Agricultural Journal 3 (2): 102-106, 2008
ISSN: 1816-9155

Attitude of Secondary School Students in Abia State, Towards Career in Agriculture

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Abstract: The study surveyed the attitude of secondary school students in Abia State, toward a career in Agriculture. The specific objectives were to describe the socio-economic profile of participants, influences on career decisions, orientations after leaving school, level of encouragement to pursue a career in Agriculture (farming), Rating their attitude towards farming/agriculture. Sample population was 120 respondents and purposive and simple random techniques were used. Interview and questionnaire were also used in data collection. Major findings showed that the majority of the students were in the age group of 16-18 years, Majority, 51% of the students were female and 49% were male. The respondents' background was rural (farming) and most of student's parent engaged more in farming. About 74% were influenced by their parents, on career decision, 28% of respondents were to pursue a non-agricultural related university degree, 30% of respondents were having negative attitude towards farming/agriculture and 70% were having positive attitude towards farming/agriculture. Most affecting problems of the students were lack of sponsors, lack of agriculture teachers, lack of guardian counselors, lack of equipment and land. It was recommended that government and non-governmental organizations should work together to provide agricultural teachers and guardian counselors in various schools especially those in rural schools.

Key words: Attitude, secondary, students, career, agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has contributed greatly to the general economic stability of Nigeria and various governments have continued to encourage agriculture through various programmes. Currently, about 70% of the Nigerian workforce is employed in agriculture (Njoku, 1999). Nigeria agricultural structure is composed of the smallholder farms and the middle scale farms. From the structure, it is evident that the family small-scale farm, which employs over 82% of all agricultural workforces and produced about 85% of Nigeria food supply, is the backbone of Nigeria agriculture.

The low performance can be attributed to a number of factors the most important of which are the twin problem of lack of youths trained in Agriculture taking up farming as a career to replace the old and the ageing farmers and the near total absence of basic infrastructural facilities in the rural areas which has exacerbated rural urban migration (Olusanya, 1990). With this urban and rural background, little understanding or sympathy is displayed towards agriculture for instance in urban setting some students that enrolled for agriculture as a field of specialization course of study did so after failing to secure admission to study some course perceived as being more prestigious. Due perhaps to the fact that agriculture is not seen as a profession like law, Accountancy, Engineering and Medicine, students tend therefore to choose disciplines with professional status.

Moreover, most of the students who eventually enrolled for agriculture placed their hopes on city-based jobs in the ministry of agriculture, banks co-operative and other government parastatals.

This low esteem of agriculture could also be attributed to the school curriculum and prescribed examination, which tend to be theoretical with emphasis mainly on learning. Corroborating this, Solarin (1974) in Olaitan and Uwadiae (1993) noted that some agricultural science teachers are not really interested in practical farming. They believed their roles are limited to teaching students to pass their examinations, without making them farmers which would involve the actual practical demonstration by the teacher. Invariably such teachers could not teach agricultural science effectively and successfully to have meaningful results. The students may have a fair grounding on agricultural relate basic science, but are seriously lacking in many qualifications required for making a successful business out of farming.

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Williams (1978) cited in Onuekwusi and Njoku (1999) opined that if the food needs of the country are to be met and economic development is to proceed, trained men must be at hand to carry out the whole complex career in agriculture.

In the light of the foregoing, the need for student's participation in agriculture cannot be overemphasized, students with higher literacy levels can bring the entrepreneurial spirit into agriculture. Entrepreneurship implies risk bearing and a desire, willingness and ability to take necessary measures to improve output and productivity (Akubuilo and Mgbada, 1999). This implies a positive attitude towards the adoption and use of new agricultural technologies, such as high yielding, disease resistant, crop varieties and the breeds of livestock, students of agriculture can be the springboards needed for vertical integration in the agricultural sector.

The decline in the numbers of young people entering farming and the agriculture industry has been a concern for all those involved in the agricultural sector for many years.

However, in more recent years with the prosperity and diversity of job opportunities provided in many areas yet young people from the south eastern Nigeria are leaving agricultural occupation for trading and other business (Onuekwusi and Njoku, 2000).

This phenomenon is a threat and the concern about the future of this industry and its attractiveness as a worth while career for young people needs to be pursued vigorously.

This concern has lead to the need to conduct this research. The broad objective of this study, was to assess the attitude of final year secondary school students towards agriculture (farming). The specific objectives were, to find out the socio-economic profile of students, identify who influences the career decision of students, ascertain what students intend to do when they leave school, establish the level of encouragement to purse a career in Agriculture (farming) by students and ascertain the attitude of students toward agriculture.

Hypothesis

HO: There is no significant difference between the attitudes of senior secondary school students towards agriculture in the urban and rural areas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area: The research was carried out in Ikwuano and Umuahia North Local Government Areas in Abia state of Nigeria. The choice of the areas were primarily based on its relatively rural (Ikwuano) and urban (Umuahia North) set up, secondly, its proximity to the researchers academic environment.

Population/ sample: This involved 120 students selected from the urban and rural areas of the study area.

Sampling technique: Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used for this study.

Sampling procedure: From the selected schools, 20 students each were randomly selected from each of the sampled schools in the rural and urban areas.

Data collection: In each of the secondary schools selected, questionnaires were distributed to the rural and urban secondary school students. These were latter collected and analysed.

Method of data analysis: All the objectives were analysed using descriptive statistical tools like frequency and percentage. The hypothesis was achieved using t-test statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio economic profile of participant

Age: The age distribution (Fig. 1) shows that majority, 77% of respondents were in age range of 16-18 years. This age were found in both the urban and rural student, which is known as adolescent age. This finding corresponds

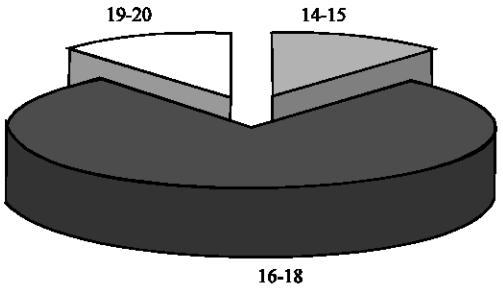

Fig. 1: Age range of students

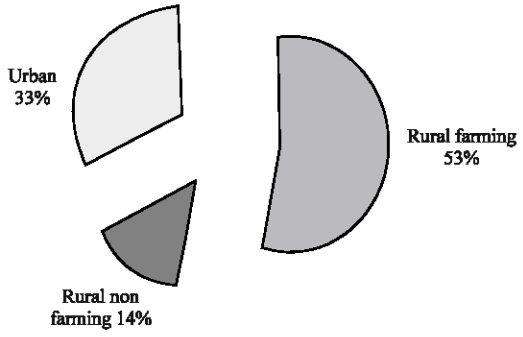

Fig. 2: Background of students

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to gender

Gender	Freq.	(%)
Male	59	49
Female	61	51
Total	120	100

Source: Survey data (2006)

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to farm enterprise in student background

Farm enterprise	Freq.	(%)
Crop farming	61	51
Animal farming	9	8
Crop and animal	35	29
None at all	11	9
	120	100

Source: Survey data (2006)

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to ownership of farm

Own farm	Freq.	(%)
Yes	44	37
No	76	63
Total	120	100

Source: Survey data (2006)

with the national age bracket as reported by many researchers (Obinne and Obasi, 2000; Isiaka and Adekoya, 2001).

Gender: Table 1 shows that 51% of students were female while 49% of them were male. This means that majority of those students in schools were females lending credence to the fact that there is male drop out from schools in the area.

From Fig. 2 result shows that 53% of the students surveyed come from a rural farming background, just over one third (33%) are from urban/town background and few 11.6% from rural non farming. This shows that most of our students whether schooling in the urban or rural area are from the rural areas and therefore, are conversant with rural life set up. This finding is in agreement with that of Aluko (1990).

From Table 2, result shows that 51% of farm enterprise in students' background was crop farming and 35% of them were involved in crop and animal farming combined. The involvement of rural student farm enterprise is higher than that of urban students in farm enterprise.

Table 3 shows that 63% of students do not have their own farm at home while 37% have their own farms. Majority, 81% of student's parent have there own farm especially those that come from rural schools, whiles 19% of students parent do not have and are from urban schools.

About 70% of the student's parents were currently farming especially those living in rural area. This is because farming is the source of their income for the family.

The finding also shows that, 70% of students' parents farms were in the village and 30% were in the town.

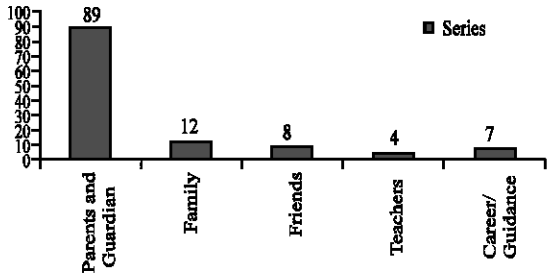

Fig 3: Influences on career decision

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to orientations after leaving school

Intention	Freq.	(%)
Purse an agric related university degree	29	24.00
Purse a non agric related university degree	34	28.00
Purse on OND/HAN	15	12.50
Purse an OND/HAN non agric	8	6.66
Work immediately after school	8	6.66
Take up any short term vocational training	26	22.00
Total	120	100.00

Source: Survey data (2006)

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to level of encouragement to purse a career in agriculture/ farming

	Freq.			(%)		
Influence	E	D	N	E	D	N
Parent	91	5	24	76	4.2	22
Career guidance	65	19	36	54	16.0	6
Teacher	89	5	26	72	4.2	20
Other teachers	74	11	35	62	9.2	29
Friends	59	37	24	49	31.0	20
Others	56	13	51	47	11.0	42
Total		120			100.0	

Source: Survey data (2006)

Influences on career decisions: Figure 3 indicates that, 74% of student rated their parents as the important influence on their career decision especially those students from a farming background (rural) since they do not have career guidance in school. While other family members and friends were the next, followed by career guidance and other teachers. This result is same with those from the town/ urban area. The findings also agree with the findings of Emerole and Onuekwusi (2001) that parents are important influence on their children's career decision.

Findings also indicate that 39% of student always discussed a career in farming with their parents and career guidance especially those in rural schools.

From the above (Table 4), about 28% of the student would purse a non-agricultural related university degree and 22% of student would take up any short-term vocational training. Most students in urban neglect agriculture as career and want to read medicine.

For students from a farming background, 76% of their parent have encouraged them to purse a career in farming, however just over quarter of these parents have discouraged this choicec (Table 5).

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to attitude towards Farming/Agric

	Frequency				(%)			
Negative attitude aspect	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
Farming involves working long hour in open air	43	27	26	14	36	31	22	1.16
Provides low income	12	29	42	37	10	24	35	31
Hard work	51	38	17	14	43	32	14	1.16
Working 7 day per week	10	14	46	50	8.33	11.6	37	42
Dirty work	12	28	42	38	10	23	35	32
Uncertainty of disease	28	37	23	32	23	31	19	27
Dependent on the weather	44	27	18	21	36	31	15	18
Positive aspect								
Working in the open air	62	30	21	7	52	25	18	5.83
Working with animal	32	23	28	27	27	19	32	22
Being your own boss	49	35	19	17	41	29	16	14
Interesting job/satisfaction	59	35	14	12	50	29	11.6	10
Good income	70	38	10	2	58	23	8.33	1.66
Working with machines	55	41	16	8	46	34	13	6.66
Well paid	44	41	20	15	36	34	1.7	12.5
Boring	32	33	36	19	27	28	30	15
Insufficiency paid	34	35	32	29	20	22	27	24
Reward	50	33	18	19	42	28	15	15
Unrewarding	32	20	33	35	27	1.7	28	29
Healthy working environment	42	35	25	18	35	29	21	15
Isolated working environment	17	29	25	49	14	24	21	41
A job for poor people	17	8	32	51	14	7	27	48

Source: Survey data (2006)

From Table 6, over 58% of students stated that Good Income was a positive aspect to farming. (Vaughan and Onigbinde, 2001). Other important aspect included working in open air (52%), interest/ job satisfaction, working with machines reward, those students from farming background regarded farming as good income since money got from here is used for training them in school.

From findings 52% of students never like to live in rural setting, 62% of student want to be part time farmers and 46% of student want to be full time.

Some 45% students surveyed comes from a farming background this means their parents were encouraging them to pursue a career in agriculture.

Result shows that 42% of student's parent in urban were civil servants, administrators, engaged in commercial ventures etc. This means there is no time for them to participate in farming (Table 7).

Hypothesis: From the t-test, the Urban has a t-statistics of 9.935 while the Rural has 12.395. From this result, we reject the Null Hypothesis and accept the Alternative, which says that: There is a significant difference between the attitudes of senior secondary school students towards agriculture in the urban and rural areas (Table 8).

The implication is that the students from the rural areas who are near nature would be ready to take up Agricultural occupation than those of the urban students.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to attitude of student towards living in rural area in the future

Live in the rural area in the future	Freq.	(%)
Never	63	52.00
Yes, immediately	10	8.33
Yes in 5 years	14	11.00
Yes in 10 years	2	2.50
Yes in more than 10 years	5	4.16
Possibly	26	21.00
Total	120	100.00

Source: Survey data (2006)

Table 8: T-Test table on difference between the attitudes of senior secondary school students towards agriculture in the urban and rural areas

	Mean	SD	Std error mean	t	df	Mean Diff.
Urban	36.2143	13.6392	3.6452	9.935	119	36.2143
Rural	36.7143	11.0831	2.9621	12.395	119	36.7143

Source: Survey data (2006)

CONCLUSION

The following conclusion were made based on the finding of the study;

- Parents are the most important influence on career of students
- Most students' parent engaged in farming as their main occupation.
- Students intend to purse a non-agricultural related university degree.
- Majority students comes from farming background

- Despite the fact that farming is perceived as poorly paid by the majority of student nonetheless, agriculture was generally viewed as an interesting and rewarding occupation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents being most important influences on career decisions of their children, should be enlightened, ministry of education should provide urban and rural schools with career guidance to enable the student's make proper career choice.

The Government should set minimum requirements for every school whose students are offering Agriculture to take it in senior secondary certificate examination.

The Government should provide enough Agricultural teachers' in all secondary schools especially those in urban areas and introduce the Supervised Organized Experimental Practice (SOEP) in agriculture in senior secondary schools (Olaitan and Uwadiae, 1999). This should be used in the teaching of agricultural science in both rural and urban schools.

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