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FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH RURAL YOUTHS' INVOLVEMENT IN NONFARM ACTIVITIES IN KEBBI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Rural youths are faced with the difficulty of maintaining their livelihoods despite the availability of vast farming resources. Due to insecurity in some parts of the study area, the able-bodied youth have deserted the farming areas looking for survival in non-farming activities. Some who are into farming activities are still engaged in nonfarm activities as coping strategies during the off-season. The study assessed the extent of rural youth involvement in nonfarm activities. Specifically, it described the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents, examined the nonfarm activities in which they are involved, their level of involvement, and examined respondents' perceptions of nonfarm activities. A multi-stage random sampling procedure was used to select 360 respondents. The primary data was collected through a pre-tested interview schedule, and percentage, frequency counts, tables and charts were deployed to analyse the data. Results show that the mean age of respondents was 33.4 years. Most of the respondents (81.2%) were males and married (90.0%). The majority (90.1%) were moderately involved in nonfarm activities, the respondents were involved in marketing ($\bar{x}=2.46$), agro-processing ($\bar{x}=1.58$) and distribution ($\bar{x}=1.40$). Meanwhile, the respondents were less involved in health work ($\bar{x}=1.00$), and motorcycle/bicycle repairing ($\bar{x}=1.01$) and had a favourable perception of nonfarm activities. There was a significant relationship between respondents' age ($r=0.174$), farming experience ($r=0.158$), household size ($r=0.153$), and their involvement in nonfarm activities; the relationship between respondents' involvement in nonfarm activities and perception was insignificant ($r=-0.006$). The skills acquisition program should be made available at all levels to encourage rural youth to stay in rural areas.

Keywords: Rural youth, Perception, Non-farm, Activities, Insecurity

INTRODUCTION

In the second quarter of 2023, the agricultural sector generated about 21 per cent of Nigeria's gross domestic product. The largest contribution was crop production, which accounted for almost 19 per cent of GDP. Agriculture accounts for a significant portion of Nigeria's GDP and is a key activity for the country's economy after oil. However, agricultural activities provide livelihoods for many Nigerians, while the wealth generated by oil only reaches a limited section of the people (Statistica, 2023). The potential of the agricultural sector to employ the team youth population in the country is enormous if the conflict and other armed unrest are tackled by the government.

Of recent, the worsening insecurity issues in some parts of the country have significantly contributed to the food security and employment issues. These armed conflicts have disrupted agricultural activities which is the main source of employment for the rural youths. This has hampered food production and supply as many farmers especially youths are unable to visit their farms for fear

of attack by bandits and armed men (Abdulkareem, 2023). The ugly incident has forced many rural youths to desert their farms and seek employment elsewhere. Many public commentators have attributed the worsening insecurity in some parts of the country to poor governance unemployment and the quick money syndrome currently affecting many youths. The insecurity challenges have also increased the number of unemployed youths in the country apart from the Covid-19 pandemic which has compounded these challenges by causing widespread job losses across all sectors. Many businesses have downsized or closed completely due to lockdowns imposed by the government to curtail the spread of the virus (Olufemi, 2023).

However, this has resulted in many rural youths finding it difficult to maintain a livelihood which is why poverty is pervasive among them. Many studies have been conducted in this area; Abdullahi *et al.* (2020); Agbarevo (2019); Nmeregini *et al.* (2019); Olayide and Chidinma (2018); Umunnakwe, (2014);

and Agu (2013). None of these studies has focused on how insecurity forced rural youths to be involved in non-farm activities as a source of livelihood. The present study looked at non-farm activities the rural youths are involved in the level of their involvement and their perception of non-farm activities and isolated factors associated with rural youth involvement in non-farm activities to provide policy recommendations that will guide policy formulation. Hence this study's specific objectives are to:

- i. Describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents;
- ii. identify the non-farm activities the respondents are involved in and their level of involvement;
- iii. examine the respondents' perceptions of non-farm activities; and
- iv. isolate the factors influencing respondents' involvement in non-farm activities.

METHODOLOGY

The study sample was drawn from rural communities in Kebbi State using a multi-stage sampling procedure. The state is divided into four agricultural extension zones, namely: Argungu Zone I, Bunza Zone II, Zuru Zone III, and Yauri Zone IV. Zone One is made up of eight Local Government Areas; Zone Two comprises six Local Government Areas, Zone Three comprises four Local Government Areas, and Zone Four comprises three Local Government Areas. In the first stage, in each of the four agricultural extension zones, two LGAs were randomly selected. In the second stage, three rural communities were randomly selected from each LGAs, making a total of twenty-four rural communities. In the final stage, fifteen rural youths were randomly selected from each rural community to give a total of 360 respondents. Data collected were subjected to descriptive (such as mean frequency count, tables, and charts) statistical analysis. Factor analysis was used to isolate factors associated with rural youth involvement in nonfarm activities in Kebbi State, Nigeria.

The dependent variable (Involvement) was measured on a scale of 1-4 where 1= not involved, 2 =

involved, 3=rarely involved, and 4= always involved. The perception of nonfarm activities was measured against a five-point Likert scale statement. Options strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree were scored 5,4,3,2 and 1 point, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows that the mean age of respondents was 33.4 years, with a standard deviation of 4.91 years, while the majority (48.6%) of rural youths' were between 28-34 years of age. This finding implies that the respondents are in their active and productive age, full of vitality and agility, and capable of taking risks. The results in Table 1 also show that most respondents (81.2%) were male and married (90.0%) with a mean household size of 10.2 ± 4.66 members.

The consequence is that married men have dominated the nonfarm sector, which means they have responsibilities of taking care of their large families, hence, their involvement in nonfarm activities to make ends meet. This result is in harmony with the results of Sani (2023); Ibrahim, Torimiro, Adamu and Ojo (2020) who reported male dominants and large household sizes in the Northern part of Nigeria. While cultural factors could be one of the reasons for female non-involvement in nonfarm activities, high prestige that could be accorded to ownership of large household size in the study area.

Figure 1 reveals that the majority (64.1%) of the respondents had an annual income of ₦200,001 – 846,666.00 with an average yearly income of ₦429,000.00 \pm 1,679,039.23. The high value of standard deviation observed showed that income inequality exists among the respondents in the study area. Income is the primary driving force in any economic activity. From the result, it could be observed that the respondents are low-income earners, and this may not be unconnected with the fact that farming activities in the study area have declined in recent times due to security challenges bedevilling some parts of the study area; the rural youth are forced to take solace in nonfarm activities to make a living.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by personal and demographic characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. deviation
Age(years)			33.4	4.91
≤20	1	0.5		
21-27	29	13.2		
28-34	107	48.6		
≥35	83	37.7		
Sex				
Male	180	81.8		
Female	40	18.2		
Marital Status				
Single	10	4.5		
Married	198	90.0		
Divorced	3	1.4		
Widow/widower	9	4.1		
Household size			10.2	4.66
≤00	6	2.7		
1-8	82	37.3		
9-17	119	54.1		
≥18	13	5.9		

Source: Field survey, 2020

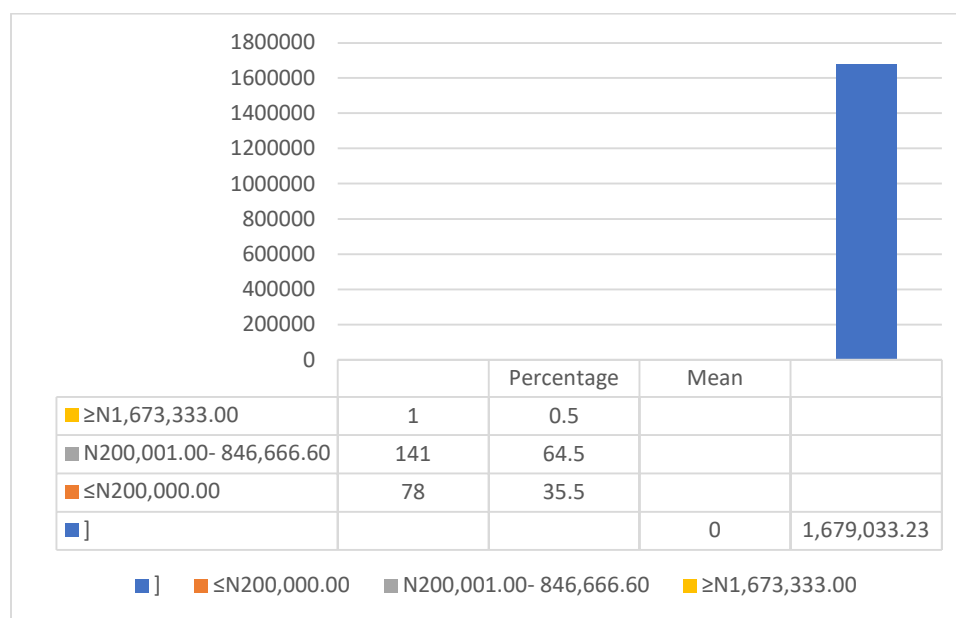


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents according to their annual income (₦)

Rural youths' involvement in nonfarm activities

Results in Table 2 shows that the most commonly non-farm activities involved by respondents were marketing, agro-processing, distribution, transportation, handicraft, retail activities with the mean value of (\bar{x} =2.463); (\bar{x} =1.577); (\bar{x} =1.400); (\bar{x} =1.363); (\bar{x} =1.313); (\bar{x} =.272), respectively and they were less involved in health work (\bar{x} =1.00). It shows clearly that these activities were the most desired and important to the respondents. The results agree with that of Issa (2019); Nmergini *et al.*, (2019); and Olayide and Chidinma (2018) who

reported that most of the respondents were involved in the transportation, marketing and selling of farm produce. The reason for respondents' involvement in the aforementioned activities it could be that the activities require fewer skills and technical competence. Similarly, Table 3 indicates that the majority (90.1%) of the respondents were moderately involved in non-farm activities, (9.1) of the rural youths' had a low involvement in non-farm activities, and only a few (0.5%) were highly involved in non-farm activities.

Table 2: Rural youths' involvement in nonfarm activities

Nonfarm activities	Mean	Std. deviation	Rank
Marketing	2.463	1.198	1 st
Agro-processing	1.577	0.843	2 nd
Distribution	1.400	0.718	3 rd
Transportation	1.363	0.718	4 th
Handicraft	1.313	0.889	5 th
Retailing	1.272	0.687	6 th
Teaching/civil service	1.213	0.692	7 th
Tailoring	1.150	0.634	8 th
Petty trading	1.131	0.319	9 th
Bakeries	1.095	0.463	10 th
Knitting	1.081	0.385	11 th
Hired labour	1.059	0.359	12 th
Manufacturing	1.050	0.329	13 th
Construction	1.040	0.321	14 th
Mining	1.040	0.275	14 th
Local party agent/council member	1.040	0.258	14 th
Bricklaying	1.040	0.258	14 th
Rental services	1.036	0.250	15
Tourism	1.031	0.259	16 th
Barbing	1.031	0.221	16 th
Carpentry	1.031	0.259	16 th
Mechanics	1.022	0.177	17 th
Pottery	1.022	0.177	17 th
Selling traditional medicine	1.022	0.177	17 th
Motorcycle/bicycle repairing	1.022	0.177	17 th
Shoe repairing/shining	1.013	0.150	18 th
Health work	1.000	0.000	19 th

Source: Field survey, 2020

Table 3: Overall level of rural youths' involvement in non-farm activities

Total involvement Score	Frequency	Percentage
Low (≤ 25.1)	20	9.1
Moderate (26.1-38.1)	199	90.1
High ($\geq 39+$)	1	0.5

Source: Field survey, 2020 (Mean= 33.33)

Item analysis of measures of perception of nonfarm activities

Results in Table 4 show that 47.7% of rural youth strongly agree that nonfarm activities are good for the family, nonfarm activities reduce the time one spends on the farm (68.2%) and that involvement in

nonfarm activities can improve someone's living condition (49.5%). Meanwhile, 52.7% strongly disagreed that nonfarm activities are an additional burden that nonfarm activities are only good for female folk (60.9) or that nonfarm activities are only useful during ceremonies (67.3%).

Table 4: Distribution of rural youths' according to their perception of nonfarm activities

Perception statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
Nonfarm activities are good for the family	37.3	47.7	4.1	10.5	0.5
Nonfarm activities reduce the time one spends on the farm	68.2	23.6	2.3	5.5	0.5
Nonfarm activities are insurance against crop failure	28.6	28.2	22.7	18.6	1.8
Nonfarm activities are an additional burden	8.2	11.4	16.8	52.7	10.9
Nonfarm activities can improve someone's living condition	49.5	28.6	13.6	5.0	3.2
Nonfarm activities are mere suffering	11.4	40.9	16.8	18.2	12.7
Nonfarm activities are just a waste of time	6.8	7.3	5.9	41.4	38.6
Nonfarm activities are not good for me	5.0	5.0	4.1	24.1	1.8
Nonfarm activities are only good for female folk	5.5	4.1	10.9	18.6	60.9
Nonfarm activities are only useful during ceremonies	4.5	2.3	2.7	23.2	67.3

Source: Field survey, 2020

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, U= Undecided, D= Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Relationship between respondents selected socioeconomic characteristics and involvement in non-farm activities

Table 5 shows that there were significant relationships between respondent's age ($r=0.174$), years of farming experience ($r=0.158$), and the number of children($r=0.153$) and their involvement in non-

farm activities. This infers that as the age, years of farming, and number of children of rural youths increases they tend to be more involved in non-farm activities.

Table 5: Correlation analysis showing the relationship between rural youths' involvement in non-farm activities and selected socioeconomic characteristics

Socioeconomic variables	r=value	p=value
Age	0.174**	0.010
Years of farming experience	0.158*	0.019
Number of children	0.153*	0.024
Household size	0.036	0.597
Number of wives	0.015	0.821
Annual income	0.021	0.760
Farm size	0.088	0.191
Years of education	-0.064	0.371

Source: Field survey, 2020

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Relationship between perception of non-farm activities and their involvement

Table 6 shows there was no significant relationship between perception and involvement in

non-farm activities ($r=-0.006$, $p=0.932$). The higher the respondents' perception of non-farm activities did not inform their involvement in non-farm activities.

Table 6: Correlation analysis showing the relationship between respondents' involvement in non-farm activities and their perception of non-farm activities

Variable	r=	p=
Perception	-0.006	0.932

Source: Field survey, 2020

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that respondents were young, and married, the majority were male and demographic, socioeconomic and livelihood factors are major factors associated with rural youth involvement in nonfarm activities. The respondents were moderately involved in nonfarm activities and had an indifferent perception of nonfarm activities. It is recommended that the government at all levels should provide security, especially in rural areas, and ease the affairs of youth in agriculture so that youth can remain in the agricultural sector and see agriculture as a sustainable career option.

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