J. Agric. Res. & Dev. 12(1)1-10. Copy@2013. Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ilorin

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS VARIABLES AND THEIR ATTITUDES TO TAKING CAREER IN AGRICULTURE: A CASE STUDY OF THE FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE OF UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA

ADESIJI G.B., MATANMI B.M, BOLARIN O., ADEKANYE .A.P. AND [1]OBANIYI, K.S.
Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development,
University of Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria,
[1]Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension,
Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Kwara state, Nigeria. http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jard.v12i1.1

ABSTRACT

A positive attitude to life or profession has been identified as a means of rapid development. It is a force that compels an individual to go extra mile in any discipline or career of his choice. The purpose of this study is to examine the attitude of undergraduate students in taking a career in Agriculture. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select one hundred and ten respondents across all levels, which made up of 11.8% of the total population of undergraduate students in the Faculty of Agriculture of University of Ilorin at that time. Data were obtained using structured questionnaire. Attitude was measured with a 5-point Likert type scale, while the data was analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson moment correlation coefficient statistics. The findings showed that more than half of the respondents (63 %) were male, majority (76.4%) were in their twenties. A significant percentage (83.6%) offered agricultural science in their secondary schools, but only few (15.5%) preferred to study agriculture in the university, however, later majority (69.1%) preferred agriculture as a discipline, while 71.8% had no intention of changing to other faculties, because they have developed interest in their course of study. The prevalence factors that influence respondents in studying agriculture were: wille job opportunity in the carrier, room for carrier development, intellectual ability. Pearson correlation coefficient showed a significant relationship between attitude and age($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$); gender ($r = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$); level of respondents ($r = 0.31$, $p < 0.05$) and knowledge of existing Agricultural organization ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$). Most students did not want to study agriculture initially but later find it interesting. It is therefore recommended that enlightenment programme should be embarked upon to expose undergraduates to the prospect and dynamism of agriculture.

Key words: Attitude, Undergraduate Students, Career, Agriculture, Faculty of Agriculture

INTRODUCTION

The development of agriculture necessitates a continuous impact from one generation to the other. Consequently, the accomplishment and conduct of present-day agricultural students will determine the sustainability of agriculture in the future. Attitude, norms, habit, custom and value are the causes of human behavior performance, attitude thus

becomes important because it provides direction and purpose to behavior and performance (Aderemi and David, 2001). Decline enrolment is a major concern for agricultural education programs all over the country. Mallory and Sommer (1986) revealed that this decline in enrolment can be related to negative perceptions about agriculture among high school students. This is because majority of high school students or secondary school students are ignorant of the range of career opportunities in agriculture and equated agriculture with farming alone. Scanlon and Hover (1991) also supported the decline in enrolment in agriculture education program.

Absolutely few other disciplines have experienced the dilemma that agricultural science at the university level has faced over the year. In spite of the huge sum of money spent by the government, private organizations, institutions and individuals developing agriculture through the various agricultural programs embarked upon and the established of schools and faculties of agriculture, most undergraduate of agriculture are still not totally committed to taking a career in agriculture. Some students found themselves in the field of agriculture as a last resort in the quest to acquire university education. Others study agriculture in a bid to satisfy the demand of their parents or relatives against their personal wishes. This may be as a result of perception they hold about the profession. According to Malumfashi (1999), youth perceive farming as less dignifying. Haney, (2008) also established that youth showed negative attitude to farming activities , Haney identified exogenous factors such as government regulation e.g. farm job related hazard as one of the causes of negative attitude of taking carrier in agriculture. However, the study by Reza (2005) on attitude and perceptions of agricultural undergraduate students of Bu Ali Sina University toward agriculture identified factors such as interest for enrolment for continuing study on graduate courses, importance of agriculture , more probability achievement in agriculture and Interest toward Agriculture.

Osborne and Dyer (2000) in a study on Illinois agricultural undergraduate students indicated that parents of the students and their teachers in high school agriculture play the significant role for students' enrolment in colleges of agriculture. Dyer *et al* (1999) on their study stated that students who had completed high school agriculture courses, had more positive attitudes toward university agriculture and agriculture as a career.

There is no doubt that agricultural development will be affected by attitude of the future agriculturist. Therefore, it is important to know those factors that may be responsible for this attitude and to be able to integrate it into policy in order to secure the future of this country.

In this regard, this study attempts to answer the following research questions

- What is the background of the respondents in the agricultural science subject?
- What are the factors that influence the attitude of people in taking career in agriculture?
- Are the students aware of existing agricultural organizations that can offer jobs?
- What are the attitudes of students already on the program?

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine the attitude of undergraduate students to taking career in agriculture in the University of Ilorin. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the background of the respondents in the agricultural science subject
2. Identify the factors that influence the attitude of people in taking career in agriculture
3. Examine different agricultural jobs desired by students after living the school
4. Examine attitude of respondents in the program at present.

Hypotheses of the study

- Ho1: there is no significant relationship between some selected demographic characteristics and attitude of respondents toward agriculture as a career.
- Ho2: there is a significant relationship between existing agricultural organization and students' attitude towards career in agriculture.

METHODOLOGY

A survey research design is used in this study. The study area is the faculty of Agriculture, University of Ilorin. The target population comprises of all undergraduate students in the faculty of Agriculture, university of Ilorin. Out of total number of 932 students, 11.8% were selected based on gender using stratified random sampling method leading to total sample size of 110 respondents. The data were collected using structured questionnaire as the research tool.

Independent variables in the study are age, gender, background on agriculture and parents' occupation. The only dependent variable in this research study was the attitude toward taking a career in agriculture which is measured using the likert five-point scale. This is done by scoring the respondents based on their responses in terms of negative or positive statement as it indicate degree of favorableness or unfavorableness toward agriculture as a career , the positive statement of (strongly agreed= 5, agreed=4,undecided =3, disagreed=2, strongly disagreed=1 while negative statement of (strongly agreed= 1, agreed=2,undecided =3, disagreed=4, strongly disagreed=5.(Likert, 1932), a method which is now dominant in measuring people's attitudes, views and experiences (Taylor and Heath, 1996).

Content and face validities of the instrument were established by a panel of experts consisting of both faculty members and education specialists who had expertise about agricultural extension and higher education studies. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage and mean were used to analyze the data while Pearson Product moment correlation statistics was used to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Selected Personal Characteristics of the Respondents

Selected personal characteristics were collected from undergraduate student of agriculture as shown in Table 1. The result indicated that majority (57.3%) were males. This in line with the results of Afonja and Olusi (1995) who found out that male graduate in the faculty of Agriculture is high compared to their female folks. Large proportions (76.4%) of the respondents were between 20-25 years. This may be as result of National Universities Commission regulation that the minimum age of entrance to university is 18 years. This is line with result of Reza (2005) who reported the age of undergraduate students offering agriculture in Bu Ali Sina University between 2001 and 2005 to be above 20 years. It can also be deduced that above half of respondents' parents are civil servants. This showed that the parents of the respondents had formal education. Also, objective one, which is to examine the background of the respondents in the agricultural science subjects, was achieved. The finding showed that majority (83.6%) had offered agriculture before entry to the university. Despite the fact that Agricultural science was not new to them, majority still do not want to study Agriculture at higher level. This may be as a result of negative feeling about the course. This is in agreement with Rosenberg (1998) who submitted that the shortage of graduates in agriculture may be as a result of student negative belief regarding career in agriculture.

Table1: Personal Characteristics of the Respondents

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Gender		
Male	63	57.3
Female	47	42.7
Total	110	100.0
Age Range		
Below 20	10	9.1
20-22	44	40.0
23-25	40	36.4
Above 25	16	14.5
Total	110	100.0
Parents' Occupation		
Civil servants	78	70.9
Medical Practioners	7	6.4
Farming	5	11.8
Trading	4	4.5
Other	6	12.7
Total	110	5.5
		100
Background in Agriculture (Offered Agriculture)		
Yes	92	83.6
No	18	16.4
Total	110	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Attutudes to taking Career in Agriculture

Objective 2: identify the factors that influence the attitude of people in taking carrier in agriculture. Results in Table 2 show that wide job opportunities had greatest influence on the respondents decision to study agriculture with mean score 3.47. This is in agreement with the report of Christina *et al* (1992) who ranked a stable and secure future as the greatest influence over students' decision of choosing agriculture as a profession. It is followed by room for career development with mean score 3.19 and intellectual ability with mean score 3.09. This is followed by expected reward (pay) from the career (3.08), my parents or guardians (2.95), interest in agriculture (2.94), my study of agriculture as a subject (2.94), and prestige in agriculture (2.89). These are followed by other factors as showed in table 2 and lastly by gender (1.56).

Table 2: Factors that Influence Respondents Choice to Study Agriculture

S/N	Factors	Mean	Ranking
1.	Wide job opportunities in the career	3.47	1
2.	Room for career development	3.19	2
3.	Intellectual ability	3.09	3
4.	Expected reward (pay) from the career	3.08	4
5.	My parents or guardians	2.95	5
6.	Interest in agriculture	2.94	6
7.	My study of agriculture as a subject	2.94	6
8.	Prestige in agriculture	2.89	8
9.	Exposure to agriculture	2.62	9
10.	Occupational counseling and information	2.56	10
11.	Inability to study intended course	2.44	11
12.	Societal perception about agriculture	2.42	12
13	Socio-economic status	2.39	13
14.	Government policies on agriculture	2.24	14
15.	The media	2.15	15
16.	Secondary school teachers and counselors	1.93	16
17.	My friends or peers	1.86	17
18.	My farming or job background	1.82	18
19.	Age	1.64	19
20.	Gender	1.56	20

Source: Field survey 2010

Objective 3: Examine different agricultural jobs desired by student after living the school

Table 3: Ranking of Jobs by Respondents in order of Preferences

S/N	Agricultural jobs	Mean	Ranking
1.	Working in ministry of agriculture (state or federal)	8.65	1
2.	Working with international organizations involved with issued like deforestation, poverty, global insecurity, water conservation and sustainability	8.49	2
3.	Working in agricultural development organization like ADP,NALDA and FACU	8.33	3
4	Teaching agriculture in colleges or universities	8.19	4
5	Set up a consultancy service in any area of your choice in agriculture	8.11	5
6	Working in private farms	7.72	6
7	Be a development worker focusing on the poor and vulnerable	7.52	7
8	Buying, selling and marketing of agricultural produce	7.14	8
9	Working in oil companies involving in processing agricultural produce like flourmill, paper and canning and Plastic industries	6.78	9
10	Working in oil companies involved with Environmental issues, pollution and oil spillage.	6.86	10
11	Working in food industries whose goods range from dairy products beverages and beef.	6.84	11
12	Working in research Centre's or institutions involved in agricultural research.	6.59	12
13	Working in banks and insurance companies	6.33	13
14	Going into full time farming on my own	6.15	14
15	Taking improved technology to farmers and helping the rural communities.	5.89	15

Source: Field survey, 2010

It was obvious from table 3, that the majority with mean of (8.65) of the respondents had the highest preference for working in ministry of agriculture, followed by (8.49) whose preference is in working in an international organization with involvement in issued like deforestation, poverty, global insecurity ,water conservation and sustainability . Also, from

the table of preference, it was general observed that the majority of the undergraduates did not show preference for full time farming and neither do they want to associate with anything that will make them to visit poor farmers in their various village. This finding is in line with that of Larke and Talbert (1993) who reported that students tend to have negative attitude toward the traditional components of agriculture. This attitude may be one of reasons why taking career in agriculture is poor or negative.

Objective 4: Examine attitudinal change of respondent in the program at present

Table 4: Preferential course of respondents as at present.

Course	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture	76	69.1
Engineering	3	2.7
Heath science	4	3.6
Science	22	20.0
Other	5	4.6
Total	110	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2010

The finding in Table 4 showed that in spite the fact that majority of the respondents did not prefer agriculture before admission, more than half (69.1%) of the respondents now find themselves in agriculture. This indicated that majority of the respondent have developed interest in the career. This is line with the model of Alexander (1997) which indicates that as students complete a number of courses, their level of interest will progress to the expert stage.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Test of Relationship between Selected Personal Characteristics and Attitude of the Respondents toward Agriculture as a Career

Characteristics	R	Significant
Age	0.44	0.05
Gender	0.21	0.05
Level of respondents	0.31	0.05
Knowledge of existing organization	0.23	0.05

Pearson correlation coefficient showed a significant relationship between attitude and age ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.05$); gender ($r = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$) ; level of respondents ($r = 0.31$, $p < 0.05$) , therefore Hypothesis 1 which stated that there is no significant relationship between some

selected demographic characteristics and attitude of respondents toward agriculture as a career was rejected. This was because relationships which exist between them were significant; Also hypothesis 2, which stated that there is a significant relationship between existing agricultural organization and their attitude towards a career in agriculture was rejected at ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$); this can be explained by the fact that age affects individual attitude toward taking career in agriculture, so likewise gender and academic level of the respondent.

CONCLUSION

Having, identified the factors that influence the attitude of undergraduate in taking carrier in agriculture, it is important to lay emphasis on positive attitude of our undergraduates, because they are our hope and tool for enhancing food security in the nearest future, since today undergraduate are the future agriculturists. However, the finding of study indicated that despite the fact that the majority of the respondents did not want to study agriculture initially, but during their period of study and exposure to the course, they have developed interest in agriculture. And they have realized that the scope of agriculture goes beyond farming or rearing of animals alone. Also, it was observed that the majority of respondents chose agriculture because of job opportunity in the career rather than to be self-employed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore recommended that enlightenment programmes be embarked upon to expose undergraduate to the prospect and dynamic of agriculture. Government should help to formulate a policy that will make agriculture compulsory at lower level of secondary school, just like English language and mathematics. This will stimulate the interest of students in taking it as a career and consequently, food insecurity will be a forgone issue in our nation and in the world in general.

Furthermore, agricultural mechanization should be encouraged, because this will help to stimulate interest of our undergraduate in the study and instead of them looking for white collar jobs after graduation, farm mechanization can be practised like in the developed country of the world. Back to land program can be developed with basic infrastructural facilities which can be made available to young graduates. Incentives should be given to young graduates. All these will attract secondary school or higher school leavers to take career in agriculture.

Finally, university curriculum should be designed to make agriculture interesting with practical- oriented courses. Also, scholarship should be given to undergraduate students of agriculture to motivate them.

REFERENCES

Aderemi, A.M.R. and L.W. David, 2001."Impact on sustainable of secondary school Agricultural Education teachers and programs in the north central Region." *Journal of Agric.Edu. 42: 38-45.*

Afonja and Olusi O, 1995. "Enrolment figures and causal factors of women in agricultural studies at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria". Country case study. Rome, FAO

Alexander, P.A. (1997*): Mapping then multidimensional nature of domain leaning: the interplay of cognitive, motivational and strategic forces*

Christina L. C, Robert. S, James G. L (1992): Australian Students' Perceptions of Agricultural Careers, *Journal of Agricultural Education, (spring)* Pg 30-36

Dyer J.E., Breja, L.M., & Andreasen, R. J. (1999). "Attitudes of college of agriculture freshmen toward agriculture." *Journal of Agricultural Education*, Vol. 40 (2).14-240

Haney, S. (2008). Encourage farm youth to attend agricultural schools, grainnews.ca, January 28th, p25 URL: http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p22950_index.html. Accessed March 2011

Hoover, T.S and Scanlon.D.C (1991) "Enrollment issues in agricultural education programs and FFA members." *Journal of Agricultural Education* 32:2-19

LarkeA.Jr and Talbert B.A. (1993) *Factors influencing minority and non-minority student to enroll in an introductory Agric Science course in Texas proceeding of The 20th annual National Agriculture Education Research meeting. Northville. Pp23-33*

Likert, R (1932). *A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes. Archives of Psychology: No.140*

Mallory, M. and Sommer, R. (1986). *High school student images of agricultural careers. California Agriculture,* 40:4-6.

Malumfashi, S H (1999).*Interest of youth in agriculture-a case study of students of agriculture, ATBU Bauchi. A Bachelor of Agricultural Technology research project (unpublished). Agricultural Economics and Extension programme, ATBU Bauchi, Nigeria, 47Pp*

Osborne. E.W and Dyer, J.E. (2000)."Attitudes of Illinois agriscience students and their parents toward the agriculture and educational programs." *Journal of Agricultural Education*. 3(41):54-59

Reza (2005). *Study on attitude and perceptions of agricultural undergraduate students of Bu Ali Sina university toward22ndAnnual Conference Proceedings, AEAEE Pp 424-429.*

Taylor, B and A. Heath (1996).The use of double-sided items in scale construction. Working Paper no. 37. Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends: Abstract available online at URL: http://www.crest.ox.ac.uk/p37.htm [11.01.03].I,