

Relationship between Youth Associations and Youth Empowerment in Agricultural Activities in Ogun State, Nigeria

Coster, A.S¹ and Sebiomo, A.A²

¹ Department of Agricultural Education, Tai Solarin College of Education
P.M.B 2128, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria

² Department of Agricultural Education, Tai Solarin College of Education
P.M.B 2128, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT—*The study examined the relationship between youth associations and youth empowerment in agricultural activities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study used primary data obtained through structured questionnaire administered to 240 respondents. A multistage random sampling procedure was used to select 20 farm youths in each of the twelve rural communities where youth are actively involved in registered agricultural associations in Odogbolu LGA and Ijebu North LGA. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Results show that majority (88.3%) are male, single (81.37%), under the age of 30 years (80.8%) and educated (98.4%). The youth acquired various agricultural skills such as poultry production, crop production and fish production as a result of participating in the associations' agricultural activities and majority (96.7%) of them transferred the acquired skill to their personal farms. The study further revealed that youth made an average income of N103,750 per annum for their engagement in personal farm. Also, 13.3 % of the youth make use of their phones to access internet while majority (86.7%) did not access internet services for the marketing and selling of their farm products. The result of the multiple regression analysis shows that gender, educational level, length of residence in a community, income and contact with extension agents were the relevant and significant factors that determined youth participation in agricultural activities of the youth associations. The study recommend that credit facilities should be provided by the government and NGO to the young farmers, intensive campaign to encourage young school leavers and female youth into the agricultural training programme, seminars and workshops should be organise to raise the level of perception, attitude and relevance of using ICTs by the rural youth to transform agriculture*

Keywords— Relationship, youth associations, empowerment, agricultural activities

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, policy discussions concerning youth have been based on the premise that youth are in transition from childhood to adulthood and, as such, have specific characteristics that make them a distinct demographic and social category. This transition is multi-faceted. It involves the sexual maturation of individuals and their growing autonomy social and economic independence from parents and other carers. The nature of the transition from childhood to adulthood has changed over time and varies considerably from one region to another. Rural children in developing countries become adults quickly mainly because the transition from school to work usually occurs at an early age and is completed in a short space of time. The same is true for poor young rural women with regard to marriage and childbearing. 'Lack of alternatives' is the major reason given for very high levels of marriage and childbearing among rural adolescent girls. Rural survival strategies demand that young people fully contribute to meeting the livelihood needs of their households from an early age. Consequently, youth as a transitional stage barely exists for the large majority of rural youth, and the poor in particular (Benelli, 2007)

Worldwide it is estimated that there were 1.2 billion youth in the year 2000 and 53% of them lives in rural area (Onyeoziri 2002). In Nigeria, youth dominate the population of 140 millions in 2006, 45% fall in the 0-14 years age bracket and the mean age is 17.56 years (UN systems in Nigeria, 2000). According to Onyeoziri (2002) 44% of the Nigeria youth are male while 56% are female, 61% of them lives in rural areas and 39% in Urban centres.

Sustainability of farm youth's participation in agriculture development cannot be over emphasized as they (the farm youth) were born on the farm, socialized into farming and found to have developed adequate ruggedness suitable for farming right from their tender age (Adedoyin et. al., 1998, Torimiro 1998).

The farm youth are young men and women between the age of thirteen and thirty years who are living in the farming community and actively involved in crop farming activities. This category of population acquired traditional farming skills and knowledge, which are not scientifically utilized to the utmost advantage of the agricultural sectors. Their participation in agricultural development is very important because they have potential to contribute actively and productively in all significant aspect of agriculture which includes crop production, livestock rearing and fish production (Umaru 1992).

Due to western education, that our youth are acquiring everyday, there has been a depletion of the youthful labour force in agriculture. There are mass rural-urban migrations of young graduates who mostly have no vocational or technical knowledge looking for scarce white collar jobs. This migration leads to increased level of the unemployment in urban areas, social ills and vices among others. Also National Economic Empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS 2004) reported that urban unemployment in Nigeria is estimated to be about 10.8%. Even those who are employed are clamoring for better standard of living and their expectation are rising daily. This situation motivated many youth to join associations for agricultural activities which will not only increase food production and to an extent, reduces the gap between food production and its demand in the country but also create a career opportunity for the youths in agriculture thereby empowering them in agricultural decision making of the country. Consequently, the aged men who are less energetic with low innovation proneness are left in the rural areas carrying out unproductive agricultural activities. Their inefficiency and unproductiveness constitute a bane to agricultural development in Nigeria.

A survey by National Manpower Board in 1990 shows a glooming picture on the unemployment figure in the country. About 5.7 million graduates are said to be unemployed while the figure was been predicted to hit 15 million by the end of 2005 (Oladoja et.al., 2005). Release by National Bureau of Statistics in 2011 show that unemployment is highest among youth between the age of 15 and 24, with an average unemployment rate of 35.9 percent. The figure show that agriculture and trading are the two sectors responsible for the highest level of unemployment per sector. Goedkoop, et. al (2004) stated that young people have a natural disposition for innovation and for learning new tools and those assets can help to create viable options to remain in the countryside.

Youth have been noted to play a vital role in agricultural production especially in developing countries like Nigeria, where their contribution is paramount. Studies have shown that children and youth contribute significantly in agricultural activities (Ugwoke, et.al 2005). In a study by Ugwoke et.al (2005) it was reported that youth engage in farming activities. This was confirmed by Fashina and Okunola (2005) that youth are major client group needed for agricultural transformation in Nigeria. Also, Coster and Adekoya (2010) in a similar study reported that the unemployed graduate youth were able to secure a living through participation in agricultural training programme of Ogun State Employment Generation Programme (OGEGEP). Thus the preparation of any nation for productive life depends on the policies and programmes designed for youth.

This study aimed to assess the relationship between youth associations and empowerment of youth in agricultural activities. Specifically, it examined the socio economic characteristics of the youth participating in agricultural youth associations; assess the empowerment acquired by the youth through agricultural skilled learned in the associations; ascertain the relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the youth and their participation in agricultural youth associations; and identify the problems faced by the youth in the agricultural youth associations.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Ogun State. Ogun State is entirely in the tropics, located in the Southwest Zone of Nigeria with a total land area of 16,409.26 square kilometers. It is bounded on the west by the Benin Republic, on the south by Lagos state and the Atlantic ocean, on the East by Ondo State, and on the North by Oyo and Osun state. It is situated between latitude 6.2oN and 7.8oN and longitude 3.0oE and 5.0oE. The climate of Ogun State follows a tropical pattern with the raining season starting about March and ending in November, followed by dry season. The mean annual rainfall varies to 128cm in the southern part of the state to 105cm in the Northern areas. The average monthly temperature ranges from 23oC in July to 32oC in February. The Northern part of the state is mainly of derived savannah vegetation while the central part falls in the rain forest belt. The southern part of the state has mangrove swamp. The geographical land scope of the state comprises extensive fertile soil suitable for agriculture, and savannah land in the north western part of the state, suitable for cattle rearing. There are also vast forest reserves, rivers, lagoons, rocks, mineral deposits and an ocean front The state is blessed with a conducive climate that supports cultivation of a variety of crops such as yam, cassava, maize, rice, plantain, beans, vegetables and citrus fruits such as orange, paw-paw, pineapple and so on. The main cash crops produced in the state are cocoa, cashew, kola nut, oil palm and palm kernels, rubber and coffee.

The State has 20 local government areas, with an estimated population of about 3,751,140 in 2006 (NPC, 2006).

The sampling technique employed for this study is multi stage sampling technique. Odogbolu Local Government Area and Ijebu North Local Government Area were purposively selected from the Ijebu division, one of the four agricultural zones classified by the Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme. Six rural communities in which many farm youth participating in registered youth associations are actively involved in agricultural activities were randomly selected in each of the Local Government Areas, thus make a total of twelve rural communities (Aiyesan, Dagbolu, Apoje, Osunbudepo, Ajibandele, Aba paanu, Imodi-Imosan, Omu-Ajose, Ala, Ibefun-Ilado, Okun-owa and Odogbolu). Finally, a random sampling of 20 youth under the age 15 -30 years were selected from each of the twelve rural communities. Thus, a total of two hundred and forty (240) farm youths were interviewed for this study.

Pre-tested and validated structured interview was used to elicit information from the youth participating in the agricultural activities of the youth associations. Also, unstructured interviews were conducted to probe into some of the issues that were not addressed during the administration of the structured questionnaire.

The data collected were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

The simple descriptive statistics involves the use of frequency, percentages and tabular presentation of the data to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, skill acquired, personal agricultural activities, problems and constraints encountered in the associations while the inferential statistics (multiple regression) was used to determine the relationship between the selected socio-economic characteristics of the youth and the level of the participation in agricultural activities of the youth associations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that majority (88.3%) of the respondents are male while female youth constitute 11.7%. Majority (66.7%) of the youth participating in agricultural youth associations are between the age of 16-30 years, 14.1% are less than 20 years while 16.7% are between the age of 30-40 years. Majority (81.3%) of the sampled youth are single while 18.7% are married. The education level attainment shows that 47.5% of the youth acquired NCE/OND, 25% acquired HND/Degree and 25.8% had secondary school education. This implies that majority of the youth participating in agricultural youth associations are literate hence they will be more receptive to new innovations that will improve agricultural productivity. Also, majority (61.7%) of the respondents had resided in the community for more than 15 years, 25.8% had resided in the community for between 11-15 years and 10% had resided in the community between 6-10 years. Table 1 revealed further that 46.7% of the youths had between 3-5 years farming experience, 14.2% had between 6-10 years farming experience and 3.3% had more than 10 years farming experience. Also, 41.7% of the participating youth had farming as their primary occupation while 58.3% had farming as their secondary occupation.

Table 2 shows that the need to be self employed (75%) were the dominant factor that motivated the youth to participate in agricultural activities of the youth associations followed by interest in agriculture (21.7%). Majority (54.2%) of the respondents acquired poultry production skill, 25% acquired crop production skill, 18.3% acquired fish production skill and 2.5% acquired animal fattening skill. Also, 97.5% of the participating youth had engaged in personal farm by transferring the skill acquired to their own farm thereby increase agricultural production in the study area.. This result corroborated the findings of Coster and Adekoya (2010), Pur, et.al., (2007), and Fasina and Okunola (2005). This implies that participation in agricultural youth associations had immensely contributed in the acquisition of different agricultural skills by the youth in the study area which apart from reducing unemployment also had the advantage of curbing social ills and delinquent behaviour among youths especially armed robbery and political thuggery. Table 2 revealed further that majority (60.8%) of the youth participating in agricultural activities of the youth associations earned between N51,000-N100,000 as annual farm income, 19.2% earned less than N50,000 per annum, 13.3% earned between N101,000 -N150,000 and 6.7% earned above N150,000 as annual farm income. Majority (46.7%) of these youth sourced their farm finance from cooperative societies , 22.5% were assisted by NGO loan scheme, 20.8% sourced their farm finance from their personal saving, 10% of the participating youth obtained loan from their friends and relatives and there was no assistance in either cash or kind from the government.

Table 3 reveals the uses of information communication technology among the youth participating in agricultural activities of the associations. 91.7% of the youth have mobile phones while about 8.3% did not have. Also, about 43.6% of the youth used their mobile phones to make contacts with buyers of farm produce and sellers of farm inputs while 56.3% did make use of their mobile phones to contact their family members and friends rather than for farm transactions. On access to internet services to link the external markets for their farm products, about 13.3 % opined that they make use of their phones to access internet while majority (86.7%) did not access internet services for the marketing and selling of their farm products. The study revealed further that majority (66.7%) of the youth participating in agricultural activities relied on radio and television as their primary source of information. This implies that the youth in study area despite the high literacy level recorded are still far from the outside world in the usage of information technology that can transform activities in support of improved agriculture. Thus the youth associations needs to organise seminars and

workshops to raise the level of perception, attitude and change in addressing the relevance and affordability of ICTs by youth farmers.

Table 4 presents the result of multiple regression analysis that established the relationship between socio economic characteristics and their participation in agricultural youth associations.

The regression estimate indicates that five variables namely; gender, education, length of residence, income, contact with extension agents were statistically significant and determined the participation of youth in agricultural associations. The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) of 0.590 indicate that about 59% variation in youth participation in agricultural associations were explained by the explanatory variables included in the model. The F-value (19.986***) show that the overall model is significant at 1% and Durbin watson value (2.017) show the absence of autocorrelation.

The coefficient of gender is positive and statistically significant at 5%. This implies that there exists a significant relationship between the gender of the youth and their participation in agricultural activities. This result was supported by the findings of Torimiro and Oluborode (2006) who reported that gender influences the choice of production needs because young men and women participate in different cultural practices on the farm at varying level of participation. Also, Farinde et. al., (1999) and Olujide et. al.,(1999) in their different studies found out that cultural activities in the farm are allocated base on the farmers' children gender.

There is a negative relationship between the age of the youth and their participation. This indicate that the youth that are involved in agricultural associations are lower age cadre i.e less than 30 years. The younger individual are more flexible and their attitude are more favourable towards participation in such tedious and physical tasks while the older individual are more rigid and are less likely to participate in such a collective physical tasks. This result supports the findings of Coster and Adekoya (2010) who reported that younger unemployed graduates are likely to participate in the agricultural training programme than the older unemployed graduate. This is because the energetic younger youths would involve themselves in higher task to earn a living than the older youth.

Education was found to be positive and significant at 5%. This implies that the higher the level of education of the youth the more the level of participation in agricultural association and increased agricultural activities. This result was corroborated by the findings of Torimiro and Oluborode (2006); Coster and Adekoya (2010) who at their different research studies reported that the level of education influenced the participation of youth in agricultural/economic activities. This is because effective participation obviously requires communicative and human relational skills which must be learned; hence those who are better educated would be better empowered for participation since their attitude would likely be favourable.

The length of years of residence in the community was positively related to youth participation in agricultural associations and statistically significant at 10%. This indicate that the longer the number of years that a youth has resided in a community the more his/her level of participation in youth agricultural associations. This result corroborates the findings of Ekong (2003) who reported that for a non indigene to be fully accepted into rural social groups, the family he comes from must have lived in the community for a very long time, gained the acceptance of the people and contributed in various ways to the growth of the area.

Farming experience has no significant relationship with the level of participation in agricultural youth associations. This implies that experience in farming is not a prerequisite for belonging to agricultural youth' associations. The association is open to any interested youth member who are ready and willing to undergo training in different agricultural skills.

The coefficient of income was positive and statistically significant at 5%. This indicates that as the level of income earned in agricultural production increases so also the level of participation will increase. Thus, income is a significant motivational factor that will influence the level of youth participation in agricultural activities of the agricultural youth associations. Pur et al., (2007) reported a similar positive relationship between income and level of participation of youth in agricultural activities.

The result also shows that there exists significant relationship between contacts with extension agents and participation. This implies that as there is increase in number of contacts with extension agents who rendered valuable services of improving agricultural productivity the more the level of participation of youth in agricultural activities. of the associations.

Table 5 reveals the problems encountered by the participating youth in agricultural associations. Majority (82.5%) were financially constrained to expand their personal farm and diversified into different agricultural production, 9.2% had no access to farm inputs to improve their agricultural productivity and 10% had land acquisition problem.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that youth associations in the study area have impacted positively on the livelihood of the youth in their respective communities. The youth are motivated in participating in the youth agricultural associations because it gave them the opportunity to acquire various skills ranging from crop production, poultry production, animal fattening and fish production which they eventually transferred to their personal farm and earned reasonable income to sustain their living and support their family. Also, the use of ICTs to explore marketing opportunities with the outside world was not prevalent among the rural youth farmers. Regression analysis revealed that gender, educational level, length of residence in a community, income and contacts with extension agents were the relevant and significant factors that explained the participation of youth in agricultural activities of the youth associations in the study area.

Based on the above, the following recommendations were made;

- government at all levels should direct policies towards empowering youth in agricultural activities and other vocational skills so as to reduce the glooming youth unemployment in the country.
- The State and local governments should intensify awareness campaign to encourage more young school leavers and female youth to participate in various agricultural training programmes in their locality so that they can secure a living for themselves.
- Credit facilities and land should be made available by both government and non government agencies to youth through their associations. This will provide opportunity to those who acquired agricultural skills to start their own personal farm and generate more income to sustain their living.
- The youth associations and other relevant agencies should assist in organising seminars and workshops to raise the level of perception, attitude and relevance of using ICTs by the rural youth to transform agriculture

5. REFERENCES

- Adedoyin S.F., D.O. Torimiro and M.F.O. Jaji, 1998. Rural Infrastructure and Social Amenities Requirement of Farmers' Children in Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State. *Nig. J. Rural Sociol.*, 2: 29-32.
- Bennell Paul. (2007). Promoting Livelihood Opportunities For Rural Youth. *Knowledge and Skills for Development, IFAD*, 2007
- Coster, A.S and Adekoya, M.I (2010). Economic Impact of Unemployed Graduate Youths Training in Agricultural Activities in Ogun State. *Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(5): 87-95, 2010
- Ekong, E.E., 2003. An Introduction to Rural Sociology (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Dove Publisher, 2003), pp: 36.
- Farinde, A.J., O.A. Ajayi and D.O. Torimiro, 1999. "Farm- Children Involvement in Crop Production Activities and Associated Hazards in Oke-Ogun Area of Oyo State, Nigeria" in *Farm Children and Agricultural Productivity in the 21st Century*, Eds Williams S.B, FE. Ogbimi and A.J. Farinde, (Nigeria: Children in Agriculture Programme, 1999), pp: 158-164.
- Fasina, O.O. and J.O. Okunola, 2005. Impact of youth agricultural programme on food production in Ondo State. *Proceedings of the 9th Annual National Conference of Nigerian Rural Sociological Association* (8-11, March, 2004).
- Goedkoop J, Roa MC, Sanz JI, Barahama JM, Menendez JL (2004). Youth and research: experiences from Honduras and Columbia. *Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture magazine (LEISA)*, 20: p.2.
- National Bureau of Statistics (2011). *Nigeria Unemployment Figures. Annual Abstract of Statistics*, 2011
- NEEDS. 2004: National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, National planning commission Abuja, Nigeria
- Oladoja, M.A., O.A. Adoekun and B.O. Adisa, 2005. Agricultural Extension and Poverty Alleviation, Problems and Challenges in a Democratic and Deregulated economy. *J. Agric Extension* 8 : 84 – 89.
- Olujide, M.G., J.O. Oladeji and O.B. Oyesola, 1999. Involvement of Farmers' Children in Farming Activities in Ikorodu local Government Area of Lagos State. In *Farm Children and Agricultural Productivity in the 21st Century*, Eds. Williams, S.B, F.E. Ogbimi and A.J. Farinde, Nigeria: Children in Agriculture Programme, 1999), pp: .153-157.
- Onyoziri, I.E.C., 2002 *Empowering the youth omega CXI consults publisher Maiduguri.*
- Pur, J.T., Ibrahim Shehu and Elizabeth Sabo (2007). The Role of Youth Associations in Empowering Youths in Agricultural Activities in Adamawa State, Nigeria. *Agricultural Journal*, 2(5): 602-605, 2007.
- Torimiro, D.O and B.O. Lawal, 1998. Rural Children's Socialization into Farming. In: *Gender, Sustainable Development and Urban Poor in Nigeria*, Eds. Oruwari, Y. (Nkpolu, PortHarcourt, Nigeria: River State University of Science and Technology, 1998), pp: 115-120.
- Torimiro, D.O. and Oluborode, A.A (2006). Exploring Socio-economic Correlates of Production Needs for Enhancing Food Security Through Farm Youth in Southwest Nigeria. *Journal of Applied Science Research*, 2(5): 248-255, 2006
- Ugwoke, F.O., O.M Adesope and F.C. Ibe, 2005. Youths Participation in Farming Activities in Rural Areas of Imo State, Nigeria: Implication for Extension. *J. Agric extension* 8. 136 – 142

Umaru, M. 1992. Extension Strategies for Reaching Rural Youths. (Foreward) Proceeding of the National Workshops, NAERLS, Zaria, Nigeria, 20th – 24th July 1992.

Table 1. **Summary of Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	212	88.3
Female	<u>28</u>	<u>11.7</u>
	240	100.0
Age		
< 20	34	14.1
21 - 30	160	66.7
31 – 40	40	16.7
>40	<u>6</u>	<u>2.5</u>
	240	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	195	81.3
Married	<u>45</u>	<u>18.7</u>
	240	100.0
Education level		
No formal Education	2	0.8
Primary	2	0.8
Secondary	62	25.8
NCE/OND	114	47.5
HND/DEGREE	<u>60</u>	<u>25.0</u>
	240	100.0
Length of residence		
< 5 years	6	2.5
6 – 10 years	24	10.0
11 – 15 years	62	25.8
>15 years	<u>148</u>	<u>61.7</u>
	240	100.0
Farming Experience		
1 – 2yrs	14	5.8
3 – 5 yrs	112	46.7
6 – 10 yrs	106	44.2
>10 yrs	<u>8</u>	<u>3.3</u>
	240	100.0
Occupational status		
Farming (primary occupation)	100	41.7
Farming (secondary occupation)	140	58.3
Private sector employed	8	3.3
Self employed	90	37.5
Government employed	42	17.5

Source: Field survey, 2009

Table 2. **Benefits of Participating in Agricultural Youth Associations**

Motivation for participation		
Self employed	180	75.0
Interest in agriculture	52	21.7
Others	<u>8</u>	<u>3.3</u>
	240	100.0
Skill Acquired		
Crop production	60	25.0
Animal fattening	6	2.5
Poultry production	130	54.2
Fish production	<u>44</u>	<u>18.3</u>
	240	100.0
Engagement in Personal Farm		
Yes	234	97.5

No	<u>26</u>	<u>2.5</u>
	240	100.0
Income earned		
Less than 50,000	46	19.2
51,000 – 100,000	146	60.8
101,000 –150,000	32	13.3
Above 150,000	<u>16</u>	<u>6.7</u>
	240	100.0
Source of farm finance		
Personal saving	50	20.8
Friends & Relations	24	10.0
Cooperative society	112	46.7
NGO assisted loan scheme	54	22.5
Government assistance	-	-
	240	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2012

Table 3 : Assessment of ICT Usage Among the Youth in Agricultural Activities

	YES		NO	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Do you have mobile phone	220	91.7	20	8.3
Do you use your mobile phone to make contact with buyers of farm produce	96	43.6	124	56.3
Do you use internet services to source for internal and external markets for your farm produce	32	13.3	210	86.7
Source of information is through other means of communication such as Radio, Television	160	66.7	80	33.3

Source: Field survey, 2012

Table 4. Relationship Between Socio-Economic Characteristics and Participation in Youth Agricultural Associations.

Variables	Co-efficient	Standard Error	T- value
X1: Gender (male=1, 0 otherwise)	0.353	0.601	1.754**
X2: Age (years)	-0.189	0.186	-0.019
X3: Marital (1=married, 0 otherwise)	0.195	0.212	0.920
X4: Education (years)	0.148	0.053	2.786**
X5: Length of residence (years)	0.197	0.109	1.797*
X6: Farm experience (years)	-0.221	0.163	-1.350
X7: Income (Naira)	0.031	0.114	0.271**
X8: Extension contacts (1=yes, 0 No)	2.702	0.257	10.520***
Constant	1.617	0.601	2.691***
R ²	0.590		
Adj. R ²	0.561		
Durbin Watson	2.017		
F-statistic	19.986***		

*** Significant at 1% , ** Significant at 5% , * Significant at 1%

Table 5. Problems of Youths Participating in Agricultural Associations

	Frequency	Percentage
Financial constraint	198	82.5
Land constraint	20	8.3
Farm inputs (fertilizer/seeds)	<u>22</u>	<u>9.2</u>
	240	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2012