Proclivity to entrepreneurship among agricultural undergraduates in Ondo state, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship is one of the economic self-reliance tools for addressing youth unemployment and sustainable agricultural livelihoods in Nigeria. This study examined agricultural undergraduates' proclivity toward agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurship in Ondo State. Using a multistage sampling procedure, data were collected from 153 undergraduates through a structured questionnaire. The study reveals that the mean age of respondents was 23.1 +/- 3.4 years, with most being male (51%). Specifically, 51.6% had favourable perceptions of agricultural entrepreneurship, while 58.6% held favourable perceptions of non-agricultural entrepreneurship. The respondents' motivating factors for agricultural entrepreneurship were interest in agricultural technology and innovation (x = 1.66) and desire for independence and self-employment (x = 1.65), while desire for independence and self-employment (x = 1.77) and passion for social impact (x = 1.69) were the motivating factors for non-agribusiness. It was also revealed that 60.1% of the respondents showed high proclivity for agricultural entrepreneurship, while a higher proportion, 69.9%, had high proclivity for non-agricultural entrepreneurship. The t-test result (t = -1.68, p = 0.095) reveals no significant difference between students' proclivity toward agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurship. The study concluded that undergraduates exhibit higher proclivity toward non-agricultural ventures, recommending increased institutional support, practical exposure, and incentives to enhance youth engagement in agricultural entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Agricultural entrepreneurship, non-agricultural entrepreneurship, proclivity, perception, undergraduate engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria faces a persistent crisis of graduate unemployment, with a rate up to 8.6% especially among the youth aged 15-24, as recorded by the National Bureau of Statistics (2023). The joblessness persists despite tertiary qualifications due to the gap between academic training and industry requirements. Aminu (2019) noted that theoretical learning in Nigerian institutions limits workplace readiness. Entrepreneurship is promoted as a viable solution, with government initiatives such as N-Power, the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP), Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN), and the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) introduced to stimulate youth entrepreneurship (Omoju et al., 2023).

Agriculture employs 70-75% of the labour force and contributes 20.9% to GDP (Ajekwe & Ibiamke, 2020). Yet, many youths perceive agriculture as strenuous and unattractive. They prefer non-agricultural sectors such as ICT, fashion, and media due to their perceived profitability, modern appeal, and innovation opportunities (Komolafe et al., 2022; Chah et al., 2023). Undergraduates, as future entrepreneurs, are key to transforming Nigeria's business environment. Adelowo, Joshua, and Ilevbare (2018) noted that entrepreneurship education improves opportunity recognition and business planning skills. Ondo State presents a suitable case due to its educational institutions, agricultural base, and youthful population. The specific objectives are to:

i. describe the personal and enterprise characteristics of the undergraduates;
ii. assess the perceptions of the respondents towards agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurship;
iii. identify the motivations for considering agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurship; and
iv. examine the proclivity to agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurship after graduation.

The study hypothesised that there is no significant difference in the undergraduates' proclivity to agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurship.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Ondo State, Nigeria, located in the South-Western geopolitical zone with a population of over 3.4 million. The target population comprised final-year students in tertiary institutions offering agriculture-related programs. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted: seven institutions were purposively selected, followed by proportional sampling, and then simple random sampling to select a total of 153 students. Proclivity was assessed on a 2-point scale of "willing" (1) and "not willing" (0). Perceptions were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale. Motivation was measured on a 3-point scale. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including paired sample t-test.

Table 1: Sampled tertiary institutions and number of selected respondents in Ondo State

Tertiary institution	Final year students	Proportion selected	Sampled (n)
Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba (AAUA)	198	10%	20
Adeyemi University of Education	83	20%	17
Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA)	808	5%	40
Federal Polytechnic, Ile Oluji	60	20%	12
Olusegun Agagu University of Science and Technology (OAUSTECH), Okitipupa	268	10%	27
Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo	96	20%	19
Wesley University, Ondo	85	20%	17
Total	1,598		153

Source: Selected tertiary institutions administration unit

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics of the undergraduates

Table 2 shows balanced gender representation (51% male; 49% female), and the respondents' mean age was 23.10 +/- 2.04 years. The majority came from moderately large households (x = 7.43 +/- 1.77). Fathers were mainly artisans (19.6%), government workers (18.3%), or teachers (13.7%), while mothers worked mostly in government (22.2%), trading (20.3%), or teaching (15.7%). Given that 69.3% of respondents were sponsored by both parents, such family structures may reinforce motivation for youth entrepreneurship (Ilevbare et al., 2022).

Table 2: Personal characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Sex				
Male	78	51.0		
Female	75	49.0		
Age (years)			23.10	2.04
< 21	10	6.5		
21-25	128	83.7		
> 25	15	9.8		
Marital status				
Single	147	96.1		
Married	6	3.9		
Household size			7.43	1.77
< 6	17	11.1		
6-10	129	84.3		
> 10	7	4.6		
School upkeep sponsor				
Father	15	9.8		
Mother	15	9.8		
Father and mother	106	69.3		
Self	6	3.9		
Family member	8	5.2		
Philanthropist	3	2.0		

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Enterprise characteristics of the undergraduates

Table 3 reveals that 94.8% of respondents planned to start an enterprise after graduation. A notable 69.9% had previous entrepreneurial experience. All respondents (100%) reported receiving entrepreneurship training, primarily from workshops and seminars (58.2%). The results further show that 30.7% were moderately confident and 27.5% were very confident in running an enterprise.

Table 3: Enterprise characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Starting entrepreneurship after graduation		
Yes	145	94.8
No	8	5.2
Type of entrepreneurship starting		
Agricultural entrepreneurship	66	43.1
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship	79	51.6
Previous entrepreneurship experience		
Yes	107	69.9
No	46	30.1
Level of success of previous experience		
Not successful	2	1.3
Somewhat successful	38	24.8
Moderately successful	42	27.5
Very successful	25	16.3
Training in entrepreneurship		
Yes	153	100
No	0	0
Type of training received		
Formal education	64	41.8
Workshop or seminars	89	58.2
Confidence in ability to run enterprise		
Not at all confident	20	13.1
Somewhat confident	44	28.8
Moderately confident	47	30.7
Very confident	42	27.5

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Perceptions towards agricultural entrepreneurship

As shown in Table 4, a slight majority (51.6%) held favourable perceptions of agricultural entrepreneurship, while 48.4% were classified as having unfavourable perceptions. This split indicates a fairly balanced divide in how undergraduates view agriculture as an enterprise option. Such mixed perceptions resonate with studies of youth agricultural engagement: for example, Ikebuaku & Dinbobo (2023) found that Nigerian youths generally display positive perceptions and intentions toward agripreneurship, but that structural factors (e.g., market access, infrastructure) mediate their commitment. Consequently, while many students see agriculture as viable and promising, nearly half remain skeptical, signaling the need for deeper interventions (e.g., awareness campaigns, exposure programs) to shift perception among those hesitant.

Table 4: Perceptions towards agricultural entrepreneurship

Perception statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a viable career option	51	35.3	9.2	3.9	0.7
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a lucrative and profitable business	50.3	37.9	10.5	0.7	0.7
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a way to connect with nature	45.1	42.5	11.8	0.0	0.7
Agricultural entrepreneurship can help bridge the gap between urban and rural communities	55.6	34.6	7.2	1.3	1.3
Agricultural entrepreneurship is an opportunity to apply entrepreneurial skills	55.6	39.2	3.9	1.3	0.0
Agricultural entrepreneurship provides a high degree of autonomy and independence.	45.8	45.8	7.2	1.3	0.0
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a risky business	34.0	66.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Agricultural entrepreneurship is an innovative and dynamic	41.8	47.7	5.9	3.9	0.7
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a field that requires a strong sense of commitment and dedication.	47.7	36.6	8.5	5.9	1.3
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a field with a lack of social status.	11.8	21.6	8.5	30.7	27.5
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a low-income profession	12.4	24.8	9.2	26.8	26.8
There is need for education and training to succeed in agricultural entrepreneurship	43.8	33.3	6.5	11.8	4.6

Perception statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Agricultural entrepreneurship is an opportunity to introduce new technologies and practices to the field.	54.9	30.1	7.8	5.2	2.0
Agricultural entrepreneurship as a challenging field, requiring significant investment in terms of time, money, and effort.	0.7	0.7	11.8	34.6	52.3
Many students were not aware of the potential and opportunities of agricultural entrepreneurship	1.3	3.3	9.8	37.9	47.7
Perception level (60.09 ±6.04; Min = 45.00, Max =72.00)	**F**	**%**			
Favourable (≥60.09)	79	51.6			
Unfavourable (< 60.09)	74	48.4			

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Perception towards Non-agricultural Entrepreneurship

The results in Table 5 show that a slight majority of respondents (51.6%) held a favourable view of non-agricultural entrepreneurship, while 42.4% were unfavourable. This pattern is consistent with recent evidence from Nigerian universities showing that campus entrepreneurship education and innovation activities are strengthening students' turn toward entrepreneurial careers, and that non-farm ventures often appeal because they promise autonomy, brand-building and perceived higher financial returns (Oyinlola et al., 2024).

Table 5: Perceptions towards Non-agricultural entrepreneurship

Perception statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship had potential for final success and independence	41.8	38.6	7.8	9.8	2.0
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship is a risky venture with potential for failure	30.1	50.3	0.7	5.2	13.7
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship is an opportunity to build a personal brand	47.1	39.2	8.5	2.6	2.6
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship can be competitive	41.2	44.4	6.5	5.2	2.6
There is Flexibility and freedom to set one's own schedule	37.3	43.8	11.8	4.6	2.6
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship is a way to provide societal needs	34.6	43.1	12.4	7.2	2.6
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship can be challenging but rewarding	43.8	40.5	9.8	3.9	2.0
It offers ability to pursue a passion or interest	49.0	36.6	9.8	2.0	2.6
There is possibility of working with a diverse group of people in Non-agricultural entrepreneurship	44.4	43.8	5.9	2.6	3.3
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship requires a strong work ethic and commitment	38.6	45.8	9.8	2.6	3.3
Provides access to resources and mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs	41.8	45.8	7.2	3.9	1.3
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship is an opportunity to be one's own boss	47.1	37.9	9.8	4.6	0.7
Requires networking and building relationships with potential customers and partners	49.7	33.3	7.2	7.8	2.0
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship requires creativity and problem-solving skills	43.1	28.1	22.2	3.9	2.6
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship offers a chance to learn new skills and gain experience	13.1	8.5	52.3	19.6	6.5
Perception level (59.43 ±8.15; Min = 19.00, Max =72.00)					
Favourable (≥ 59.43)	88	58.6			
Unfavourable (< 53.43)	65	42.4			

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Motivations for considering agricultural entrepreneurship

The result in Table 6 shows that, interest in agricultural technology and innovation ($\bar{x}$ = 1.66), desire for independence and self-employment ($\bar{x}$ = 1.65), desire to improve rural livelihoods and communities ($\bar{x}$ = 1.60), opportunity to diversify income streams ($\bar{x}$ = 1.59), and potential for high profits and financial success ($\bar{x}$ = 1.57) are the significant motivations for considering agricultural entrepreneurship among the respondents. These results reflect the shift in how young people view agriculture, not just as a means of survival, but as a field full of possibilities. The desire for independence and self-employment indicates that

young people want control over their careers and are eager to build businesses they can manage on their own terms. This aligns with the findings of Amedu et al. (2023), who reported that flexible work and decision-making freedom were strong incentives for youth engagement in agribusiness. The motivation to improve rural livelihoods suggests that some youth are socially driven and want to use agriculture to create jobs, reduce hunger, and uplift their communities. In addition, the idea of diversifying income streams shows a practical awareness of risk management, as many young people understand that farming can offer multiple channels of revenue from planting and processing to marketing and storage. The potential for high profits, though not the strongest factor, still mattered greatly, revealing that many see agriculture as a promising way to achieve financial success.

Table 6: Motivations for considering agricultural entrepreneurship

Motivational statements	Mean (x)	Rank
Interest in agricultural technology and innovation	1.66	1st
Desire for independence and self-employment	1.65	2nd
Desire to improve rural livelihoods and communities	1.60	3rd
Opportunity to diversify income streams	1.59	4th
Potential for high profits and financial success	1.57	5th
Passion for agriculture	1.56	6th
Love for nature and the outdoors	1.51	7th
Family tradition and cultural values	1.49	8th
Desire to contribute to food security and sustainable agriculture	1.48	9th
Availability of land and resources for farming	1.41	10th

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Motivations for considering non-agricultural entrepreneurship

As revealed in Table 7, desire for independence and self-employment ($\bar{x}$ = 1.77), need to solve a particular problem or challenge in society ($\bar{x}$ = 1.69), opportunity to pursue a passion or hobby ($\bar{x}$ = 1.67), desire to create jobs and provide employment opportunities ($\bar{x}$ = 1.67), and desire to be a leader or influencer in a particular field ($\bar{x}$ = 1.67) are the most significant motivations driving respondents toward non-agricultural entrepreneurship. The high mean score for independence and self-employment shows that many youths are motivated by the autonomy and personal control that come with owning a business. This drive reflects a broader youth mindset that values flexibility, authority, and the ability to shape one's professional journey. The motivation to solve societal problems suggests that youths are not only driven by personal gain but also by a sense of purpose and responsibility toward their communities. Equally, the passion for hobbies and the opportunity to convert them into viable enterprises is a noteworthy motivation. Youths often seek avenues to express creativity and personal interests in ways that also generate income. This was emphasized by Adeyanju et al. (2020), who highlighted that young people with strongly passion-driven ideas had higher entrepreneurial persistence.

Table 7: Motivations for considering non-agricultural entrepreneurship

Motivational statements	Mean (x)	Rank
Desire for independence and self-employment	1.77	1st
Need to solve a particular problem or challenge in society	1.69	2nd
Opportunity to pursue a passion or hobby	1.67	3rd
Desire to create jobs and provide employment opportunities	1.67	3rd
Desire to be a leader or influencer in a particular field	1.67	3rd
Potential for financial success and higher earnings	1.64	6th
Opportunity to innovate and create something new	1.63	7th
Availability of support and resources for start-ups	1.62	8th
Desire to provide a unique product or service	1.61	9th
Opportunity to work remotely or from home	1.41	10th

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Proclivity to agricultural entrepreneurship

Table 8 indicates that 60.1% of respondents had high proclivity for agricultural entrepreneurship. This level of inclination aligns with the results of Idris-Adeniyi et al. (2019), who found that undergraduates in Southwestern Nigerian universities favoured agripreneurship when institutional support and favourable policies were present. Support for value-added processing of agricultural products (81.0%) ranked highest, while taking risks (69.9%) ranked lowest, pointing to an opportunity for targeted risk management training.

Table 8: Distribution of respondents based on proclivity to agricultural entrepreneurship

Proclivity statement	Willing F (%)	Not willing F (%)	x	Rank
To start own agricultural entrepreneurship after graduation	114(74.5)	39(25.5)	0.75	5th
To invest time and resources in an agricultural enterprise	114(74.5)	39(25.5)	0.75	5th
To take risks associated with agricultural entrepreneurship	107(69.9)	46(30.1)	0.70	8th
To seek support from relevant stakeholders in agricultural entrepreneurship	115(75.2)	38(24.8)	0.75	5th
To collaborate with other agricultural entrepreneurs to achieve common goals	118(77.1)	35(22.9)	0.77	4th
To adopt innovative technologies and practices in agricultural entrepreneurship	121(79.1)	32(20.9)	0.79	2nd
To support value-added processing of agricultural products	124(81.0)	29(19.0)	0.81	1st
To promote agricultural entrepreneurship among other youth in my community	119(77.8)	34(22.2)	0.78	3rd

Agricultural entrepreneurship	**F**	**%**	**Min**	**Max**	$\bar{X}$	**S.D.**
High proclivity (>=6.09)	92	60.1%	0.00	8.00	6.09	2.57
Low proclivity(<6.09)	61	39.9%				

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Proclivity to non-agricultural entrepreneurship

The results in Table 9 reveal that 69.9% of the respondents exhibited high proclivity toward non-agricultural entrepreneurship, reflecting a growing shift in youth preferences toward sectors outside primary agriculture. These findings are consistent with Oyinlola et al. (2024), who noted rising enthusiasm among Nigerian youths for non-farm entrepreneurship due to greater autonomy and income prospects.

Table 9: Distribution of respondents based on proclivity to non-agricultural entrepreneurship

Proclivity statement	Willing F(%)	Not willing F(%)	x	Rank
To start own non-agricultural entrepreneurship after graduation	128(83.7)	25(16.3)	0.84	1st
To invest time and resources in non-agricultural enterprise	124(81.0)	29(19.0)	0.81	6th
To take risks associated with non-agricultural entrepreneurship	127(83.0)	26(17.0)	0.83	4th
To seek support from relevant stakeholders in non-agricultural entrepreneurship	120(78.4)	33(21.6)	0.78	8th
To collaborate with other non-agricultural entrepreneurs to achieve common goals	128(83.7)	25(16.3)	0.84	1st
To adopt innovative technologies in non-agricultural entrepreneurship	127(83.0)	75(17.0)	0.83	4th
To support value-added processing of non-agricultural products and services	129(84.3)	24(15.7)	0.84	1st
To promote non-agricultural entrepreneurship among other youth in my community	123(80.4)	30(19.6)	0.80	7th

Non-agricultural entrepreneurship	**F**	**%**	**Min**	**Max**	$\bar{X}$	**S.D.**
High proclivity (≥ 6.57)	102	69.9	0.00	8.00	6.57	2.37
Low proclivity (< 6.57)	46	30.1				

Source: Field Survey, 2023

T-test analysis of differences in proclivity

The paired sample t-test results in Table 10 ($t = -1.68$, $p = 0.095$) indicate that there is no significant difference between the proclivity to agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurship. This suggests that the willingness of undergraduates to engage in entrepreneurship is broadly balanced between agricultural and non-agricultural ventures, consistent with findings by Ikuemonisan et al. (2022) and Oyinlola et al. (2024).

Table 10: Paired sample t-test analysis for differences in proclivity to agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurship

Variables	N	x	SD	Std. Err.	Mean Diff.	t	df	Sig.
Agricultural entrepreneurship	153	6.09	2.57	0.28	-0.48	-1.68	152	0.095
Non-agricultural entrepreneurship	153	6.57	2.37					

*Significant at p<=0.05. Source: Field Survey, 2023

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that although undergraduates exhibited positive perceptions toward both agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurship, their proclivity toward non-agricultural ventures was relatively higher. This pattern implies that while awareness of agribusiness opportunities exists, perceived risks, limited access to capital, and inadequate institutional support continue to deter stronger engagement in agricultural entrepreneurship. It is recommended that universities and policymakers enhance experiential learning through agritech innovation hubs, mentorship schemes, and youth-friendly financing mechanisms. Additionally, targeted incentives such as start-up grants and structured agribusiness internships should be introduced to strengthen students' practical interest and confidence in pursuing agriculture as a viable entrepreneurial pathway.

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