

Barriers of Youths' Participation in Farming Activities in Developing Countries: The Case of Akinyele Local Government Areas of Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper identifies barriers of youths' participation in farming activities in a developing society. This is predicated on the fact that poor participation of youths in agricultural production is largely the bane of agricultural development, food insecurity and high rate of unemployment. Primary data were used for this study; following a survey of youths' farmers in the study area. Significant relationship existed between the barriers facing youths and their participation in farming activities ($r=0.645$, $p=0.05$). Youths in the study area are constrained by lack of farm inputs such as capital, inadequate extension agents' visit and training on the use of improved technology. The constraints, if not checked may affect the food security of the nation.

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1. Introduction

Nigeria has an estimated cultivable land of 71.4 million hectares, with a farming population of 38 million people (Kuta, 2004). The country has a comparatively rich agro-diversity, with a wide array of food and cash crops. In spite of this obvious strength, there is widespread poverty, hunger and food insecurity in both urban and rural populations. Poverty and food insecurity were due to low agricultural production. According to Adejare and Arimi (2013), Nigeria agriculture is faced with various problems that prevent reasonable development and cause decline in agricultural sector. This decline is due to the nature of its production and the problems underlying its improvement. However, labour is the most important input in agricultural production because it is required in carrying out farm activities such as land clearing, ploughing, weeding, fertilizer application, pesticide application, harvesting and other farming activities. Agricultural labour forces comprise old people and youths. Youths have vital roles to play in agricultural and rural development" (Malatest, 2002; Odhiambo, 2001). Youths are generally regarded as leaders of tomorrow. They are also a vital source of manpower for development and constitute a very significant work force in rural communities (Ekong, 1998; Ommani, 2011). This is particularly true considering the fact that more than 95 percent of the crops and livestock products in most African communities are from rural farmers.

Youths have been differently defined worldwide, Okogun (2004:p.5) declared that the "youthful period is the time when a man's latest

power and attributes are developed to highest potentials". It is a period when man's intellect is at its highest peak. In Nigeria, youths could be described as any person between the age of 16 and 30 years and they make up 80 percent of the total population and as well constitute about 76 percent of agricultural labour force (Okogun, 2004; Gameren et al, 2005; Fajans, Zaletta, Lamb & Kleinman, 2005: p 13).

The agricultural production in Nigeria has been faced with different problems in varying degrees since independence due to non-recognition of the role of youth in agricultural production. The performance of the agricultural sector has been dwindling and falling from 60 percent GDP to 31 percent by the early 1980's. Production declined because of low tariff on imported goods that favoured importation and the demand for labour in other sector of the economy which encouraged migration of farm workers especially the youths to towns and cities. They also left rural areas in search of comfort (e.g gainful employment and social amenities). Inadequate or non-availability of rural infrastructures hinders the growth and development of agricultural productivity and the entire community in rural areas.

At present, Nigerian agricultural production is characterized by rudimentary technology, challenges of weeds, pests and diseases, draught and erratic rainfall (in some agro-ecological zones) and a host of other debilitating factors (Adisa, 2011). These factors culminate in poor yields, low produce quality and subsequent low income for farmers. These are serious disincentives for an agricultural based nation that will participate in emerging world economy.

There is a need to further strengthen the farming system through a process of adopting improved technology and as well encourage youth participation in agricultural production intensification. This may be why Hamiton (1990) posited that “when events have not taken a favourable course, situations involving rejections are likely to occur”. Consequently, in as much as these youths still continue to be involved in drudgery agricultural practices, poverty and stunted life, they would seek whatever seems to them the best way of sustenance, especially in other non-agricultural sectors in the cities and towns. This is dangerous to agricultural development especially when the generation of the current old and aged farmers who are the main food producers in the country would need to be replaced by the younger people. If the youths are not mobilized and motivated to participate in farming activities in their environment, the country is bound to be faced with great famine, penury and other social vices such as kidnapping and robbery attack in the near future.

Youths and their potentials are a well-known fact in Nigeria. They constitute about 80% of the total population that make up the rural areas and as such are supposed to be actively involved in the farming activities to increase food and livestock production but they are with certain problems which prevent agricultural development of the nation. Some of the problems are poor agricultural development programmes which are designed to increase food and livestock production such as the “Operation feed the nation”, during the Obasanjo’s military regime (1978), “Back to land” by the civilian government of Alhaji Sheu Shagari (1979), and “Better life for Rural People” by the General Babangida’s military regime e.t.c. failed because they were developed through a top-down approach without recognizing or taking into consideration participation of the youths in these programmes. Most youths have strong apathy toward participation in agricultural production (Jibowo, 1998; Adedoyin, 2005; Adewale *et al.*, 2005). This has resulted in mass unemployment and lack of sustainable livelihood activities among the youths (Breitenbach, 2006). Apathy of the youths toward agriculture that generated mass unemployment has further led most young people into cultism, prostitution and street begging, among others in order to make money (Sodique, 2006). The traditional formal educational system which equipped youths with theoretical knowledge at the expense of the practical contributes a bottleneck of youths venturing into agricultural production. Social changes due to modernization also affect youth participation in agricultural activities. Akinyele local government is a traditional food producing area in Oyo state with high level of its youths participating in farming activities.

However, youths’ participation in agricultural activities have dwindled due to modernization and other social changes leaving old people in farming. With fewer youths into agriculture, the long-term future of the agricultural sector is in doubt. In Nigeria, the development of the agricultural sector, therefore, depends on participation of young people, more especially the rural youths.

It is against this background that the following questions were raised:

- What are the socio-economic characteristics of the youths in the study area?
- What are the constraints to youths’ participation in agricultural activities in the study area?
- What is the farming activities engaged in by the youths in the study area?
- What are the levels of youths’ participation in agricultural activities in the study area?

The general objective of the study is to identify barriers of youths’ participation in farming activities in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria with a view to encourage youth participation in agricultural production. This will reduce the unemployment rate in the country.

The specific objectives are to

- determine the socio-economic characteristics of rural youths in Akinyele Local Government Areas of Oyo State
- identify the farming activities youths engaged in,
- ascertain youths’ levels of participation in farming activities,
- identify constraints facing youths farmers in the study area,

Hypothesis of the study.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between the constraints faced by the youths and their participation in farming activities in the study area.

2. Material and Methods

The study was carried out in Akinyele Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria. There are 40 registered rural youth organizations in the local government area. The members of these organizations are involved in various farming activities. Four youth’s organizations were randomly selected out of the 40 organizations. There are at least 115 members in each organization in which simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 35 youths’ farmers from each of the organizations to give a total number of 140 respondents. Data were collected using structure interview schedule and the aid of questionnaire. The instrument for data collected was pretested and an Alpha coefficient reliability of 0.82 was obtained. Information elicited from the

respondents include types of agricultural activities involved in by the respondents, their level of participation in farming activities, socio-economic characteristics and barriers faced by youth farmers. The barriers were ranked in order of severity into low, moderate and high severe by the respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used

in analyzing the data. The appropriate descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts and percentage were used while the hypothesis was tested using spearman rho's correlation.

3. Results

The results are shown in Tables 1-7.

Table 1.0 *Distribution of respondents based on their socio-economic characteristics in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State.*

Socio-economics characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
15-19	12	9.0
20-24	42	30.0
25- 30	86	61.0
Total	140	100.0
Sex		
Male	93	66.0
Female	47	34.0
Total	140	100.0
Religion		
Christians	92	66.0
Islam	23	16.0
Traditional	25	18.0
Total	140	100.0
Educational level		
No formal education	13	9.0
Primary	45	32.0
Secondary	82	59.0
Total	140	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2012.

Table 2.0: *Distribution of respondents according to their engagement in farming activities in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State. (n=140).*

Farming activities	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Land clearing	107	76.0	33	24.0
Harrowing	-	-	140	100.0
Ploughing	-	-	140	100.0
Ridging	111	79.0	29	21.0
Planting	114	81.0	26	19.0
Weeding	108	77.0	32	23.0
Thinning	89	64.0	51	36.0
Fertilizer application	42	30.0	98	70.0
Spraying	35	25.0	105	75.0
Harvesting	117	84.0	23	16.0
Processing	55	39.0	85	61.0
Storage	89	64.0	51	36.0
Marketing	78	56.0	62	44.0
Livestock feeding	52	37.0	88	63.0
Cleaning of livestock house	57	41.0	83	59.0
Treating sick animals	50	36.0	90	64.0

Source: Field survey, 2012

Table 3.0: Distribution of respondents according to participation in farming activities in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State (n=140).

Farming activities	Never		Occasionally		Always	
	Freq	Percentage	Freq	percentage	Freq	Percentage
Land clearing	-	-	40	29.0	100	71.0
Harrowing	140	100.0	-	-	-	-
Ploughing	140	100.0	-	-	-	-
Ridging	-	-	47	33.0	93	67.0
Planting	-	-	34	24.0	106	76.0
Weeding	9	6.0	35	25.0	96	69.0
Thinning	15	11.0	68	49.0	57	41.0
Fertilizer application	37	26.0	46	33.0	57	41.0
Spraying of chemicals	58	41.0	52	37.0	30	22.0
Harvesting	-	-	42	30.0	98	70.0
Processing	25	18.0	53	38.0	62	44.0
Storage	4	3.0	88	63.0	47	34.0
Marketing	-	-	64	46.0	76	54.0
Livestock feeding	55	39.0	59	42.0	26	19.0
Cleaning of livestock house	55	39.0	50	36.0	35	25.0
Treatment of sick animals.	51	36.0	54	39.0	35	25.0

Source: Field survey, 2012.

Table 3.1: Distribution of respondents based on their level of participation in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State.

Level of participation	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
High	86	61.0	24.0
Low	55	39.0	
Total	140	100.0	

Table 4.0: Distribution of respondents according to livestock production in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State.

Livestock production	YES		NO	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Poultry	95	68.0	45	32.0
Goat	106	76.0	34	24.0
Sheep	98	70.0	42	30.0
Pig	73	52.0	67	48.0
Cattle	47	34.0	93	66.0
Snailery	54	39.0	86	61.0

Source: Field survey, 2012.

Table 5.0: Distribution of respondents according to type of crops produced in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State (n=140).

Types of crops grown	YES		NO	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Cassava	112	80.0	28	20.0
Yam	114	81.0	26	19.0
Maize	107	76.0	33	24.0
Cowpea	48	34.0	92	66.0
Vegetable	97	69.0	43	31.0
Garden eggs	94	67.0	46	33.0
Okro	101	72.0	39	28.0
Melon	98	70.0	42	30.0
Pepper	63	45.0	77	55.0
Cocoyam	99	71.0	41	29.0

Source: Field survey, 2012.

Table 6.0: Distribution of respondents based on constraints facing farming activities in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State (n=140).

Constraints	Severe		Moderate		Low		Not a constraint.	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Transportation	81	58.0	31	22.0	16	11.0	12	9.0
Inadequate practical training	34	24.0	23	16.0	26	19.0	57	41.0
Poor implementation of government policies	52	37.0	35	32.0	26	19.0	17	12.0
Capital	90	64.0	22	16.0	28	20.0	-	-
Gender	24	17.0	34	24.0	36	26.0	46	33.0
High cost of inputs	78	56.0	32	23.0	17	12.0	13	9.0
Communal conflict	26	19.0	16	11.0	45	32.0	53	38.0
Insufficient land	28	20.0	40	29.0	51	36.0	21	15.0
Inadequate extension services	88	63.0	21	15.0	31	22.0	-	-
Inadequate water supply	72	51.0	35	25.0	21	15.0	12	9.0
Lack of interest.	23	16.0	34	24.0	35	25.0	48	34.0

Source: Field survey, 2012

Table 7.0: Relationship between youths' participation in agricultural activities and constraints faced in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State.

Variables	r-value	Df	p-value	Decision
Constraints and participation.	0.645	138	0.05	Significant

N=140

4. Discussions

A large proportion (61.0%) of the respondents fell within 25 and 30 years. This implies that the youths are in their active ages. When proper knowledge of agriculture is inculcated into youths at an early age, they will be interested in farming activities. Males and females do participate in farming activities as shown in Table 1.0 but males participate more than females. This may be due to drudgery nature of the work. This study is supported by Okogun (2004) who stated that males are more interested in farming activities because of the tedious nature of farming. Sixty-six percent of the respondents were Christians while 18.0% were traditional worshippers. This finding shows that all the respondents are members of a religious organisation; developmental agencies such as agricultural extension agents can target this body as a medium of disseminating information that will improve the productivity of the youths in the study area. This finding is lent credibility by Cartmel and Furlong (2005) who explained that informal networks provided young people with information about forthcoming employment opportunities or personal recommendations for jobs. Most (91.0 %) of the youth farmers were educated. High level of education may help to find solutions to the problems facing their farming activities in the study area.

Table 2.0 shows various farming activities involved in by youths in the study area. Majority of the respondents are involved in land clearing (76.0%), ridging (79.0%), planting (81.0%) and harvesting of

agricultural produce (84.0%) while few are involved in chemical and fertilizer applications. Few involvement of youths in chemical and fertilizer application may be due to inaccessibility of the inputs. All the respondents are not involved in harrowing and ploughing. This implies that farming in the study area still depends on the use of crude implements such as hoes and cutlasses. There is a limit to which farmers can cultivate using hoes and cutlasses. Therefore, government should assist the farmers by making tractors available for hiring at the local government secretariat at affordable price. This will encourage youths to increase their farm sizes and participate more in farming activities. This study is supported by Arimi (2005) who observed that rural youths participated more in agricultural production when they are provided with necessary farm inputs such as fertilizer, tractor and capital.

Table 3.0 reveals that all the respondents in the study area participate in both crops and animal production but there are variations in their levels of participation in various farming activities. Respondents are always involved in planting of crops (76.0%) than feeding of livestock (26.0%). This may affect the quantity of livestock production in the area. Most (66.0%) of the respondents are not always involved in the storage of their produce which could be as a result of unavailability of storage facilities. It is shown in Table 3.1 that most of the youths participated highly in farming activities while 39.0 percent had low participation score. This result is consistent with that of Ewebiyi (2013) who reported

that farming is still engaging more people in rural south-west, Nigeria, despite proliferation of non-farm activities. This finding, therefore, implies that there are variations in the levels of youth participation in farming activities; this could be because of constraints faced by youth farmers in the area. Respondents (39.0%) with low level of participation should be encouraged to be actively involved in farming by providing adequate farming inputs for them.

Seventy-six percent of the respondents engaged in goat production; seventy percent are involved in sheep production while few respondents are involved in cattle (34.0 %) and snailery (39.0 %) production respectively. The extension agents in the study area should encourage the youths in the area to be involved more in snailery production because of its higher return potential. This finding also revealed that youths' participation in other livestock productions is low; they should, therefore, be encouraged to participate more in livestock production in the study area because livestock production plays vital role in Nigerian food security. Animals from livestock provide meat, milk and eggs for human consumption, as well as hides and skin for the domestic industry (Damisa et al, 2010).

Table 5.0 indicates that the respondents engage in different crop production. However, the respondents engage more in yam (81.0%), cassava (80.0%) and maize production (76.0%) while few of the respondents engage in cowpea and pepper production. The development agencies should focus on the crop produced by the farmers to assist in providing inputs and other assistance to farmers.

The constraints facing youths who engaged in farming activities in this locality are ranked in order of severity which include poor transportation, lack of capital, inadequate extension services, poor access to inputs and inadequate water supply and unsubstantial (inadequate) agricultural practical training. Unsubstantial practical training of youths in the nation's agricultural institutes is one of the banes of youths' participation in agricultural production. Most of the nation's agricultural training institutions are theoretically sound at the expense of practical sessions. This limited practical knowledge makes youths venturing in agricultural enterprise unsuitable. This could be due to under-funding of the nation's institutions that limit their capacity to conduct practical training as necessary.

Poor road networks coupled with inadequate vehicles make transportation of produce from farm to city markets very difficult. This often leads to loss of substantial quantities and qualities of perishable produce, thereby reducing the income of the farmers. In the same vein, inadequate water for domestic and farm use, especially during the dry season makes dry

season cultivation impossible, hence majority of the youths are idle when there is no rainfall. Akinyele local government area is now becoming an urban and the occupation of the inhabitants is changing due to increase in population and urbanization. As the population is increasing, there is need to improve upon the traditional farming system to suit the modern society. The use of crude implement should be minimized among farmers. It has been found that lack of farm inputs such as farm machinery or use of crude implement does not allow youths farmers to increase (farm size) hectare cultivation (Arimi, 2005). This is predominant among young farmers in the area thereby limiting their participation in farming activities. Poor extension agents' visit and training of youths on the use of improved technology are also very severe in the study area. All these constraints are impacting negatively on youths' participation in agricultural production in the local government area.

Agricultural institutions in Nigeria need to revisit their curriculum and see that agricultural training meet the need of the youth for them to contribute to economic development. More practical sessions should be given a priority if the training is to be useful for the trainees. Government needs to revisit their policies on education. Government should fund agricultural institution well, knowing full well that societal transformation depend on the level of the education of its citizenry. Youths linkage with sources of farm inputs such as sources of capital and improved farming methods will motivate them to participate actively in agricultural production.

Table 7.0 reveals that there is a significant relationship between the constraints facing the farmers and their participation in farming activities ($r=0.645$, $p=0.05$). This implies that lack of capital and other farming inputs hinders youths' engagement in agricultural activities, thus threatening food security. This finding is supported by Tasie, Wilcox, and Uche (2013) who asserted that agricultural development has been very slow compared to other sectors of the economy because of insufficient fund inflows to farmers. In a similar vein, Adeyemi (2008) and Ehiagiamusoe (2008), in separate studies, contended that if credits were made available to farmers, the slow growth of the agricultural sector would develop more rapidly and that credit facilities for small-scale farmers serve as catalysts that activate the engine of growth enabling it to mobilize the forces within it and to advance in the direction expected or planned for it.

Conclusion and recommendations.

Youths in the study area are facing some constraints which affect their participation in agricultural activities. These constraints include lack of capital, inadequate extension agents' visit and training on the use of improved technology. Most of

the youths still depend on the use of crude implement such as hoes and cutlasses which has limited them to subsistence level of production. These constraints had significantly affected their participation in agricultural activities. If the trend is not checked it could affect the food security of the nation. Youths' participation will, therefore, be effective if adequate incentives are provided when needed and the traditional farming system is improved upon to suit the modern society through the use of improved technologies. This will serve as a motivating factor and increase their level of participation in farming activities. Basic amenities such as motorable roads and electricity should be made available to these teeming youths. This will improve the marketability of farm produce and easy transportation. Availability of farming inputs, water supply and adequate extension services will help in boosting the morale of youths and increase participation in agricultural production thereby promoting food security and subsequent rural development.

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