

# Assessment of Secondary School Student's Perception and Attitude to the Study of Agriculture, Omu- Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria.

## Author's Details:

**E.F. Fabiyi, K.S. Obaniyi, J.O. Olukosi and E.O. Oyawoye**

College of Agricultural Sciences,  
Landmark University, Omu Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria

### **Abstract:**

*The study was conducted to assess the perception and attitude of secondary school students to studying agriculture as a discipline in higher institutions and suggest ways by which the subject can be made more acceptable and attractive to senior secondary school students as a future career. Twenty five secondary schools were purposively selected based on their proximity to Landmark University, Omu-Aran where the research was initiated cutting across five Local Government Areas (LGA's) of Kwara State. One thousand senior secondary school students were used for the study (forty students from each of the twenty five schools). The age, sex and class of the respondents were considered while the respondent's parent's socio-economic characteristics were used because secondary school students have no property, land, capital nor personal family of their own except that of their parents. The results revealed that age, gender and class of students were significant determinants of students' perception to agriculture at 0.05 and 0.10 significant levels respectively, while respondent's father's occupation and educational level were not significant. This shows therefore that the gender and class of students are significant determinants that influence their perception towards their choice of agriculture as a future career. Moreover, teachers of agriculture should enhance students' positive perception and attitude towards agriculture in their teaching methods so as to help students develop more interest in agricultural work or businesses which will maximize agricultural production.*

**Keywords:** age, senior secondary students, agriculture, perception and attitude

## **1. Introduction**

The large numbers of youth significant presence especially in rural area coupled with their poor economic situations make them a significant economic factor in development. Moreover, their economic situations present a critical challenge of mobilizing and involving youth as active participants in the process of sustainable agriculture and rural development. As formidable agents of challenge and generators of wealth and services young people needed to be caught young, trained and encouraged to take interest in agriculture. According to the Bible [1] we should train up a child in the way he should go and when he/she grows up, he will not depart from it. So we should train them now to help them to take to agriculture [2]. All secondary school children both males and females should be made to study agriculture because of its importance to human lives. Agricultural practices provide food and shelter for man, without agriculture no man and animal will survive [3].

The youths in secondary schools and outside school have great roles to play if sustainable development will be achieved in agriculture for they are the future of any country. They can be and are part of the solution to Nigeria's multiple problems of food scarcity, their contributions can help Nigeria out of her problem of food insecurity. Young people can invest their skills and knowledge in agricultural works and businesses, because they are energetic, inventive and creative particularly in the environmental and economic crisis of climate change and low crude oil price currently experience in the country. Sustainable agricultural and rural development can contribute to the overall progress of the country and help youths to be dependable and responsible [4]. Therefore, helping young people to acquire knowledge and skills related to sustainable agricultural development and activities that will reduce dependence on government jobs and poverty are necessary now. This in turn will reduce crime in the society. The rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria is high because majority are seeking for white collar jobs. For instance 46% of Kwara youths are unemployed [5].

Senior secondary school students seemed to be the right group of youths to be encouraged and trained to take to agriculture as a discipline in the university and when out of school can take to agriculture as a career. There should be youth programmes and adequate curriculum to meet these needs. The challenges facing agriculture is to satisfy people's rights to food and to ensure that the resources base remain productive for the future [6].

Although secondary school students have little or no economic assets such as land, property and capital, but they have time, energy and intelligence needed to learn and improve their knowledge and capability for positive change and development. The youths make up a large segment of the total population in the world.

The total youth population in the world today is estimated to be about 1,500 million and is projected to grow to two billion by the year 2050 [7]. According to UNESCO statistics, there are from 130 to 150 million out of school youths and most of these are in Sub-Saharan African. These numbers are increasing and not decreasing and are between 15-24 years [8]. Therefore, it is very important to train

them young by stimulating their interest in agriculture, in order to enhance their involvement in the development process and improve their economic and social worth. They should be trained to take interest in agriculture and contribute to sustainable development.

The youths represent the future and hope of every country. In many developing countries, up to seventy percent of the young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty five live in rural areas [7]. As it was observed, youths' attitude to agriculture activities shows that many of them do not like to go to farms to help their parents. It may be too late to change value and behaviour of young adults when most pattern of behaviour and ways of thinking have already been established [9]. There is therefore the need to study the perception and attitude of students of secondary school towards agriculture in order to find ways of approach to encourage and stimulate them to study agriculture as future career. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to examine the perception and attitude of secondary school students towards studying agriculture as a discipline, in higher institutions. The specific objectives are:

- I. To determine the socio-economic characteristics of secondary school students and their parents in the study area;
- II. To examine the perception of secondary school students towards agricultural activities
- III. To examine their attitude towards agriculture
- IV. To suggest ways by which the subject can be made more attractive and accepted to students as a future career. The hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics of secondary school students and their perception and attitude to studying agriculture as a discipline for future career.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This study was carried out in Omu-Aran Area and surroundings in Kwara State, Nigeria involving four L.G.As. (Irepodun, Isin, Ekiti and Oke-ero LGA) Twenty five secondary schools were purposively selected. These include secondary schools from town and villages surrounding Omu-Aran on the basis of their proximity to Landmark University, Omu-Aran, The secondary schools selected for the study cut across four L.G.As. Seventeen towns and villages were also purposively selected, from the four LGAs. The areas lie between latitudes 8° and 8° 25' N and between longitudes 4° 40' E and 5° 30' E. The headquarter which is Omu-Aran is about 80km from Ilorin the State capital. It has a landmass of 2,432sqkm with a population of 137,980. The LGAs are made up of 42 main towns and villages [10]. The information from the Meteorological Office Ilorin shows that the study area falls within humid climate with two distinct seasons (the wet and dry seasons). The wet season falls between April and October and dry season between November and March. The rainfall ranges between 50.8mm during the driest months to 2413.3mm in the wettest months. The minimum average temperature throughout Kwara State ranges between 21.1 and 25.0°C while, maximum average temperature ranges between 30 to 35°C. The people's major occupation include farming, hunting, trading, tapping and weaving. The popular products obtained in the area includes agricultural produce such as maize, cassava, cocoa, palm oil, yam and kola [11]. The main tribe is Yoruba with few other tribes like Hausa, Ibo, Fulani and Tiv. Out of these communities, twenty five secondary schools were also purposively selected because of economic reasons and their nearness to Landmark University where the research was initiated. Teachers of agriculture and biology were trained and used as enumerators, to administer the questionnaires. Forty senior secondary schools students were randomly selected from the twenty five schools, totaling 1,000 students as sample size. The questionnaires were designed to source information from students of secondary schools in the study area about their interest in studying agriculture in higher institution. Information related to socio-economic characteristics of the student's parents on household size, educational level, farming experiences, age, sex and attitude of students to agricultural activities or work were collected. This study involved 1,000 secondary school students (senior secondary students) in schools where agricultural sciences are taught to both males and females. Respondent's parents socio-economic characteristics were used because secondary school students have no property, land, capital nor personal family of their own except that of their parents. The age, sex and class of the respondents were considered only. Descriptive statistics which include frequencies and percentages were used to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their influence on attitude of students to agriculture as a discipline. On the other hand, some variables were used for Chi-square analysis on the influence of socio-economic characteristics of the parents on the perception and attitude of students to agriculture as a discipline. The variables are: age, gender, class of students, father's occupation, and fathers highest level of education.

Chi-square analysis was used to measure the perception and attitude of the students to agricultural work in the study area.

## **3. Results**

This study involved 1,000 senior secondary school students from the study area. The respondents involved in the study were males (47.9%) and females (52.1%). Their ages ranging from below 12years (1.2%), from 13-15years (57.8%) and above 16years (41.0%) (Table 1).

Majority of the respondents parents were unemployed (46.7%), 22.8% were civil servants while other occupation including farming were 30.5%. Table 1 also show that majority of the parents had no tertiary education (54.2%), while, 45.8% had tertiary education (University degree- 30.7%, Nigeria Certificate in Education- 11.5% and National Diploma- 3.6%).

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents` parents and age and sex of the respondents.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender respondents</b>		
Male	495	47.9
Female	538	52.1
<b>Age of respondents</b>		
Below 12	12	1.2
13years	58	5.6
14years	172	16.7
15years	367	35.5
Above 16years	424	41.0
<b>Fathers occupation</b>		
Farming	32	3.1
Teaching	5	0.5
Trading	16	1.5
Civil service	236	22.0
Unemployed	482	46.7
Others	262	25.5
<b>Father`s Educational level</b>		
Primary school	195	18.8
Secondary school	314	30.4
Nigeria Certificate in Education	119	11.5
Diploma	37	3.6
University	317	30.7
Others	51	5.0
Multiple response		

Table 2: Chi square analysis of student`s socio-economic characteristics and their perception towards studying agriculture as a discipline

Variables	Chi square X <sup>2</sup>	DF	P Value	Decision
Age	8.6158	5	0.196	NS
Gender	8.6102	1	0.072**	S
Class of Students	28.3765	5	0.000*	S
Father`s Educational level	10.0398	5	0.186	NS
Father`s occupation	9.3609	5	0.228	NS

Table 2 shows chi-square analysis of some independent variables concerning the respondent`s socio-economic characteristics and their perception towards agriculture. Age, gender and class of students were significant determinants of students` perception to agriculture at 0.05 and 0.10 significant levels respectively while respondents` fathers` occupation and educational level were not significant. This therefore, implies that gender and class of students are significant determinants that influence their perception towards their choice of agriculture as future careers.

Table 3: Chi square analysis of student’s socio-economic characteristics and their attitude towards agriculture as a discipline

Variables	Chi square X <sup>2</sup>	DF	P Value	Decision
Age	12.6629	5	0.196	NS
Gender	22.1672	1	0.072	S
Class of Students	23.3599	5	0.000	S
Father`s Educational level	5.1922	5	0.186	NS
Father`s occupation	9.1380	5	0.228	NS

Table 3 shows chi-square analysis of students’ socio-characteristics and their attitude towards agriculture. The independent variables used were age, gender, class of students, parent’s occupation and their educational level. Age, gender and class of students were significant determinants of students’ attitude towards agriculture at 0.05 probability level of significance.

**4. Discussion**

**Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and parents.**

This study was carried out to investigate the attitude of the senior secondary school students in four Local Government Areas of Kwara State, Nigeria. One thousand students were randomly selected, involving both boys and girls. Secondary school students have no economic assets (personal properties), such as land, houses nor capital, so their parents socio-economic characteristics were used but students’ age and sex were included.

Forty-seven point nine percent (47.9%) male and 52.1% female students were involved in the study (Table 1). In the past only male students study agriculture, female students were normally separated to study home-economics. About one decade ago, the curriculum changed and both sexes now study agriculture and home economics in secondary schools. In order to enhance their involvement in the development process and improve their economic and social worth, they should be trained to take interest in agriculture and contribute to sustainable development. The students’ age ranged between 12 years to 16 years and above. In the past government policy makers did not pay attention to involvements of youths in agriculture. Priority should be given to programmes and educational contents that can accelerate their economic value and sustainable development. It is stated in [4] that agricultural curricula, the content and teaching strategies should be capable of building the capacity of students to such a level of excellence that will make them job creators and productive members of the work force. It was pointed out in [12] that one of the major problems responsible for the poor performance of Nigeria in the agricultural sector and non-attainment of food-self sufficiency and self-reliance is the defective training that failed to generate relevant practical oriented and middle level man power in the agricultural sector. In the past, government policy makers did not pay much attention to involvement of youths in agriculture. As a policy, the Ministry of Agriculture should consider and include male and female youths as part of the present and future agricultural manpower. It is stated in [13] that Nigeria`s future lies in the participation of agricultural students and youths in the agricultural sector of the economy.

In many developing countries, up to seventy percent of youths between fifteen and twenty five years of age live in rural areas [7]. Many of the rural youths may participate in agricultural activities with their parents, this may help them to have positive attitude towards agriculture. If farming operations are done with ease, using tractor to cultivate the land secondary school students and other youths too may want to study it in higher institution as a future career. Many of the respondents’ parents were unemployed (46.7%), 22.8% were civil servants, only 3.1% were famers while teachers and traders were 27.4%. This shows that many of the secondary school students are from poor parents. According to [14] which stated that famers represents the poorest of the poor and that 10 million of Nigerians especially in rural areas are living below poverty level of one dollar per day. Many of them do not even have the means of going to higher institutions to read agriculture. This may result to many of them roaming the streets and later joining bad gangs of robbery and kidnapping. Appropriate vocational education to meet the needs of secondary school students who may not be fortunate to go to higher Institutions to study, should be created, such as tie and dye of textile materials and dyeing of animals skin for shoe making and basket weaving for making furniture and many others can be done as businesses. According to [15], the role of education in career and vocational development is important. Majority of respondent’s parents had only primary school and secondary education (49.2%), 45.8% had tertiary education, while only 5% did not go to school (Table 1). Level of education of parents may influence the choice of subjects to be studied in the University for their children. Many parents who have low educational level may want their children to study medicine. They may not want them to study agriculture because of lack of understanding of what

agriculture entails. They perceive agriculture to be poor man's business. Those with tertiary education have more understanding of what studying agriculture in higher institutions involve. It was identified in [15] that some parent's factors that can influence choice of career included occupational rating, self concept, parental attitude and experience. In [16] the attitude of youths towards agriculture as a career was studied, and it was reported that the background of pupils or students such as where they come from and occupation of parents influenced their attitude towards agriculture and other organizations after their graduation.

Chi-square analysis of some independent variables (age, gender and class of students) revealed that age, gender and class of students were significant determinants of students' perception to agriculture at 0.05 and 0.10 significant levels respectively (Table 2). This therefore, implies that age, gender, and class of students influence their perception towards choosing to study agriculture as a career in future. Tables 3 depict the Chi-square analysis on independent variables such as age of students, gender and class of students were significant determinants of students' attitude towards agriculture at 0.5 probability of significance. This result is similar to the findings of [4] that the children (youths) of farmers have interest in studying agriculture. Their aspiration towards agriculture was also positively significant at 0.5 level of significance. Also [17] reported the perception of Kwara State University agricultural students on farming as a means of future livelihood and showed that majority of students believed that agriculture has a high potential for self employment and it is a self sustaining profession. Therefore, the Null hypothesis which stated that: There is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics of secondary school students and their perception and attitude to studying agriculture as a discipline for future career is rejected. This means that students have favorable perception and attitude towards agriculture but may refuse to participate in agriculture due to the way agricultural practices is carried out. Farmers still use crude implements and poor unprofitable practices that are not appealing to the youths. Extension agents need to suggest or counsel rural farmers to dress reasonably and modernly (neatly) while doing their agricultural work, so as not to portray themselves dirty and poor farmers always.

## **5. Conclusion and recommendations**

Some research studies have been conducted in other to advance agriculture in Nigeria, so emphasis must be placed on the participation of the youths by encouraging them to study agriculture up to tertiary institutions. The aged farmers are to be replaced with energetic and educated youths. All male and female students should be made to study agriculture right from their primary to secondary schools and tertiary institutions. Agriculture provides food and shelter for man. Agricultural businesses can also be done to increase economic condition of farmers.

- Though, students have positive attitude towards agriculture as a subject or as a discipline, teachers of agriculture should enhance students' positive perception and attitude towards agriculture in their teaching methods. Positive attitude to learn new skills and interest in agricultural works or businesses will maximize agricultural production. Extension workers can be used in secondary schools as subject matter specialist (SMS) to speak about mechanized farming; this may encourage them to study agriculture in higher institutions and as their future career.
- Teachers should let the students know that today's agricultural work is different from that of the past. Mechanize implements and equipment have replaced crude and uncivilized tools like hoes and cutlasses which make farming activities tedious.
- Negative comments about rural farmers and their occupations should be done with caution.
- Regular video viewing of successful practicing farmers and mechanisation operations on farms should be included in agricultural class teaching.
- It is commonly said that 'knowledge without application is without value' that is to say that theoretical study of agriculture without practicals will not yield any useful and profitable results. Priority should be given to programmes and educational content that can accelerate their economic value and sustainable development. This will increase in a stable manner the involvement of youths whether urban or rural in sustainable agriculture and rural development.

## **Acknowledgement**

This work was funded by the Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria.

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