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ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' ENROLMENT AND CAREER INTERESTS IN COLLEGES OF AGRICULTURE IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The low level of youth involvement in agriculture in Nigeria is evidenced by the poor rate of enrolment of students into colleges of agriculture as compared to universities and other specialised institutions. This study investigated the socio-economic characteristics of students in colleges of agriculture in Oyo state; their level of access to sources of agricultural information before college, factors that influenced students' enrolment into colleges of agriculture and career preference of the students. A simple random sampling procedure was used to select three hundred respondents for the study. Descriptive statistical tools chi-square analysis and Pearsons' Product Moment Correlation were the techniques used for data analysis. The study found that the mean age of the students was 22 years, 59.30% of them were male, and 3.10% were married. Furthermore, agricultural engineering was the most common course among the students (21.0%). Most of the students (58.3%) resided in urban areas and only 12.0% preferred agriculture as a course of study. Most of the students had educated parents with up to 34.30% holding university degrees. There exist a significant relationship between students home background ($X^2=166.038$, $p<0.01$), fathers' educational level ($X^2=189.642$, $p<0.01$) and mothers' educational level ($X^2=166.038$, $p<0.01$) as factors that influenced students' enrolment. Access to agricultural information through agriculture as a subject in secondary school had a significant correlation with students' choice of agriculture as a career ($r=0.172$, $p<0.01$). The study concluded that socio-economic characteristics of students and their parents influenced the choice to enrol in colleges of agriculture. Also, exposure to agricultural information at secondary school level was important in encouraging career choice in agriculture. Based on these findings, it is recommended that career guidance towards agriculture in the secondary schools should be strengthened.

Keywords: Students, Enrolment, Colleges of Agriculture, Career Interests, Oyo State.

Introduction

Agriculture is a veritable tool for addressing poverty and unemployment in developing countries (Okiror and Otabong, 2015). Nigerian agriculture is promising and relies heavily on critical thinkers and problem solvers with agriculture-specific skills to solve challenges facing the sector and propagate innovations for agricultural development. Agricultural education no doubt is important in developing such skills.

The Federal Ministry of Education (2010) stated that the objectives of agricultural education are to enable students to acquire required knowledge, new ideas and practical skills in agriculture; to prepare them for careers in agriculture and to be solution providers. Towards this end, several agricultural colleges, faculties, and universities of agriculture were established across the

country. The expectation has been that these specialised institutions will produce the much needed skilled manpower and human capital for better farm production by application of latest technology and research findings thereby addressing the nation's agricultural development objective. According to United Nations (2008), investing in human capital is an effective way to reduce poverty and encourage sustainable development.

As observed by Muturi (2012), despite the effort at promoting agricultural education in Nigeria, there is low level of youth involvement in agriculture and production still rests in the hands of the elderly, and often uneducated small-scale farmers. The poor level of enrolment into colleges of agriculture across the country is a reflection of the low level of interest of the Nigerian youth in agriculture.

Maximising the enormous potentials that the youth possesses to contribute to production and the entire food value chain is vital to Nigeria's food security. For agriculture to remain a key driver of the country's economy, it must attract and develop a generation of young farmers, who can bring not only their energy and skills to the sector but also innovative and modernised farming methods.

The decision to acquire an agricultural education is the first step to developing a career in the sector. Agriculture as a career is broad, providing opportunities for advancement and job placement in diverse sub-sectors (Thiesse, 2012). Agronomy, animal production, crop protection, fisheries, horticulture, forestry, agricultural economics, agricultural extension and agricultural engineering are some of the career choices opened to students. However, agriculture is often not regarded as a career or an enterprise, but rather, a way of life for the poor who reside in rural communities. The poor income which is a characteristic of the small-scale resource-poor farmer is also a turn-off for young graduates while turning to farming after school would be seen as a failure among most youths. Similarly, agriculture-related courses are "classified" as reserved courses for the less intelligent students who find it difficult securing admission into courses such as medicine and engineering. More worrisome, however, is the report of Omotesho et al. (2015) that a significant percentage of agriculture students in Nigeria do not wish to pursue agriculture-related careers after the completion of their studies.

Knowledge of the factors that influence students' decision to enrol into colleges of agriculture is important in driving the interest of youth towards agricultural education. Also, despite the pursuit of agricultural education, a variety of factors can affect the choice of students' career preference. This study, therefore, assessed the factors influencing students' enrolment into colleges of agriculture and the career interest of students of colleges of agriculture in Oyo State. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. describe the socio-economic characteristics of the students;

2. examine the sources of information that influenced the students towards enrolment in colleges of agriculture;
3. assess the factors that influenced students' enrolment into colleges of agriculture; and
4. Identify the career preferences of the students upon graduation.

Hypotheses of the study

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between selected socioeconomic characteristics of the students and factors that influenced their enrolment to the college of agriculture.

H₀₂: There is no significant correlation between the sources of information that influenced the choice of agriculture as a course of study and career preferences among students.

Methodology

The Study Area

The study area was Oyo State, Nigeria in 2014. One of the 36 states of the country, the state, covers approximately 27,249Km² and has a population of 5,591,589 (National Population Commission. NPC, 2006). Oyo State has the highest concentration of agricultural research institutes in the country and is noted for the cultivation of tree crops as well as arable crops. There are four colleges of agriculture in the State. These are; The Federal College of Forestry, Federal College of Animal Health, Federal College of Agriculture, and Oyo State College of Agriculture.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

All students of the four Colleges of Agriculture in Oyo State formed the sampling frame from which a total of 300 respondents were selected through a random sampling procedure. A proportionate sampling of ten percent (10%) of the student population in each college was carried out. This process resulted in the selection of 68 students from Federal College of Forestry, 43 from Federal College of Animal Health, 75 from Federal College of Agriculture and 114 from Oyo State College of Agriculture. The data were collected through the use of a well-structured questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Frequency counts, means and standard deviation were employed to analyse the data collected. Chi-square analysis and the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to test the hypotheses of the study.

Chi-square (χ^2) statistic is used for testing relationships between categorical variables. It compares the tallies or counts of categorical responses between two (or more) independent groups. Chi-Square statistic is calculated by using the formula;

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Where;

f_o = the observed frequency and f_e = the expected frequency
Chi-square (χ^2) analysis provides information not only on the significance of any observed differences, but also on exactly which categories account for any differences found. The Chi-square test is a non-parametric statistic and hence its suitability for the purpose of this study.

The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables. It is the covariance of the two variables divided by the product of their standard deviations. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient which is denoted by r , takes a range of values from +1 to -1. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used in the hypothesis testing because it offers a base to test the null hypothesis that the true correlation coefficient ρ is equal to 0, based on the value of the sample correlation coefficient r .

$$\rho_{X,Y} = \frac{COV(X,Y)}{\sigma_X \sigma_Y}$$

Where:

- COV is the covariance
- σ_X is the standard deviation of X

The formula for ρ can also be written as

$$\rho_{X,Y} = \frac{E[XY] - E[X]E[Y]}{\sqrt{E[X^2] - E[X]^2} \sqrt{E[Y^2] - E[Y]^2}}$$

A five-point Likert scale was used to elicit information from the respondents' sources of information on career opportunities in agriculture before enrolment. A list of all possible sources of information was drawn and the respondents were required to indicate their level of access to each of these sources. The scale was graduated as follows;

Very high access =5, High access =4, Moderate access =3, Low access = 2, No access =1

The extent to which various factors influenced students' enrolment into the colleges of agriculture was examined using a five-point Likert scale graduated as follows;

Very high influence =5, High influence=4, Moderate Influence=3, Low Influence=2, and No Influence=1

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

The mean age of the respondents was 22 years. This age bracket is an economically active one and people in this bracket are usually motivated and innovative (Matanmi and Olabanji, 2013). More than half (59.3%) of the respondents were males while about (40.7%) were females. The predominance of male students may be as a result of the physically tedious nature of agricultural activities. Only a few (3.10%) of the students were married, (96.3%) while the majority were single. More than half (60.7%) of the respondents were Christians The table also revealed that (21.0%) of the interviewees were training to specialise in agricultural engineering, 18.0%, 17.0% and 9.3% in agriculture technology, crop production/technology and agricultural extension/management respectively. Meanwhile, 9.0%, 8.7%, 8.3%, 5.0% and 3.0% of the respondents studied postharvest technology, forestry technology, animal health and production technology, farm power and machine and home/rural economics. However, only 12% of the students originally wanted agriculture as a course of study. A notable proportion of the respondents (58.3%) resided in the urban areas, while 23.3% and 18.3%

lived in semi-urban and rural areas, respectively. Life in rural areas can foster exposure to agricultural activities as rural dwellers are predominantly farmers (Matanmi and Olabanji, 2013). Most urban centres have a dearth of agricultural activities. Hence,

majority of the respondents may lack the right exposure to agriculture that could serve as a motivation to choosing agriculture as a career. Most of the students' parents were educated and most of their fathers (34.3%), and mothers (28.0%) had first-degree certificates.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to socio-economic characteristics

Variables	Frequency (n=300)		Percentages (%)	Means
Gender	Male	178	59.3	
	Female	122	40.7	
Age	≤15	3	1.0	22 years
	16-20	94	30.3	
	21-25	154	51.3	
	26-30	44	14.7	
	≥ 30	8	2.7	
Religion	Christianity	182	60.7	
	Islam	114	38.0	
	Traditional worshippers	4	1.3	
Marital Status	Single	289	96.3	
	Married	9	3.10	
	Widowed/Divorced/Separated	2	0.60	
Course of study	Agricultural Engineering	63	21.0	
	Postharvest technology	27	9.0	
	Farm power and machine	15	5.0	
	Agricultural Technology	54	18.0	
	Crop Production and Technology	51	17.0	
	Agricultural extension and management	29	9.3	
	Home and Rural Economics	10	3.0	
	Forestry Technology	26	8.7	
	Animal Health and Production Technology	25	8.3	
Agriculture as 1 st Choice of course of study (As opposed to enrolling in agriculture as a substitute)	Yes			
	No	36	12.0	
		264	88.0	
Home Background	Urban area	174.9	58.3	
	Semi-urban area	70.2	23.4	
	Rural area	54.9	18.3	
Fathers' Educational status	No formal Education	14	4.7	
	Primary school certificate	36	12.0	
	SSCE	48	16.0	
	ND/NND	45	15.0	
	First degree	103	34.3	
	Above first degree	54	18.0	
Mothers' Educational Status	No formal Education	19	6.3	
	Primary school certificate	34	11.3	
	SSCE	66	22.0	
	ND/NND	76	25.4	
	First degree	84	28.0	
	Above first degree	21	7.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Sources of Information on Career Opportunities in Agriculture

Table 2 presents the responses of the students on their level of access to sources of information on career opportunities in agriculture. It reveals that students had the highest access to agricultural information from taking agriculture as a subject in secondary school ($M=3.79$, $SD=1.32$). This was followed

by experiences shared by friends and relatives ($M=3.26$, $SD=1.36$). Other sources of information were radio broadcast of agriculture ($M=2.89$, $SD=1.40$), television broadcast on agriculture ($M=2.86$, $SD=1.30$), Newspapers ($M=2.69$, $SD=1.30$) and technical journals/conference proceedings on agriculture ($M=2.63$, $SD=1.30$).

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to their Level of Access to Sources of Information on Career Opportunities in Agriculture.

Information Source	VI/A	II/A	MA	LA	NA	M	SD
Through agriculture as a subject in secondary school	42.7	21.7	15.0	13.3	7.3	3.79	1.32
Through friends and relatives	25.0	23.0	15.0	27.0	10.0	3.26	1.36
Through radio broadcast on agriculture	18.3	18.3	27.7	16.7	19.0	2.89	1.40
Through television broadcast on agriculture	15.7	19.0	25.7	20.3	19.3	2.86	1.35
Through Newspapers	11.3	17.7	28.3	21.0	21.7	2.69	1.30
Through technical journals/conference proceedings on agriculture	10.0	19.0	28.3	18.7	24.0	2.63	1.29

Source: Field survey, 2014

VI/A=Very high access, II/A=high access, MA= Moderate access, LA=Low access, NA= No access.

Factors that Influenced Students' Enrolment into Colleges of Agriculture

Responses to the factors that influenced the students' choice to enrol in colleges of agriculture are presented in Table 3. Parents and guardians (M=3.37) had a high influence on the students' decision to enrol into the colleges of agriculture. Rayfield et al. (2013) also reported that parents were the leading influence on students' choice making. Friends (M=3.21) and other relatives (M=3.10) also have a significantly high influence on students' enrolment decision. Teaching reputation of the college (M=3.56), the serenity of the college environment (M=3.46) as well as advertorials about the college were some of the factors that attracted students to the colleges. Activities of Agricultural Science teachers (M=3.39) and extension professionals (M=3.32) were motivating factors of the students in desiring to study at the college.

Job-related prospects such as Potential income from agriculture (M=3.63) and Job Market potentials of agriculture (M=3.44) also influenced decisions of students. Love for animal crop cultivation (M=3.40), Love for animal husbandry (M=3.02), Love for field work (out-of-office job) (M=3.23) were factors that highly influenced the students' decision to study at the colleges. However, factors such as availability of scholarship awards at the college (M=2.15), activities of practical agriculture instructors (M=2.93) and School Counsellors (M=2.83) had little influence on students' decision. Ambition to become agricultural superintendents (M=2.36), research Officers (M=2.34), farm manager (M=2.31), agricultural extension agents (M=2.26), agricultural/forest officers (M=2.37), teacher/lecturer (M=2.20), and bank (credit/investment officer) (M=2.14) had low influences on the students' decisions.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents based on factors influencing their decision to enrol into college agriculture

Factors	VIII	III	MI	LI	NI	M	SD	Rank
Influence of friends and relatives								
Parent(s) and guardian(s)	34.3	20.7	11.0	18.3	16.3	3.37	1.32	III
Friends	22.0	24.0	17.3	26.7	10.0	3.21	1.31	III
Other relatives	17.3	23.0	25.0	21.7	13.0	3.10	1.36	III
College factors								
Teaching Reputation of the college	29.3	27.3	20.0	17.7	6.0	3.56	1.24	III
Serenity of the college	27.3	28.7	15.3	19.7	9.0	3.46	1.32	III
Adventorials of the college	29.3	19.3	25.3	20.7	15.3	3.07	1.34	III
Availability of scholarship awards at the college	11.3	11.3	11.0	12.7	53.3	2.15	1.46	LI
Attractions from Agric. professionals								
Agric. Science Teacher	30.3	23.0	15.7	15.7	14.3	3.39	1.42	III
Extension Professionals	29.3	20.3	14.0	22.3	12.3	3.32	1.42	III
Agric. practical instructors	20.0	22.3	19.0	18.3	25.3	2.93	1.49	LI
School Counsellor	18.0	16.7	20.0	1.3	24.3	2.83	1.43	LI
Job prospects								
Potential Income from agriculture	34.3	25.7	17.0	14.7	8.3	3.63	1.31	III
Job Market potentials of agriculture	30.0	22.0	21.0	16.0	11.0	3.44	1.35	III
Love for crop cultivation	26.7	26.7	20.0	13.7	13.0	3.40	1.35	III
Love for animal husbandry	21.0	19.7	19.3	20.3	19.7	3.02	1.43	III
Love for field work (out-of-office job)	24.3	23.3	19.0	18.0	15.3	3.23	1.40	III
Type of Agric. job desired								
Agricultural Superintendent	9.2	40.0	1.1	3.3	46.3	2.36	0.662	LI
Research Officer	11.3	30.7	7.0	6.0	45.0	2.34	0.672	LI
Farm Manager	12.0	32.3	3.1	5.2	46.3	2.31	0.723	LI
Agricultural Extension Agents	6.7	30.0	6.0	18.3	39.0	2.26	0.670	LI
Agricultural/Forest officers	9.3	40.7	10.0	7.0	33.0	2.37	0.670	LI
Teacher/Lecturer	15.0	26.0	12.0	10.0	37.0	2.20	0.708	LI
Bank (credit/investment officer)	22.3	31.0	11.6	5.1	30.0	2.14	0.756	LI
Any kind of job	52.7	23.3	6.0	2.0	16.0	1.57	0.753	LI

Source; Field Survey, 2014

VIII=Very high influence, High influence=III, Moderate Influence=MI, LI=low influence, NI=No Influence

Career Preference of the Students of Colleges of Agriculture

As revealed in Table 4, generally, careers in science-related fields were the most preferred by the students (M=3.96) as it ranked first on the scale of responses. Careers in engineering-related fields ranked second (M=3.80), followed by careers in health-related fields

(M=3.76), Social science-related fields (M=3.64), education-related fields (M=3.41) and last of all was agriculture-related fields (M=2.58). This confirms the report of Omotesho et.al. (2015) that a significant proportion of agriculture students are not willing to build agricultural related-careers

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents based on Career Preference

Career Options	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Science-related fields	3.96	0.30	1st
Engineering-related fields	3.80	0.60	2nd
Education-related fields	3.44	0.74	5th
Health-related fields	3.76	0.22	3rd
Social science-related fields	3.64	0.78	4th
Agriculture related-fields	2.58	0.90	6th

Source: Field survey, 2014

Test of Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of the students and factors that

influenced their enrolment into the colleges of agriculture.

The result of chi-square analysis of the responses shows that home background, father

and mothers' educational status significantly influenced enrolment at $p < 0.01$ while age, gender and religion were not significant as factors that influenced the students' enrolment at the college. Mwiria (2005) also stated that

home backgrounds of students and parental educational status contributed in determining which vocational subjects' students registered for

TABLE 5: Relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics and factors that influenced their enrolment to the college of agriculture

Variable	X ² (chi-square)	Df	p-value	Decision
Age	94.061	4	0.034	Not Significant
Gender	3.203	1	0.293	Not Significant
Religion	53.401	2	0.623	Not Significant
Home background	71.723	2	0.001	Significant
Father's educational status	189.642	5	0.000	Significant
Mothers' educational status	166.038	5	0.000	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2014

H₀₂: There is no significant correlation between the students' level of access to sources of agricultural information before enrolment and their career preferences.

Information received through the study of agriculture as a subject at the secondary school level was positively related to choosing agriculture-related careers as shown in Table

6. Other sources of information such as friends and relatives, radio broadcast on agriculture, television broadcast on agriculture, Newspapers and conference proceedings on agriculture and their career preference were not significant in encouraging agriculture-related careers

Table 6: Correlation between Students' Source of information and their Career Preference

Sources of information	r-value	p-value	Decision
Through agriculture as a subject in secondary school	0.172*	0.0003	Significant
Through friends and relatives	0.124	0.278	Not significant
Through radio broadcast on agriculture	0.053	0.564	Not significant
Through television broadcast on agriculture	-0.012	0.840	Not significant
Through Newspapers	0.089	0.654	Not significant
Through technical journals/conference proceedings on agriculture	0.056	0.438	Not significant

Source: Survey Field, 2014 * $P < 0.01$

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that the study of agricultural science in secondary school was the most important source of information on career opportunities in agriculture. Also, parents and guardians have significant influence on students' decisions to enrol in colleges of education. Finally, Careers in agriculture-related fields were the least preferred among the students of colleges of agriculture in Oyo State.

The study recommends the strengthening of career guidance in secondary schools so that students may be aware of prospects in agriculture. Increased awareness should be created among parents and guardians on the entrepreneurship opportunities in agriculture. In addition, agriculture students should be given proper orientation which will enable them to embrace agriculture-related careers.

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