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YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION PRACTICES IN SABON GARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KADUNA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The contributions of agriculture to farmers' income and rural development have been associated to depend on the active participation of youths who are the potential labour force. The study examined youth participation in improved agricultural production practices in Sabon Gari Local Government Area (LGA), Kaduna States. Using multistage sampling procedure, 90 youths from six wards in the LGA were selected. Structured questionnaire was employed for data collection. The study made use of primary data which were analysed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Findings of the study showed that majority (86.7%) of the youths were male, 94.4% had formal education, 77.8% did not belong to any cooperative society, with a mean age of 28 years, household size of 13 person and farming experience of 15.9 years. Results of regression analysis showed that farming experience (r=0.190) and membership of cooperative (r=0.582) positively influence youth participation in improved agricultural production practices. Farming which is the major occupation (-0.383) had negative relationship on youths' participation in improved agricultural production practices. Based on the information obtained from the study, it could be concluded that extension services is inadequate in the study area which consequently affects agricultural production. The study therefore, recommend that extension services that focus on youth programmes should be improved upon by both State and Local Government authorities in order to educate and stimulate youths' interest in agriculture.

Keywords: Awareness, constraints, improved-production, socioeconomics, participation, youth

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is an important sector in economic development and poverty alleviation drive of many developing countries including Nigeria. Globally, agriculture provides livelihoods for more people than any other industry and is seen as the largest employer of labour (CBN, 2021). The roles of the Nigerian agricultural sector include provision of food for the population. It provides income for the farming households as well as being a major source of foreign exchange earnings for the nation. An estimated 75% of the world's poor are from rural areas and most are involved in farming, an activity which requires sustenance, especially by the youth who are the leaders of tomorrow (World Bank, 2018). This is the generation which is expected to rise in the coming years for food production and food security (Proctor and Lucchese, 2012). Umeh and Odom (2011) asserted that, the contribution

of agriculture to farmers' income and rural development depends on the active participation of youth who are the potential labour force. Ajani *et al.,* (2015) pointed out that rural youths in Nigeria have the potentials needed to participate effectively in agricultural development. Oyekale (2011), opined that youths have great roles to play in agricultural development in Nigeria as they are considered to be the active working group. Youths are characterized by innovative behaviour, minimal risk aversion, less fear of failure, less conservativeness, greater physical strength and greater knowledge acquisition propensity.

Though youths have desirable qualities that can promote agriculture, most of them however, have strong apathy toward agriculture. The younger generation is not interested in farming even though they have been identified as constituting the major resource base in Nigeria (Aphunu and Natoma 2010). Unfortunately, the inability of the Federal Government to integrate youths into the mainstream of the numerous agricultural development programmes implemented over the years (Akpan, 2010) makes it even more difficult for them to explore their full potentials in agricultural production. Some of the major problems encountered by youths in agriculture also include lack of interest in agriculture as a result of drudgery in farm operations, poor competitive market for agricultural products, inadequate start-up capital and credit facilities, inadequate youths empowerment schemes from the government (Akpan, 2010), inadequate labour saving technologies for ease of operations, among others. As a result, they are faced with serious economic challenges which result in undue poverty and vulnerability (Ajani *et al.,* 2015). Muthee, (2010) also stated that youths are not largely involved in agricultural activities due to the fact that agriculture as a career choice is burdened with misconceptions, lack of information and awareness. The poor state of agricultural sector and low esteem associated with it has made youths to seek employment in other sectors of the economy in order to empower themselves economically. This has resulted in rural-urban migration, thereby leaving the bulk of agricultural production in the hands of the aged who often produce at a subsistence level leading to insufficient food for the country at large.

To address this, the Federal Government introduced various agricultural reforms in order to attract attention to the potentials of agriculture and ensure food security for the nation (Iwuchukwu & Igbokwe, 2012). Unfortunately, most of these programmes did not have specific roles for youth involvement in agriculture until 1986 when the military government introduced National Directorate of Employment (NDE). Other programmes such as People's Bank and the Community Banks were established in 1989 and 1990, respectively, to provide credit facilities to low income earners embarking on agricultural production and other micro enterprises, with special consideration for youth engaged in agricultural production. In 1992, the FADAMA (Hausa word for lowland farming) was initiated to enhance self-sufficiency in food production, reduce poverty, and create employment opportunities for youths in the rural areas (Ugwu and Kanu, 2012).

Reports indicate that 60% of the Nigerian population are youths (Emeh, 2012; Anyanwu, 2014), and defined as individuals between 15 and 35 years of age (Adesugba and Mavrotas 2016). Therefore, it can be asserted that the economy of Nigeria is a youthful one (Oviawe, 2010). Sadly, as the youth pop-

ulation grows, so does the unemployment rate. Okafor, (2011) observed that unemployment is a global trend, but occurs mostly in developing countries of the world, with attendant social, economic, political, and psychological consequences. According to (Asogwa *et al*., 2012), unemployment rate in Nigeria is growing at the rate of 16% per year with the youths impacted the most. Unemployment is a fundamental developmental challenge in Nigeria at the moment. Adesugba and Mavrotas (2016) reported that even though, the proportion of unemployed youths in Nigeria have decreased in recent times following the implementation of a remarkable number of job creation programmes targeted towards them, youth unemployment rate remains high thus implies more effort should be directed towards youth unemployment issue. At the center of all potential strategies to reduce youth unemployment stands the agricultural sector which continues to be the highest employer of labour in Nigeria and which also provides great prospect for job creation, particularly for young people (Munishi, *et al.,* 2017; Nyabam, *et al.,* 2018). Based on the huge employment potentials in the agriculture, there has been a growing commitment from the Nigerian government towards engaging youths in agriculture.

At state level, Kaduna State Government has implemented a number of empowerment programmes targeting youths and women in various farming techniques and providing them with farm implements and inputs. Such programmes include: Agricultural Enterprise and Rain-fed Agriculture; Subsidy Reinvestment programmes (SUREP), The Agro Processing, Productivity Enhancement and Livelihood Improvement Support (APPEALS), among others (Thisday, 2015). In view of the above, this paper was designed to examine the following objectives:

i. identify socio-economic characteristics of the youths in Sabon-gari Local Government Area.
ii. assess youths' awareness of improved agricultural production practices
iii. analyse factors affecting youth participation in agricultural production practices and
iv. identify constraints associated with youths' participation in improved agricultural production practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted in Sabon Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State which is located in Zaria, Kaduna State. It is bordered to the south by Tudun Wada Bridge, to the east by Zaria dam, to the west by Giwa Local Government Area and to the north by Kaduna-Kano express way. Sabon Gari Local Government Area comprises of eleven wards. The study area is located between latitude 11.11667°N, longtitude 7.73333°E (https://latittude.to>...>Nigeria) and has an annual rainfall of 1000-1250mm (Sufiyan *et al.,* 2013). Agriculture is the predominant occupation of the people.

Four stage sampling procedure was used in selecting the respondents for this study. The first stage involved purposive selection of Kaduna State since there is active participation of youths in improved agricultural practices in the State. The second stage involved purposive selection of Sabon-gari LGA. The local government is famous for high population of youths due to various educational institutions located in the area. The third stage involved random selection of six political wards namely: Bomo, Basawa, Jushi, Dogarawa, Chikaji and Muchiya were ran-

domly selected from the eleven wards. The fourth and final stage involved random selection of fifteen (15) youths each from the six wards. A total of ninety youths were involved in the study. Structured questionnaire was employed for data collection, Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis.
The multiple regression model is expressed as follows:

$Y = a+b_1x_1+b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + b_6x_6$
Where: Y = Youth Participation in improved agricultural production practices. Each improved production practice is arbitrary assigned a number.
Did not participate=0 Crops production=1, livestock=2, horticulture=3, beekeeping=4, processing=5 and irrigation farming=6.
X_1 = Gender, X_2 = Age (years), X_3 = Marital status, X_4 = Education, X_5 = Household size, X_6 = Farming experience, X_7 = Major occupation, X_8 = Membership of cooperative society, X_9 = Access to extension services, e = error term, a = constant, b_1-b_9 = Regression coefficient

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of the youths

Result on socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents show that 86.7% were male (Table 1). This may be due to differential access to resources between male and female. Finding is in tandem with Onuk *et al.,* (2010) that males had higher participation in agriculture than their female counterparts because of more access to productive resources. The age distribution of the youths revealed that 80.0% were within the age range of 18-29 years, with a mean age of 28.3 years. This age range is a time in their life, when they are very active and searching for job and would most likely choose agriculture as a business or employment if they are duly informed, guided or fully exposed to the diverse occupational opportunities in the field of agriculture. Finding is in agreement with Adaigho and Tibi (2018), who made emphasis on youths for community development.

More than half (57.8%) of the youths were single while 37.8% were married (Table 1). This indicates that majority of the youths that participated in the improved agricultural production practices are single. This implies that marriage is not a barrier to youth participation in agricultural production in community or business development activities. This study corroborates the finding of Matthews–Njoku and Ajaero (2007), where 56% and 44% of the respondents in their study area were single and married, respectively. Educationally, 94.4% of the youths had one form of formal education, out of which 42.2% each had tertiary and secondary education respectively (Table 1). Similarly, Agboola *et al.* (2015) asserts that attendance of formal schools and high level of literacy provide opportunity for enlightenment and exposure in various areas of life which encourages understanding and adoption of an innovation among young farmers. The ability to read and write could lead to high agricultural productivity.

The average household size of the youth was 13 persons (Table 1) which indicate that majority of them belong to a large family structure, hence the need to participate in income earning activities such as agriculture among others. An average farming experience of 15.9 years was obtained. This implies that the youths were experienced farmers. With many years of experience, youths will be able to make sound decisions as regards resources allocation and management of improved

agricultural production practices. About half (48.9%) of the respondents were involved in farming as their major occupation while 51.1% were involved in non-farm activities, 30.0% were traders and 21.1% were civil servants. This result points to the likelihood that youth engagement in agriculture as full time occupation is still low. It can also be inferred that youths are involved in income diversification. Income diversification reduces income uncertainty. The reduction in income uncertainty will open up opportunities to invest in improved production technologies for enhanced production.

About 55.6% of the respondents source their credit for agricultural production from personal savings (Table 1). Also, 24.4% get credit from family and friends, an indication that greater number of the youths has no access to external sources of income and as such relied mostly on informal sources of credit for their agricultural activities. The study is in line with Agboola *et al.,* (2015) who opines that inadequate access to credit will not allow farmers to use resources maximally and thus making them less efficient.

Table 1: Distribution of youths based on socio-economic characteristics (n=90)

Socioeconomic characteristics		Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Gender	Male	78	86.7	
	Female	12	13.3	
Age (years)	18-23	40	44.0	
	24-29	32	36.0	28.3
	30-35	18	20.0	
Marital status	Single	52	57.8	
	Married	34	37.8	
	Divorce	4	4.4	
Education	No formal education	5	5.6	
	Primary	9	10.0	
	Secondary	38	42.2	
	Tertiary	38	42.2	
Household size	3-8	36	38.0	
	9-14	28	28.0	13
	15-20	14	19.0	
	21-26	8	9.0	
	27-32	4	5.5	
Farming experience (year)	1- 7	64	71.1	
	8-14	20	22.2	15.9
	15-21	6	6.7	
Major occupation	Farming	44	48.9	
	Trading	27	30.0	
	Civil servant	19	21.1	
Sources of credit	Personal savings	50	55.6	
	Friends and family	22	24.4	
	Other sources	18	20.0	
Membership of cooperative	No	70	77.8	
	Yes	20	22.2	
Access to extension services	No	61	67.8	
	Yes	29	32.2	

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Majority (78.8) of the respondents do not belong to any cooperative society (Table 1). This indicates that the youth are mostly independent farmers that lack access to social capital such as information sharing, networking and training among others that could improve their agricultural activities. It is worthy of note that 67.8% of the youth lack access to extension services in the study area. Poor access to extension services may be attributed to limited number of extension agents in Nigeria.

Youths awareness of improved agricultural production practices

Awareness of a practice, be it production or otherwise precede adoption. Improved production practices on crops, livestock, horticulture, beekeeping, processing and irrigation farming has been promoted in the study area. Majority (74.4) of the youths were aware of improved agricultural production practices (Table 2). With this finding, it can be inferred that there is high level of awareness of agricultural innovation in the study area. Finding lend credence to Jirgi *et al.,* (2009) who reported that 78.0% of the respondents were aware of improved rice varieties. Abiodun *et al.,* (2018) also reported that majority of the maize farmers in their study area were aware of improved maize seed varieties.

Factors influencing youth participation in improved agricultural production practices

Three explanatory variables significantly influenced the participation of youth in improved agricultural production practices promoted in the study area (Table 3). These variables were farming experience, membership of cooperative society and major occupation. Farming experience (r= 0.190) and membership of cooperative society (r= 0.582) were significant at 5% and 1% level respectively and both positive. The positive influence implies that membership of cooperative society and years of farming experience (1%) enhances youth participation in improved agricultural production practices. These two variables thus conformed to *a priori* expectation. Years in farming is an important factor of managerial acumen. It can therefore be inferred that those youths that had been in farming for quite a long time are likely to know the accrue benefits of adopting new methods of farming than farmers with few years in farming. The estimated coefficients of major occupations (r= -0.383) was statistically significant at 5% level and negative (Table 3). With negative influence, it can be inferred that youth access to other occupational opportunities might is a disincentive to their choice of agriculture as a life-long occupation.

Table 2: Youth awareness of improved agricultural production practices

Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	67	74.4
No	23	25.6

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 3: Factors affecting youth participation in agricultural production

Variables	Standard error	Coefficient	t-value
Farming experience (years)	0.118	0.190	1.888*
Membership of cooperative	0.008	0.582	5.333***
Major occupation	0.113	-0.383	3.467**
Gender	0.042	0.026	0.272
Age	0.198	0.058	0.582
Marital status	0.018	-0.099	-0.976
Education	0.083	0.056	0.568
Household size	0.015	-0.081	-0.828
Access to extension services	0.000	0.000	-0.001

Source: Field Survey, 2015

R^2=0.609 Adjusted R^2=0.532 ***p<0.01 * p<0.10;

Major constraints affecting youth participation in improved agricultural production practices

Major constraints reported in Table 4 include inadequate capital (43.3%), lack of storage facilities and unaffordable inputs (28.9%). This implies that youths in study area would not be able to participate adequately in improved agricultural production practices which is in agreement with the assertion of Abiodun *et al.,* (2018), that lack of infrastructure and essential inputs also hinders youth's participation in agricultural and rural development activities.

Table 4: Distribution of youths based on Constraints limiting youths' active participation in agricultural production

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate capital	39	43.3
Lack of storage facilities and unaffordability of inputs	26	28.9
Diseases and weed infestation	12	13.3
Poor yield	8	8.9
Poor soil conditions	5	5.6

Source: Field Survey, 2015

CONCLUSION

From above discussion, youths in the study area through their participation in improved agricultural production practices can be regarded a good source of rural employment, income generation, and a means to mobilize other sectors of agriculture for increased productivity. Conclusively, youths are in a position to be among the stable and long-time contributors that can help guide the development process. Youths often represent a fast, stable and untapped resource for immediate and long-term development effort in any given community. The youths are therefore, essential human force in the development of their respective communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Bases on conclusion, it is recommended that, extension services with focus on youth programmes should be improved upon in the study area by both State and Local Government authorities in order to educate and stimulate youths' interest in agriculture. Youths who are members of cooperative societies should encourage others to join them to be able to solicit for external supports which can be in cash (fund) and in-kind (farm inputs and facilities), from government, Non-Government Agencies and philanthropies within and outside their host communities. This will encourage youths to view agriculture as a lucrative and profitable enterprise.

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