Attitude of Secondary School Students towards Young Farmers' Club in Kwara State, Nigeria

Ayanda, I. F., Salawu, O. L., Olooto, F.M., Yusuf, O.J., Olatinwo, L.K. and Awolola, B. O.
Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension Services, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria
Corresponding Author: felicia.olooto@kwasu.edu.ng**.**

Abstract

This study investigated the attitude of secondary school students towards participating in Young Farmers Club (YFC) in Nigeria. A three-stage sampling technique was used to select 123 YFC's members for the study. A 5- point Likert -type scale was used to measure the attitude of the students towards YFC activities. Information was gathered by the use of questionnaire and described by frequency, percentages and mean scores. Results showed that 42.3% and 57.7% of the students were male and female, respectively with an average age of approximately 15.0 years. Activities of YFC include crop and livestock production, organizing excursion to farms, research institutes, debates and seminars. All the students reported enhanced skills in crop and livestock production, convinced of the profitability of agricultural enterprises (58.5%). However, they reported that agriculture is not meant for the poor (55.2 %). Also, the constraints such as inadequate financial support (Mean = 3.53), inadequate farm operating equipment (Mean = 3.52), students are incapacitated to pay their annual due on regular basis (Mean = 3.24). Therefore, it is desirable to remove constraints hindering the activities of young farmers club through financial support from parents and provision of farming equipment by school authorities in order to sustain the attitude of secondary school students towards YFC in the study area.

Key words: Young Farmers' Club, attitude, secondary school

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INTRODUCTION

The role of agriculture to the development of the African economies cannot be overemphasized. In most poor countries, agriculture is a major employer and source of national income and export earnings (Manning and Thompson, 2006). It accounts for about 30% of Sub-Saharan Africa's (SSA) Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 40% of exports, and approximately 60-80% of employment (Johanson and Saint, 2007). Specifically, in Nigeria where there is serious food insecurity, getting young people to become farmers is emerging as a challenge. Young people are being raised up with career aspirations by far beyond agriculture therefore putting the farming enterprise at risk.

Young people show no desire to be farmers or to be employed in farming after receiving vocational training. The number of youths who consider farming as a symbol of poverty and backwardness is very large indeed. Neither are they willing to assume hard physical work and therefore avoid employment in agriculture, which require physical labor. Moreover, because of the negative attitude of the family and the society at large about agriculture, informal work in urban areas is preferred by those who are exposed to school even if it is low paying and as backbreaking as agriculture (Getnet and Asrat, 2012). Therefore, the status of farming should be changed so that rural youth could aspire for, invest on and live by it.

Nowadays, he youth view agricultural sector as a non-profitable business meant for the old. Though, youths have desirable qualities that can promote agriculture but most of them have strong apathy towards it thus, resulting to mass unemployment and lack of sustainable livelihood among them (Chikezie, 2012). The world's population has increased tremendously to over seven billion (United Nations Population Fund, 2011) and it is projected to reach 9.2 billion in the year 2050 (World Watch Institute, 2013). Nigeria is one of the countries with the highest population growth rate. The world today is faced with a challenge of finding ways to feed a growing population with a declining number of agriculturists, especially individuals engaged in food production. A need exists to have more agricultural scientists and agricultural practitioners who are educated properly in the science ofagriculture to find ways of feeding the growing population, reducing poverty, and improving livelihoods, especially, in developing countries like Nigeria. This emphasizes the importance of encouraging the youths to actively involved in farming.

Curricula activities involving student organizations, such as Young Farmers Clubs (YFC) in schools and in communities could be avenues through which students achieve academic success; their career aspirations are recognized and stimulated. According to Phipps *et al*. (2008), school years are a critical time for adolescents to engage in career exploration and development. Therefore, increase in understanding of the roles of youth organizations towards fomenting the career interests and aspirations of youth regarding post-secondary education, including the agricultural disciplines, and careers in Nigeria's agriculture sector, is paramount. This study thus, investigated the attitude of secondary school students towards participating in Young Farmers Club (YFC) in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study was conducted to examine the attitude of

secondary students towards the YFC activities in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study described the personal characteristics of students participants in YFC activities, investigated the activities performed by the YFC and identified constraints to the activities of Young Farmers Club.

METHODOLOGY:

Study Area

The study was carried out in Kwara State, Nigeria. The State has a total number of 340 secondary schools as at 15th of March, 2016. The target population includes all the students that are members of Young Farmers Clubs in all secondary schools in Kwara State. A three-stage sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Firstly, Ilorin West Local Government Area (LGA) was purposively selected as it has the highest number of schools (28) with registered YFCs in the State. The second stage also involved a purposive sampling of 5 secondary schools that have functional Young Farmers Clubs. The final stage is the proportionate random selection of 20% of YFC members in the selected schools. Thus, a total of 123 students were selected for the study. Data collected were described using frequency, percentages, and mean scores, while Pearson Correlation was used to analyse the relationships that exist between variables. A 5- point Likert-type scale was used to measure the changing attitude of the students towards agriculture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics

Age: Results of the study as shown in Table 2 indicated that 48.8% of the members of Young Farmers Club fell within the age bracket of 11-15 years while about half (50.4%) of the members were between 16 and 20 years of age. It was a small proportion (0.8%) of the respondents that were 21 years old and above. The mean age was approximately 15 years. This result indicated that the respondents were mostly in their adolescent age. At this age bracket, the students have the capacity to learn new skills, venturesome, wisdom and are highly energetic (Akangbe, 2003). Similarly, the students can be influenced, through their participation in Young Farmers Club, to build lifelong relations, such as making friends, and learning new skills, which make a positive impact in the communities and the world, especially, in the field of agriculture (National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs, 2013; Wilkes, 2002).

Sex: Result in the table also showed that 42% of the members of Young Farmers Club were male while 58% were female. This result showed that there were more girls than boys in YFC. This contradicts a report by FAO (year???) that girls continue to be a minority among students at all levels, particularly in developing countries. The interest shown by the female students in YFC is a new dimension.

Household Size: Result of the study as shown in Table 2 indicated that 6.5% of the respondents belong to a family with an household size that ranged between 2 and 4 while 75.6% of the respondents belong to a family with an household size that ranged between 5 and 7. Small proportion (14.6%) of the students belonged to a family with a household size that ranged between 8 and10. The mean household size was 7 persons. The size of household had serious implications for the attainment of food security as many family labours are available to operate large farm size and adoption of innovation (Ahaibwe *et al*., 2013). The low number of household size available for farming might be due to the involvement of children in schooling as education at elementary stage is compulsory in most States in Nigeria.

Parental level of educational attainment: Furthermore, results shown in Table 2 indicated that 2.4% and 4.9% of the students' fathers lacked formal and only acquired adult education, respectively. However, 11.4% and 38% of the fathers had first school leaving certificate (Primary school education) and secondary school education, respectively. . In addition, about half (50.4%) of the respondents' fathers had tertiary education. In the same table, about half (49.6%) of the students' mothers were products of tertiary institutions. It could be inferred that possession of formal education by the parents of the students will provide appropriate platform for the students to be aware, and be guided in career goal aspirations and development. Indeed, families, parents and guardians in particular, play a significant role in the occupational aspirations and career goal development of their children (Jeffrey *et al.*, 2004). Without parental approval or support, students and young adults are often reluctant to pursue or explore diverse career possibilities. It is not out of place to allude that the education background of the parents (about half were products of tertiary institutions) might have influenced the support given to their children to participate in YFC, given the future prospects of agriculture in Nigeria.

Activities Performed by Young Farmers Club: Results shown in Table 5 indicated that crop production (100%) and poultry keeping (61.8%) were the key activities regularly undertaken by the YFC. Other activities that were reported to be organized by YFC included workshop on entrepreneurship (24.4%), seminar on agricultural production (24.4%), excursion to agricultural organization and progressive farmers' fields (24.4%). Majority (100.0%) reported that fish production was not part of the activities that was undertaken by the YFC. The involvement of students in these activities will provide information on the economic reward that may accompany these enterprises. Ugwuanyi (2001) explained that as a result of YFC in schools, other youth would be encouraged, motivated, trained through mentroing, indoctrinated and given special professional orientation for the purpose of providing succession and continuity in agricultural development, which address the sustainability of agricultural production.

Attitude towards YFC activities: Table 4 summarized the attitude of YFC members towards agriculture. The students reported high reduction of drudgery in crop production (Mean= 4.22). Drudgery was one of cogent scaring factors of youth in agricultural production. Activities such as weeding, land preparation, seed planting and harvesting are mechanized in many farms visited by the students during excursion to progressive farmers' fields. Similarly, organized workshop convinced the students of the profitability of agricultural venture (Mean= 2.83). In addition, Seminars has reduced tremendously the negative impression of the students towards agriculture as means of livelihood (Mean= 2.66). Excursion to progressive farmers convinced me that agriculture is not a profession for the poor (Mean = 2.88). The organized seminar provided a platform for cross fertilization of ideas. Superior argument from the student participants in the debate neutralized the negative impression about agriculture (Mean= 3.22) as a result of superior submissions by the student participants in the debate.

Constraints to Young Farmers Club activities

Evidence in Table 5 showed inadequate financial support from the school (Mean =

3.53), inadequate farm operating equipment support from the school authority (Mean = 3.52), students are incapacitated to pay their annual due on regular basis (Mean = 3.24), the school goes on vacation during the peak period of farming activities (Mean = 3.17), inadequate time to carry out the club activities (Mean = 3.12) were the major constraints hindering YFC activities. These agreed with the finding of Mbanaso, Ajayi, Ironkwe and Onunka (2013) which reported that lack of logistic support by government, negative attitude of government towards YFCs in secondary schools, lack of legislation backing up YFCs in secondary schools among others hinder YFC in schools.

Therefore, in order to establish a functional YFC in schools, these constraints should be noted and given appropriate attention. These constraints can be ameliorated by persuading the Parent Teacher Association and the Government to accept a uniform levy on all the agricultural students in the school for the operation of YFC activities. In addition, YFC could be made compulsory for every student offering agriculture as a subject.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was deduced that activities of YFC can influence the attitude of the students and expose them to the profitability of agricultural enterprises via the excursion to extension organizations. Members of YFC have learnt that agriculture is capable of providing gainful employment for the youths and that livestock production was a money spinner. Also the constraints hindering the activities of Young Famers Club inadequate financial support from the school, inadequate farm operating equipment support from the school authority, students are incapacitated to pay their annual due on regular basis and the school goes on vacation during the peak period of farming activities among others.

It is therefore recommended that membership of YFC should be made compulsory for all the students offering agriculture with payment of annual due along with the school fees. Also, organizations such as YFC should be promoted and supported at secondary school levels by the Government and NGOs so that YFC can continuously change students' negative impressions about agriculture more so that they are the potential store house for agricultural revolution through technology adoption such as best agronomic practices.

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Table 1: Population and sample selected for the study

Schools	Number of student members of YFC	Selection of 20% of the members
Odo-Ekun Secondary School	80	16
Waziri Senior Secondary School	150	30
Government Secondary School, Maraba	150	30
Unilorin Secondary School	150	30
Government Day Secondary School, Ilorin	83	17
Total number of members	613	123

Table 2: Socio-economic characteristics of young farmers' club

Age (years)	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
11-15	60	48.8
16-20	62	50.4
21 and above	1	0.8
Mean	**15**	
Sex		
Male		42.0
Female		58.0
Household size		
2-4	8	6.5
5-7	93	75.6
8-10	18	14.6
11-13	2	1.6
23-25	1	0.8
29 and above	1	0.8
Mean	**7**	
Parents' education		
	Father	**Mother**
Educational Level	**Frequency %**	**Freq. Percentage (%)**
No Formal Education	3 2.4	2 1.6
First School Leaving Certificate	14 11.4	12 9.8
Secondary School	38 30.9	44 35.8
Tertiary institution	62 50.4	61 49.6
Adult Education	6 4.9	4 3.3

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 3: Activities Performed by Young Farmers Club

Variables	Yes Frequency
Crop production	123
Organizing workshop for members	30
Seminar on agricultural production enterprises	30
Excursion to progressive farmers field	30
Excursion to agricultural organizations/Research Institute	30
Organized debate on agriculture as a means of sensitizing our members to appreciate agriculture as means of livelihood	59
Livestock production:	
Poultry	7 6
Sheep	
Goat	
Cattle	
Fish	
Rabbitry	
Cane rat rearing	

Source: Field survey, 2017

Table 4: Attitude of members of Young Farmers Club towards YFC activities

Attitudinal statements	SA Freq %	A Freq %	UD Freq %	D Freq %	SD Freq %	MS	Rank
Crop Production embarked on by the YFC showed high reduction of drudgery as farming operations such land clearing and cultivation, weed control and seed planting are mechanized.	52 (42.3)	59 (48.0)	3 (2.4)	6 (4.9)	3 (2.4)	4.22	1st
Organized Workshops for students exposed me to the profitability of agricultural enterprises	18 (14.6)	54 (43.9)	10 (8.1)	4 (3.3)	5 (4.1)	3.83	6th
Seminars that were organized by YFC reduced tremendously my negative impression about agriculture as a sustainable means of livelihood	20 (16.3)	46 (37.4)	4 (3.3)	11 (8.9)	9 (7.3)	3.71	7th
Excursion to Progressive Farmers Field convinced me that agriculture is not meant for the poor	49 (39.8)	19 (15.4)	3 (2.4)	5 (4.1)	14 (11.4)	2.88	5th
Excursion to Agricultural Organizations has convinced me that agriculture can provide gainful employment for the youths	57 (46.3)	23 (18.7)	4 (3.3)	1 (0.8)	4 (3.3)	3.	
The organized debate adequately changed my negative orientation towards farming	44 (35.8)	32 (26.0)	5 (4.1)	13 (10.6)	4 (3.3)	3.	
I am convinced that livestock production is a money spinner	31 (25.2)	45 (36.6)	10 (8.1)	13 (10.6)	7 (5.7)	3.	

Source: Field survey, 2018 Percentages in parentheses

Table 5: Constraints hindering the activities of Young Farmers Club

S/N	Constraints	Mean Score	Ranking
1	Inadequate Time to carry out club activities	3.12	5th
2	Inadequate financial support	3.53	1st
3	Inadequate farming equipment	3.52	2nd
4.	Incapacitated to pay annual due on regular basis	3.24	3rd
5	School on vacation during peak period of	3.17	4th

	farming		