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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Willingness of Agriculture Students to be Involved in Agripreneur Career in Southeast Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Africa has over 420 million youth that could be asset, conversely' they continue to face challenges of unemployment, underemployment and poverty despite the potentials of agricultural sector in providing income-generating opportunities. The limiting factors for their participation in agriculture is not well documented. This study, therefore investigated how willing of agricultural students in agripreneurship in Southeast, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used. Southeastern Nigeria was purposively selection due to high unemployment and poverty. Two Federal Universities were purposively selected. Students were randomly selected proportionate to the population size. In all, 120 respondents were selected. Structured questionnaire was used to capture data. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and logit regression α=0.05. The study revealed that Sex (β=0.80), previous year of participation (β=0.17), vision to be an employer (β=1.26) and experience (β=2.90) positively influenced willingness to participate while high unemployment rate (β= -1.66), inadequate agricultural facilities and lack of government support/credit facilities (β= -2.15) and insecurity/herdsmen menace (β= -0.037) had negative effect. The study also found out that major perceived constraints in taking up agripreneurship were lack of start-up capital, inadequate infrastructural facilities, marketing challenges and poor accessibility to agricultural loan. Therefore, effective youth-oriented policies and innovative development strategies such as inclusion of agripreneurship training in their early school day training, revitalization of farm settlement scheme, provision of inputs and credit facilities among others are drivers to tap the energy of young Nigerian labour force for productive and beneficial ventures.

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Introduction

Mokaya et al. (2012) stated that after thorough review and analysis of literatures that the concepts of entrepreneur, if considered in isolation fail to give a perfect explanation of its meaning. Consequently, Mokaya et al. (2012) defined entrepreneurship as a process that involves creativity and innovation, environmental browsing, identifying opportunities and evaluating them, marshalling resources to implement them, establishing and running a business that grows by making profit.

Nine billion is projected as the global population by 2050. Youth (aged 15 to 24) is equally projected to be 1.3 billion (14% of the projected global population) by the same year with Africa and Asia, having the largest share of the increase as shown by United Nations (2011). The youths in these continents continue to face challenges of unemployment, underemployment and poverty, despite the ample potential of the agricultural sector in providing income-generating opportunities. Youths in Africa would have been the greatest asset provided they were adequately harnessed coordinated and

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utilized in developing their economy. An economy with active population supports increased productivity and an inclusive economic growth and development. Conversely, majority of African youths are unemployed or underemployed due to lack of proper coordination of Africa's demographic dividend that could have given the continent great economic dividend (African Development Bank Group, 2016). About twelve million youths enter the workforce annually, but only 3.1 million jobs are created, leaving over eight million youths unemployed. As a result of this situation, Africa witnessed low standard of living, mass emigration, conflict and crises. International Labour Organization (2020) report indicated that 268 million (35.4%) were outside labour force, 456 million (60.2%) were employed while 33 million (4.4%) are unemployed. The distribution of the employed 456 million revealed that 29% are employed by employee, 3% are employer of labour, 20% contributes to family labour and 48% engaged themselves. This report indicates that more entrepreneurs are required to mob up the teemed population of African unemployed youth.

Youth unemployment in Africa from 2000-2021 as reported by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, (2015) revealed a progressive increase from 23.5–34.8 million and in West Africa within the period unemployment rose from 3.7 million to 8.1 million (International Labour Organization, 2020). Consequently, West Africa countries kept on experiencing increasing rate of crime, unrest and suicide to mention but a few. This situation needs to be urgently attended to, so that workable policies that will enable our youths to be gainfully employed is formulated and implemented.

In the last 15 years, some countries in African continent enjoyed rapid economic growth that was not 'pro-poor' but a sectorial growth that generated few employment opportunities. Therefore, the need to promote growth in sectors that is capable of absorb the youth population, particularly in agricultural sector that could bring about 'pro-poor' growth, improves the economy, promotes food security, raises rural incomes, creates employment along the food value chain, and empowers the marginalized groups.

Table 1. Unemployment data of Nigeria for the year 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020)

Age	Labour force population	Unemployment	Unemployment (%)	Underemployment (%)
15-24	16,709,724	6,819,539	40	30.5
15-34	23,328,460	7,167,429	30.7	26.5
35-44	20,124,531	4,097,429	20.4	28.6
45-54	13,089,047	2,242,945	17.1	28.2
55-64	7,040,132	1,457,289	20.4	31.0
Gender				
Male	41,664,913	9,561,740	22.9	26.3
Female	38,626,981	12,202,818	31.6	31.0
Residence				
Urban	28,513,287	7,251,897	23.2	25.4
Rural	51,778,607	14,512,720	31.5	28.0

Table 1 above shows the Nigeria unemployment data by age, gender and place of residence and the unemployment rate and underemployment rate.

In Nigeria, about 65% of the working population are involved in agriculture and this sector plays a vital role in economic growth and social improvement. The agricultural sector contributed 28.5% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the nation in 2019. Notwithstanding, the contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP in 2019 is below what it was before independence (65.7%) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014; Komolafe & Adeoti, 2018).

A nation's economy is broadly categorized into two principal sectors: agriculture and industry (Uche & Familusi, 2018). Agriculture which is rural based, supplies raw material to industry. Recent fall in the price of crude oil in the international market has expedited the Nigerian government's advocacy for diversification of the economy. Thus, emphasizing the export of agricultural commodities as an additional foreign exchange generator. Introduction of entrepreneurial principles into agricultural production in Nigeria will be a strong driver to the intending programme and improve on the existing structures in the agricultural sector.

Nigerian farmers are facing serious challenges like inadequate infrastructure, difficulty in accessing credit and absence of training opportunities for smallholder farmers among others, mitigating these constraints would improve Nigeria's food security, develop agribusiness, increase the GDP and raise foreign exchange earnings (Uche & Familusi, 2018).

With adequate and planned investment in agriculture, achievable through agripreneurship, daily rise in food prices can be halted and Nigerians will be food secure. Technological development in the agricultural sector in Nigeria is a serious

challenge for our aged farmers. This problem can adequately be resolved by incorporating youths into agricultural enterprise. As a result of which there will be adequately knowledge transfer and challenges of aged farmers in production, processing, packaging and marketing can easily be solved.

Nigeria's agriculture potential and fortunes are dwindling, this situation is placing urgent need on the development of a system that will eliminate the constraint placed on this sector by the low technical know-how and institutional weaknesses among others factors. For the agricultural sector to remain competitive and relevant in the global economy, new ideas needed to be developed and applied for value addition and sustainability (Uneze, 2013). Consequently, agripreneurship is a key in this direction (Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services, 2016). Therefore, effective youth-oriented policies and innovative development strategies are drivers to tap the energy of young Nigerian labor force for productive and beneficial ventures (Aladejebi, 2018) instead of engaging in civil unrest and crime. The advantages of agriculture in Nigeria can adequately be annex only if the youths are willing and other stake holders are prepared to give the required support. On this note, this study seeks to know the willingness of graduating students of agriculture to take up agripreneur career in solving the problem of unemployment and profile the needed support by the willing graduates.

Materials and Methods

Primary data used for this study were collected using well-structured questionnaire. Data collected include graduating students of agriculture's socio-economic characteristics, willingness to take up agripreneurship as a career and the support required to take off. The study adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure. The first stage was the purposive selection of Southeastern Nigeria due to high level of unemployment in the area (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Second stage was the selection of two Federal Universities that offers agriculture as a course of study in Southeastern Nigeria. Third stage involved random selection of final year students in the Faculty of Agriculture proportionate to the total number population size. The total number of respondents selected were one hundred and twenty.

Table 2. Sampling procedure for selection of respondents

Name of University	Department	Total Final Year Students	Selected Final Year Students	No of Questionnaire Administered and Analyzed
Federal University of Technology Owerri (F.U.T.O)	Agricultural economics	115	17	17
	Agricultural extension	76	11	11
	Fisheries technology	54	8	8
	Animal science	63	10	10
	Forestry and wild life	52	8	8
	Crop science	61	9	9
	Soil science	65	10	10
	Total	**486**	**73**	**73**
Nnamdi Azikiwe University	Agricultural economics and extension	52	8	8
	Animal science	47	7	7
	Crop science	26	4	4
	Fishery	24	4	4
	Forestry and wild life	27	4	4
	Food science and technology	110	17	17
	Soil science	23	3	3
	Total	**309**	**47**	**47**

The analytical tools employed by the study were descriptive statistics and Logit model. The descriptive statistics used include some measures of central tendencies like the mean, standard deviations and frequency distributions tables, percentages and Likert scale.

Logit Model

The determinants of graduating agricultural students' willingness to participate in agripreneurship was analyzed by the use of Logit Model. Logit regression models relationships between a dichotomous response variable as the dependent variable and a set of independent (regressor) variables.

According to Gujarati (2004) the LM is quite applicable to this study because it is employed when individuals make choice between two alternatives and with each case it is assumed that the alternatives are mutually exclusive. Also, it has the advantage of not treating categories in any continuous form, this make it also to be different from ordered or sequential Probit models. Logit models estimate the effects of the explanatory variables on a dependent variable with unordered response categories. The advantages above ordinary least square model are it eliminates heteroscedasticity in the error term, make the error term to be normally distribute and the predicted probabilities ranges between 0 and 1. Additional advantage of Logit model is its computational ease and also it is relatively robust, as measured by goodness of fit or prediction accuracy (Gujarati, 2004).

Assuming the probability that graduating agricultural students will be willingness to participate in agripreneurship (WP**)** or not (NWP), then the student's empirical models to be estimated is specified as:

$$WP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots \beta_n X_n + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

$$NWP = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 X_1 + \gamma_2 X_2 + \dots \gamma_n X_n + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Where, WP = Willingness of agriculture undergraduate to participate in agripreneurship, NWP = Non-willingness of agriculture undergraduate to participate in agripreneurship and are vectors of respective parameters to be estimated. β= Vectors of explanatory variables. ε = Error terms.

The explanatory variables include:

X_1 = Age (years)

X_2 = Sex (Male = 1, otherwise = 0)

X_3 = Previous participation and experience (participation = 1 otherwise = 0)

X_4 = Years of participation (years)

X_5 = Vision of becoming an employer of labour through agripreneur (yes =1, no =0)

X_6 = High unemployment rate (if high rate of unemployment will push you into agripreneurship =1, otherwise =0)

X_7 = Parental support (Had Parental support = 1 otherwise = 0)

X_8 = Inadequate agricultural facilities and lack of government support (if inadequate agricultural facilities and lack of government support will push you away from agripreneurship =1, otherwise =0)

X_9 = Insecurity/ herdsmen problems (If insecurity/ herdsmen problems will push you away from agripreneurship =1, otherwise =0).

Results and Discussion

Socioeconomic/demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Figure 1 and 2 show the age distribution and gender of respondents, respectively.

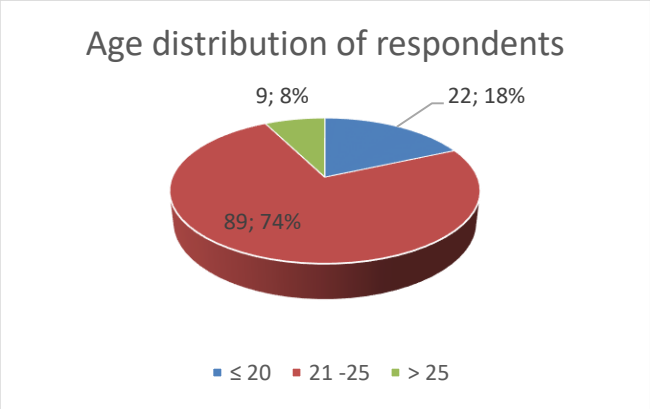

Figure 1. Age distribution of respondents.

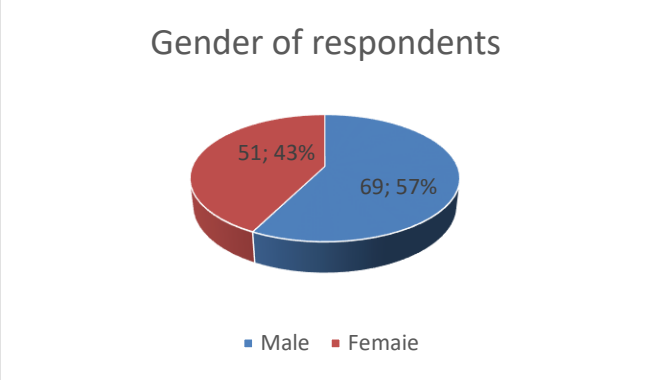

Figure 2. Gender distribution of respondents.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Undergraduate Students

The socioeconomic characteristics of undergraduate students were presented in table1. Average age of the respondents in the study area was 23.06years ±1.22 years. This implies that all the respondents are in their economic active age and should be ready to contribute to the national economy. Male (57.0%) respondents were 14 more than the female respondents (43.0%). Larger proportions of respondents were single (92.50%). Majority (93.0%) of respondents were Christians, only (7.0%) practice Islamic religion. Most of the respondents (64.2%) lived in rented hostels off campus, (25.0%) of the respondents lived in school hostel and only (10,8%) of them lived with their parents. Parent and guardians (83.3%) were the main source of respondents' stipend for their education, (16.7%) were self-sponsored, (7.5%) out of the self-sponsored respondents engaged in part time work while (9.2%) were self-employed. Majority (43.3%) of the respondents' parents were civil servants, while (33.3%) were businessman,

(15.0%) were public servants and (8.3%) were orphans. Majority of the students (64.20%) had received training in agripreneurship elsewhere apart from the practical they were involved in, in the course of study agricultural science in the university, likewise majority (75.0%) had information about agribusiness from journals, other sources of information were internet (66.7%), television (50.0%) and radio (33.3%). Average stipends received by respondents from parents and guardians stand at (₦145,375 ± ₦112,776). A total of (51.7%) were not willing to study agriculture in the university, but resigned to fate.

Table 3. Socio-economic characteristics of respondent undergraduate students

Characteristics	Frequency	%Age	
Marital status			
Single	111	92.5	
Married	09	07.5	
Religion			
Christianity	112	93.0	
Islam	08	07.0	
Source of stipend			
Parent/guardian	100	83.3	
Self-employed	11	09.2	
Part time work	09	07.5	
Students' residence			
School hostel	30	25.0	
Rented hostel off campus	77	64.2	
Living with their parent	13	10.8	
Parent's occupation			
Civil servant	52	43.3	
Public servant	18	15.0	
Business owners	40	33.3	
Had no parent	10	08.3	
Training on agripreneurship			
Yes	77	64.2	
No	43	35.8	
Source of information on agripreneurship			
Internet	80	66.7	
Journals	90	75.0	
Television	60	50.0	
Radio	40	33.3	
Average annual stipend (#)			
30,000 – 100,000	52	43.3	₦145,375±112,776
100,001–300,000	60	50.0	
300,001 – 600,000	08	06.7	

Table 4. Initial course applied for by respondent

	Frequency	%Age
Agriculture	58	48.3
Not agriculture	62	51.7
Course applied for initial, if not agriculture		
Medical related courses	34	28.3
Biological science courses	26	21.7
Engineering courses	02	01.7
Total	**62**	**51.7**

Willingness of Final Year Undergraduate to Take Up Agripreneurship

Majority (57.5%) of the respondents were willing to take up agriculture as their business after their course of study. All the respondents gave conditions that will enable them to take up agripreneur as a career. Majority (33.3%) aspired to be self-employed (32.5%) aspired to be a job creator, (26.7%) were willing because of high youth unemployment rate, (24.2%) were willing because they studied agriculture, (22.5%) believed that agripreneurship is profitable, (22.5%) were willing because of their love for agriculture, (12.5%) due to their background believed that agriculture is easy and simple for them, (11.7%) received encouragement from their relatives and 10.8% were willing because they aimed continue their parent's business.

Table 5. Willingness of final year undergraduate to take up agripreneurship

	Frequency	%Age
Willing to venture into agripreneurship after graduation?		
Yes	69	57.5
No	51	42.5

Table 6. Conditions for respondents to participate in agripreneurship

Condition Stated	Frequency	%Age
Studied agriculture	26	21.7
Aspire to be a job creator	39	32.5
Passion for agriculture	27	22.5
High unemployment rate	32	26.7
Profitable of agripreneurship	27	22.5
Aspire to be self-employed	40	33.3
Encouragement from relatives	14	11.7
Agripreneurship experience	15	12.5
Take up my parent's business	13	10.8

Determinants of Undergraduate Students of Agriculture's Willingness to Participate in Agripreneurship

Table 7 presented the logit model result used to estimate the determinants of undergraduate students of agriculture's willingness to participate in agripreneurship. Nine variables were allowed in the model, but only seven were significant. The likelihood ratio is -50.70 and Pseudo R^2 = 0.41, chi-square of 67.59 with a p-value of 0.000 reveals that the model as a whole is statistically significant. Mean VIF =1.4 established the absence of Multicollinearity.

Sex

Sex is significant at (5%) and positively affects willingness to participate in agripreneurship. The marginal effect showed that being a male increases the likelihood of respondent's willingness to participate in agripreneurship by 4.5%. This corroborates the findings of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2014) and United Nations Women (2018).

Previous participation and experience

Previous participation in agribusiness and experience is significant at (1%) and positively affects willingness to participate in agripreneurship. This corroborates the findings of Adeyanju et al. (2021). The marginal effect shows that previous participation and experience increase the likelihood of respondent's willingness to participate in agripreneurship by 61%.

Years of participation

Years of participation is significant at (5%) and positively affects willingness to participate in agripreneurship. This corroborates the findings of Adeyanju et al. (2021). The marginal effect shows that a year increase in participation in agribusiness increases the likelihood of respondent's willingness to participate in agripreneurship by 42%**.**

Vision of becoming an employer of labour

Respondent's vision of becoming an employer of labour is significant at (5%) and positively affects willingness to participate in agripreneurship.

The marginal effect shows that respondents having the vision of becoming an employer of labour increases the likelihood of respondent's willingness to participate in agripreneurship by 30%.

High unemployment rate

High unemployment rate is significant at 10% and negatively influenced willingness of respondents to take up agripreneurship. This implies that with increase in unemployment there is likelihood that the willingness to take up agripreneurship will decrease and the marginal effect shows that the decreases is likely to be to the tune of 39%. This obviously revealed that to enhance participation enabling environment must be provided.

Inadequate agricultural facilities and lack of government support

Inadequate agricultural facilities and lack of government support is significant at (1%) and negatively influenced willingness of respondents to take up agripreneurship. This implies that with inadequate agricultural facilities and lack of government support there is likelihood that the willingness to take up agripreneurship will decrease and the marginal effect shows that the decreases is likely to be to the tune of 49%.

Insecurity/herdsmen problems

Insecurity and herdsmen problems is significant at (5%) and negatively influenced willingness of respondents to take up agripreneurship. This implies that with insecurity and herdsmen problems there is likelihood that the willingness to take up agripreneurship will decrease by 2%.

Table 7. Determinants of undergraduate students of agriculture's willingness to participate in agripreneurship (Mean VIF =1.4)

	Logit Regression Result		Marginal effect	
Variables	**Coefficient**	**P>|z|**	**Coefficient**	**P>|z|**
Age	0.04	0.14	0.10	0.14
Sex	0. 806	0.001	0.045**	0.04
Previous participation and experience	2.90	0.000	0.61***	0.000
Years of participation	0.17	0.008	0.42**	0.009
Vision to be an employer of labour	1.26	0.12	0.30*	0.09
High unemployment rate	-1.66	0.053	-0.39*	0.02
Parental support	1.32	0.20	0.29	0.12
Inadequate agricultural facilities and lack of government support/credit facilities.	-2.15***	0.000	-0.49***	0.000
Insecurity/ herdsmen problems	-0.037**	0.006	-0.02**	0.001
Constant	-3.07	0.05		
Log likelihood = -50.70; Prob > chi^2 = 0.000; LR chi^2 (8) = 67.59; Pseudo R^2 = 0.41; No of obs = 120				

***1% significant level; **5% significant level; *10% significant level

Constraints Militating Against Respondents' Willingness to Participation in Agripreneurship

The major perceived constraints according to their severity in militating against the uptake of agripreneurship after graduation by students of agriculture were; lack of start-up capital with a mean score of (3.38), inadequate infrastructural facilities with mean score of (3.36), marketing challenges with mean score of (3.23), poor accessibility to agricultural loan with mean score of (3.13), they ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th respectively. Other constraints identified that militated against respondents' willingness to participate in agripreneurship have mean scores below 3.0 indicating that they were not so severe. These were poor government policies implementation and funding of agriculture (2.95), follow by wrong public perception on agripreneurship (2.74), the next was lack of information on agricultural technologies and innovations (2.60), followed by past failure experiences in agripreneurship (2.52), then discouragement from parent/ guardian (2.41), then fear of vagaries or failure of weather (2.31) and last in the four Likert Scale was religious belief on production of certain live stocks (1.92).

Table 8. Constraints militating against willingness to participation in agripreneurship

Limiting factors	Very severe	Severe	Moderately severe	Not severe	Mean	Rank
Lack of start- up capital	60(50.0)	35(29.2)	9(7.5)	3(2.5)	3.38	1st
Inadequate agricultural infrastructural facilities	67(55.8)	57(47.5)	12(10.0)	6(5.0)	3.34	2nd
Marketing challenges	47(39.2)	48(40.0)	13(10.8)	3(2.5)	3.24	3rd
Poor accessibility to agricultural loans	37(30.8)	65(54.2)	14(11.7)	4(3.3)	3.13	4th
Poor government policies implementation and funding on agriculture	29(24.2)	62(51.7)	26(21.7)	3(2.5)	2.95	5th
Wrong public perception on agripreneur	25(20.8)	51(42.5)	33(27.5)	11(9.2)	2.74	6th
Lack of information on agricultural technologies and innovations	20(16.7)	44(36.7)	43(35.8)	13(10.8)	2.60	7th
Past failure experience in agripreneurship	15(12.5)	50(41.7)	37(30.8)	18(15.0)	2.52	8th
Discouragement from parent	30(25.0)	20(16.7)	39(32.5)	31(25.8)	2.41	9th
Weather failure	11(9.2)	31(25.8)	61(50.8)	17(14.2)	2.31	10th
Religious belief on production of certain live stocks	11(19.2)	17(14.2)	43(35.8)	49(40.8)	1.92	11th

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study provided empirical evidence that youth willingness to participate in agripreneurship is hinged on gender, previous participation and experience, vision to be an employer of labour, state of security, government support by providing of adequate facilities and enabling environment/credit facilities.

Policy implications and recommendations:

(i) The willingness of female youth in taking up agripreneurship is low, therefore policy that will spur them into being willing like training, provision of inputs and credit facilities among others should be preferentially extended to them.

(ii) Experience, training participation were the main driver for youth's participation in agripreneurship, therefore, they should be exposed to agribusiness early in life. Inclusion of agripreneurship training in their early school days will enhance their willingness by giving them a vision of future opportunities in agriculture.

(iii) Government needs to improve the security situation by allowing community policing so as to encourage our youths to stay securely on the farm.

(iv) Government needs to revitalize farm settlement scheme and provide the needed incentives in form of land, housing, poultry houses and pens, machineries and equipment for youths to work with.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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