



INFLUENCE OF ENGAGEMENT OF FARM CHILDREN IN FARMING ACTIVITIES ON THEIR WILLINGNESS TO CHOOSE AGRICULTURE AS A PROSPECTIVE CAREER IN ODEDA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

For the farming profession to continue and to ensure sustainable agricultural output to feed the teeming population, farm children must participate in farming activities. The study attempted to assess the influence of the engagement of farm children in farming activities on their willingness to choose agriculture as a prospective career in Odeda LGA of Ogun State, Nigeria. A multistage process was employed to select one hundred and forty farm children and interviewed via a questionnaire survey. Data obtained were summarized and presented using descriptive statistics such as means, frequency counts and percentages and analysed utilizing inferential statistics (Chi-square and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation). Approximately half (50.7% and 49.3%) of male and female farm children were respectively sampled for this study. The respondents were within the age range of 12 and 20 years, with an average age of 17 years and seven persons per household. Findings showed that planting ($\bar{x}=1.51$), wetting ($\bar{x}=1.49$) land clearing and preparation ($\bar{x}=1.41$) and harvesting of farm produce ($\bar{x}=1.41$) were the main farm activities engaged in by the respondents. Though the respondents had a positive disposition to the economic importance of agriculture, the majority (72%) of the farm children were not willing to choose agriculture as their prospective career. Statistically significantly, engagement of farm children in farm activities ($\chi^2=4.437$, $P=0.509$) was not associated ($P>0.05$) with their willingness to choose agriculture as a prospective career. As a result, the study recommended exposing and acquainting farm children with a range of careers in agriculture.

Keywords: Activities, agriculture, engagement, farm-children, motivation

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture forms a significant portion of the economies of all African countries (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2020). The sector is widely regarded as essential for the provision of means of human survival; in particular, it offers food, employment opportunities, income, foreign exchange revenues, and raw materials. Therefore, it requires a growing workforce to meet the increased demand for agricultural products (Girdziute et al., 2022). Africa has the largest number of children that are involved in farming activities on their parents' farms (International Labour Organisation, 2017), and there is yet a reduction in farm population (Young Professionals for Agricultural Development). This inter-generational succession begins when farm children are still at a very young age and have no choice other than to be involved in farming activities (Badmus and Yekini, 2011). Rural farmers are eager to indirectly pass on the farming legacy to their offspring by enlisting them in farm work from a young age. Thus, farm children are repositories of agricultural knowledge passed down from their parents and guardians. The benefit of having grown up in a rural area is acquiring of accumulated farming experiences, which when put to good use can help lessen issues associated with hunger, poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and a quest for white-collar jobs. Nevertheless, because of unfavorable experiences, such children may become less interested in agriculture careers. Such that they perceived agriculture as a profession of intense labour, not profitable and unable to support their livelihood compared to what white-collar jobs offered (Mukembo et al., 2014). Negative farm experiences such as the drudgery involved as a result of the usage of crude farm implements, health effects of chemical application and other farming activities, and academic deficit may prompt a student to hate

farming and decide against taking up a career in agriculture in the future and consequently will not choose to study any field of agriculture in tertiary institutions (Ofuoku and Ugbechie, 2017). In addition, most rural farmers wish their children to become professionals in other fields (law, medicine, accounting, and engineering) other than agriculture, given the arduous way of life and the suffering they experienced in their profession (Dlamini, 2017). Farm children's perceptions and attitudes toward choosing agriculture as a future career will be shaped by the experiences accrued over time in farming. Studies (Ofuoku et al, 2014; Ofuoku and Ugbechie, 2017, Obayelu and Fadele, 2019) have been carried out on students' willingness to choose agriculture as a profession/ career but there is still a dearth of research on the influence of engagement in farming activities on farm children's willingness to choose agriculture as a prospective career. Based on these premises, the study sought to (a) identify the personal characteristics of the farm children (b) identify the level of engagement of farm children in farming activities (c) ascertain the respondents' willingness to choose agriculture as a profession, and (d) determine their perception of agriculture. The study hypothesized that (i) there is no significant relationship between farm children's engagement in farming and their willingness to choose agriculture as a profession (ii) there is no significant relationship between farm children's perception of farming and their willingness to choose agriculture as a prospective career.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

The study was conducted in Odeda Local Government Area (LGA) of Ogun State which shares boundaries with Abeokuta North LGA of Ogun State. Geographically, it is between

longitude $3^{\circ}26'76''$ and $3^{\circ}47'28''$ and latitude $7^{\circ}27'28''$ and $7^{\circ}05'54''$, with an area of 1,560km² and a population of 222,097 people (National Population Commission, 2006). The climate favours the cultivation of a wide range of food crops such as rice, yam, maize, cassava, cocoyam, oil palm, fruits and vegetable leaves. The temperature typically varies from 70F and 92F and is rarely below 64F or above 95F. The LGA enjoys a tropical climate with uni-modal peak rainfall between June and November, average annual and monthly rainfall of 1,220mm and 102mm, respectively as well as monthly maximum and minimum temperature range of 29-36 and 22-35°C respectively (Kilanko-Oluwasanya, 2009). South-westerly wind prevails during the rainy season, beginning from March to November, while North-westerly wind dominates during the dry season, beginning from December to March.

Sampling technique

The study employed a multistage sampling procedure. Firstly, Odeda, Local Government Area (LGA) was randomly sampled from the three LGAs in Egba political district of Ogun State. Secondly, two communities were purposively chosen from Odeda town, Alabata, and three communities from Olugbo due to their similarity in agricultural features, making a total of seven communities, and lastly, 140 senior secondary three students were randomly selected for the study.

Method of data collection and analysis

The data collected from the study were subjected to both descriptive and inferential analytical tools. The descriptive tools employed include percentages, frequency counts and mean while Chi-square and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used in analysing the relationships between variables. The level of farm children's engagement in farming activities was measured on a three-point response scale of always involved, occasionally involved and never

involved. In addition, farm children's willingness to choose agriculture as a profession and sources of motivation were measured on a three-point rating scale of 'absolutely willing, hardly willing and not willing' while their perception of agriculture was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale of the respondents' perception of agriculture as adapted from Ayodele et al. (2016) as follows $>4.5=SA$ (Strongly Agree), $3.5-4.49=A$ (Agree), $2.5-3.49=U$ (Undecided), $1.5-2.49=D$ (Disagree), $1-1.49=SD$ (Strongly Disagree). All mean scores above the grand mean (\bar{x}) of 3.36 were considered favourable perceptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic characteristics of the students

Results of the descriptive analysis revealed that the respondents were within the age range of 12 and 20 years, with a mean (\bar{x}) age of 17 years. This indicates that the respondents are likely actively engaged in farming activities and that they are also old enough to make decisions about their future careers. The finding of this study is similar to Ango et al., (2020) that observed a mean age of 17.46 years. The sample of this study comprised almost equal number of male (50.7%) and female (49.3%) respondents. This implies that both sexes participate in farming activities. This is similar to Mukembo et al. (2014) who sampled 49.0% and 51.0% of male and female secondary school students in a similar study. The majority (80%) of the respondents were Christians. This is an indication that Christianity is dominantly practised by the respondents. This result is higher than Oyegbami et al., (2011) that 58% of their respondents were Christians. The study further shows that the farming households in the study area had a mean (\bar{x}) of 7 persons. This implies that the families are fairly large enough to supply family labour to alleviate labour constraints. The finding from this study corroborates Ogunjinmi et al. (2022) who reported an average of 6 persons per household in a related study.

Table 1: Personal characteristics of respondents (n=140)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean (\bar{x})
Age	4	2.8	16.65
12-14	97	69.3	
15-17	39	27.9	
18-20			
Sex			
Male	71	50.7	
Female	69	49.3	
Religion			
Islam	26	18.6	
Christianity	112	80.0	
Traditional	2	1.4	
Household size			
2-5	54	38.6	7
6-9	68	48.6	
10-13	13	9.2	
14 above	5	3.6	

Source: Field study, 2021

Farm Children's Engagement in Farming Activities

Findings in Table 2 showed that planting ($\bar{x}=1.51$), land clearing ($\bar{x}=1.41$), vegetable bed making ($\bar{x}=1.41$) and transportation of crop produce ($\bar{x}=1.26$) were the pre-planting and planting operations always engaged in by the

respondents. Higher values of the means indicate more involvement of the respondents in agricultural activities. This may indicate that the respondents were more involved in these activities than any other pre-planting operations, most likely as a result of the labour-intensive nature of the tasks involved.

The findings from this study are consistent with Oyegbami et al. (2011) that farm children are more involved in harvesting (96%), planting (92%) and processing (80%). However, activities like wetting ($\bar{x}=1.41$), ridging/heaping ($\bar{x}=1.13$) and stumping ($\bar{x}=0.79$) were less involved by the respondents. This could hint that these activities are tedious for the respondents and at times involve some level of experience and skills. This study is similar to Oyegbami et al., (2011) that only 6% of their respondents were involved in uprooting while Oyetoro and Olabode, (2013) reported that their respondents were never involved in ridging.

In addition, the result also showed that wetting ($\bar{x}=1.49$), harvesting ($\bar{x}=1.41$) and weeding ($\bar{x}=1.33$) were the post-planting activities mostly engaged in by the respondents. The respondents' participation in these activities might suggest that more people are required to complete these tasks. The finding of this study is in tandem with Ofuoku et al (2014) that 58.54% of farm children in this age category were more involved in weeding (56.04%) and harvesting (44.38%).

However, thinning/supplying ($\bar{x}=1.18$), fertilizer application ($\bar{x}=1.14$) and marketing ($\bar{x}=1.14$) were the post-planting activities where the respondents participated the least. This is an indication that these activities could be delicate to be handled by the respondents.

The results further show that feeding of livestock ($\bar{x}=1.06$), water supply ($\bar{x}=1.05$) and cleaning ($\bar{x}=1.05$) were the livestock activities always carried out by the respondents while egg picking ($\bar{x}=0.78$), vaccination ($\bar{x}=0.66$) and record-keeping ($\bar{x}=0.60$) were least involved by the respondents. This may indicate that the respondents are not capable of undertaking these tasks because they call for a certain level of competency and expertise. The findings of this study are similar to the observations of Ofuoku and Ugbechie (2017) who reported the involvement of farm children in order of harvesting, livestock feeding, cleaning and egg collection, and sales of crop produce

Table 2: Farm children’s engagement in farming activities (n=140)

Farming activities	Always engaged f (%)	Occasionally engaged f (%)	Never engaged f (%)	Mean (\bar{x})	Rank
Pre-planting and planting					
Land clearing	76(54.3)	46(32.9)	18(12.9)	1.41	2 nd
Land preparation	80 (57.1)	37(26.4)	23(16.40)	1.41	2 nd
Ridging	54(38.60)	50(35.7)	36(25.7)	1.13	4 th
Stumping	35(25.0)	40(28.6)	65(46.4)	0.79	5 th
Planting	90(64.3)	32(22.9)	18(12.9)	1.51	1 st
Post-planting					
Wetting	83(59.3)	42(30.0)	15(10.7)	1.49	1 st
Harvesting	81(57.9)	53(37.9)	6(4.2)	1.41	2 nd
Weeding	73(52.1)	40(28.6)	27(19.3)	1.33	3 rd
Processing	68(48.6)	40(28.6)	32(22.9)	1.26	4 th
Supplying/ thinning	57(40.7)	51(36.4)	32(22.9)	1.18	5 th
Fertilizer application	53(37.9)	53(37.9)	34(24.3)	1.14	6 th
Marketing	60(42.9)	39(27.9)	41(29.3)	1.14	6 th
Livestock activities					
Livestock feeding	54(38.6)	36(25.7)	49(35.0)	1.06	1 st
Supply of water	56(40)	35(25.0)	49(35.0)	1.05	2 nd
Cleaning	49(35.0)	42(35.0)	49(35.0)	1.00	3 rd
Egg picking	32(22.9)	45(32.1)	63(45.0)	0.78	4 th
Vaccination	29(20.7)	35(25.0)	76(54.3)	0.66	5 th
Record keeping	30(21.4)	24(17.1)	86(61.4)	0.60	6 th

Source: Field study, 2021

Farm Children’s Willingness to Choose Agriculture as a Profession.

The result in Table 4 shows that the majority (72.1%) of the respondents were not willing to choose agriculture as a profession. This may indicate that, despite the involvement of these students in agricultural activities, the respondents were not encouraged by their parents’ jobs to pursue a career in agriculture. This is worrisome because as the farm parents

grow older, it is possible that their production dwindles, and consequently unable to feed the swarming population adequately. The result of this survey is lesser than those of Obayelu and Fadele (2019), who observed that 88.4% of their respondents were unwilling to pursue a profession in agriculture. The most likely explanation could be that their investigation was carried out in a metropolis.

Table 3: Farm Children’s Willingness to Choose Agriculture as a Profession

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not willing	101	72.1
Hardly willing	09	6.4
Absolutely willing	39	27.9

Source: Field survey, 2021 multiple responses

Farm Children Sources of Motivation for Agriculture Profession

The results in Table 4 show that approximately half (50.7%) of the respondents had no stimulation towards the agriculture profession. This is an indication that the respondents were hardly motivated by their parents/ guidance (7.1%) to take agriculture as a career. The finding from this study is in tandem with Nandi et al. (2022) who ranked lack of motivation as the most significant among their respondents. In addition, about a quarter (26.4%) of the respondents had self-motivation towards agriculture as a future career. This could show that the majority of the respondents were not attracted to the agriculture profession despite their parents' background, this could have emanated from the experiences

they had on their parents' farms. In addition, only 7.1% of the respondents' parents inspired their wards towards agriculture as a future career. This result implies that the farm parents prefer their wards to venture into non-agricultural related careers. This result is consistent with Ango et al., (2020) that reported low mean scores of 7.65 for parental influence and 8.98 for peer group influence on choosing agriculture as a career in a similar study. In addition, 10.7% of the respondents had been driven towards the agriculture profession as a result of membership in the Young Farmers' Club (YFC). This is an indication that school extracurricular activities could be an avenue to develop the interest of students in choosing agriculture as a career.

Table 4: Farm Children Sources of Motivation for Agriculture Profession

Sources of motivation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Parents/ guidance	10	7.1
Self-motivation	37	26.4
Peer group influence	7	5.0
Young Farmers' Club	15	10.7
None	71	50.7

Perception of Farm Children on Agriculture

The results in Table 5 show the dispositions of the respondents toward agriculture. All mean values below the grand mean ($\bar{x}=3.36$) were regarded as undecided (Ayodele, 2016). Findings from this study show that the respondents vividly recognized that agriculture offers opportunities for employment ($\bar{x}=4.27$), provides income ($\bar{x}=4.13$), food ($\bar{x}=4.07$) and many career opportunities ($\bar{x}=4.04$). Since higher mean values indicate more responses, this implies that the respondents identified that agriculture is second to none in performing economic functions. The findings of this study are in tandem with Obayelu and Fadele (2013) and Arimi and Fatufe (2021). The respondents also agreed that agriculture is labour-intensive ($\bar{x}=3.80$) and should be diversified ($\bar{x}=3.58$). This indicates that the respondents were engaged in small-

scale farming, which relies on the use of family labour and fundamental tools for agricultural operations. This finding corroborates Ango et al., (2020) whose respondents ranked the associated drudgery in agriculture highest in a related study. Furthermore, the respondents were indifferent to the fact that agriculture is risky ($\bar{x}= 3.21$), not an encouraging experience ($\bar{x}=3.11$), I do not like to become a farmer ($\bar{x}= 3.03$), agriculture is a dangerous job ($\bar{x}= 2.92$), it is for the illiterates ($\bar{x}=2.91$), a career of low status ($\bar{x}= 2.91$), occupation of the aged ($\bar{x}=2.80$) and not profitable ($\bar{x}=2.76$). These findings indicate that the respondents' perspectives were unbiased. These results are consistent with Arimi and Fatufe (2021) that more than half (59.1%) of their respondents had a neutral perception of agriculture.

Table 4.0: Perception of Children on choosing agriculture as a prospective Profession

Perceptual statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean(\bar{x})	Remark
Agriculture creates employment	76(54.3)	45(32.1)	7(5.0)	5(3.6)	7(5.0)	4.27	Agreed
Income from agriculture is attractive	65(46.4)	50(35.7)	10(7.1)	8(5.7)	7(5.0)	4.13	Agreed
Without agriculture, there is no food	71(50.7)	40(28.6)	7(5.0)	12(8.6)	10(7.1)	4.07	Agreed
There are many career opportunities in agriculture	64(45.7)	44(31.4)	13(9.3)	11(7.9)	8(5.7)	4.04	Agreed
Agriculture is a career of much intensive labour	55(39.3)	42(30.0)	10(7.1)	26(18.6)	7(5.0)	3.80	Agreed
I want to combine agriculture with my profession	43(30.7)	44(31.4)	17(12.1)	21(15.0)	15(10.7)	3.56	Agreed
Agriculture is a risky venture because of climate change	35(25.0)	39(27.9)	13(9.3)	27(19.3)	26(18.6)	3.21	Undecided,
My experience on my parents' farm is not encouraging	23(16.4)	49(35.0)	12(8.6)	33(23.6)	23(16.4)	3.11	Undecided,
I do not like to become a farmer	26(18.6)	46(32.9)	9(6.4)	24(17.1)	35(25.0)	3.03	Undecided,
Farming is not a clean job	27(19.3)	40(28.6)	12(8.6)	31(22.1)	30(21.4)	3.02	Undecided,
Agriculture is a dangerous job	36(25.7)	24(17.1)	12(8.6)	29(20.7)	39(27.9)	2.92	Undecided,

Agriculture is an occupation of illiterate	32(22.9)	27(19.3)	13(9.3)	33(23.6)	35(25.0)	2.91	Undecided,
Agriculture is a low-status career	31(22.1)	31(22.1)	12(8.6)	27(19.3)	39(27.9)	2.91	Undecided,
Agriculture is for the old	32(22.9)	26(18.6)	9(6.4)	28(20.0)	45(32.1)	2.80	Undecided,
Agriculture is not profitable	23(16.4)	36(25.7)	9(6.4)	28(20.0)	44(31.4)	2.76	Undecided,

SA- Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree
Grand mean= 3.36

Association between farm children’s engagement in farming and their willingness to choose agriculture as a profession

The result shows that there was no significant relationship (P>0.05) between farm Children’s engagement in farming

and their willingness to choose agriculture as a potential vocation. This indicates that as individuals become more involved in farming operations, their propensity to choose agriculture as a career decreases. The finding of this study is inconsistent with the report of Ofuoku and Ugbechie, (2017).

Table 5: Test of the association between farm children’s engagement in farming and their willingness to choose agriculture as a profession

Variables	χ^2	p-value	Decision
Farm children willingness to choose agriculture as a profession	4.437	0.509	NS

Source: Field Survey, 2021
NS- Not Significant

Relationship between Farm children’s Perception of Agriculture and their willingness to Choose Agriculture as a Profession

The result in Table 6 shows that there was no significant relationship (P>0.05) between farm children’s perception of agriculture and their willingness to choose agriculture as a prospective career (r=1.539, P=0.215). This indicates that

there is a weak correlation between farm children's willingness to pursue a career in agriculture and how likely they are to consider it as a career. On the other hand, Obayelu and Fadele (2019) and Simoes and Rio (2020) reported a positive perception. This result could further buttress the fact that the respondents in this study were indifferent towards agriculture as a career.

Table 6: Test of the relationship between farm children’s perception of agriculture and their willingness to choose agriculture as a prospective career

Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision
Perception of agriculture and willingness to choose agriculture as a profession	1.539	0.215	NS

Source: Field Survey, 2021

CONCLUSION

The focus of this study was to assess the influence of engagement in farming activities on farm children’s willingness to choose agriculture as a prospective profession in Odeda Local Government, Ogun State. The major farming activities engaged in by the respondents were planting/ sowing, land clearing, ridging, transportation of produce, wetting, harvesting, weeding, animal feeding, water supply and cleaning. Despite that the respondents were aware of the economic importance of agriculture, they were not willing to choose agriculture as a future profession. According to the findings of this study, it may be challenging to achieve sustainable development goals one and two and ensure a farming succession if highly skilled individuals, such as farm children, decide against pursuing a career in agriculture.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. . To stimulate farm children's interest in the agricultural industry, agricultural extension agencies should include them in extension programmes.
- ii. Along with their parents, extension agents could assist in educating farm children about agricultural practices including vaccination and record keeping.
- iii. Teachers of agricultural science need to make an effort to inform farm students about the variety of careers available in agriculture and encourage them to become members of the Young Farmers' Club..

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