



Factors influencing the interest of youths towards career in agriculture: A case study of Bwari Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria



doi.org/10.33500/ijaar.2021.09.006

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Article History

Received 23 October, 2021
Received in revised form 06 December, 2021
Accepted 08 December, 2021

Keywords:

Interest,
Youth,
Career,
Agriculture,
Bwari.

Article Type:

Full Length Research Article

ABSTRACT

The study was undertaken to analyse the factors influencing the interest of youth towards career in agriculture in Bwari Area Council, Abuja. The study employed the use of survey research design. A total of 100 respondents were used for the study and they were sampled using multi stage sampling technique. Primary data was used for the study and these were collected using well-structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics and logistic regression were used to actualize the objectives of the study. From the result, it was discovered that most (54%) of the youths were male with a mean age of 26 years. Most of the youths were not married and they were mostly educated with 96% of the respondents having at least a secondary school education. Most of the respondents were business owners, with an average household size of 3. The average monthly income of respondents was N62,134.6. The most popular career areas among the youths in the study area were crop production and animal husbandry. The study revealed that the factors that significantly influenced the interest of the youth toward a career in agriculture were drudgery, family background, access to land, access to farm machinery, access to extension services and cost of inputs. It was recommended that attention should be given to training and advisory services, as this will expose the youths to more knowledge and training, and ensure that they are better equipped to engage fully in agricultural activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth is a transition period between childhood and adulthood. It is a vibrant phase or state of being young and this stage of life is characterised by energy, intelligence, zest, innovativeness, and hope. These attributes help in improving knowledge and the capacity for growth and development; and which partly compensate for their seeming limitation in access to economic resources (Jabal et al., 2021). There are some specific attributes of youth

that make them most suitable for development; their vigour and undying spirit to achieve and excel being the most important of all. They are young, virile, agile and are mostly innovative. Youths belong to a heterogeneous group which is in constant evolution with varying experiences depending on the region and country (Idu et al., 2020).

The United Nations defines youth as people who aged between 15 and 24 years, while those who are aged between 10 and 19 years are tagged young people. In some developing countries and in many regions of Africa, the youth are often described as those who are not yet married, while age is used as a secondary means of

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identifying youths (Ovharhe and Gbigbi, 2016). The youthful period is often identified with strength, sexual maturity/activity, high display of emotions as well as financial, social and economic independence. In 2006, the African Youth Charter promulgated by the African Union defined youth as people between the ages of 15 and 35 years. In the same vein, the National Youth Development Policy of Nigeria describes youth as consisting of every young person, male or female, between the ages 18 and 35 years (Mat-Taib et al., 2019). The period is often prolonged in developing societies due to the various types of political, social, and economic uncertainties among many other reasons (Joseph et al., 2021).

According to World Bank (2020), youth make up about 60% of the country's population. They are considered the future of a country because of the amount of energy and aspirations they possess. They are often considered the prime movers of any nation, and their involvement in the agricultural sector will improve the socio-economic life of the people, both those in the rural and urban areas; and it will also lead to the development of vocational agriculture among the youth. As asserted by Omeje et al. (2020) the economy of Nigeria is a youth economy, and expectedly the young people of today will become tomorrow's parents, leaders, labour force and armies in a short while. However, most youths in Nigeria are confronted with a whole lot of challenges which include poverty, unemployment, urbanization, lack of capacity and skills needed to move the economy forward.

The agricultural sector is an industry with huge potentials and opportunities for youth to explore. The sector explicitly aim to increase the supply of safe and high-quality food by promoting more sustainable crop production (Sennuga, 2019) while also helping to improve market access and farmers' livelihoods (Sennuga et al., 2020a). Even though there is a negative perception about agriculture among people, especially among the youth, the sector has the ability to offer a high income, provided it is operated in the right way. Agriculture is a progressive sector with many job opportunities in various areas, ranging from administration, production, post-production and even, marketing (World Bank, 2020). Some of the areas of career opportunities include agriculture development officer, horticulture development officer, soil and water conservation experts, rural development officers. Other areas include opportunities in the agro-industry sector, animal health, agricultural technology, agricultural extension, entrepreneurship, and so much more. Despite the many available career opportunities in the agricultural sector, there is a lack of interest from the youth in choosing agriculture as a professional career, and this has led to a shortage in skill and labour shortages in the sector. The youth perceive agriculture as an exclusive venture for the rural people (Geza et al., 2021). Certain factors influence career choice among the youth, and that is why it is imperative to undergo a study on the factors influencing

the interest of youth in choosing a career path in agriculture.

The farming population in Nigeria is aging and it is practically impossible for this fading generation still dominating the agricultural sector to deliver on the expected level of productivity which will be sufficient enough to meet food requirements of the ever-growing population of the country. Agriculture possesses huge and vast potentials or opportunities that is not only able transform the nation's economy but also has the ability tremendously impact the personal lives of those involved in the value chain, particularly the youth. Many researchers have posited that Nigerian youths possess the capacity to improve agricultural landscape of the country but most of them seem not to be interested in agricultural activities (Idu et al., 2020; Sennuga et al., 2020b; Joseph et al., 2021).

From researches, the current average age of a Nigerian farmer is 55 years and by 2030 this is expected to grow to around 75 years, hence the need to increase the participation of the youth in agricultural production activities (Akpan et al. 2015; Abubakar, 2021). Researches also show that by 2030, there will be an estimated 50% increase in the rural-urban areas migration, which implies that there will be a reduction in the farming population of the country. It is uncertain if the present group of ageing farmers has the capacity to produce enough food to feed the projected Nigerian population of about 230 million people in 2030. Also, the current level of unemployment among the youth in the country is alarming. Youth unemployment is a liability to families, the society and the economy as a whole (Omoniyi, 2021).

The integration of youth in agricultural activities is a vital factor in the development of the agricultural sector in many countries and this is predicated on the fact that they possess innovative features, a fast-learning rate, and greater physical energy. Meanwhile, Anyanwu and Duru (2021) posited that the perceptions of better career opportunities outside agriculture, poor infrastructural development and basic amenities in rural areas and a general lack of interest in agriculture are some of the reasons why there seems to be a low interest in agriculture among the youth.

The role of youth in agriculture in Nigeria has been down played and employment data are very difficult to obtain and even in situations where unemployment registers exist, they are always limited to the urban areas sidelining the rural populace, who are left to feel inferior in the development of agriculture in Nigeria. It is quite unfortunate that most youth who are expected to carry on with agriculture in the rural places are now migrating to the urban places seeking for an ever elusive white collar job (Omoniyi, 2021). The industrialization and modernization of the urban settlements and the consequent neglect of rural areas affects the rural areas in terms of the development of the agricultural sector. This is especially

true concerning the labour force of the country.

Even though farming is usually carried out by the elderly people, the physical requirements of the vocation, as well as the need to be innovative and creative, makes it ideally suited for young people from 15 to 34 years old. The African youth possess qualities like energy, creativity, innovativeness and strength, and these they have in abundance. For these youths to be attracted to agriculture, it has to be profitable, dynamic, and competitive. These are the some of the important characteristics that is required for the agricultural sector to grow and develop, and to improve food security, while also preserving a fragile natural environment. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to analyse the factors influencing the interest of youth towards career in agriculture in Bwari Area Council, Abuja.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Describe the socioeconomic characteristics of youths in the study area.
- ii. Determine the awareness of youths on career areas in agriculture.
- iii. Identify factors that determine the interest of youths towards career in agriculture.
- iv. Analyze the effect of the factors on the interest of youths towards a career in agriculture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area

The study was conducted in Bwari Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The area council lies in coordinates of 9°16'60" N and 7°22'60" E and it is bordered by the Municipal Area Council and by Gwagwalada Area Council. It is one of the fastest growing area councils in Abuja with institutions like Dorben Polytechnic, Veritas University, Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) headquarters, and Nigerian Law School located in the area council. Bwari has a population of over 1.3 million people, and it is native to the Gbagyi speaking people, who are believed to be among the first settlers in the area. The weather in the area council is characterized by alternate wet and dry seasons with a mean annual rainfall of around 1500 mm. Bwari Area Council has ten (10) wards which include: Bwari Central, Byazhin, Dutse Alhaji, Igu, Kawu, Kubwa, Kuduru, Shere, Ushafa and Usuma (Ehizemhen et al., 2019).

Population of the Study and Research Design

The population of the study was youth (18 to 33 years old) in Bwari Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The survey design was used for this study. Survey

design is a sub-category of descriptive research. The design employs questionnaires and interviews to determine the opinion, preference, attitudes and perceptions of people about issues. Questionnaires were used to collect data for the study.

Sampling technique

Multi stage sampling technique was employed in sampling respondents for the study. The first stage involved the purposive selection of three (3) wards with high population of youths in the study area. These wards include Kubwa, Dutse Alhaji, Ushafa and Bwari Central. The second stage involved the random selection of 25 youths from each of the wards, which will result in a total of 100 respondents used for the study.

Data collection

The study employed the use of primary data which were collected by using well-structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher with the aid of well-trained enumerators who are conversant with the area council.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics and logistic regression were used to analyse the data used for this study. Descriptive statistics was used to achieve objectives 1, 2 and 3, while objective 4 was actualized using logistic regression.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio economic characteristics of the respondents

The result of the socio economic characteristics of the youths in the study area is presented in Table 1. The socio economic variables include gender, age, marital status, educational level, occupation, monthly income and household size. The gender distribution of the respondents shows that majority (54%) of the respondents were male while 46% were female. Gender plays an important role in determining the acceptance and even the attitude of youth towards having a career in agriculture. Still from the Table 1, the result reveals that the age of most (57.6%) of the respondents was between 21 and 30 years, and the average age of the respondents was 26 years. Age plays a vital role in the choice of agriculture as a career path by youths or even their participation in agricultural activities. The age distribution of respondents shows that most of the youths are within the physically and socially active age,

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)	Mean
Gender			
Male	54	54	
Female	46	46	
	100	100	
Age (years)			
20 and below	20	20.2	
21-25	28	28.3	
26-30	29	29.3	26
31-35	14	14.1	
36-40	8	8.1	
	99	100	
Marital status			
Married	20	20	
Not married	80	80	
	100	100	
Level of education			
No formal education	1	1	
Primary education	3	3	
Secondary education	46	46.5	
Tertiary education	49	49.5	
	99	100	
Occupation			
Artisan	13	13.1	
Business owner	42	42.4	
Employee	22	22.2	
Unemployed	22	22.2	
	99	100	
Monthly income			
20,000 or less	26	30.8	
21,000-40,000	22	28.2	
41,000-80,000	17	21.8	62,134.6
81,000-120,000	10	10.2	
120,000 or more	7	9	
	78	100	
Household size			
1-3	36	54.5	3
4-6	21	31.9	
7-9	7	10.6	
10 and above	2	3	
	66	100	

Field data analysis, 2021.

which means their involvement in agriculture will go a long way in boosting the sector because of their ability to withstand the physical nature of agriculture. This is in line with the assertions of Omoniyi (2021).

From Table 1, the result shows that majority (80%) of the respondents were not married while the remaining 20%

were married. Since most of the youths are not yet married, it means they are not faced with the distraction of catering for the family, and can therefore make appropriate decisions on the career path they want to choose. The result for the educational level of the respondents in Table 1 shows that most (96%) of the youths in the study area

Table 2. Awareness of youths on career areas in agriculture.

Career areas	Frequency* (N=100)	Percent (%)
Agricultural education	83	83
Crop production	95	95
Animal husbandry	93	93
Fisheries	91	91
Mushroom farming	34	34
Bee keeping (honey production)	54	54
Agroprocessing	68	68
Agricultural extension	44	44
Agro-input sales	73	73
Forestry	73	73
Horticulture and landscaping	65	65
Animal feed formulation	75	75
Soil science	63	63
Agricultural economics	67	67
Agricultural engineering	57	57
Crop protection	77	77
Animal health	82	82
Agricultural research	62	62
Snailery	65	65
Agricultural technology	62	62

Field data analysis, 2021.

had at least a secondary school education. The level of education of an individual play a major part in improving the understanding and comprehension of an individual, and ultimately their ability to make sound decisions, and this is in line with the position of Sennuga et al. (2020a). The result further shows that majority of the youths in the study area were business owners according 42.4% of the respondents. Also, majority (30.8%) of the respondents had a monthly income of ₦20,000 or less. However, the average of monthly income of the youths in the study area was ₦62,134.6. Table 1 further reveals that the majority (54.5%) of the respondents had a household size of between 1-3 people. Meanwhile, the average household size of the youths in the study area was 3. This result is not surprising, judging from the fact that most of the respondents were not married.

Awareness of youths on career areas in agriculture

Table 2 shows the result of the awareness of youths on the career areas in agriculture. The result indicates that the most popular career areas among the youths in the study area were “crop production” (95%) and “animal husbandry” (93%). This result is not shocking since most people do not perceive agriculture beyond the tilling of ground and rearing of animals, which has resulted in the bad attitude

of many people, especially youths, towards pursuing a career in agriculture. This agrees with Jabal et al. (2021) which stated that one of the major challenges facing youth in agriculture is their bad perception of the sector.

The result further reveals that the other career areas with high level of awareness among the youths in the study area include: fisheries (91%), agricultural education (83%), animal health (82%), crop protection (77%), animal feed formulation (75%), agro-input sales (73%), and forestry (73%). The result further shows that the areas with the lowest awareness among the youths in the study area were agricultural extension (44%) and mushroom farming (34%).

Factors that determine interest of youths towards career in agriculture

The result in Table 3 shows the factors that determine the interest of youths towards a career in agriculture. The result shows that “personal perception about agriculture” was the most prevalent factor that determines the interest of youths towards career in agriculture. The mean score (3.20) of responses for this factor was the highest and is higher than the average mean score of 2.5. This implies that the perception or notion the youths have towards agriculture determines whether or not they choose to

Table 3. Factors that determines the interest of youths towards career in agriculture.

Factors	Mean score	Decision
Lucrativeness	3.13	Accepted
Drudgery	2.57	Accepted
Family Background	2.45	Rejected
Personal Perception about Agriculture	3.20	Accepted
Access/Availability of Land	2.85	Accepted
Access to farm Machinery	2.92	Accepted
Access to Loan / Credit	2.89	Accepted
Government Policies / Intervention	2.87	Accepted
Access to Agric. Extension Service (training/advice)	3.09	Accepted
Cost of Agricultural inputs	2.92	Accepted

Field data analysis, 2021.

Table 4. Effect of selected factors on the interest of youths towards a career in agriculture.

Factors	B	Std. Error	Wald	P-Value
Lucrativeness	.888	.558	2.536	.111
Drudgery	-1.374	.419	10.752	.001
Family background	1.190	.661	3.241	.072
Personal perception	-.475	.715	.442	.506
Access to land	1.727	.860	4.035	.045
Access to farm Machineries	1.599	.834	3.681	.055
Access to loan	.226	.675	.112	.738
Government policies	-.822	.730	1.269	.260
Access to training and advisory services	1.986	.831	5.715	.017
Cost of inputs	-1.125	.553	4.140	.042
Constant	-.339	1.908	.032	.859

Field data analysis, 2021.

pursue a career in agriculture. The result also indicates that lucrateness with a mean score of 3.13 was another major factor that determines the interest of the respondents in agriculture. This implies that the youths will most likely go into agriculture if they perceive the sector as lucrative and if they believe practicing agriculture pays higher or as much as other sectors. The other factors that determine whether or not the youths are interested in agriculture include: access to advisory services (3.09), access to farm machinery (2.92), cost of agricultural inputs (2.92) access to loan/credit (2.89), government policies/intervention (2.87), access to land (2.85) and drudgery (2.57).

Effect of Selected Factors on the Interest of Youths towards a Career in Agriculture

Table 4 shows the result of the logistic regression analysis

of the effect of selected factors on the interest of youths towards a career in agriculture in the study area. The result shows that Nagelkerke R^2 has a value of 0.629 which means that 62.9% of the variations in the dependent variable can be predicted by the independent variable. The remaining 37.1% was due to error or variables not captured in the model. The result shows that drudgery, family background, access to land, access to farm machinery, access to extension services and cost of inputs all had significant influence on the interest of the youth toward a career in agriculture.

Drudgery was negative and significant at 1% level of significance. This means that there is an inverse relationship between drudgery and the interest of the youths. Hence for a unit increase in drudgery, the interest of the youths in agriculture decreases by 1.374. Because of the strenuous nature of agriculture, especially non-mechanized farming, some youth tend to shy away from participating in agricultural activities. Family background

was positive and significant at 10% probability level. This implies that there is a positive relationship between the family background of the youths and their interest in agriculture. Youths who grew up in a farming environment or around families who are into one form of agriculture or another, are likely to be more interested in pursuing a career in agriculture than those who grew up in a non-agrarian society.

Access to land was significant at 5% probability level and has a positive relationship with interest. This means that the more access to land the respondents has, the more interested they will be in agriculture. Land is a basic input in agriculture and poor access to land for use by youth due to unfavourable land tenure systems can hinder their capacity to fully engage in agriculture. This is in line with Omeje et al. (2020) who found that access to land was a constraint to youth participation in agriculture.

The result further shows that access to farm machineries was positive and significant 10% probability level. This means that the interest of the youths in agriculture increases with increase in their access to farm machineries. This finding shows that access to tractor and modern farm inputs plays a major role in stirring and increasing the interest of youths in agriculture because the availability of these equipment help reduce drudgery, while increasing efficiency. Saliu et al. (2016) identified access to modern farm inputs as one of the major drives of agricultural productivity.

Access to training and advisory services was significant at 1% level of probability and positively influences the interest of youths in agriculture. The result shows that the interest of youths towards agriculture as a career increases with access to training and advisory services. This is in agreement with the findings of Sennuga (2019) who found extension service delivery to have a significant influence on the participation of youths in agricultural activities.

Cost of inputs was negative and significant at 5% probability level. This implies that cost of inputs has a negative influence on the interest of youths in agriculture as a career. As the cost of inputs increase, the interest of the youths decreases. High cost of inputs means that cost of agricultural productivity increases, and this could reduce the interest of the youths in agriculture.

Conclusion

The goal of this study is to investigate the factors that are responsible for the interest of youths towards career in agriculture. From the study, it was discovered that most of the youths were male with a mean age of just over 26 years. Most of the youths were not married and they were mostly educated with 96% of the respondents having at least a secondary education; and the most popular career areas among the youths in the study area were crop

production and animal husbandry. The study however revealed that the factors that significantly influenced the interest of the youth toward a career in agriculture were drudgery, family background, access to land, access to farm machinery, access to extension services and cost of inputs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- I. Modern farm tools and machineries should be available for hire at affordable prices. This will help reduce drudgery in production activities.
- II. Attention should be given to training and advisory services, as this will expose the youths to more knowledge and training, and ensure that they are better equipped to engage fully in agricultural activities.
- III. Youth-friendly agricultural policies should be developed by the government, as this will ensure that the interests of youths are stirred towards pursuing a career in agriculture.

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