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Research Paper

Attitude of Young Persons Towards Agriculture In Enugu East Local Government Area

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ABSTRACT
This study addressed the attitude of youths towards engaging in agricultural activities. The specific objectives were to examine the attitude of the youth towards horticulture (crop production); to assess the attitude of the youth towards livestock rearing; to evaluate the attitude of the youth towards fishing; and to analyze the attitude of the youth towards forestry. The survey research design was used in the study. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. Analysis of Variance (statistical analysis technique) was used to estimate the hypotheses in the study. It was found that youth from the selected communities did not agree to agriculture as a means of livelihood despite the provision of various incentives. In line with the findings, it was recommended that the National Orientation Agency should design a long-lasting enlightenment campaign to dispel the misinformation thriving among youths that dissuade them from considering agriculture as a means of livelihood. Also, stakeholders in the agricultural sector particularly farmers associations and academic institutions should come together and design a means of teaching the practical skills required to engage in agriculture on a small and large scale to youths. In addition, start-up agribusinesses should be given access to long term soft capital. With the burden of finances reduced, it allows the youth to focus on making something out of their set ups.

Key words:** **Agriculture, Attitude, incentive, Youth

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I. Introduction

Agriculture is the backbone of the Nigerian economic system. It plays a critical role in the entire life of the economy. In 2020, the agricultural sector contributed 18,348,180,000,000 Naira to real gross domestic product of the Nigerian economy. This represents 26.21 percent contribution to real gross domestic product. Specifically, crop production contributed 16,544,520,000,000 Naira followed by livestock rearing which gave 1,233,110,000,000 Naira (CBN, 2020). Next was fishing that put in 380,030,000,000 Naira into the economy and then forestry which contributed 190,510,000,000 Naira. The importance of Agriculture in Nigeria can never be overemphasized. In Nigeria today, there is a rising demand for food due to a continuous increase in the population of the country. Nigerians spent about N22.8 trillion on food items in 2019, representing more than half (56.7%) of the total household expenditure of N40.2 trillion (Price Waterhouse Coopers, PWC, 2020). Agriculture ranks first on this list because of the food crisis that looms not only in Nigeria but around the world (Udo, 2021). In addition, Agricultural activities lead to job creation, boost exports, ensure steady supply of raw materials to both local and foreign manufacturing sectors, protect the environment andpreserves species of crops and animals.

The 2021 Africa Agriculture status report has revealed that Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries witnessed the most rapid agricultural production growth of 4.3 per cent in the last 20 years, more than other regions globally (Falaju, 2021). The report revealed that three-quarters of the growth was driven by the expansion of cropland rather than an increase in yield, saying with Africa's population expected to double to nearly a 2.5billion by 2050, there was a need to put in steps in place to increase production without compromising the continent's natural resources. In the next 10 years, we need to transit from result-dependent agricultural output growth to productivity-led agricultural output growth. This comes from knowledge, capacity, technology and the kind of implements we use in our agriculture going forward. We need to build locally adaptive technologies, local institutions to be able to do agriculture in a way that will focus on productivity led growth."

This can be achieved with the intervention of the youth. Nigeria, the most populous black nation, is home to around 200 million people with an annual population growth of 2.61 percent. Nigeria has one of the largest youth cohorts in the world with over 35 percent of the country's population falling within the age group of 15-34 (PWC, 2020b). The importance of youth to an economy was highlighted by the call from the President, African Development Bank Group, Dr Akinwunmi Adesina while delivering a convocation lecture at the American University of Nigeria, Yola, titled, 'Building a new Nigeria: Imperatives for shared prosperity. He noted that the country should prioritize investments in the youth: in upskilling them for the jobs of the future not the jobs of the past; by moving away from so-called youth empowerment to youth investment; to opening up the social and political space to the youth to air their views and become a positive force for national development and for ensuring that we create youth-based wealth (Salau, 2021).

A young person faces a set of more or less viable options or 'opportunity space' as they attempt to establish an independent life. This opportunity space is determined by global, national and regional policies, institutions and markets and social and cultural factors (Future Agricultures Consortium, 2013). A young person's ability to successfully exploit opportunity space depends on: their access to resources, social networks, information, knowledge and skills; their attitudes (e.g. towards risk and travel), imagination and alertness; and their ability to exploit opportunities. Youth participation in agriculture is one of the key enablers of achieving global food security and nutrition (Mutinda, *et al.*, 2021). Further, if youth are engaged in agriculture, there will be increase in economic growth and attainment of environmental sustainability. This is because youth account for one of the highest populated age group (24%) in the world.

However, despite these facts not everything is favourable about the prospects of the Nigerian youth in the world of agriculture continuing rural poverty and underemployment, migration of young people to urban areas, ageing farm populations and low agricultural productivity are observed across the country. The problem of young people and agriculture is framed as either 'youth in peril' or 'agriculture in peril', depending on one's point of view. Modernized, business-like agriculture – with its assumed potential for growth and employment – is hailed as the 'saviour of young people'. At the same time, young people are hailed as the 'saviour of agriculture' (Future Agricultures Consortium, 2013). However, their interest in farming, in many settings opportunities to make a living in agriculture is limited. Therefore, young people increasingly aspire to work outside the agriculture sector. In view of the above, this study sought to determine why this attitude subsists. Specifically this study sought to:

i. Examine the attitude of the youth towards crop production
ii. Assess the attitude of the youth towards livestock rearing
iii. Evaluate the attitude This significantly falls short of the 10% specified in the Maputo Declaration. of the youth towards fishing
iv. Analyze the attitude of the youth towards forestry

Overview of the state of Agriculture business in Nigeria

Agriculture budget represents 1.8% (or N183 billion) of the total 2020 budget size (PWC, 2020). More than 80% of Nigeria's farmers are smallholder farmers (SHFs). These numbers accounts for 90% of Nigeria's agricultural produce. Nigeria's tractor density is put at 0.27 hp/ hectare which is far below the FAO's recommended tractor density of 1.5 hp/ hectare. Nigeria's agricultural trade deficit continues to widen amid government's push for self-sufficiency in the sector. In four years (2016 - 2019), Nigeria's cumulative agricultural imports between 2016 and 2019 stood at N3.35trillion, four times higher than the agricultural export of N803billion within the same period. Nigeria's major agricultural imports include wheat, sugar, fish and milk while the main agricultural exports include sesame seeds, cashew nuts, cocoa beans, ginger, frozen shrimp and cotton. Sesame, cashew nuts and cocoa account for more than half of the nation's agricultural exports while wheat dominates agricultural imports. Agricultural export declined by about 11% from N302.2 billion in 2018 to N269.8 billion in 2019. Nigeria's agricultural imports rose by 12.7% from N851.6 billion to N959.5 billion during the same period, the highest value ever recorded in the country. Nigeria remains a net food importer — the agricultural trade deficit has widened with imports exceeding exports by N689.7 billion in 2019 compared to N549.3 billion in 2018.

There are number of challenges facing the Nigerian agricultural sector. Over the past years, Nigeria has dealt with very low yields per hectare due to shortages in the supply of inputs such as seedlings and fertilizers as well as inadequate irrigation and harvesting systems which hinders productivity and yield rates. Next is due to the desertification and water depletion in the northern part of Nigeria, nomadic herdsmen are now shifting towards the south of the country in search of grazing fields and water for their animals. This has resulted in violent conflict with crop farmers in the south (PWC, 2020). Increased violence in the food producing states is causing decline in Nigeria's food production output. Following the outdated methods of agriculture such as the

use of hoes and cutlasses which reduces efficiency as these methods are costly and time consuming. Nigeria's failure to adopt advanced mechanized systems has reduced the quality of its agricultural products. Although the Nigerian government has provided several facilities through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) such as the Anchor Borrower's Programme to help provide small-scale farmers with adequate financing, the farming industry still lacks adequate access to finance. Also, there is absence of value addition and supply-chain linkages. Nigeria focuses mostly on food production, thus neglecting the processing and manufacturing segment of the value chain. The chain reaction that arises from shortages of resources, lack of financing for small-scale farmers and inefficient transport systems, exacerbates the development of food production along the value and supply chain. Finally, despite the unemployment in the country, there is under-utilization of the available youth manpower to process agricultural production (Dimelu, *et al.,* 2020). Several empirical studies addressed this later challenge as shown below.

Empirical Review

Mutinda, *et al.,* (2021) addressed attitudinal individualities affecting youth participation in agriculture: a case of seven selected countries in Kenya. Five attitudinal acuities were investigated to determine how they affect youth participation in agriculture. They are; agriculture is labour intensive, agriculture is dirty enterprise and non-professional in nature, agricultural returns take too long to yield and agriculture is a domain for the elderly and school dropouts. Results from the study indicated that all the attitudinal traits considered influence youth participation in agriculture to some extent (0.176 correlation coefficient). Majority (32. 9%) thought that agriculture take long to yield returns while the perception that agriculture is dirty and non-professional had the least influence (16.4%) of youth participation in agriculture. Training and sensitization of youth, provision of incentives or financial support to youth and formation of youth groups were found to be the most effective ways of promoting positive attitude among the youth towards agriculture. Dimelu, *et al.,* (2020) investigated the determinants of youth farmers' participation in agricultural activities in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The major determinants of youth agricultural activities were household size and membership of social organizations. It was recommended that the state government and other relevant agencies and organizations should create platforms to educate youth farmers on the need for more involvement and diversification in their agricultural livelihood strategies. Ayanda, *et al.,* (2020) study addressed the attitude of secondary school students towards young farmers' club in Kwara State, Nigeria. 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. Akintonde, *et al.,* (2019) study was on attitude of senior secondary school students towards agricultural sciences and trainings in Ogbomoso North Local Government Area of Oyo State. The findings revealed that there was significant relationship between respondent's education, gender, father's and mother's primary occupation while age and religion were insignificantly related to their attitude toward agriculture as a profession. Nlerum and Babatunde (2019) examined the attitude of youths to agriculture as career in Iwo and Aiyedire Local Government Areas of Osun State, Nigeria. Results showed that the attitude of youths to agriculture as a career in the study area was negative as indicated by grand means of 2.44 and 2.47 in Iwo and Aiyedire respectively. The variable with the highest negative response in Iwo with a mean of 2.32 was that agriculture is a gold mine for young entrepreneurs. For Aiyedire the variable with the highest negative response of 2.42 was that agriculture is attractive and decent. The major constraints of the youths to the choice of agriculture as a career in Iwo were insufficient land to start (3.02) and use of crude tools for farming (3.02). Lack of funds to begin (2.91) and insufficient career guidance by agricultural extension workers and rural sociologists (2.79) were the major constraints for youths in Aiyedire. In order to attract more youths into having a positive attitude to agriculture as a career, the study recommends provision for sufficient land and fund for young farmers and engagement of more agricultural extension workers and rural sociologists for career guidance to youths in the study area. Pelzom and Katel (2017) evaluated youth perception of agriculture and potential for employment in the context of rural development in Bhutan. The research reveals that students attending high school who hail from rural areas and have parents who are farmers perceive that agriculture can be a potential area for employment. However, the principal components analysis reveals that some factors causing young people not to take up agriculture-related employment are crop loss, lack of resources, parental pressure and relatively less access to technical and financial support. The responses of young people suggest that with adequate technical and financial support, profitable and sustainable farming can be made attractive to young entrepreneurs. Thomas and Eforuoku (2015) analyzed the determinants of participation in youth-in-agriculture program in Ondo State, Nigeria. Inadequate training facilities was the most severe constraint to participation (0.98) and participation in

YIAP was above average (57.0%). Predictors significantly related to YIAP participation were household size (β=0.133, p=0.032), farm size (β=0.373, p=0.001), years of farming experience (β=0.354, p=0.002), attitude (β=0.228, p=0.006) and constraints (β=-0.074, p=0.032). However, farm size (β=0.40) and years of participation (β=0.36) mostly contributed to participation in YIAP. Effort by relevant agencies to providing extension education, encourage female youth participation and harnessing youth involvement in agriculture program will ultimately reduce rural-urban drift. Abdullahi, *et al.,* (2010) assessed the attitude of rural youths towards family farming in Dass, Bauchi State, Nigeria and the implications for policy. It was found that about 16.0 percent of them had favourable, while 63.0 % and 22.0 % respectively, had a moderatelyfavourable and unfavourable attitudes towards family farming. Their positive disposition towards farming was influenced by these demographic cultural variables or assets, in association with the natural endowments of the study area. The Dass scenario was found to be unique and amenable to sustainable agricultural and community development. A key policy implication of the situation was the need to harness these assets of the youths' towards empowering them, through appropriate strategies, to remain attracted to/and take up farming as a full-time employment. Aphunu and Akpobasa (2010) undertook an assessment of rural youths' attitude towards agricultural production in Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State. Youths' agreed that farming is stressful (Mean = 3.20), farming is for the less privileged in the society (Mean = 3.08), farming is for the school drop-outs and illiterates (Mean = 2.78); agricultural products attract low prices (Mean= 2.66), farming reduces ones status in the society (Mean = 2.6.4) and that farming is meant for the old (Mean = 2.64).Overall, majority of the youths showed unfavourable attitude towards agriculture as a livelihood occupation. The result confirms Amalu (1998) assertion that attitudes towards agriculture and agricultural methods have not changed as much as they need to. To worsen matters, he further noted, rural youths have migrated to the cities in growing numbers and have become consumers rather than producers of food.

II. Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. This design involved collecting first-hand information from the elements involved in the study (Saunders, *et al.,* 2019). The area of the study is Enugu East local government area. The choice of the area was based on it being a local government area that had lots of communities that were either urban or semi-urban or rural in nature. Having these combinations allowed the study to cover a wide number of youths with varied demographic considerations. Data was collected using a Self-Administered questionnaire. Convenience sampling method was used to determine the respondents involved in the study and the communities from which they were drawn. The Youth Council of the selected communities were contacted in order to relate with their members. A total of 72 youths were involved in the study. Saunders and Townsend (2016) proffered a minimum of 50 respondents when the research involves several groups. Reliability of the instrument was established using the test-retest method with a Spearman's rank correlation of 0.89. The correlation establishes a high correlation between the results of the 1st week test and that of the 2nd week test.

Given that a lot has been on-going in the agriculture sector three key efforts of the federal government were considered as incentives to attract youth interest in agriculture. The creation of Anchors Borrowers Program to increase farmers access to finance, establishment of Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones to concentrate agro-processing activities for exports and expansion of the National Agricultural Information System for enhancing market information. In view of these incentives as well as having different youth groups to consider it was deemed necessary to adopt the Analysis of Variance as statistical technique for the study.

Table 1 Distribution of questionnaire

Communities	Questionnaire shared	Percentage	Questionnaire valid for use	Percentage
Agbogazi	21	15.21	11	15.27
Amoji	30	21.73	16	22.22
Emene	24	17.39	10	13.89
Ibeagwa	33	23.94	18	25
Obinagu	30	21.73	17	23.62
Total	138	100	72	100.00

Source: Author's calculation using data from Field survey, 2021

Table 1 showed that out of 138 questionnaires shared only 72 were found valid for use.

Table 2 Demographic considerations of the participants

Category	Sub-category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	49	68.05
	Female	23	31.95
Age	15-20	14	19.44
	21-30	40	55.56

	31-35	18	25
Educational level	Primary	22	30.56
	Secondary	41	56.94
	Tertiary	9	12.5
Agriculture Experience	Crop production	29	40.3
	Livestock rearing	10	13.9
	Fishing	6	8.3
	Forestry	4	5.6
	More than one aspect	23	31.9

Source: Author's calculation using data from Field survey, 2021

Table 2 outlines the demographic considerations of the study. Youths from the five selected communities were mostly male made up of 68.0% of the participants. Female participants constituted 31.95%. 55.56% of the participants were aged between 21-30 years, all within the prime of their youth. Only 12.5% of the participants in the study have had tertiary education.

Table 3 ANOVA Result of Hypothesis one test

Test for Equality of Means Between Series

Method	Df	Value	Probability
Anova F-test	(4, 20)	2.332266	0.0909
Welch F-test*	(4, 9.01419)	1.005865	0.4531

*Test allows for unequal cell variances

Analysis of Variance

Source of Variation	Df	Sum of Sq.	Mean Sq.
Between	4	233.0400	58.26000
Within	20	499.6000	24.98000
Total	24	732.6400	30.52667

Source: Author's calculation using Eviews 10

Hypothesis one test revealed that F-calculated statistic was 2.332266 while F-tabulated statistic was 2.866. With F-calculated statistic lower than F- tabulated statistic it shows that the mean score for all categories was not equal. The probability of F-calculated statistic at 0.0909 being higher than the level of significance of 0.05 supports the finding above. It shows there was statistical insignificance. Based on the result, we conclude that there is no significant statistical difference between the various youth groups response to incentives on crop production to which each community is exposed to in order to engender a favourable attitude in youths towards agriculture.

Table 4 ANOVA Result of Hypothesis two test

Method	df	Value	Probability
Anova F-test	(4, 20)	0.225554	0.9209
Welch F-test*	(4, 9.82538)	0.235594	0.9118

*Test allows for unequal cell variances

Analysis of Variance

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Sq.	Mean Sq.
Between	4	13.84000	3.460000
Within	20	306.8000	15.34000
Total	24	320.6400	13.36000

Source: Author's calculation using Eviews 10

Hypothesis two test revealed that F-calculated statistic was 0.225554 while F-tabulated statistic was 2.866. With F-calculated statistic lower than F- tabulated statistic it shows that the mean score for all categories was not equal. The probability of F-calculated statistic at 0.9209 being higher than the level of significance of 0.05 supports the finding above. It shows there was statistical insignificance. Based on the result, we conclude that there is no significant statistical difference between the various youth groups response to incentives on livestock rearing to which each community is exposed to in order to engender a favourable attitude in youths towards agriculture.

Table 5 ANOVA Result of Hypothesis three test

Method	df	Value	Probability
Anova F-test	(4, 20)	0.804800	0.5365
Welch F-test*	(4, 8.23535)	1.265879	0.3569

*Test allows for unequal cell variances

Analysis of Variance

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Sq.	Mean Sq.
Between	4	40.24000	10.06000
Within	20	250.0000	12.50000
Total	24	290.2400	12.09333

Source: Author's calculation using Eviews 10

Hypothesis three test revealed that F-calculated statistic was 0.804800 while F-tabulated statistic was 2.866. With F-calculated statistic lower than F- tabulated statistic it shows that the mean score for all categories was not equal. The probability of F-calculated statistic at 0.5365 being higher than the level of significance of 0.05 supports the finding above. It shows there was statistical insignificance. Based on the result, we conclude that there is no significant statistical difference between the various youth groups response to incentives on fishing to which each community is exposed to in order to engender a favourable attitude in youths towards agriculture.

Table 6 ANOVA Result of Hypothesis four test

Method	df	Value	Probability
Anova F-test	(4, 20)	0.527869	0.7166
Welch F-test*	(4, 9.78861)	0.300314	0.8711

*Test allows for unequal cell variances

Analysis of Variance

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Sq.	Mean Sq.
Between	4	38.64000	9.660000
Within	20	366.0000	18.30000
Total	24	404.6400	16.86000

Source: Author's calculation using Eviews 10

Hypothesis four test revealed that F-calculated statistic was 0.527869 while F-tabulated statistic was 2.866. With F-calculated statistic lower than F- tabulated statistic it shows that the mean score for all categories was not equal. The probability of F-calculated statistic at 0.7166 being higher than the level of significance of 0.05 supports the finding above. It shows there was statistical insignificance. Based on the result, we conclude that there is no significant statistical difference between the various youth groups response to incentives on

forestry to which each community is exposed to in order to engender a favourable attitude in youths towards agriculture.

III. Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one test shows there was statistical insignificance. This revealed that youths in the selected communities were not disposed towards agriculture. The finding points out that despite various incentives put in place by federal government the youths prefer to be consumers rather than producers of food. This is despite crop production being the leading segment in agriculture with the most contribution to the economy. The finding differed from Mutinda, *et al.,* (2021) who found that provision of incentives or financial support to youth and formation of youth groups were found to be the most effective ways of promoting positive attitude among the youth towards agriculture. In the same way hypothesis two test was also insignificant. It implies that offering incentives as done by the federal government was not enough to attract young people into livestock rearing. The finding was not in line with Ayanda, *et al.,* (2020) who found that enhanced skills in livestock production convinced of the profitability of agricultural enterprises. The result of hypothesis three test gave rise to youths turning away from agriculture. They preferred other vocations to fishing. This may be attributed to the observation of Pelzom and Katel (2017) that among the principal factors causing young people not to take up agriculture-related employment are crop loss, lack of resources, parental pressure and relatively less access to technical and financial support. There was no deviation from earlier findings in hypothesis four test. The result established that young people are not towing the line of agricultural practice as a means of livelihood. Forestry was the least of agricultural practice to be of interest to youths. The finding can be attributed to the concerns of youth noted in Aphunu and Akpobasa (2010) where youths agreed that farming is stressful, is for the less privileged in the society, is for the school drop-outs and farming reduces ones status in the society.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that youths in the selected communities do not desire to practice agriculture despite the viable provisions available that could aid facilitate smooth agricultural practice. In line with the findings of the study it as recommended that:

1. The National Orientation Agency should design a long-lasting enlightenment campaign to dispel the misinformation thriving among youths that dissuade them from considering agriculture as a means of livelihood. This will clear the air on what is the true situation of things for anyone engaging in agriculture business in Nigeria. In addition, it will dissuade the argument that white-collar jobs pay more than agriculture business.
2. Stakeholders in the agriculture sector particularly farmers associations and academic institutions should come together and design a means of teaching the practical skills required to engage in agriculture on a massive scale to youths. Armed with the practical skills it becomes easier to nudge youths towards taking up the agriculture profession.
3. Start-up agribusinesses should be given access to long term soft capital. With the burden of finances reduced it allows the youth to focus on making something out of their set ups.

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