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YOUTH CORP MEMBERS' PERCEPTION OF AGRIPRENEURSHIP IN OYO AND OSUN STATE

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the perception of NYSC members in Oyo and Osun States towards involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 185 serving corps members that belong to agro-allied Skill Acquisition Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) group from two Local Governments Areas (LGAs) each from the selected States. Quantitative data were collected on the respondents' socioeconomic characteristics; major agricultural enterprises they were involved in and the agripreneurial characteristics they possessed using semi structured questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive (frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviation) and Inferential (Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Chi-square) statistics. Results showed that respondents had a mean age of 26 years, 85.4% were single and 75.7% were not graduates of agriculture. Commitment (\bar{x} = 3.50), innovativeness (\bar{x} = 3.47), initiative (\bar{x} = 3.45) and creativity (\bar{x} = 3.39) were the major agripreneurial characteristics possessed by the respondents. Respondents were involved in different agricultural enterprises of their choices namely poultry (7.6%), crop farming (6.5%), fish farming (6.5 %), vegetable farming (5.9%), Snail farming (1.1 %). Most (61.1%) of the respondents had a positive perception about youth involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship. Further result showed that there was no significant relationship between the respondents' perception towards involvement in agripreneurship and their age, household size, years of practical agricultural experience, cosmopolitaness and income. Majority (61.1%) of the respondents had a positive perception about youth involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship. It was concluded from the study that majority of the corps members in the study areas were favourably disposed towards involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship. Based on the findings, it is therefore recommended that any agricultural entrepreneurship programme for corps members should focus on all agricultural enterprises to further boost their potentials in being successful agripreneurs. Corps members should be availed the opportunity of agricultural entrepreneurship training programme with a view to further enhancing their agripreneurial characteristics

Keywords: Agriculture entrepreneurship, serving corps members, agripreneurial characteristics, agro- allied SAED

INTRODUCTION

In the Nigerian context, youth corps refer to individuals that are being churned out of the tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics and college of education; having successfully completed their specified courses, and then are being posted to different parts of the country for a compulsory one year National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme. In relation to the findings of Abiodun (2010), the large number of tertiary institutions and increased graduate turnout, plagued with the issues of unemployment coupled with their attendant consequences (increased crime rate, unfulfilled dreams, and suicide among others) are posing a great challenge to many developing countries of which Nigeria is one. A possible way to reduce the menace of unemployment is the involvement of youth corps in agripreneurship. Agripreneurship refers to entrepreneurship opportunities within the agricultural sector.

Agripreneurship is not an attractive career, therefore it is seen as the employment of last resort (John *et al.*, 2012). The youth perceive agricultural sector as not being a viable enterprise initiative which may be due to low income returns. The study conducted in Delta State, Nigeria revealed that the youth view agriculture as a job for the less privileged in the society and meant for the aged (Aphunu, 2010). The perception that agriculture is

a low income enterprise may be due to the fact that most youth are not yet or fully involved in agricultural enterprises.

It is therefore necessary to examine the perception of graduate youth towards involvement in agripreneurship in Oyo and Osun States, Nigeria; hence, the need for this study.

The main objective of this study was to examine the perception of youth corps towards agricultural entrepreneurship in Oyo and Osun States, Nigeria. It specifically described the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents; identified the major agricultural enterprises they were involved in, examined the perception of youth corps towards involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship and examined the agripreneurial characteristics possessed by the respondents.

The hypothesis of the study; There is no significant relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the graduate youths and their perception about agripreneurship.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Oyo and Osun States, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents for the study. At the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select two zones each from Oyo (Ibadan North and Oyo zones) and Osun

(Ilesha and Ife zones) States based on the presence of agro-allied training centres making a total of four zones. At the second stage, one Local Government Area (LGA) was purposively selected from each of the four zones based on the presence of agro-allied training centres making a total of four LGAs. From each of the selected zones, Ibadan North and Oyo East LGAs were selected from Oyo State while Ife East and Ilesha East LGAs were selected from Osun State. At the third stage, purposive sampling technique was also used to select one functioning agro-allied SAED training centre from each of the selected LGAs making a total of four training centres. At the final stage, proportionate sampling technique was used to select 60% of the total three hundred and six (306) serving corps members of the agro-allied SAED group in the 2018 Batch "A" to give a total of 185 respondents for the study. Duly pretested and validated semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data from the respondents. Descriptive statistics used include frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviation were used to summarise the data while Pearson Product Moment Correlation and chi-square analyses were to test the stated hypotheses and draw inferences on the hypothesis.

Measurement of variables

The dependent variable for the study is serving corps members' perception about agribusiness. A combination of ten positive and ten negative perceptual statements that relates to agribusiness were listed and measured on a 4 points Likert-type scale. The perception of the respondents were indicated and scored as follows: Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point) for positive perceptual statements and vice versa for the negative statements. The maximum attainable score for the positive statements was 80 points while the minimum attainable score was 20 points. Equal interval of the total perceptual score was used for the categorization into negative, indifferent and positive perception. On agribusiness characteristics, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they possess selected agribusiness characteristics such as innovativeness, risk tolerance, commitment, result oriented, planning ability, prudence, team work, multitasking ability, creativity, vision, initiative and customer centric. Responses were scored based on five point Likert type scale as follows: very much (4 points), much (3 points), little (2 points), very little (1 point) and not at all (0 point). The mean scores for each agribusiness characteristics was calculated and used to rank the agribusiness characteristics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic characteristics

Table 1 reveals that most (60.0%) of the respondents were males. This implies that more male corps members showed interest in agricultural entrepreneurship in the study area. This might be due to the fact that most of the activities embedded in agricultural entrepreneurship are often considered as being strenuous and laborious. Most (62.7%) of the respondents were 26 years and above with a mean age of 26.18 ± 2.74 years. This indicates that most of the respondents were in their active ages and still have strength for agribusiness activities and are consequently potential future agribusinesses. Majority (71.4%) of the respondents practiced Christianity, and 28.1 percent practiced Islam. The finding indicated that Christianity was the dominant religion among the respondents and that religion was not a barrier to being involved in agricultural entrepreneurship. This corroborates the finding of Ayoade (2013) that majority of people involved in agriculture in Southwestern Nigeria were Christians. More than half (57.8%) of the respondents were Yorubas, 17.8 percent were Igbos, 15.1 percent were Hausas while the remaining 9.2 percent of the respondents belonged to other ethnic groups such as Igala, Ijaw, Isoko among others. The fact that many of the corps members that belonged to agro-allied SAED group were Yorubas implies that many youths are now serving within their catchment area which is not in line with one of core vision of NYSC which was to foster intercultural mix of youths from different ethnic groups. However, this could be as a result of frequent political and ethno-religious crises/conflict which has characterized many parts of Nigeria which necessitate most corps members being posted to their catchment areas. The results in Table 1 also show that majority (85.4 %) of the respondents were single while 14.6 % were married. This implies that youth's interest in agricultural enterprises could be very high while they are still single and able to concentrate on their enterprises without distractions arising from marriage responsibilities. This is in line with Chikezie *et al.* (2012) and Ogunremi *et al.* (2012) that unmarried people had latent energy in them to go into entrepreneurship training without distraction from family members. Majority (69.7%) of the respondents had acquired practical agricultural experiences in one way or the other before the service year while the remaining 30.3 percent did not. Majority (70.3%) of the respondents had bachelor's degree, 25.4 percent had Higher National Diploma (HND) while 3.2 percent had master degree. The finding reveals that educated youths were becoming more interested in agriculture more than before and indicates that the illiteracy level among the people involved in agriculture will reduce with time. This is against Adeogun and Agbeniyi (2011) who reported that

agricultural enterprise was dominated with those

who had either non-formal or primary education.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their socioeconomic characteristics, n = 185

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
Sex				
Male	111	60		
Female	74	40		
Age				
≤ 20	5	2.7		
21 – 25	64	34.6	26.18	2.74
26+	116	62.7		
Religion				
Christianity	132	71.4		
Islam	52	28.1		
Traditional belief	1	0.5		
Ethnic group				
Yoruba	107	57.8		
Igbo	33	17.8		
Hausa	28	15.1		
Others	17	9.2		
Marital status				
Single	158	85.4		
Married	27	14.6		
Practical agricultural experience before NYSC				
No	56	30.3		
Yes	129	69.7		
Years of agricultural experience				
≤ 5	32	17.3		
6 – 10	138	74.6	8.73	4.51
11 - 15	9	4.9		
16+	6	3.2		
Academic field				
Graduates of agriculture	45	24.3		
Non graduates of agriculture	140	75.7		
Educational qualification				
HND	47	25.4		
Bachelor degree	132	71.4		
Master degree	6	3.2		

Source: Field survey, 2018

This implies that the higher percentage of the respondents who had agricultural experience before being posted for NYSC stand the greater chance of taking up career opportunities in agricultural sector. The results in Table 1 also show that most (76.6%) of the respondents had between 6-10 years of experience in agricultural activities, 17.3 percent had less than or equal to 5 years of agricultural practice, 4.9 percent had between 11-15 years while 3.2 percent had above 16 years of experience. The finding of Hudu *et al.*, (2014) that stated that more than half of youths that take up career opportunities in agriculture have had practical agriculture experience at one time or the other affirms the finding of this study. The mean year of experience was 8.73 ± 4.51 years implying that respondents had fairly long experience which could enhance their interests in becoming agripreneurs. Most (75.7%) of the respondents

were not graduates of agriculture while 24.3 percent were graduates of agriculture. This invariably implies that being a graduate of agriculture does not guarantee that one will take up career opportunities in agricultural enterprises. It is a matter of the perception of the graduate youths and interest to be involved in agricultural entrepreneurship. The finding affirms that of Kenneth *et al.* (2013) that majority of the youths that were involved in agricultural enterprises were non - graduates of agriculture.

Involvement in agricultural enterprises by the serving Corp members

Table 2 reveals that (38.4%) of the respondents were already involved in different agricultural enterprises of their choice even as corps members while (61.6%) were not engaged in any agricultural enterprise.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on present involvement in agricultural enterprises and specific enterprises engaged in, n = 185

Involvement in agricultural enterprise	Frequency	Percentage
No	114	61.6
Yes	71	38.4
Specific enterprises engaged in		
Poultry	14	7.6
Fish farming	12	6.5
Crop farming	12	6.5
Vegetable farming	11	5.9
Honey production	11	5.9
Animal production	5	2.7
Locust beans production	3	1.6
Snail farming	2	1.1
Cocoa production	1	0.5

Source: Field survey, 2018

Respondents who were already engaged in agricultural enterprises indicated poultry (7.6 %), fish farming (6.5%), honey production (5.9%), vegetable farming (5.9%), locust beans production (1.6%), snail farming (1.1%) and cocoa farming (0.5%) as their choice enterprises. This finding corroborates that of Hudu *et al.* (2014) that crop farming, livestock and poultry enterprises were the most preferred agricultural enterprises of youths.

Agripreneurial characteristics possessed by the respondents

The results in Table 3 show the rank distribution of agripreneurial characteristics possessed by the respondents. The findings show that commitment (\bar{x} =3.50) ranked highest among the agripreneurial characteristics that respondents identified they possessed, followed by innovativeness (\bar{x} = 3.47) initiative (\bar{x} = 3.45), creativity (\bar{x} = 3.39), vision(\bar{x} = 3.36), planning ability(\bar{x} = 3.26)and team work (\bar{x} = 3.25).

Table 3: Rank of agripreneurial characteristics possessed by the respondents n = 185

Characteristics	\bar{x}	Standard deviation	Rank
Commitment	3.50	0.76	1 st
Innovativeness	3.47	0.81	2 nd
Initiative	3.45	0.80	3 rd
Creativity	3.39	0.77	4 th
Vision	3.36	0.76	5 th
Planning ability	3.26	0.81	6 th
Team work	3.25	0.93	7 th
Result oriented	3.24	0.85	8 th
Risk tolerance	3.15	0.79	9 th
Multitasking ability	3.10	0.87	10 th
Prudency	3.06	0.83	11 th
Customer centric	3.06	0.99	12 th

Grand mean score = 3.27, Standard deviation = 0.83, \bar{x} = mean

Source: Field survey, 2018

Comparing the grand mean score of 3.27 with each of the individual means, it can be deduced that the respondents had high commitment, innovativeness, initiative, creativity and vision whereas they had low planning ability, team work, result oriented, risk tolerance, multitasking ability, prudency and customer centric. This finding corroborates the reports of Alabi and Farinde (2012) who posited that persistence and commitment were the major entrepreneurial characteristics possessed by entrepreneurs in Osun state.

Perception of respondents towards involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship

The results in Table 4 show the percentages of Likert scale scores for a set of perceptual statements which were responded to by corps members in agro-allied SAED group. More than half of the respondents strongly agreed to the perceptual statements such as engaging in agricultural entrepreneurial activities would help reduce rate of unemployment among youths (71.4%), agricultural entrepreneurship is a way to reduce poverty and hunger (65.4%) and agricultural

entrepreneurship is not just profit oriented but enhances creativity (62.2%) among others.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents' perception towards involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship, n = 185

Perception statements	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Engaging in agricultural entrepreneurial activities would help reduce rate of unemployment among youths	71.4	24.9	2.7	1.1
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a way to reduce poverty and hunger	65.4	29.2	4.3	1.1
Agricultural entrepreneurship is not just profit oriented but enhances creativity	62.2	32.4	3.8	1.6
Agricultural entrepreneurship will make it possible for agricultural product to be available for potential end-users	59.5	36.8	1.6	2.2
Opportunities in agricultural entrepreneurship are unlimited	53.0	40.5	4.9	1.6
Agricultural entrepreneurship strengthens the link between agricultural stakeholders	48.1	39.5	8.6	3.8
Agricultural entrepreneurship is lucrative	49.7	34.1	13.0	3.2
Agriculture is an enterprise for both gender	55.7	24.3	8.6	11.4
Agricultural entrepreneurship in Nigeria has a lot of untapped potential	47.0	36.8	9.7	6.5
Agriculture is a gender specific enterprise	51.4	19.5	11.4	17.8
Only agricultural graduates should be involved in agripreneurship	53.0	13.5	18.4	15.1
Agricultural entrepreneurship cannot increase the standard of living of agripreneurs	51.9	15.7	16.2	16.2
Agricultural entrepreneurship does not benefit youths	50.3	18.9	12.4	18.4
Agricultural entrepreneurship should be practiced by those who are non-literates	49.2	14.1	21.1	15.7
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a poor man's option	43.2	20.0	20.5	16.2
Agricultural entrepreneurship as a career reduces one's social status				
There is no steady employment in agricultural entrepreneurship	16.8	27.0	34.1	22.2
Agricultural entrepreneurship is a less risk business enterprise in Nigeria	35.1	27.0	20.5	17.3
Participation in agricultural enterprises is labourious	17.8	20.5	38.9	22.7
Agricultural entrepreneurship is highly capital intensive	17.3	21.6	27.6	33.5

F= Frequency, %= Percentage: SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

Rating scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4= Strongly Agree

Source: Field survey, 2018

Further analysis was carried out to rate the respondents' perception as negative, indifferent or positive using the total perceptual score. Result in Table 5 shows that most (61.1%) of the graduate youth had a positive perception, 37.3% were indifferent while the remaining 1.6% had a

negative perception about agripreneurship. In other words, majority of the serving corps members in the study areas were favourably disposed towards agripreneurship. The perception of respondents towards agripreneurship would most likely affect their involvement in the sector.

Table 5: Overall perception of respondents on agricultural entrepreneurship n = 185

Total perception score	Frequency	Percentage	Decision
21 - 40	3	1.6	Negative perception
41 - 60	69	37.3	Indifferent perception
61 - 80	113	61.1	Positive perception

Grand mean = 61.50, S.D = 8.48

Source: Field survey, 2018

Test of Hypothesis

The test for significant relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the graduate youths and their perception about

agriprenurship was carried out. Results of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis in Table 5 show that at $p \leq 0.05$, there was positive but no significant relationship between age, household size, cosmopolitaness, income and the respondents' perception towards involvement in agriprenurship. However, there exist a negative but no significant relationship between years of practical agricultural experience and the respondents' perception towards involvement in agriprenurship in the study areas. This implies that

there is no significant relationship between the respondents' perception towards involvement in agriprenurship and their age, household size, years of practical agricultural experience, cosmopolitaness and income. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted. This is contrary to the findings of Douglas *et al.* (2017) that reported that sex, years of experience in farming, land ownership, occupation of guardian and the source of income were significantly related to youth perceptions towards farming enterprises.

Table 6: Pearson's product moment correlation analysis between socioeconomic characteristics of respondents and perception towards involvement in agriprenurship

Variables	Correlation coefficient (r)	P – value	Decision
Age	0.045	0.540	NS
Household size	0.065	0.379	NS
Cosmopolitaness	0.069	0.348	NS
Years of practical agricultural experience	-0.090	0.224	NS
Income	0.045	0.539	NS

**Significant at 0.01, *Significant at 0.05.

NS = not significant

Source: Field survey, 2018

Furthermore, the results of chi square analysis in Table 6 reveals that sex, marital status, religion, ethnic group, educational qualification, graduate of agriculture were not significantly associated with the respondents' perception towards involvement in agriprenurship. This

implies that the perception of the respondents towards taking up entrepreneurship opportunities in agriculture is not influenced by their sex, marital status, religion, ethnic group and being a graduate of agriculture or not.

Table 7: Results of Chi-square showing association between socioeconomic characteristics of respondents and perception towards involvement in agriprenurship

Variables	χ^2 - value	df	P-value	Decision
Sex	3.190	2	0.203	NS
Marital status	1.104	2	0.576	NS
Religion	0.716	4	0.949	NS
Ethnic group	4.835	6	0.565	NS
Educational qualification	4.121	6	0.660	NS
Graduate of agriculture	3.336	2	0.189	NS

**Significant at 0.01, *Significant at 0.05, NS = not significant, df = degree of freedom

Source: Field survey, 2018

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, more than half of the respondents were Yoruba, Christians and had in one way or the other acquired practical agricultural experiences before service year. Majority of the respondents were not graduates of agriculture. Commitment, Innovativeness and initiative were the major agriprenurial characteristics possessed by the respondents. Majority (61.1%) of the respondents had a positive perception about youth involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship. From the study, it was concluded that majority of the corps members investigated were favourably disposed towards involvement in agricultural entrepreneurship. It is therefore recommended that any agricultural entrepreneurship programme for

corps members should focus on all agricultural enterprises to further boost their potentials in being successful agripreneurs. Corps members should be availed the opportunity of agricultural entrepreneurship training programme with a view to further enhancing their agriprenurial characteristics. In addition, agricultural entrepreneurship should not be limited to just graduates of agriculture. Capacity building and empowerment should be given to interested corps members in the area of agriprenurial activities.

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