim lack of interest in farming. Only 5% of the respondents claimed low profitability as their challenge in farming.

Conclusion

With the above results, one could conclude that Ekiti youths can improve involvement in agriculture if some factors are properly considered and appropriately taken care of by the right quarters. Ekiti youths need to be encouraged by the government. Socio-economic factors that pose challenges to them are not insurmountable. It seems that paucity of funds and access to arable lands poses great challenges to the youths. This reveals that successive government in Ekiti have not been really determined to assist in driving youths to agriculture. Equally, it can be deduced from the study that no financial institution has been drifted to assist in financing agriculture in Ekiti. Neither is any forum put in place to promote this among the youths.

Recommendations

Study found out that what youths really need most in Ekiti to encourage their taking on agriculture include finance, training, and fertile land. Added to these are improved seedlings, fertilizer, agrochemicals, modern farm equipment, and regular supply of electricity to power their gadgets. In view of this, we would recommend that government should design the appropriate policies and create such structures that can contain all the identified challenges.

A well standardized market structure could be arraigned by the state and the local governments tailored towards buying agricultural produce in huge quantities from farmers. Not only buying them for standardized storage, the state government could harness these products and process them for industrial consumption and for exportation if found excessive. Doing this would not only encourage more production, it would improve industrial growth, create more jobs, and generate progressive employment. Moreover, in the words of Rybakowa (2013), as cited by Bednaríkov a et al. (2016) government support is not enough to motivate people to agriculture (Rybakowa, 2013)

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