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AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF CAREER PROSPECTS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT BROADCASTING

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ABSTRACT

Rural development broadcasting is crucial in the dissemination of improved technology and sustained livelihood among rural dwellers. Agricultural extension students are positioned to become future rural development broadcasters. Hence, the study examined agricultural extension students' perception on career prospects in rural development broadcasting. The study was carried out in the University of Ibadan, Oyo state. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of 170 respondents. Data were collected with the aid of structured questionnaire. Data analysis was done using chi-square and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The results showed that most of the respondents were male (51.8%), single (60.0%) with an average age of 32 years. Poor funding of agriculture by government ($\bar{x} = 1.64$), inadequate sponsorship in agricultural broadcasting ($\bar{x} = 1.58$), uncertainty of job availability in rural broadcasting ($\bar{x} = 1.56$) and poor awareness on career prospects in rural development broadcasting ($\bar{x} = 1.54$) were major constraints to students taking up career prospects in rural development broadcasting. Most (55.0%) of the respondents had favourable disposition towards career prospects in rural development broadcasting. Respondents' age ($r = -0.342$, $p \leq 0.05$), membership of campus press organisations ($\chi^2 = 0.650$, $p \leq 0.05$) and constraints to career prospects in rural development broadcasting ($r = -0.238$, $p \leq 0.05$) were significantly related to students' perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting. Efforts should be made by various stakeholders in increasing the awareness of students on the career prospects of rural development broadcasting.

Keywords: Career prospects, rural development broadcasting, agricultural extension students

INTRODUCTION

The development of any nation can be hardly achieved without a corresponding development of its rural sector. This is because an estimated eighty percent of the world's poor are rural and are mostly involved in farming (World Bank, 2017). In addition, it is in the rural areas that the population is still growing at a higher rate amidst poor social and economic infrastructure support (Msoffe, 2009).

According to Akpabio (2005), agriculture has been described as the mainstay of economic growth in Africa. It is the single largest contributor to the wellbeing of the rural poor in Nigeria, sustaining a large proportion of the rural and total labour force. With their great potentials, no serious, active, conscious, sensitive, and organised government would want to neglect rural communities, as its lack of development results in the overall poor development of the country. The rural area is crucial because food is grown there to feed the whole nation while droughts, diseases and infestations to crops are first felt there. Even research that is meant for better farming practices is tested there.

However, the nature of life in most rural communities is that of a subsistence manner. The communities need basic life necessities, like food, shelter and clothing which are all mainly gotten from agriculture. It is therefore important that the agricultural sector be developed in order to develop the rural areas. Since information dissemination is crucial in the bid to achieve this objective, effective and efficient means of rural information dissemination must be deployed. A cost effective means of achieving this end is broadcasting.

According to Onabajo (2000), broadcasting involves the transmission of information through radio waves from a radio or television station, to the audience in far and near places, through their receivers, which help in decoding such information. Similarly, it entails the dissemination of information by an organisation (radio or television station) to a large, widely dispersed heterogeneous audience through their radio or television receivers. Over time, broadcasting has been found to be a powerful and effective medium for widespread education in rural areas. Iyer (2011) avers that rural broadcasting imparts knowledge of new technologies to rural dwellers, helps them improve their earnings and increase development. Several scholars have conceptualised rural broadcasting in different ways. For instance, Nwanne (2013) views rural broadcasting as concerted and integrated efforts to convey to rural dwellers information that would help them attain a better life in all ramifications. Also, Kumar (2003) identifies rural broadcasting as an avenue for participatory communication and as a tool relevant in both economic and social development while Chapman *et.al* (2003) opine that rural broadcasting provides a set of participatory communication techniques that support agricultural extension efforts by using local languages to communicate directly with farmers and listener groups.

Rural broadcasting therefore, represents one of the best ways of reaching the rural people with development messages. It can also be referred to as rural development broadcasting. The rationale behind rural development broadcasting is to ensure that development oriented messages are communicated to the rural people. The use of the



mass media to reach large farm audiences have for long been an essential component of agricultural communication in Nigeria. This is particularly more important in these times of declining number of village extension agents who are mostly employed by the government.

In Nigeria, the broadcasting industry is liberalised and have a high number of sponsored broadcasts in relation to public service broadcasts. Therefore, the sponsors as well as the broadcasters are crucial in determining the messages that will eventually be disseminated to the audience. The broadcaster is even more important because of their role in designing the message and searching for potential sponsors of such messages. Considering this gate keeping role of the broadcasters in the information dissemination model, graduates of agricultural extension should ordinarily step in to fill the existing gap by exploiting the opportunities provided by the broadcast media to improve agriculture and the rural areas. Moreover, considering the unemployment situation in Nigeria especially in the formal sector of the agricultural industry, there is the need to research into the possibility of creating jobs for the numerous agricultural extension graduates being turned out of Nigeria's tertiary institutions yearly and at the same time solving the existing problem of agricultural information deficit. This is highly ingenious but could only be achieved if the potential agricultural extension graduates are inclined to take up the challenge. It is therefore important to ascertain the willingness of these students by researching into their perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting. Specifically, the study was designed to:

1. describe the personal characteristics of respondents,
2. identify the constraints to students' career interest in rural development broadcasting;
3. examine the relationship between the personal characteristics of the students and perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting and;
4. ascertain the relationship between constraints to students' career interest in rural development broadcasting and perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out at the University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The University of Ibadan was established in 1948. It is located in the northern part of the Ibadan metropolis, some eight kilometres from the traditional centre of Oja Oba and Mapo. The University's Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development was established in 1976 and is considered as the flagship of Agricultural

Extension teaching and research in Nigeria. The University is surrounded by a large number of broadcast media houses including the oldest radio and television houses in Africa. It also has its own radio station known as Diamond 101.1 FM.

The population of the study consisted of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development students of the University of Ibadan in the 2013/14 academic session. The data used for the study were obtained from primary source through the use of a well-structured questionnaire. Students in the final year undergraduate (500 level), Masters of Science (M.Sc.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) classes were purposively selected due to their potential readiness for the labour market. Sixty percent (60%) of students in each of the classes (17 out of 29 in 500L, 83 out of 138 in M.Sc. and 70 in Ph.D) were randomly selected to give a total number of one hundred and seventy (170) respondents. Descriptive tools such as frequency counts and percentages were used in making sense out of the data, while inferential statistical tools like chi-square and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to further analyse the data collected.

Constraints to students' career interest in rural development broadcasting was measured by asking respondents to tick from a list of factors that could mitigate against their career interest in rural development broadcasting using a 3 – point scale of not a constraint scored 0, minor constraint, 1 and major constraint, 2. Using a benchmark of 1, factors with mean scores of 1 and above are considered serious constraining factors.

Perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting was measured by using 30 attitudinal statements rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Positive statements were scored as Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1 while, it was reversed for negative statements. The expected maximum score was 150 while the minimum score was 30. The mean score of 130.6 was used to categorise the respondents into favourable and unfavourable perception scores such that scores above 130.6 were considered favourable and those below, unfavourable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' personal characteristics

The results in Table 1 show that more than half of the respondents (51.8%) were male, which implies that gender balance is gradually being achieved in the field of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development when compared with the findings of Oladeji and Thomas (2010) that across universities, the ratio of male to female respondents is skewed toward the male. This could also be as a result of the laborious nature of agricultural operations which are very tedious for the female to

handle. Hence, the commonly held notion that agriculture is mainly for males because of the drudgery associated with it (Agbebaku, 2004) no longer holds. The mean age was 31.8 years, an indication that the presence of a mature and vibrant group of people who are ripe for the employment market and will be interested in available career opportunities. The majority (60.0%) of the respondents were single. This is expected as a large number of them are unemployed students who do not have the means to sustain a family yet. The modal level of study was M.Sc. (64.7%) which emphasises the role of the University of Ibadan as a postgraduate institution. Furthermore, the level of

education is sufficient enough to enhance rural broadcasting in line with the assertions of Badiru (2013) that high educational attainment, if properly channelled, could be a great potential for turning the rural development broadcasting sector around. The result further shows that a few (2.9%) were members of press organisations. This is quite discouraging as membership of press organisations could enlighten and thus, predispose the respondents to nursing a career ambition in rural development broadcasting. The fact that press organisations are usually for undergraduate students may also be responsible for this.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by personal characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Age		
Less or equal to 25	34	20.0
26-30	62	36.5
31-35	27	15.9
36-40	21	12.4
Above 40	26	15.3
Sex		
Male	88	51.8
Female	82	48.2
Marital status		
Single	102	60.0
Married	68	40.0
Level of study		
500 level	23	13.5
MSc	110	64.7
PhD	37	21.8
Membership of campus press organisations		
Not a member	165	93.5
Member	5	2.9

Respondents' perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting

Results in Tables 2 and 3 show that agricultural extension students had favourable disposition towards taking up rural development broadcasting as careers. Specifically, Table 2 shows that they responded positively to most of the issues raised in respect of their perception of the career prospects of rural development broadcasting. For instance, most of the respondents (87.7%), perceived that agricultural extension graduates can become producers of agricultural broadcasts, another 87.1% felt that the services of rural development broadcasters are needed in the broadcasting industry, while a dominant proportion (78.2%) believed that agricultural extension graduates can work as editors in the media houses. Furthermore, most respondents (75.9%), also opined that graduates of agricultural extension and rural development can work as freelance

broadcasters and the majority (72.9%) also perceived that graduates of agricultural extension can become agricultural broadcasters. This overwhelming favourable disposition could be as a result of the students' exposure to theoretical and practical courses on communication, which might have predisposed them to the career prospects.

Overall, Table 3 shows that a larger proportion of the respondents (55.0%) were favourably disposed to career prospects in rural development broadcasting. This is an indication that many of the students were ready to pursue careers in rural development broadcasting if the environment is conducive enough. However, the fact that a considerable proportion (45%) had unfavourable disposition to taking up rural development broadcasting as a career suggests that more needs to be done in enhancing students' interests as regards to career prospects in rural development broadcasting in the study area.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on their perception of the career prospects of rural development broadcasting**

Perception statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
Having background in agricultural science makes one capable of becoming a rural development broadcaster.	32.9	32.4	8.2	18.8	7.6
Different disciplines in agricultural science always need rural development broadcasters to showcase their findings.	37.6	45.9	9.4	5.9	1.2
Agricultural science graduates don't have ability to work as editors in the media industry.	4.7	14.1	21.2	44.7	15.3
Rural Development Broadcasters' work is needed in a media.	40.0	47.1	11.2	1.8	0.0
I can go extra mile to take rural development broadcasting as career.	18.8	31.8	32.9	14.1	2.4
Rural development broadcasting is not needed in the transfer of information from research to farmers.	2.9	6.5	4.1	42.4	44.1
It is not necessary for a rural development broadcaster to have a background in agricultural science.	5.3	21.2	10.0	40.0	23.5
Agricultural science graduates can work as editors in the media industry.	24.7	53.5	14.7	6.5	0.6
Agricultural science graduates can become producers of agricultural programmes.	46.5	41.2	7.6	3.5	1.2
Rural development broadcasters are not needed by different discipline of agriculture science to showcase their findings.	3.0	20.0	8.2	34.7	34.1
The services of rural development broadcasters are not relevant in the media industry.	4.1	4.7	10.0	45.9	35.3
Agricultural science graduates cannot work as producers of agricultural programmes.	3.5	8.2	4.7	31.8	51.8
Rural development broadcasting remains relevant in the transfer of information from research to farmers.	53.5	43.5	0.6	1.8	0.6
Rural development broadcasters' efforts promote general rural development.	0.6	44.7	47.1	7.1	0.6
Agricultural science graduates can work as rural development broadcasts scriptwriters.	40.6	42.9	14.1	1.8	0.6
Rural development broadcasting is a means of providing service to the rural community.	44.1	48.2	6.5	1.2	0.0
Rural development broadcasters' efforts promotes sustainable production.	35.9	55.9	5.3	2.4	0.6
I can't take extra courses to possess the skills to become a rural development broadcaster.	10.6	8.2	24.7	37.1	19.4
Rural development broadcasters' efforts don't have any significant effect on rural development.	5.9	7.1	7.6	38.2	41.2
A graduate of agricultural extension and rural development can become agricultural broadcaster.	12.9	60.0	18.2	7.1	1.8
I like rural development broadcasting as a career.	24.7	41.2	25.9	8.2	0.0
Graduates of agriculture can work as freelance broadcasters.	18.8	57.1	18.8	4.7	0.6
Graduates of agriculture cannot work as advertisers.	9.4	14.7	14.7	42.4	18.8
Agriculture science graduates don't have the ability to work as rural development broadcasts scriptwriters.	5.9	10.6	14.1	42.4	27.1
I don't like rural development broadcasting as a career.	3.5	9.4	30.0	35.9	21.2
Graduates of Agriculture can work as advertisers.	20.0	56.5	14.1	8.2	1.2
Graduates of agriculture don't have the ability to work as freelance broadcasters.	2.9	11.2	19.4	50.0	16.5
Rural development broadcasting helps to reduce poverty in rural areas.	22.4	58.8	7.6	8.2	2.9
Rural development broadcasters can only work as a full time staff.	7.6	12.4	23.5	45.9	10.6
A graduate of agricultural extension and rural development cannot become agricultural broadcaster.	4.1	9.4	6.5	42.4	37.6

Table 3: Categorisation of the respondents' perception of the career prospect in rural development broadcasting

Category	Freq.	%	Mean	Standard deviation
Unfavourable 99 – 130.5	77	45.0	130.6	12.3
Favourable 130.6 – 150	93	55.0		

Constraints to students' career interest in rural development broadcasting

The most prominent constraint to students' interest in rural development broadcasting as a career according to Table 4 was that of poor funding of agriculture by government ($\bar{x} = 1.64$). As a result of this, agriculture is not featured prominently in the media and is rarely portrayed glamorously when featured. This finding is in line with Umeh and Odom (2011) that poor funding of agriculture by the government has led to a decline in the number of youth in agriculture. Another major constraint was lack of continuity in agricultural or rural development broadcasts due to inadequate sponsorship ($\bar{x} = 1.58$). This is not surprising as most sponsors are profit oriented and as such may not be willing to invest in rural development broadcasts compared to sports and entertainment which are considered to have more

potential audience, hence, greater sources of profit. This finding is in accordance with Badiru and Adekoya (2014) that rural development broadcasts are mostly sponsored by the public sector which renders their sponsorship unsustainable. Uncertainty of available jobs in the media ($\bar{x} = 1.56$) and poor awareness of the career prospects in rural development broadcasting ($\bar{x} = 1.54$) were other major constraints to taking up career in rural development broadcasting among graduates of agricultural extension and rural development. These are indicators that most people are still left in the dark regarding the career prospects and opportunities inherent in rural development broadcasting. This finding is consistent with Arnold and Place (2010) that extension continues to be the "best kept secret" and lacks recognition among students.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by constraints to interest in taking rural development broadcasting as a career

Constraints	Not a constraint	Minor constraint	Major constraint	Mean
Poor awareness of the career prospects in rural in rural broadcasting	6.5	32.9	60.6	1.54
Perceived poor educational background in broadcasting	8.8	50.0	41.2	1.32
Unattractive salary of rural development broadcasters	5.9	37.1	57.1	1.51
Uncertainty of job availability in rural development broadcasting	7.1	30.6	62.4	1.56
Lack of continuity due to inadequate sponsors	5.9	30.0	64.1	1.58
Poor recognition of rural development by government	7.6	33.5	58.8	1.51
Poor funding of agriculture by government	6.5	22.9	70.6	1.64

Relationship between selected personal characteristics and respondents' perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting

Table 5 shows that there was a significant relationship between age and students' perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting ($r = -0.342$, $p \leq 0.05$). This is an indication that age has influence on individuals' disposition toward taking up career in rural development broadcasting. It suggests that younger graduates are more inclined to taking up career in

rural development broadcasting than the older ones. Similarly, the Table reveals a significant relationship between membership in campus press organisations and students' perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting ($\chi^2 = 0.650$, $p \leq 0.05$). This is expected to influence students' disposition towards taking up career in rural development broadcast as exposure to campus press activities could broaden their horizon and facilitate the acquisition of requisite skills in broadcasting among the students.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis showing the relationship between respondents' selected personal characteristics and perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting

Variable	r-value	P-value	Decision	
Age	-0.342	0.024	Significant	
Characteristics	Chi-square value	df	p-value	Decision
Membership of campus press organisation	0.650	1	0.040	Significant



Relationship between constraints to students' interest and perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting

Table 6 reveals that there was a significant relationship ($r=-0.238$, $p\leq 0.05$) between constraints to students' interest in taking rural development broadcasting as a career and perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting. It thus

means the higher the constraints, the less perceived prospects of a career in rural development broadcasting among young graduates. This further suggests that the challenges militating against students' interest in rural broadcasting could discourage them from taking up career in rural development broadcast.

Table 6: Relationship between constraint to students' interest and perception of career prospects in rural development broadcasting

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision
Constraints vs. perception	-0.238	0.002	Significant

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Agricultural extension students of the University of Ibadan were favourably disposed to career opportunities in rural development broadcasting. However, poor funding of agriculture by government, lack of continuity in agricultural or rural development broadcast due to inadequate sponsorship, uncertainty of available jobs in the media and poor awareness of the career prospects in rural development broadcasting were major challenges militating against the actualisation of this potential. Meanwhile, students' age and membership of campus press organisations as well as the highlighted constraints to rural development broadcasting all influenced students' dispositions towards taking up career opportunities in rural development broadcasting. Hence, it is recommended that genuine definition of the career pathways in rural development broadcasting is essential in eliminating uncertainties in rural development broadcasting and lack of readiness to make decision on the part of the students. In addition, government should increase its funding of agriculture in general, while appropriate mechanisms should be put in place by all stakeholders to enhance the sponsorship of rural development broadcasts by both governmental and non-governmental agencies.

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