

## Factors Affecting the Choice of Career in Agriculture among Senior Secondary School Students in Ilorin Metropolis

Alalade OA<sup>1\*</sup>, Okpodu V<sup>1</sup>, Ajiboye GE<sup>1</sup>, Ladipo TO<sup>2</sup>, Ogunrinde TO<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Extension Management Division, Department of Rural Development and Gender Issues, Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI), Ilorin, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>General Management Division, Department of Agricultural Development Management, Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI), Ilorin, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Computer Training and Information Management Division, Department of Agricultural Development Management, Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI), Ilorin, Nigeria

### Original Research Article

#### \*Corresponding author

Alalade OA

#### Article History

Received: 27.02.2018

Accepted: 08.03.2018

Published: 16.03.2018

#### DOI:

10.36347/sjavs.2018.v05i03.003



**Abstract:** This study examined the factors influencing the choice of career in agriculture among senior secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 90 respondents for the study. Descriptive statistics and simple regression analysis were used to analyze data and present results for the study. The mean age of respondents was 16.8 years. Findings of the study indicated that students have a negative perception about agriculture with most (38.1%) of the respondents perceiving agriculture as a poor man's job. Also, majority of the students were not aware of the existence of many Agricultural Programs/Organizations and career opportunities in Agriculture. There is a significant positive relationship between age, gender, favorite academic subjects and level of awareness of agricultural programs. The study concludes that students have a negative perception about agriculture. Thus, it is recommended that agriculture be made compulsory at the primary and secondary levels, to inculcate the importance of the profession, and the culture of farming in students. Also, scholarships should be awarded to students who indicate interest in pursuing agricultural profession in tertiary institutions in order to encourage more students to pursue a career in agriculture.

**Keywords:** Perception, Career, Agriculture, Constraint, Awareness.

### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains one of the most important economic sectors in Nigeria. It not only supplies the country's food but also comprises a considerably high percentage of production and employment.

Agriculture if taken seriously have the potential to account for over 50% of the Gross National Product (GNP), 40 % of employment, more than 80% of the domestic food supply, and 30% of non-oil exports within the next five years [1]. Many children are not exposed to agriculture as a way of life [2]. To sustain the agricultural workforce, colleges of agriculture must invest in recruiting students to agricultural careers [3]. The roles of agriculture remain significant in Nigeria economy despite the strategic importance of the oil sector. Agriculture provides primary means of employment for Nigerians and accounts for more than one third of total Gross Domestic Product (GDP). More than 70% of the working adult populations in Nigeria are employed in the agricultural sector directly or indirectly and over 90% of Nigeria's agricultural outputs come from peasant farmers who dwell in rural areas [4].

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa predicts that the size of the elderly population is expected to jump from 16.6 million to 28.6 million persons over the period from 1995 – 2015. The economic development of Nigeria depends on development of the agricultural and agro-industry sectors, which are fundamentally affected by low productivity, declining land resources and aged farmers. Ismailla *et al.*, [5] report that ageing has an adverse effect on agricultural production in Nigeria, most of the people of over 55 years are unwilling or unable to work, especially when the farm is far from the house, or when working in low trend ecologies as in rice. The aged farmers have to be replaced with vibrant and educated youth for food production and employment. Majority of Nigeria's farmers cannot read and write which impede their ability to adopt new technologies that could

enhance agricultural production. As Ekoja [1] showed that significant difference exists among farmers in the adoption of innovations on account of educational qualifications. The Nigerian Government was proactive in this respect by setting up three universities of agriculture in Nigeria. The universities were located in Abeokuta, Ogun State; Makurdi in Benue State and Umudike in Abia State [1]. There are several faculties of agriculture in other national, state and private universities as well as polytechnics, colleges of agriculture and education where courses of agriculture are taught. As a matter of fact, the Nation now boasts of having more colleges of Agriculture and Universities offering agricultural related courses. It is expected that the products of these institutions will develop keen interest in agriculture and serve as replacements for old and dead farmers. Incidentally, families, parents and guardians in particular, play a significant role in the occupational aspirations and career development of their children [6]. Without parental approval or support, students and young adults are often reluctant to pursue, or even explore, diverse career possibilities.

In recent decades there has been an alarming decline in the number of students choosing to pursue careers in agriculture. As a result, there will be a shortage of qualified professionals educated in agriculture and related fields to pursue the expected increase in available career opportunities in this field. Researchers have also found that there is a significant decline in the number of students entering agricultural programs at the post-secondary level [3]. There is evidence that some higher institution lack agricultural programs or agricultural courses. Consequently, many students in secondary schools have very little exposure to agriculture.

Agriculture human resource personnel from across the country agreed that recruiting young people to agricultural industries continues to be a problem, mostly due to a lack of understanding about what opportunities exist in agriculture [7]. Research on this issue must address the barriers, influences, and students' perceptions of agriculture to determine why students choose to enroll or not to enroll in agricultural programs. In view of the fore-going, it has become very expedient for a study of this nature to be carried out. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to: determine the level of students' awareness of agricultural related programs; examine the perception of students on agriculture as a career; determine the awareness level of students on career opportunities in agriculture, and identify the factors constraining students' from pursuing careers in agriculture.

#### **Statement of Hypothesis**

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between some selected demographic characteristics of

the students and students' level of awareness of agricultural related programs.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The study was carried out in Ilorin, the Kwara State capital. The primary ethnic group of the city is Yoruba, with significant Fulani, Nupe, Baruba Hausa minorities. A Three-stage sampling technique was employed in the selection of respondents. The first stage involved purposive selection of the (3) local governments areas within Ilorin metropolis. Second stage involved a random selection of three (3) secondary schools each from the local governments in Ilorin making a total of nine (9) schools and the final stage involved a random selection of ten (10) students each from the nine (9) selected schools in Ilorin to make a total of ninety (90) respondents. Data were collected through the use of questionnaire which was validated by experts in the related field. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, mean, percentages, Likert scale and regression analyses were utilized to analyze the data collected. Hence, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

There were 88 students who completed the questionnaire, yielding a 97.8% response rate. Although all of the data were analyzable, some questions were not answered which caused variation in the frequencies for certain responses. The demographic variables analyzed include age, gender, ethnic group and favorite academic subject.

##### **Demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Tables-1 showed that majority of the students (56.8%) were female. The ages of the students ranged from 15-19 years with a mean age of 16.8. A large majority of the respondents were Yorubas (72.7%) while 56.8% of the respondents live in peri-urban areas. The study found that students have more interest in subjects like biology, Economics, English Language as indicated by scores of 21.59%, 17.05% and 15.91% respectively. A small number of the respondents (7.95%) identified Agriculture as their favorite subject. This result is in line with the study of Abubakar [4] who stated that many secondary school students prefer non analytical subjects. The result also revealed that majority of the students does not appreciate agriculture as a subject. This goes a long way to suggest that they are likely not going to even consider taking up a career in agriculture at tertiary level.

##### **Level of students' awareness of agricultural related programs/organization**

From table-2, it was found that the students were strongly aware of only 3 Agricultural programs/organizations while majority of the students were either somewhat aware or not aware of the other 9 listed Agricultural programs/organizations. The respondents were mostly aware of the existence of a

federal ministry of agriculture (M=2.39) followed by Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI) with a mean score of 1.74 and Nigeria Stored Product Research Institute (NSPRI) with 1.71. The result further revealed that majority of the students were not aware of the existence of the following Agricultural Programs/Organizations: Operation feed the Nation (1.11), Nigeria Institute for Oil-palm Research (1.14), Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (1.21), Forest Research Institute of Nigeria (1.23) amongst others. These findings correlate with the work of Akomolafe [8] who stated that youths do not keep themselves abreast of the happenings around them especially if it's not entertainment. Arudo [9] also reported students do not take advantage of social media to get education/research information as much as they do when it comes to socializing and catching fun. These reasons account for the low level of awareness of agricultural programs/organizations amongst the students. The result further explained the main reason behind low turnout of students for agricultural programs. Majority of the respondents have no knowledge of agricultural programs and organizations whereas a good awareness level of these programs and organizations could enlighten them as well as spur their interest in pursuing careers in agriculture.

#### Perception of students on agriculture as a career

Data in Figure-1 shows that most (38.1%) of the respondents, perceived it as a poor man's job. About 22.8% perceived agriculture as a stepping stone to other careers; 14.9% saw it as being tedious, 13.6% perceived it as being lucrative, 3.2% see agriculture as a man's profession, 2.9% perceived it to be rural dweller's occupation while 4.5% has the notion that the profession requires an enormous capital outlay. Thus, most of the students have a negative perception of the profession most and do not intend to study agriculture as a course. This might result from the practice of agriculture in Nigeria, where over 75% of the rural populace are farmers, yet most of them are food insecure and characterized by abject poverty, malnutrition and diseases and the over dependence of the nation on food importation. There is the need to change this orientation so that the goal of the government towards improving agriculture can be achieved and to secure good future for agriculture. This result is in consonance with the works of Adedapo *et al.*, [10] and Adebo and Sekumade [11] who in their separate studies pointed out that students have a negative perception of agriculture as a profession.

#### Awareness of Career Opportunities in Agriculture

Data in table 3 showed the twelve (12) variables presented to the respondents to test their level of awareness of career opportunities in Agriculture. The variables were subjected to a 3 Likert scale point of strongly aware (3 points), slightly aware (2 points) and not aware (1 point) while variables greater than mean 1.60 were considered to ascertain the awareness level of

the respondents about career opportunities in agriculture and those ones less than mean 1.60 depicts the respondents are not aware of the opportunities in agriculture related field.

Data in Table 3 shows that five variables affirm students' awareness of the opportunities in agriculture. Teaching/Lecturing (M = 2.72), Fishery (M = 2.26), Agribusiness (M = 2.02), Food Processing (M = 1.72) and Animal Science (M = 1.68) ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> respectively. Teaching/Lecturing occupy the first position because the students offers Agriculture as a subject in the secondary school and obviously knew they can become a teacher by studying Agriculture at higher levels. Also, Fishery and Agribusinesses are popular opportunities the students see around them as earthen and concrete ponds seem popular within the study area. In addition, many of the respondents must have seen different people pursuing career in the line of Agribusinesses such as poultry, packaging of agricultural products through value addition hence have become conversant with these opportunities.

On the other hand, the students were not aware of many career opportunities in Agriculture. These include: Crop Science (M = 1.43), Forestry (M = 1.39), Agricultural Engineering (M = 1.39), Agronomy (M = 1.35), Soil Science (M = 1.33), Horticulture (M = 1.28), and Extension Specialist (M = 1.21) which ranked 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> respectively. The result revealed that a large majority of the students are ignorant of the robust career opportunities offered in the field of agriculture. This explains why many of them prefer other courses they adjudged as being more lucrative. This result negates the findings of Darvishi [12], who noted that students develop more interest and awareness on the engineering aspect of agriculture than agricultural science.

#### Factors Constraining Students' From Pursuing Careers in Agriculture

According to table 4, the major constraints envisaged by the respondents in pursuing a career in agriculture are: Lack of parental support (82.9%), Lack of people of colour in agriculture (79.5%), lack of mentor/role model in Agriculture (75.0%), lack of awareness of career opportunities in agriculture (72.7%), Society's negative image of agriculture (65.9%) and Lack of relatives involved in Agricultural related career (60.2%). It could be said that the constraints to taking up agricultural courses by the respondents are attributed to the factors listed above, all of which have been the constraints to agricultural development of the nation. Despite all the agricultural programmes launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the main challenges of agricultural production have neither been significantly reduced nor alleviated. These findings correspond with the findings of Adebo and Sekumade [11] and Azubuike [13], who in their separate studies considered Society's negative image of

agriculture, lack of role models in Agriculture and lack of awareness of the prospects in agriculture as major

barriers to students venturing into agricultural careers.

**Table-1: Distribution of respondents according to demographic information (N=88)**

Variables	frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	38	43.18
Female	50	56.81
<b>Age</b>		
Fifteen (15)	21	23.86
Sixteen (16)	20	22.73
Seventeen (17)	22	25.0
Eighteen (18)	25	28.41
<b>Mean age: 16.80</b>		
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hausa	5	5.68
Igbo	7	7.95
Yoruba	64	72.73
Nupe	7	7.95
Others	5	5.68
<b>Community Background</b>		
Rural	26	29.55
Peri-urban	50	56.82
Urban	12	13.64
<b>Favorite Academic Subjects</b>		
Mathematics	11	12.50
Biology	19	21.59
English	14	15.91
Physics	9	10.23
Chemistry	13	14.77
Agric science	7	7.95
Economics	15	17.05
Total	88	100

Source: Field survey, 2015

**Table-2: Distribution of respondents on level of awareness of agricultural related programs/organization**

Agric. Program/Organizations	strongly Aware	somewhat Aware	Not Aware	Mean	Decision	Ranking
Agric. Transformation Agenda	14	21	53	1.55	NS	
Federal Ministry of Agriculture	51	21	16	2.39	S	1 <sup>st</sup>
ARC/N	4	11	73	1.21	NS	
NSPRI	17	29	42	1.71	S	3 <sup>rd</sup>
NCAM	16	12	60	1.50	NS	
ARMTI	19	27	42	1.74	S	2 <sup>nd</sup>
ADP	23	11	54	1.64	NS	
OFN	2	6	80	1.11	NS	
RTEP	6	13	69	1.28	NS	
FRIN	5	10	73	1.23	NS	
IITA	12	23	53	1.53	NS	
NIFOR	3	7	78	1.14	NS	

Source: Field survey, 2015

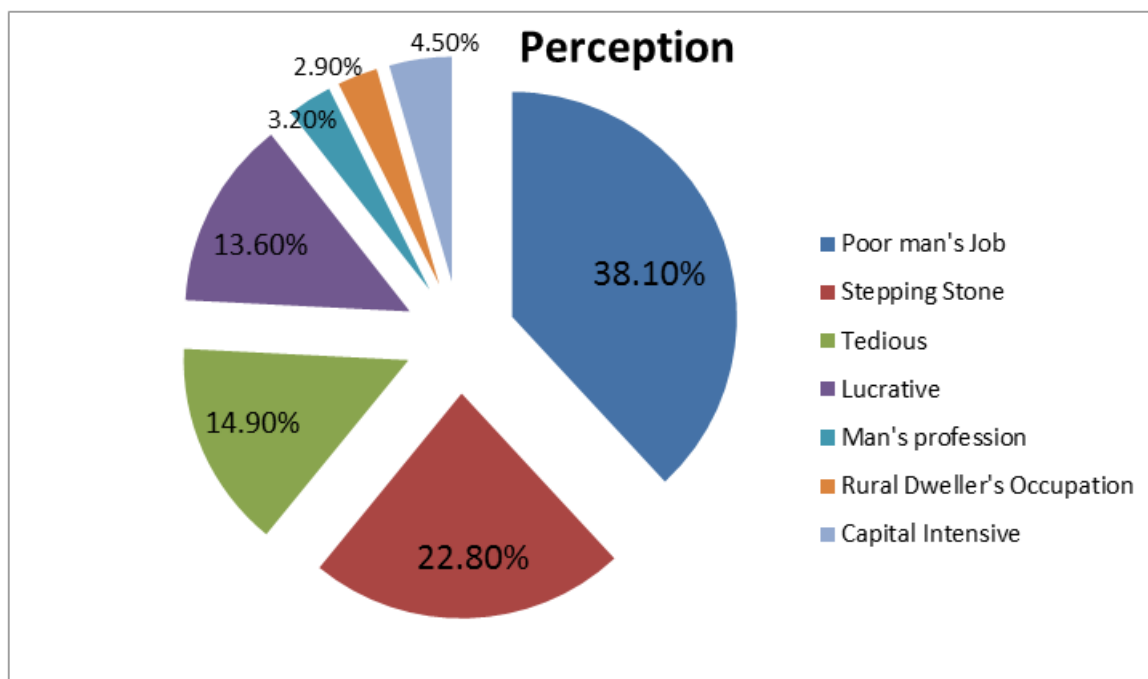


Fig-1: Perception of Respondent on Agricultural Profession

Table-3: Awareness of Career Opportunities in Agriculture

Career Opportunities	strongly Aware	Slightly Aware	Not Aware	Mean	Ranking of Awareness
Teaching/Lecturing	67	18	3	2.72	1 <sup>st</sup>
Agric. Engineering	10	12	66	1.36	8 <sup>th</sup>
Soil Science	9	11	68	1.33	10 <sup>th</sup>
Animal Science	16	28	44	1.68	5 <sup>th</sup>
Extension Specialist	4	11	73	1.21	12 <sup>th</sup>
Forestry	7	20	62	1.39	7 <sup>th</sup>
Fishery	41	29	18	2.26	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Food Processing	19	26	43	1.72	4 <sup>th</sup>
Agribusiness	33	24	31	2.02	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Crop Science	11	16	61	1.43	6 <sup>th</sup>
Agronomy	9	13	66	1.35	9 <sup>th</sup>
Horticulture	7	11	70	1.28	11 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table-4: Distribution of respondents on constraints to pursuing a career in agriculture

Constraints	Frequency	Percentages
Lack of mentor/role model in agriculture	66	75.0
Lack of relatives involved in Agric-related careers	53	60.2
Lack of opportunities to work on a farm while growing up	49	55.7
Lack of awareness of career opportunities in agriculture	64	72.7
Lack of people of colour in Agriculture	70	79.5
Society's negative image of agriculture	58	65.9
Ridicule by peers regarding agriculture	39	44.3
Lack of parental support	73	82.9
Lack of discussion by Career counselor	28	31.8
Lack of promotional materials about agriculture	23	26.1

Source: Field Survey, 2015

**Table-5: Estimates of Regression Model**

Variable	Coefficients	Standard Error
Age	1.2674E-07*	1.43664E-07
Gender	-0.053203102*	0.061675354
Favorite academic subjects	0.104583227*	0.054634532
Ethnicity	-0.010072324*	0.032349387
Academic performance	-0.015672324*	0.009486514
Community background	0.013136912	0.04369319

\*\*Significant 5%; \*Significant at 1%.

### Test of hypothesis

Table-5 reveals the estimation of simple regression model of the relationship between respondents' level of awareness of agricultural related programs and demographic characteristics of the respondents. Age, gender, and favorite academic subjects have a significant influence on respondents' awareness level of agricultural related programs. The significant positive relationship between age, gender, favorite academic subjects and level of awareness of agricultural programs could be due to the fact that gender plays an important role in the awareness level of students to agricultural programs i.e. gender positively affects the students' level of awareness of agricultural programs. Ethnicity, Academic performance, community background all has a negative relationship on the level of awareness of students on agricultural related programs. This suggests that academic performance does not in any way relate with the level of awareness of agricultural programs.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that students have a negative perception about agriculture which was borne partly out of their lack of awareness of agricultural related programs/organizations as well as their lack of awareness of the prospects and career opportunities available in the field of agriculture. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- In order to secure a future for the nation, there is an urgent need for government, parents and other stakeholders to stimulate the interest of the students in agriculture early in life through proper career guidance.
- Agriculture should be made compulsory at the primary and secondary levels, to inculcate the importance of the profession, and the spirit of farming in youths. Scholarships should be awarded to students who indicate interest in pursuing agricultural profession in tertiary institutions in order to encourage more students to pursue a career in agriculture as this have a long term effect on Nation building.
- Students should be encouraged to form Young Farmers Association and be active in carrying out operations on various farming enterprises. The experience gained in school should be tailored towards commercial agriculture and students

should be encouraged to go on excursion to commercial farms as this will serve as motivation and give them a positive perception about agriculture.

### REFERENCES

1. Ekoja II. Personal variables affecting adoption of agricultural innovations by Nigerian farmers. South African Journal of Agricultural Extension. 2004 Jan 1;33(1):94-107.
2. Esters LT, Bowen BE. Factors Influencing Enrollment in an Urban Agricultural Education Program. Journal of career and technical education. 2004;21(1):25-37.
3. Faulkner PE, Baggett CD, Bowen CF, Bowen BE. Attitudes, Educational, and Career Choices of Food and Agricultural Sciences Institute Participants. Journal of Agricultural Education. 2009;50(1):45-56.
4. Abubakar BY. Redirecting research agenda towards transformation of the Nigerian livestock industry. Keynote Address presented at the 16th at the 16th Annual Conference of Animal Science Association of Nigeria (ASAN, ASANYIGBA 2011), Sept. 12 – 15, 2011.
5. Ismaila UA, Gana S, Tswana NM, Dogara D. Cereals production in 1061 International Journal of AgriScience Vol. 2(11): 1053-1061, November 2012 Nigeria: problems, constraints and opportunities for betterment. African J. Agric. Research Vol. 5(12), pp. 1341-1350, 18 June 2010.
6. Jones WA, Larke Jr A. Factors influencing career choice of African American and Hispanic Graduates of a Land Grant Institution. InSixth Annual National Conference, POCPWI 2001 Oct 31.
7. Maze R. Parents push college over service. Army Times, 62 (42). 2002;24.
8. Akomolafe A. Relationship between fathers' occupational status and their children's occupational preference. Journal of Research in Counselling Psychology. 2003;9:127-31.
9. Alutu AN. Vocational Guidance. Masters Degree classroom lecturer notes. University of Benin. Unpublished. University of Benin. 2004.
10. Adedapo AO, Sawant PA, Kobba F, Bhise RN. Determinants of career choice of agricultural profession among the students of College of Agriculture in Maharashtra state, India. IOSR

Journal of Agriculture and Veterinary Science.  
2014;7(9):12-8.

11. Adebo GM, Sekumade AB. Determinants of career choice of Agricultural profession among the Students of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences in Ekiti State University, Nigeria. Journal of agricultural extension and rural development. 2013 Dec 31;5(11):249-55.
12. Darvishi AK. Capacity and ability of sustainable development in Iran. Iranian J. Agric. Eco. Dev. 2003;5(2):30-53.
13. Azubuike OC. Influential factors affecting the attitude of students towards vocational/technical subjects in secondary schools in Southeastern Nigeria. Journal of Educational and social research. 2011 Sep;1(2):49-56.