

ASSESSMENT OF THE ATTITUDES OF PIONEER YOUTH TOWARDS YOUTH COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (Y-CAD) PROGRAMME IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study has examined the attitudes of pioneer youth towards youth Commercial Agricultural Development programme in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentages and Pearson product moment Correlation. Result from the analysis showed that 80.8 percents were male, 76% of the respondents were married, with high literacy level, 62.4% had household size less than 5 per members, 79.2% of the respondents were Christians. The findings also showed that the respondents had favourable attitude towards the programme. It was found that age, sex, Marital Status, family size, religion and level of education had no significant relationship with the respondents' attitudes towards the programme. The study recommends the provision of adequate infrastructural facilities in each farm centres, and proper monitoring and supervision of the farm centres

Key words: Attitude, Commercial Agricultural development Programme, Youth

Introduction

The role played by agriculture in the economy of both developing and industrialized countries cannot be over-emphasized. Apart from being the first occupation of mankind, the existence of mankind depends on farming irrespective of race and colour (Adeyemo and Adekanmi, 2005).

In Nigeria, agriculture is an important industry that provides employment for about 70% of her (Okunmadewa, 2006). Also, served as an important source of foreign exchange earnings for the country. (Federal Office of Statistics, 2007). In Nigeria, adolescent and youth Population has continued to grow over the last two decades. According to the United Nations Commission on Population and Development, (2015), the population of adolescents has increased from about 12 million in 1991 to 19.5 million in 2010 and estimated at over 32 million in 2014. Similarly, population of the youth has increased from 11.3 million in 1991 to 19.9 million in 2010 and about 23.8 in 2014. (United Nations Commission on Population and Development, 2015).

Fasina and Okunlola (2005) reported that youth are major primary clientele group needed for agricultural transformation in Nigeria, thus there is need to prepare them for a productive life, and this will only depend on policies designed for them.

The poor state of youth participation in agricultural activities in Nigeria has been a matter of great

concern among researchers and administrators. This is because the decline in agricultural production has dimmed the hope of raising production in ensuring sustainable food security for the ever increasing population in Nigeria (Ogunremi, 2012).

For the country to attain economic stability, the agricultural sector must be revamped and youth encouraged by imbibing farming as a noble profession (Okwoche *et al* 2012). Presently, Nigeria is faced with dwindling oil revenue which has brought the economy of this nation almost to a standstill. Promoting sustainable agriculture in the youth through youth commercial agricultural development will be a significant gain. The youth commercial agricultural development (YACD) is an agricultural development programme established by the Ekiti State Government in February, 2012. The aim of YACD was to employ and train 20,000 youths in Ekiti state about agricultural mechanization.

YACD's project is strategically located in the zones where agricultural production is prominent. The production activities include, crop, livestock and fishery. The different locations for crop enterprise were based on the availability of resources for implementation of the project. The sites include, Ayede/Igede, Orin, Erio, Ode, Ikere, Apero, Oke Ako, Ipao, Efon and Ado.

Intensive research effort on finding out the attitude of youth towards agriculture is very necessary

considering the role youths plays in nation building particularly in the development of agricultural industry.

The developing world youth is the generation of economic and social actors and they can be agents of change in favour of sustainable development. Youth are found to possess certain characteristics required for sustainable development. Despite these facts, Nigeria witnesses a lot of migration of young people to the cities for white collar job. This makes the bulk of work engaged in subsistence farming and are characterised with the use of crude implement and local seeds thus resulting in low productivity, low income and a vicious cycle of poverty. The youth have desirable qualities that can promote agriculture, studies conducted by researchers showed that most of the youth showed apathy towards agriculture (Dutse *et al* 2010). Though past effort to restore the glory through programs and project has not yielded the expected result.

The contribution of agriculture to Nigeria's economic growth has been frail when compared to what it used to be in the past. Nigeria agriculture is still in its peasantry level and agricultural productivity has declined over the years with a resultant effect on the socio economic livelihood of the people. Several researchers have highlighted the reasons for the relegation of agriculture. Among this is the migration of youth to the urban areas. This results in the abandonment of farming enterprise in the hands of the aged people who still maintain subsistence practice of farming (Alfred, 2006). It is imperative that if youth were encouraged to live in the rural area and contribute to food production, the challenges of food crisis could be reduced. (Adedoyin, 2005).

The realization of this situation led both the federal and state government to embark on ways to involve the youth in agriculture at various levels.

It is against this background information that the study will seek to answer the following questions.

- * What are the socio-economic characteristics of pioneer youths participating in youth commercial agricultural development in the study area?
- * What is the attitude of the respondents towards the programme?
- * What are the problems encountered by the respondents?

The main objective of the study was to assess the attitude of pioneer youth towards commercial agricultural development programme in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study

- analysed the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents
- examined the attitudes of respondents towards the programme
- identified the problems encountered by respondents in the course of the programme.

Methodology

All the youth that participated in YCAD programme constitute the population for the study. However, a purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents used for the study. There are five commercial agricultural sites in the state. Twenty-five respondents were purposively selected from each site, thus, making a total of 125 respondents.

Data were collected by means of an interview schedule earlier pretested using odd and even number items. Data analysis was done using frequencies, means, table and percentages as well as the Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Results and Discussions

Data in Table 1 show that 80.8% of the respondents were male. Most of the farmers are young. This implied that the respondents are agile and active to withstand the rigors of farming. Also, most of the respondents (76%) were married while 24% were single. The study shows that most of the youth involved in YCAD programme were married, hence are expected to show a positive attitude towards Commercial Agriculture. A huge percentage of the respondents' received one form of education or the other. The high literacy level is expected to influence their behavior positively and enhance their ability to adopt technologies that could boost their productivity. However, this is contrary to the findings of Adebo and Sekumade(2013) that the low literacy level of women farmers affects their adaptation to Climate change and thus, their productivity. Adebo (2014)also indicated the low literacy level as one of the major challenges of farmers involved in e wallet programmes in Kwara. This confirms the fact that youth involvement in Commercial Agriculture could lead to agricultural transformation. The respondents also held one belief or the other which may be a factor for their choice of participating in the programme. This is in line with the findings of Jibowo (1992) and Alfred (2006) who agreed to the fact that person's belief has influence on the choice he/she makes.

Results in table 1 also revealed that household size ranges from one to eleven. The mean household size was four persons. Most of the respondents (79.2%) were Christians, 18.4% of them were Muslims while 2.4% of them practice the African Traditional Religion. The findings indicate that Christians dominate the study area.

Table 1: Socio-Economic characteristics of the respondents (n=125)

Socio-economic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	101	80.8
Female	24	19.2
Age		
<25years	25	20.0
26-30 years	60	48.0
31-35 years	35	28.0
36-40years	5	4.0
Marital status		
Married	95	76.0
Single	30	24.0
Household Size		
<5	78	62.4
6-`10	45	36.0
>10	2	1.6
Level of Education		
No formal education	40	32.0
Adult education	21	16.8
Primary school education	9	7.2
Secondary school education	7	5.6
Tertiary education	48	38.4
Religion		
Christianity	99	79.2
Islam	23	18.4
Traditional religion	3	2.4

Source: Field Survey, 2014

The result in table 2 shows the mean score of the attitudes of youths towards the programme respondents have favourable attitudes towards the following: the programme has helped to increase farm output ($x=4.48$), the programme cost is low and affordable ($x=3.80$).

The programme has not improved my lot at all ($x=3.69$), the execution of the programme by government has not been good ($x=3.62$).

The programme is not worth the propaganda ($x=3.70$). The statements all indicated that respondents have favourable attitude towards the programme.

This implies that with better packages and cooperation, the programme can attract more participation that could help youth out of their poverty cycle.

On the other hand, the respondents do not have favourable attitude towards the following statements, the programme has increased the cost of farming ($x=2.65$), programme has not been too lackadaisical about problems ($x=3.02$).

The programme is just a political propaganda ($x=3.34$). The programme has not been politicized ($x=3.31$). The programme has been hijacked by political opportunist ($x=2.90$).

Result in table 3, showed the problems encountered by the respondents. These problems as observed by the farmers includes inadequate funding (78.4%), inadequate farm implements (60%), political interference (65.8%), lack of commitment on the path of the initiators (62.4%) and lack of adequate manpower (56.0%).

Table 2: The Attitudes of Respondents towards Youth for Commercial Agricultural Development Programme

Items	SA	A	I	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION
The introduction of the programme has increased output	81(64.8)	31(24.8)	6(4.8)	6(4.8)	1(0.8)	4.48	Agreed
The programme is simple and understandable	14(11.2)	14(11.2)	25(20.0)	64(31.2)	8(64)	3.30	Disagreed
The cost of partaking in the programme is low and affordable	63(50.4)	43(34.4)	8(6.4)	9(7.2)	2(1.6)	3.90	Agreed
The programme has a lackadaisical attitude towards solving the problem of youth	22(17.6)	22(17.6)	19(15.2)	55(44.0)	7(5.6)	3.02	Undecided
The programme is just one of the political propaganda of the government	18(14.4)	14(11.2)	15(12.0)	64(51.2)	14(11.2)	3.34	Disagreed
The programme has not better the lots of youths at all	11(8.8)	7(5.6)	9(7.2)	81(64.8)	17(13.6)	3.69	Agreed
The execution of the programme by government has not been very good	9(7.2)	15(12.0)	12(9.6)	68(54.4)	21(16.6)	3.62	Agreed
The programme has been hijacked by political thugs/opportunist	17(13.6)	22(17.6)	9(7.2)	49(39.2)	28(22.2)	2.90	Disagreed
The programme is not worth the propaganda	10(8.0)	9(7.2)	13(10.4)	70(56.0)	23(18.4)	3.20	Agreed
The programme has not been politicized	17(13.6)	22(17.6)	9(7.2)	49(31.2)	28(22.4)	3.31	Disagreed

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 3: Problems Encountered by the respondents

Problems	Frequency	Percentages
Inadequate funding	98	78.4
Inadequate farm implements	75	60.0
Political interference	82	65.6
Lack of commitment on the path of initiators	78	62.4
Lack of adequate manpower	70	56.0

Source: Field Survey, 2014 Multiple Responses

Table 4 shows the relationship between the respondents' socio-economic characteristics and their attitudes towards the programme. It was found age, sex, marital, family size, religion and level of education had no significant relationship with their attitude towards the programme. The implication of the result is that all these variable have no influence on the attitudes of respondents towards the programme.

Although, the level of education has been found to be significantly related to the level of adoption (Alfred, 2006), the enlightenment through electronic and print media, including posters and handbills might have eroded the necessity of level of education for the people to be mobilized and be involved. Therefore irrespective of the level of education, the people participated and tend to have a favourable attitude.

Table 4: Result of Pearson Correlation showing Significant Relationship between selected Socio Economic Characteristics of Respondents and Attitudes towards YCAD

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	P-value	Remarks
Age and attitude	-0.012	0.892	NS
Sex and attitude	-0.099	0.281	NS
Marital status and Attitude	-0.155	0.089	NS
family size and attitude	-0.098	0.536	NS
religion and attitude	-0.056	0.538	NS
Level of education and Attitude	-0.033	0.716	NS

Source: Field Survey, 2014 **Significance at 0.05 level of significance

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that youths attitudes towards youth for commercial Agricultural Development programme has been favourable. It was observed that the level of education, age, sex, marital status, family size and religion did not significantly influence the attitudes of youth towards youth for commercial agricultural development programme in the study area.

The study therefore recommends the provision of adequate infrastructural facilities in each farm centres. Adequate funding and effective monitoring and supervision should be pursued with vigor.

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