

PERCEPTION OF YOUTHS ON GOVERNMENT AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study assessed the perception of youths about Osun State Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Programmes (OREAP) in Osun State, Nigeria with a view to examine the socio-economic characteristics of the participating youths and their perceptions towards OREAP. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select 113 respondents. Interview schedule was used to collect data which were subjected to descriptive and inferential analysis to test the hypothesis. The results show that the mean age of the participants was 28.5 years with standard deviation of 4.3, about 62.8 percent were males with an average annual income of N166, 477.0K. Also, about 67.3 percent of the respondents indicated that the reason for participating in the programme was to be a well-trained farmer. Findings revealed that sources of information ($\chi^2 = 4.937, p \leq 0.05$), occupation ($\chi^2 = 7.224, p \leq 0.01$) were significantly associated to the perception of youths towards OREAP. Farm size ($r = -0.367, P \leq 0.01$), capital expenses ($r = -0.655, P \leq 0.01$) and income per annum ($r = -0.310, P \leq 0.05$) were significantly but negative related to the perception of youth towards OREAP. It was concluded that the main factors that limit youth involvement in the programme are inadequate materials services and finance among others. The major factors influencing youth participation in OREAP are youth unemployment, youth interest in agriculture and information availability.

Key words: agricultural programmes, assessment, perception, youth

INTRODUCTION

Although “agriculture remains a key component of Nigeria’s economy, and currently contributes about 40 percent of the GDP and employing about 70 percent of the active population, the sector has however, significantly underperformed its potential”. This has been clearly manifested in the high cost of food nationwide, food insecurity both at the household and national level and malnutrition especially in children. It is unfortunate that the government of this country has not been able to engineer a sustainable agricultural development that would have ensure both National and household food security, improved rural livelihoods and indeed, make Nigeria’s agriculture competitive in the world agricultural market today. The current situation of food insecurity, rural poverty, and un-competitiveness of Nigeria in the world global food market is seemed not to be acceptable to government at all levels. The poor state of youth participation in

agricultural activities in Nigeria has been a matter of great concern among agriculturists, agricultural researchers as well as administrators. The term “youth” has been viewed as a concept and defined as the period in an individual’s life, which runs between the end of childhood and entry into the world of work (Onuekwusi and Effiong, 2002) [12]. People in this age bracket definitely constitute a sizeable chunk of a nations population on which the burden of nation building falls. The present poor state of decline in agricultural production was dimmed the hope of raising the level of agricultural production to ensure sustainable food security for the ever increasing population of Nigeria (Daudu *et. al.*, 2009) [5]. With fewer youth into agriculture, the expected benefits accrue agricultural development may not come to reality. The development of the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy therefore depends on the young people, more especially the rural youths. This is because a large population of youth represents the link between the present and the future as well as a

reservoir of labour (Muhammad-Lawal *et. al.*, 2009) [9].

A major concern of the federal Government in Nigeria is how to tackle the problem of unemployment among the youths in the country. Various regions in Nigeria have designed and executed several self-empowerment programmes to enhance the economic empowerment of youths (Umeh and Odo, 2002) [16]. One of such programmes is Osun State Agricultural Youth Empowerment programme (OSSAYEP) [13]. The programme is to equip about 1,200 young school leavers annually with modern skills and techniques in the agricultural practices with intensive monitoring by government for the first year. They will be assisted with farm land, farm inputs and credit facilities (OSSAYEP, 2004) [13].

Other development programmes include the Agricultural Development Programmes; the National Agricultural Land Development Authority; the Strategic Grains Reserves Programmes; the Programme for Accelerated Wheat Production; as well as the development of the development of artisanal fishery, small ruminant production, pasture and grazing reserves among others. These programmes were conceived to promote utilization of land resources through subsidized land development, supply of farm inputs, services and credit extension to farmers, and institutional supports for produce marketing cooperatives.

In order to arrest youth unemployment and the attendant social menace in the Osun State, government approved the commencement of Osun Rural Enterprise and Agriculture Programme (OREAP) Youth Academy. The programme is expected to equip 610 youth annually with modern skills and techniques in the agricultural practices across the state. They will also be assisted with farmland, farm inputs and credit facilities after forming themselves into viable cooperatives groups. Another target of the program is to reduce or eradicate completely rural/urban migration of youths. The training centres for the programme are located in nine communities in the state namely: Osogbo (Kelebe), Ila-Orangun, Ede, Ile-Ogbo, Waasimi (Irewole),

Ilerin (Ilesa), Esa-Odo, Ile-ife and Oyan.

Statement of research problem

The poor state of youth participation in agricultural activities in Nigeria has been a matter of great concern among agriculturists, agricultural researchers as well as administrators. This is because the present decline in agricultural production dimmed the hope of raising the level of agricultural production to ensure sustainable food security for the ever increasing population of Nigeria (Daudu *et al.*, 2009) [5]. The development of the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy therefore depends on the young people, more especially the rural youths. The problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria is presently a source of concern to all. There is increase in population and geometrical increase in youth population with an attendant low or zero employment for the learning youths of Nigeria. This situation is particularly prevalent in the rural areas and eventually leading to rural-urban migration of the youths. Efforts have being made by the some government administration to minimize the menace of youth unemployment by establishing programmes. Among them was Osun State Agricultural Development Program (OSSADEP) established in 1992 with mandates to supply of modern agricultural inputs like improved seeds, provision of necessary and appropriate guidance and supervision for the agricultural activities of participants.

The new government administration was not convinced with achievement of the programme which led to establishment of OREAP Youth Academy with the goal to equipping 610 youth annually with modern skills and techniques in the agricultural practices. Despite the establishment of OREAP, the level of youth participation in agriculture have not being encouraging with attendant insecurity of food in the state. These arouse the quest to assess OREAP among the youth in Osun State with aims of providing answers to the following questions: what are socio-economic characteristics of OREAP participating youth? and what are the perception of participating youths about OREAP?

The main objective of this study was to assess the Osun State Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Programme (OREAP) among youths in Osun State, Nigeria. It specifically examine the socio-economic characteristics of the youth participating in OREAP; and determine the perception of participating youths about OREAP. The hypothesis tested in the study was that there is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the youths and the perception of participating youths about OREAP.

Theoretical framework for study

The study was rooted on decision theory propounded by Condorcet in 1793 [4] which states that human behavior is goal directed in the presence of options, human decides on option that best achieves their goals. The theory was developed by Condorcet in 1793 when he put forward the first general theory of the stages of a decision process. Modern proponents of decision theory include Simon (1960) and Dewey (1978) [6]. Dewey (1978) put forward the five stages of problem solving; these stages were later modified by Simon to three principal phases of decision making namely "finding occasions for making a decision; finding possible courses of action; and choosing among courses of action." (Hansson 1994) [7]. The theory is concerned with identifying the values, uncertainties and other issues relevant in a given decision, its rationality, and the resulting optimal decision. It is concerned with the choices of individual and focuses on how an individual use freedom.

The theory is applicable to the study in that it serves as interplay between the variables in the conceptual model for the perception of youths about OREAP. The actors (youths) in this study make a decision based on their perception about the programme (OREAP).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Study Area

The study was conducted in Osun State in Nigeria. The state with an agrarian population of about 70% covers a vast landmass of 15,875 square kilometers and lies between

longitude 6 °51'N and 8 °10'N on the North-South pole and latitudes 4 ° 05'E and 5°02'E on the East - West pole with estimated population of about 4,137,627 (National Population Commission, 2006). The indigenes of the state are majorly Yorubas with non-indigenes from different part of the country. Traditionally, the people engage in agriculture and produce sufficient food mainly for domestic consumption. Major cash crops cultivated in the state include maize, yam, cocoa, pepper, vegetable, plantain, and banana.

Primary using interview schedule and secondary data using printed materials were used for the study. The population of the study was youth aged between 13 and 30 years. Multistage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. In the first stage, nine training centres for OREAP were identified namely: Osogbo (Kelebe), Ila-Orangun, Ede, Ile-Ogbo, Waasimi (Irewole), Ilerin (Ilesa), Esa-Odo, Ile-ife and Oyan. In the second stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select one training center each from the three agricultural development zone (ADPs) - Osogbo zone, Iwo zone and Ife/Ijesha zone. The training centre selected for the study were Ede training center, Ilesha training center and Ile-ogbo training center. There were 92, 117, 73 participants in Ede, Ilesha and Ile-ogbo training centers respectively. In the third stage, proportionate sampling technique was used to select 40 percent of the youth participants from each of the three selected training centers making a total of 113 respondents. Data collected were coded, summarized and subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis used were frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation while the inferential statistics used were Pearson product moment correlation analysis and chi-square analysis to determine the significant relationship between the variables investigated.

Measurement of variable

Dependent variable

Factors that encourage the participation of youth in OREAP were the dependent variable and was measure using eight statements

scored on a five-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) =5, Agreed (A) = 4, Undecided (U) = 3, Disagreed (DA) = 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. They were required to indicate the factors that encourage participation in the programme based on the options provided as strongly agreed, agreed undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed. The maximum score for a respondent was calculated as 40 while minimum was 8.

Independent variables

The independent variables include both the personal and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents such as sex, age, ethnic group, occupation, religion, marital status, years of formal education, income level and source of information. Nominal variables such as sex, marital status, religion, ethnic group, level of formal education, and source of information about OREAP were coded for the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-economic characteristics

Results in Table 1 show that the mean age of the respondents was 28.5 years with standard deviation of 4.3. This implies that most of the respondents were found within the World Development bulletin of 1991 report categorization of youth as people who fall within the age bracket of 12 – 30 years. According to Jibowo (1989) [8] people in this age category possess some characteristics such as innovation proneness, minimal risk aversion, faster reaction rate, less fear of failure, greater physical strength, greater knowledge acquisition propensity, love for adventure and faster rate of learning among others. This indicated that more of the participants were in their active productive years, which revealed that OREAP trains people who could be regarded as productive assets to the society and vital sources of manpower for development. Higher percentage (62.8%) were male, this is in agreement of findings of (Ogunremi *et. al.*, 2012) [10] which indicated that in most rural farming communities, men are more inclined to farming while women only occupy the position of farmers' wives and also women

were found to have negative attitude towards agriculture. Higher percentages (68.1%) were single martially and conform to the findings of Chikezie *et. al.*, (2012) [3] and Ogunremi *et. al.*, (2012) [10] that since a high percentage of the youth are single and young; they had latent energy in them to go into entrepreneurship training without distraction from family members. However, this finding contradicts the findings of Perez-Morales (1996) [14] that young people in rural areas get married earlier and become involved in adult responsibilities.

Also, higher percentage (67.3%) had 13 years and above of formal education and their mean years of formal education of the respondents was 14.3 years with standard deviation of 1.9 years. The finding indicates that more than 50 percent of the respondents had high literacy level which may be important to access and make use of the agricultural information disseminated to them during the OREAP training. This corroborates with the finding of Amasa and Tashikalma (2003) [1] who posited that education has the capacities to influence people's acceptability of new ideas and technology imparted on them through training programs. However, their occupational activities show that 31 percent of the respondents were traders, 19.5 percent were students looking for tertiary schools admission, and 15.0 percent were into farming activities among others. This contradicts the findings of Saburi (2012) [15] that posited that the dominant occupation of the participants in OREAP is farming. About 50% of the youth had personal farm and it is expected that ownership of farm is necessary so as to practice innovation being taught to the participants during the OREAP training. Their mean year of farm experience was 5.5 years with standard deviation of 2.8. This finding reveals that the youths with farming experience of less than 6 years dominates the respondents. This is in agreement with the findings of Muhammad-Lawal *et.al.*, (2009) [9] which revealed that the experiences of youth in farming depend on the skills acquired and their interest. This could however be due to the nature of the programme which is meant specifically for the youths.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to their socio-economics characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean \pm SD
Age (years)			
20-24	14	12.4	
25-29	56	49.6	
30-34	32	28.3	
35+	11	9.7	
Total	113	100	28.5 \pm 4.3
Sex			
Male	71	62.8	
Female	42	37.2	
Total	113	100	
Marital status			
Single	77	68.1	
Married	35	31.0	
Divorced	1	0.9	
Total	113	100	
Number of year spent in school			
7-12	37	32.7	
13+	76	67.3	
Total	113	100	14.3 \pm 1.9
Occupation			
Trading	35	31.0	
Student	22	19.5	
Civil servant	2	1.8	
Farming	17	15.0	
Motorcyclist	13	11.5	
Food vendor	1	0.9	
Sales rep	1	0.9	
Printing	1	0.9	
Others	10	8.8	
No occupation	11	9.7	
Total	113	100	
If any personal farm			
Yes	56	49.6	
No	57	51.4	
Total	113	100	
Year of farming experience			
0	2	1.8	
<6	100	88.5	
6-10	9	8.0	
10-20	1	0.9	
20+	1	0.9	
Total	113	100	5.5 \pm 2.8

Source: Field survey, 2015

Farm size (in hectares)

Results in Table 2 show that the average farm size of the respondents is 1.8 hectares with standard deviation of 2.2. This indicates more than 50 percent of the respondents have average farm size which may enhance practice of the knowledge imparted on them through the OREAP training. This finding is in contradiction with the finding of Olagunju and Ogunniyi (2006) [11] that majority of the people in South Western Nigeria have

relatively small cultivated land areas. The large farm size among the respondents may be attributed to their access to family land for farming. Also, their mean income is N166,477.0k with standard deviation of N152208.2K while their capital expenses are N58942.2K with standard deviation of N67760.3K. The high capital expenses incurred by majority of the respondents may be due to the kind of farm size (large) they possess.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by farm size (in hectares), capital expenses (in naira) and income level per year (in naira)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Average ± SD
Farm size(in hectares)			
<1	1	0.9	
1-2.99	43	38.1	
3.00+	69	61.1	
Total	113	100	1.8 ± 2.2
Capital expenses(in naira)			
<100000	41	36.3	
200000-299999	3	2.7	
300000+	69	61.1	
Total	113	100	N58942.2k ± N67760.3k
Income level per year(in naira)			
<216000	38	33.6	
216000-233999	3	2.7	
234000-251999	1	0.9	
252000+	71	62.9	
Total	113	100	N166477.0k ± N152208.2k
Source: Field survey, 2015			

Sources of information and the reason for applying for training in OREAP

Data in Table 3 show that about 17.7 percent of the respondents obtained information about OREAP from friends, 3.5 percent of them got to know about the program through relatives, 8.8 percent obtained information through television, 24.8 percent got to know about the program through radio and 45.1 percent of them got to know about OREAP through Osun State Youth Empowerment Scheme (OYES) [13]. This implies that OYES played a vital role in disseminating information about OREAP training in Osun State and very few of the respondents got information about OREAP from relatives and television. This contradicts the findings of Anyanwu *et.al.*, (2002) [1] who had earlier reported that young farmers use more of non-professional interpersonal sources of information such as friend to enhance their involvement in training programs. Also, about 67.3 percent of the respondents applied for training in OREAP to become a well-trained farmer and 32.7 percent applied to obtain empowerment towards eradicating existing vicious cycle of poverty. This finding implies that these two reasons serve as drive for effective participation of youth in the OREAP training. This in line with findings of Saburi (2012) [15] that most of the participants enrolled for

the training in OREAP to become a well-trained farmer.

Factors influencing youth participation in OREAP

The factors influencing youth participation in OREAP are ranked in order of importance in Table 4. In all, youth unemployment and environment were rated highest, followed by interest in agriculture, information availability. From the findings, it can be deduced that the respondents agreed that youth unemployment, environment, interest in agriculture, information availability, availability of incentives, adequate credit facilities provision, availability of capital and inputs are the major factors influencing youth participation in OREAP while they are undecided about friends and family influence as a factor. These factors could be explored in motivating youth towards participation in OREAP training.

Factors limiting youth involvement in OREAP

Data in Table 5 show racking of factors limiting youth involvement in the program, inadequate needed materials was rated the highest, followed by lack of adequate infrastructural support.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to Sources of information and the reason for applying for training

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Through friends	20	17.7
Relatives	4	3.5
Television	10	8.8
Radio	28	24.8
Others	51	45.1
Total	113	100
To be a well- trained farmer	76	67.3
Empowerment against Poverty	37	32.7
Total	113	100

Source: Field survey, 2015

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by the factors influencing their participation in O-REAP

S/N	Factors	Mean	Std. Dev	Rank
1	Youth unemployment	4.27	1.12	1st
2	Environment	4.27	1.31	1st
3	Interest in agriculture	4.14	1.04	3rd
4	Information availability	4.08	1.01	4th
5	Availability of incentives	4.01	1.14	5th
6	Adequate credit facilities provision	3.88	0.94	6th
7	Availability of capital and inputs	3.65	1.03	7th
8	Friends and family influence	3.29	1.12	8th

Source: Field survey, 2015.

Table 5. Table showing factors limiting youth involvement in OREAP

Factors	Mean	Std. Dev	Rank
Leadership style	2.00	1.37	7 th
Inadequate trainers	1.93	1.26	8 th
Incompetent trainers	1.77	1.20	9 th
Inadequate materials services	3.62	0.97	1st
Lack of adequate infrastructural support	3.21	0.99	2 nd
Finance	2.19	1.61	3 rd
Government insecurity	2.04	1.41	5 th
Inaccessibility of training centres	2.12	1.50	4 th
Welfare	2.04	1.47	5 th

Source: Field survey, 2015.

This implies that Youth involvement in the program will be enhanced if sufficient necessary materials services as well as adequate infrastructural supports are provided for the OREAP training. Also, untimely financial support was ranked third. As declared in training manual of the program, 4,000 naira is to be paid to every participant as allowance specifically to offset

transportation cost on monthly basis. This indicates that when the participants are paid on regular basis, this may serve as a motivation for involvement of the youths in the program.

Perception of youth about O-REAP

Data in Table 6 shows youth perception about OREAP training.

Table 6. Table showing respondents' perception about OREAP

Perceptual Statements	A	U	D	Mean score	Remark
It is designed to train youth to become a good farmer	106 (93.8)	6 (5.3)	1 (0.9)	4.59	Agree
It is to train youth to become an entrepreneur	111 (98.2)	1 (0.9)	1 (0.9)	4.65	Agree
It could help reduce unemployment in the state	112 (99.1)	0	1 (0.9)	4.75	Agree
Youth stands to enjoy job to be created by O-REAP	106 (93.8)	6 (5.3)	1 (0.9)	4.14	Agree
The programme will contribute positively to economic status of the beneficiary	107 (94.7)	4 (3.5)	2 (1.8)	4.68	Agree
To boost agricultural produce in the state	110 (97.3)	1 (0.9)	2 (1.8)	4.75	Agree
The benefits from the programme cannot be underestimated	109 (96.4)	2 (1.8)	2 (1.8)	4.75	Agree
The government should continue with the programme	109 (96.4)	1 (0.9)	3 (2.7)	4.72	Agree
Skills and necessary knowledge needed for wealth creation are exposed to the beneficiary of the programme	104 (92)	2 (1.8)	7 (6.2)	4.14	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2015.

Agree \geq 4.0, A=Agree, U=undecided, D=Disagree

Figures in parentheses represent percentage. The mean weighted scores of 4 and above were regarded as agreed to the statement. The results show that respondents agreed to all the perceptual statement with OREAP could help reduce unemployment in the state, it could boost agricultural produce in the state and benefits from the programme cannot be underestimated having the highest mean score among others.

Further analysis was done to rate youth perception as negative or positive using the mean perceptual score. Evidence in Figure 1 below shows that more than half (61.9%) of the youth had positive perception of OREAP while 38.1 percent indicated negative.

Test of hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of youths and their perception about OREAP.

Results of Pearson's product moment correlation analysis in Table 7 show that farm size ($r = -0.367$; ≤ 0.01) and capital expenses ($r = -0.655$; ≤ 0.01) were the socio-economic characteristics that were significantly but negative related with the respondents perceptions. This implies that as the respondents' farm size increase, their perception about OREAP decreases by 36.7 percent and as the respondents' capital expenses increase, their perception about OREAP decreases by 65.5 percent.

Table 7. Pearson's product moment correlation analysis between socio-economic characteristics of youth and perception about OREAP

Variables	Correlation coefficient (r)	P-value	Decision
Age	0.108	0.256	NS
Household size	0.048	0.786	NS
Years spent for formal education	-0.018	0.846	NS
Farm size	-0.367**	0.01	S
Capital expenses	-0.655**	0.01	S
Income/annum	-0.310*	0.05	S

Source: Field survey, 2015

**Significant at 0.01

*Significant at 0.05.

S = significant, NS = not significant

Results in Table 8 show that occupation (χ^2 . value = 7.224; ≤ 0.01) was significant at and source of information (χ^2 . value = 4.937; ≤ 0.01) were significance to the perception of youth towards OREAP. Sex, marital status, religion, ethnicity, level of education are the socio –economic characteristics that were not

significant. This implies that the better the occupation of the respondents, the higher their perception towards the program; and the more the effectiveness of the information source, the higher their perception towards OREAP.

Table 8. Results of Chi-square showing association between respondents' perception of OREAP and their socio-economic characteristics

Characteristics	χ^2 . value	df	P-value	Decision
Sex	0.155	1	0.694	NS
Marital status	0.033	1	0.855	NS
Religion	2.837	1	0.092	NS
Ethnicity	1.637	1	0.201	NS
Level of education	0.748	1	0.387	NS
Occupation	7.224**	1	0.007	S
Source of information	4.937*	1	0.026	S

Source: Field survey, 2015

**Significant at 0.01

*Significant at 0.05.

S = significant

NS = not significant

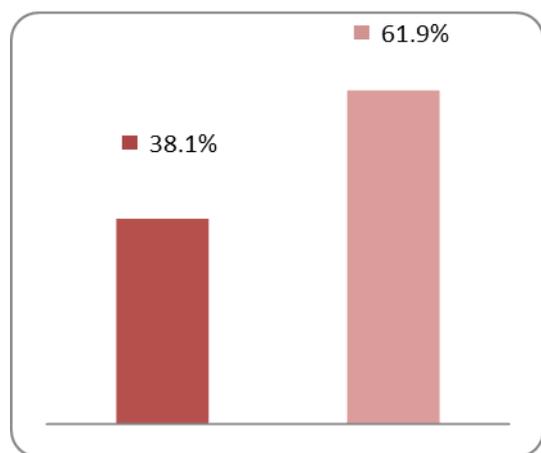


Fig.1. Bar chart showing the percentage distribution of respondents perception about OREAP

Source: Field survey, 2015.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that the objectives of OREAP such as to train youth to become a good farmer and entrepreneur, to boost agricultural produce in the State of Osun was achieved to a reasonable extent in the training conducted in 2013. The participation of the youth in the programme is greatly affected by how conducive the environment of the training centers is. It can be deduced from the study that factors that greatly militate against youth involvement in the programme are inadequate materials services and lack of

adequate infrastructural support. It was recommended among others that successive government agricultural development intervention should assist interested participants in accessing financial supports from relevant authority and provide adequate follow-up; and supervision after the training for the participants.

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