

Educators' perception on the choice of agriculture as a career among youth in Oyo state, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the educators' perception on the choice of agriculture as a career among youths in Oyo State. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 207 respondents (teachers and parents) who were randomly selected for the study. Data were collected on respondents' personal characteristics, awareness of career options in agriculture, preferred occupation for wards, factors determining preference and perception of respondents on agriculture as a career choice. Data were analysed using frequency counts, percentage, mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance. The mean age of the respondents was 36.8 years. More of them (55.1%) were males, married (56.0%), had some form of tertiary education (82.1%) and employed in the education profession (43.5%). Many (54.6%) had high level of awareness of the career opportunities in agriculture and ranked agriculture as the second most preferred occupation for their wards (\bar{x} = 2.23) after medicine (\bar{x} = 2.24). High income expectations (\bar{x} = 1.63) ranked as the most important factor determining preference for any career and more of them (54.1%) had favourable perception of their wards taking up a career in agriculture. Significant relationship existed between awareness of career options in agriculture and perception of agriculture as a career choice ($r=0.255$, $p\leq 0.05$). Educators were favourably disposed to agriculture as a career choice for their wards, although considered second to medicine. Stakeholders should sustain the public awareness of the potentials of agriculture as a high income generating occupation.

Keywords: Educators' perception, youth-in-agriculture, career choice

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture, for decades, has been linked with the creation of basic food crops and livestock (Aluko, 2014). Nigeria as an agrarian country inherited at independence an economy dominated by a robust agricultural sector in income and foreign exchange earnings, and whose share in the Gross Domestic Product was 65.7% (Encyclopaedia of the Nations, 2010). One of the biggest problems facing the Nigerian youth is unemployment due to a variety of factors such as perceived low availability of employment opportunities and inadequacy of capital for start-ups among others. The agricultural sector comes in handy in tackling this identified problem especially when the youths are ready to channel their energy into the sector. This is because of the relative ease of starting up an agricultural enterprise, compared to other enterprises.

However, Wole-Alo, Falase and Agunloye (2016) asserted that the persistent drop in agricultural production over the years continues to be a serious concern to both state and federal governments. Meanwhile, National Economic Planning (NEP) (2012) reported that approximately 65 per cent of rural families involved in agriculture-based occupation are ageing men and women. This places the nation in dire straits to replace the elderly farming population in order to ensure sustainable

agricultural production in Nigeria. The role of youths in salvaging the situation therefore becomes critical as custodians of the country's future. This is even more important since the changing socio-economic, political, environmental and climatic conditions in Nigeria and other emerging economies across the world have continued to worsen the standards of living of most families particularly those dwelling in the rural areas (Nwaogwugwu and Obele, 2017).

Reversing the trend requires deliberate efforts by concerned stakeholders at guiding the youth in choosing the right career path. It is an established fact that educators i.e. parents and teachers are part of the critical influencers of students' career choices (Dick and Rallis, 1991), (Morningstar, 1997); (Faitar and Faitar, 2013). Padunny (1994) stressed that typically, the higher the occupational status of the students' parents, the more positive their attitude towards science. This is to say that parents with higher occupational status would want their child to be doctors, engineers etc. In the same vein, teachers who express an interest in the career goals and aspirations of students sometimes serve as role models and have been shown to be influential in manipulating their career choices (Azubuike, 2011).

The youths generally seem to be less interested in going into agriculture as a life career choice/course of study (Wole-Alo *et al*, 2016). This seeming disinterest cannot be divorced from the influence of the society (comprising parents, teachers and peers etc.) on the youth. Among these categories of influencers, the roles of the parents and teachers are particularly critical because of the level of control they have over the youths. Hence, there is the need to ask some pertinent questions:

1. What are the personal characteristics of respondents?
2. Are respondents aware of career opportunities in agriculture?
3. Which profession would respondents prefer their wards to engage in?
4. What factors are responsible for the preferences in question 3 above?
5. What is the perception of respondents about agriculture as a career choice for their children/wards?

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Oyo state. The population of the study comprised all parents and teachers of senior secondary schools students in Oyo state. A four-stage sampling procedure was used in selecting the respondents for this study.

Stage I: The 33 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state were stratified into urban, peri-urban and rural LGAs depending on the principal settlement pattern existing in each of the LGAs. As a result of this, we have 12 rural LGAs, 10 peri-urban LGAs and 11 urban LGAs (Oyo State Ministry of Local Governments and Chieftaincy matters, 2018).

Stage II: Ten percent of the LGAs were selected from each stratum to ensure their equal chance of being picked. Consequently, one (1) LGA was randomly selected from the rural, peri-urban and urban LGAs respectively.

Stage III: A total of 69 public secondary schools and 101 private secondary schools were in the selected LGAs, and five percent (5%) of schools from each of the selected LGAs were randomly selected making a total of 10 schools.

Stage IV: Proportionately, 12% of the teachers were selected for sampling. A cross-section of the students (twice the number of selected teachers) was also engaged so as to gain access to their parents.

A total of 252 questionnaires were administered, but 207 were returned giving 82% return rate.

Measurement of variables

Awareness of respondents on career options available in agriculture was measured by asking respondents to indicate YES or NO in response to some awareness statements which were assigned scores of 1 and 0 respectively. The scores were later aggregated and the mean used to categorise into low and high awareness levels.

Preferred profession was measured by listing various professions and asking respondents to pick their preferred options. Respondents were asked to indicate their preference for each of the professions by picking from the options of most preferred, preferred and least preferred which were assigned scores of 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Weighted mean values of the profession were then calculated and ranked in order of magnitude to take decision.

Respondents were equally asked to state the level of influence each of the factors identified has on a career choice. Each influencing factor was ranked using a 3-point rating scale of large extent, limited extent and not a factor, with scores of 2, 1 and 0 assigned respectively. Weighted mean values of the influencing factors were then calculated and ranked in order of magnitude to take decision.

Perception of respondents about agriculture as a career choice was measured by asking respondents indicate their opinions to perception statements which were rated on a Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). These were scored 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively for positive statements and the reverse for negative statements. The maximum score was 158, while the minimum was 95. The mean score was 130.0725 and standard deviation 12.4163. Respondents who scored below the mean were classified as having an unfavourable perception of agriculture as a career while those who scored above the mean were classified as having a favourable perception of agriculture as a career choice for their wards.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics

The results in Table 2 show that more of the respondents (41.5%) were between the age range of 30 and 37 years, and the mean age for these respondents was 36.8 years. These data imply that most of the respondents were adults just approaching or at middle age. Hence, they are likely in tune with the current realities about the employment market as they are still within the employable age. The Table also shows that the respondents were fairly distributed along gender lines (55.1 %: 44.9 %). Hence, the responses could be adjudged gender-balanced. Meanwhile, most (56.0%) of the respondents were married. This

implies that respondents are mature adults who are responsible and would only act in the best interests of their children or wards.

Furthermore, the more (35.7%) of the respondents had B.Sc. or HND certificate, 21.3% had a Master's degree, 15% had NCE. These data suggest that most (82.1%) of the respondents had tertiary education. This implies a high level of literacy of the respondents. They are therefore expected to be able to enhance the skill and quality of individuals under their care. This could be because most people in the study area see a need to get educated, as they feel it will make them better people and will in turn

lead to development of individuals and society at large. This in line with Williams, Fenely and Williams (1984)'s assertion that education is an important factor for development.

The Table also shows that more (43.5%) of respondents were involved in education related occupation, 27.5% were part of a corporate organisation or another, 22.2% were into business, 5.8% were into agriculture and 1.0% was otherwise employed. Padunny (1994) stressed that typically, the higher the occupational status of the students' parents, the more positive their attitude towards science.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on their personal characteristics, N=207

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Age			
21 – 28	32	15.5	36.8
29 – 36	86	41.5	
37 – 44	65	31.4	
45 – 52	21	10.1	
52 and above	3	1.4	
Sex			
Male	114	55.1	
Female	93	44.9	
Marital status			
Married	116	56	
Single	72	34.8	
Widowed	8	3.9	
Separated	7	3.4	
Divorced	4	1.9	
Highest educational attainment			
No formal education	6	2.9	
Primary certificate	13	6.3	
SSCE	18	8.7	
OND	8	3.9	
NCE	31	15.0	
HND/B.Sc.	74	35.7	
Masters	44	21.3	
PhD	13	6.3	
Occupation			
Education	90	43.5	
Business	48	22.2	
Corporate	57	27.5	
Agriculture	12	5.8	
Others	2	1.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Awareness of career options in agriculture

The result in Table 3 shows that more (54.6%) of the respondents had a high level of awareness of the career options available in agriculture. The mean score was 13.6 ± 2.8 . This implies that a majority of the respondents were aware of career options available in agriculture and its implications

for the economy at large. This therefore shows that there is a high level of awareness of the career options available in agriculture among respondents, going against the findings of the Food Economy Task Force (2015) which reported that the awareness of career options in the agriculture and food business is low. Even though the data suggest

high awareness levels across board, there are some negative responses however, that can still be improved upon by the better spread of information

on career options in agriculture. The media has a major role to play in this case, as well as teachers and parents.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on the level of awareness of career options available in agriculture (N=207)

Statements	Yes	Percent
Are you aware that agriculture is a lucrative business?	206	99.5
Are you aware that genetic engineering (improvement of plant and animal breeds) is a part of agriculture?	194	93.7
Are you aware of agricultural technology (the development of machines and technology to enhance production) as a part of agriculture?	192	92.8
Are you aware that livestock production is a subset of agriculture?	181	87.4
Are you aware that an agricultural extension graduate could work in the community relations/outreach department of oil companies such as Shell?	115	55.6
Are you aware that an agriculturist could work in a bank?	134	64.7
Horticulture involves the art of garden cultivation and management, are you aware that this is an agricultural field that is very lucrative?	191	92.4
Are you aware that agrochemical production, marketing and sales is a part of agribusiness which is a part of agriculture?	177	85.5
Are you aware that contract farming is a form of agribusiness which is a part of agriculture?	165	79.7
Are you aware that value chain addition is a part of agribusiness?	115	55.1
Are you aware that crop production is only a subset of agriculture?	176	85.0
Are you aware that agricultural extension agents could work in (NGOs)?	182	87.9
Are you aware that there are job opportunities available for an agriculturist at the World Bank?	136	65.7
Are you aware that range and pasture management is a subset of agriculture which deals with the development and management of pasture for the production of livestock?	174	84.1
Are you aware that biotechnology (which involves the use of living organisms to make useful chemicals) is a part of agriculture?	164	79.3
Are you aware that there are job opportunities available at the World Health Organisation (WHO) for agriculturists?	144	69.6

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 3a: Categorisation of respondents based on level of awareness of career options in Agriculture

Level	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Dev
Low (3-13)	94	45.4		
High (14-17)	113	54.6	13.59	2.82
Total	207	100		

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Level of preference for selected career choice

As shown in Table 4, Medicine with mean score of 2.24 ranks first in the list of preferred career choice followed closely by agriculture with a mean of 2.23. This implies that majority of respondents prefer agriculture to other careers such as teaching. This contrasts the findings of Prince, Adebimpe

and Abiola (2002) who opined that teaching as a profession is preferred by more of the population as compared to agriculture. This could be due to the recent attention paid by the Nigerian government to the agricultural sector through intervention programmes and media campaigns.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents based on their level of preference for selected careers (n=207)

Career choice	Most preferred	Preferred	Least preferred	Mean	Rank
Medicine	89 (43.0)	78 (37.7)	40 (19.3)	2.24	1 st
Agriculture	79 (38.2)	96 (46.4)	32 (15.5)	2.23	2 nd
Engineering	76 (36.7)	80 (38.7)	51 (24.6)	2.12	3 rd
Education	71 (34.3)	75 (36.2)	61 (29.5)	2.05	4 th
Banking	47 (22.7)	112 (54.1)	48 (23.2)	2.00	5 th
Law	58 (28.0)	78 (37.7)	71 (34.3)	1.94	6 th
Architecture	37 (17.9)	100 (48.3)	70 (33.8)	1.84	7 th
Accounting	46 (22.2)	74 (35.7)	87 (42.0)	1.80	8 th
Military	29 (14.0)	81 (39.1)	97 (46.9)	1.67	9 th
Law enforcement	31 (15.0)	71 (34.3)	105 (50.7)	1.64	10 th

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Factors affecting choice of preferred occupation

Table 5 shows that high income expectations ($\bar{x}=1.63$) was the most important factor affecting educators choice of preferred occupation for their wards. Other factors in descending order of

importance are high employment prospects ($\bar{x}=1.58$), expectation of high standard of living ($\bar{x}=1.56$) and good public image ($\bar{x}=1.41$). This implies that economic returns and benefits greatly influence educators' decisions on choosing occupation for their wards.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents based on the factors affecting their choice of preferred career, n=207

Career choice	Large extent	Limited extent	Not a factor	Mean	Rank
High income expectations	141 (68.1)	55 (26.6)	11 (5.3)	1.63	1 st
High employment prospects	136 (65.7)	55 (26.6)	16 (7.7)	1.58	2 nd
Expectation of high standard of living	131 (63.3)	61 (29.5)	15 (7.2)	1.56	3 rd
Good public image	120 (58.0)	51 (24.6)	36 (17.4)	1.41	4 th
High family prestige	95 (45.9)	81 (39.1)	31 (15.0)	1.31	5 th
Societal approval	98 (47.3)	63 (30.4)	46 (22.2)	1.25	6 th
High social status	86 (41.5)	79 (38.2)	42 (20.3)	1.21	7 th
Favourable geographical location	79 (38.2)	81 (39.1)	47 (22.7)	1.15	8 th
Less risk to life	73 (35.3)	92 (44.4)	42 (20.3)	1.14	9 th
Favourable government policies	72 (34.8)	89 (43.0)	46 (22.2)	1.12	10 th
Tradition	32 (15.5)	63 (30.4)	112 (54.1)	0.61	11 th

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Perception of respondents towards agriculture as a career choice

The distribution of respondents in Table 6 shows that more (54.1%) of the respondents had favourable perception of agriculture as a career choice for their wards. This implies that respondents perceived agriculture as a good career choice for their wards, in line with the findings of Wachenheim and Rathge (2000). This favourable disposition could be a fall out of the current economic situation in Nigeria. The economic diversification efforts of the government are hinged on agriculture.

Further breakdown of the results in the Table shows a positive appreciation of most of the

attitudinal statements. For instance, majority of the respondents opined that agriculture is lucrative (86.5%), could be regarded as the backbone of a nation's economy (85.5%) and felt agriculture science should be made compulsory for secondary school students (82.6%). However, about half of respondents (50.3%) viewed agriculture as a stepping stone to other careers, while up to 41.5% of the respondents viewed it as a career of last resort for their wards when faced with unemployment. Also, many respondents (56.1%) opined that the media had not portrayed agriculture in a positive way. This may be one of the reasons hindering them from considering it as a preferred career choice for their wards.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents based on their perception of agriculture as a career choice, n=207

Statements	SA	S	U	D	SD
Agriculture is the last resort for my ward if/when faced with unemployment	16.9	24.6	11.6	30.9	15.9
Agriculture could be a dangerous career to encourage my ward(s) to engage in	1.4	8.2	3.9	27.2	49.3
Family and friends will make jest of me if discovered that my child is into agriculture	3.9	9.2	10.1	32.4	44.4
My ward will be interested in building his/her career in agriculture	15.5	30.4	41.1	8.7	4.3
A Career in agriculture is limited to crop farming alone	1.4	6.3	7.7	29.5	55.1
Agriculture is a backbone in the economy of any nation	59.4	26.1	6.3	6.3	1.9
Agriculture is a career I will not encourage my ward to engage in	2.4	7.7	15.0	33.3	41.5
Agricultural science as a subject should be made compulsory for all secondary students	49.3	33.3	7.2	5.8	4.3
The media has not portrayed agriculture in a positive light therefore I won't consider it	15.5	40.6	17.4	20.3	6.3
The Federal Government hasn't shown any interest in the agricultural sector thereby discouraging me from advising my ward(s) to pursue it	13.5	23.2	12.1	37.7	13.5
A career in agriculture is limited to livestock farming only	1.9	4.3	5.3	36.2	52.2
I will encourage my ward to pursue a career in agriculture	14.0	40.6	37.7	5.3	2.4
Agriculture is a stepping stone to other careers	15.0	35.3	18.8	23.7	7.2
Someone with a degree in agriculture can work a white-collar job	35.7	44.4	12.1	4.8	2.9
Gaining access to agricultural inputs is relatively easy	5.8	31.9	19.8	22.2	20.3
Agriculture is a good entrepreneurial career	66.7	28.5	2.9	1.4	0.5
Only youths in the rural areas should pursue a career in agriculture	3.9	6.8	5.3	33.3	50.7
Someone with a degree in agriculture can't work in an office	7.7	25.8	5.8	26.6	54.1
There are other career options available in agriculture apart from farming	60.9	32.9	3.9	1.9	0.5
Farmers live in mud houses in dirty areas and untidy environments	4.8	9.2	6.8	21.3	58.0
The Federal Government's interest in agriculture is a good thing	12.1	40.1	27.1	15.5	5.3
It is difficult getting land for agriculture	18.4	35.3	13.5	24.2	8.7
My ward has no intention of building a career in agriculture	10.1	11.1	53.1	19.8	5.8
My Raising capital for farming is difficult	19.8	38.6	17.4	15.0	9.2
Agriculture is a poor man's job	5.8	8.2	2.9	24.6	58.5
Agriculture is a safe career for my kids to consider	12.6	38.2	35.3	7.7	6.3
Agriculture should be scrapped from secondary school curriculum as not good subject	5.8	2.4	4.8	23.2	63.8
My friends and family consider agriculture a good job to engage in	15.0	52.2	21.7	9.7	1.4
A nation can become a developed one without developing its agricultural sector.	6.3	8.2	7.7	32.4	45.4
Farmers live good lives with access to basic amenities like potable water and electricity	30.0	36.7	15.5	13.0	4.8
With a degree in agriculture, my child is equipped to go into agricultural practice	26.6	41.5	20.8	10.1	1.0
Youths should pursue a career in agriculture	35.7	47.8	11.1	4.8	0.5
The media portray agriculture as a very lucrative business	1.0	17.4	23.2	43.0	15.5
Agriculture is a lucrative activity which can sustain families	48.3	38.2	17.2	4.8	1.4

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 6a: Categorisation of respondents based on their perception of agriculture as a career choice

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
Unfavourable (95 - 130.0724)	95	45.9	130.0725	12.41630
Favourable (130.0725 - 158)	112	54.1		
Total	207	100		

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Relationship between respondents' personal characteristics and perception of agriculture as a career choice for their wards

Chi-square analyses in Table 7 reveal that there was no significant relationship between respondents' sex ($\chi^2=3.139$, $p=0.726$), marital status ($\chi^2=2.005$, $p=0.735$) as well as occupation ($\chi^2=7.339$, $p=0.119$) and perception of agriculture as a career.

In addition, PPMC analysis in the same table shows that age of respondents ($r=-0.002$, $p=0.742$) was

not significantly related to their perception of agriculture as a career choice for their wards. However, respondents' educational attainment ($r=0.228$, $p=0.001$) and their perception of agriculture as a career choice were significantly related. This could imply that the higher the educational attainment of respondents, the more favourable their perception of agriculture as a career choice for their wards. This could be due to the fact that education liberates the mind and therefore makes those who acquire it exposed to varieties of opportunities not easily noticed by the uneducated.

Table 7: Test of relationship between respondents' characteristics and perception of agriculture as a career choice

Variables	χ^2 value	df	p-value	Remarks
Sex	3.139	1	0.726	Not significant
Marital Status	2.005	4	0.735	Not significant
Occupation	7.339	4	0.119	Not significant

Variable	r-value	p-value	Remarks
Age	-0.023	0.742	Not significant
Educational attainment	0.228	0.001	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Relationship between respondents' awareness of available opportunities in agriculture and perception of agriculture as a career choice for children/wards

Table 8 shows that there is a significant relationship between respondents' awareness of

available opportunities in agriculture and perception of agriculture as a career choice for their wards ($r=0.255$, $p=0.000$). This could suggest that the more aware educators are of agriculture and the opportunities available in the sector, the better informed they are in their outlook of the sector as a career choice for their wards.

Table 8: Correlation between level of awareness and perception of agriculture as a career

Variable	r-value	p-value	Remarks
Level of awareness and perception of agriculture as a career	0.255	0.000	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Test of difference between educators' perception of agriculture as a career choice for their children/wards

From the findings in Table 9, there is no significant difference in the educators' perception of parents

and teachers on youths' choice of agriculture as a career. Considering this along with the findings in Table 6, both parents and teachers generally have favourable perception of agriculture as a career choice for their children/wards.

Table 9: T-test analysis showing difference in perception of educators

Variable	Mean	N	SD	t-value	p-value	Remarks
Teachers	130.93	84	10.62	0.819	0.414	Not significant
Parents	129.49	123	13.52			

Source: Field Survey, 2018

CONCLUSION

From the study, it can be concluded that educators were favourably disposed to their children or wards taking up agriculture as a career choice. They also ranked agriculture high on their list of preferred occupations for their wards. This trend was noticed more among educators with more awareness on available opportunities in agriculture and those with higher educational attainment. Therefore, the government and relevant stakeholders in the sector should collaborate more with the media to portray agriculture in a positive light, while highlighting the various opportunities available in the field of agriculture to enhance the public perception of the sector. The government should also review its current position on the status of agriculture science as an optional subject at the secondary school level.

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