The Influence of Students' Perception and Teachers' Attitude towards Agriculture as a Career Choice in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
The study examined the influence of perception of students and attitude of teachers towards Agriculture as a Career Choice in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria. The multi-stage sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents for the study. At the first stage, 10% of registered secondary schools (12 schools) in Akure South Local government area of Ondo State (6 privates and 6 public secondary schools) were purposively selected based on the accessibility. Thereafter, proportionate random sampling was used to select fifteen (15) students offering agriculture as a subject from each of the selected schools, making a total of one hundred and eighty (180) respondents. Data was collected through the use of a well-structured questionnaire and the objectives were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings from the study showed that 97.8% of parents supported their children on their intended study subject and only 2.8% of the students indicated to take up a career in agricultural field. However, 88.3% of the students had a positive perception of agriculture as a career choice while the agricultural teachers' attitude was adjudged favourable by the students. There was a positive relationship between teacher's attitudinal influence and student's perception of agriculture as a career choice and also a positive association between gender and subject base of the students and their perception of agriculture as a career choice. Based on the above findings, educational policy implementation should make agricultural subject at secondary school level to be compulsory for all categories of students where student will be exposed to agriculture as a career and as an important tool for economic development as well as a nation's advancement.

Keywords: *Agriculture, Career choice, Student perception, Teachers' attitude, Ondo State*

INTRODUCTION
Globally, agriculture is a pivotal sector as it stimulates in achieving economic growth, alleviate hunger and reduces poverty as well as provides space for employment. Several developed countries have recorded huge success of economic prosperity and development through agricultural investment, which is a major contributor to any nation's gross domestic product (GDP) alongside with other sectors and industrial services (Nwankpa, 2017). In Nigeria, an estimated 20.9% of the country's GDP in 2017 came from agricultural activities, which revealed an indication of its promising potentials for Nigeria's economic growth and its development (NBS, 2017; Statista, 2018).

According to Sertoglu *et al.* (2017), agriculture determines the outcomes of Nigeria's battle for the long-run economic growth attainment. Apart from the huge potential of the sector to boost economic development, the teeming fast-growing population's food need is partly buoyed through agriculture, birthing the quotidian quote that "no farmer (agriculturist), no nation".

With the abundant arable land, which is about 37.3% of the total land area (World Bank, 2016) and water resources capacity of 260

billion and 92 billion cubic meters of surface and ground waters respectively (Federal Ministry of Water Resources, 2011), Nigeria is yet to leverage the very many favourable conditions for agriculture to transform its economy and a substantial part of its foreign reserves covers the importation of staple food such as rice, wheat, sugar, and fish (Adesina, 2012; Awoniyi *et al*, 2018; Popoola, 2018). There is a huge economic burden caused by high food importation cost because Nigeria agriculture cannot meet up with the food demand of its growing population.

There is a huge youth population which is about half of the entire population (Pelzom and Katel, 2017). Many of them are not interested in agriculture because a very large percentage (about 70%) of Nigerian farmers are into subsistence farming (Adebayo & Olagunju, 2015; Nwankpa, 2017) using crude implements. Also, poor access to: land, credit, and other agricultural inputs make agriculture unappealing to the Nigerian youth (FAO, 2014). However, in Nigeria, there are several agricultural youth empowerment programmes implemented at the Federal, State and Local government levels. These are: The Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATASP-Phase 1, 2015), The Youth Employment in Agriculture Program (YEAP), The Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture (YISA), Graduate Farmer's Scheme of the Federal Government in collaboration with the Songhai Nigeria Farms (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2016), and Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP). The Agricultural Transformation Agenda was initiated to address rural youths' poor access to job opportunities {ATASP-Phase1, 2015). The Youth Employment in Agriculture Program (YEAP) and the Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture (YISA) were also designed by the Federal government to produce young commercial farmers and agribusiness leaders in Nigeria (Africa Agriculture Status Report, 2015) while the Graduate Farmer's Scheme of the Federal Government in collaboration with the Songhai Nigeria Farms (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2016) were created to enhance youth engagement in agriculture. Besides, the Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) which addresses the creation of a pathway for youth to enter the agribusiness economy. However, over five decades of policies on agriculture and youth empowerment are yet to improve youth engagement and participation in agriculture to a noteworthy notch as evidenced by the high levels of hunger, rising food import bills and youth unemployment in the country (PGDA, 2010; Filmer and Louise, 2014; FAO, 2015).
Fabiyi et al. (2015) posited that inconsistency in policy and neglect of agriculture by the government among other reasons, contributed to the problem.
Agriculture is not synonymous with a job in the Nigerian youth context because the use of crude implements and methods have misshapen their perception and ill-proportioned their level of participation in agriculture. Also, agriculture job looks monstrous and unappealing to the majority of them (Abdu-Lateef and Sharifah, 2015). This explain the increase in rural-urban migration because rural youths seek white-collar jobs in the city leading to a decline in manpower in agriculture and consequently, a decline in agricultural productivity. (Abbass, 2012; Baliyan and Nenty 2015).

Training and development amidst growing complexity of work environment cannot be overemphasised, and the need for professionalism, knowledge, and skills possession to effectively perform tasks in advancing/changing technology cannot be pushed aside (Akanbi and Adetunji, 2016). Despite the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 education system about four decades ago, which is to stimulate and sustain students' interest in agriculture, enable students to acquire useful knowledge and practical skills in agriculture, and prepare them for further studies and occupation in agriculture (National Policy on Education, 2004; Obi, 2005), the agricultural sector is still lacking the required level of personnel who needs to work with the rural dwellers and food producers are lacking in quantity but the

youths have no inclination to associate themselves with farming (FAO, 2014).

The aging farmers, forecast of a swelling national population and perceived food scarcity due to the Covid-19 pandemic, have further steered the need to transfer food production activities to younger, more energetic and productive society members (Pinnado and Sanchez, 2017) and this can only be gotten if the young school leavers decide to seek professionalism in this sector and choose it as a career choice. However, lesser students venture into agriculture as a field of study or as an occupation after their secondary education.
The dislike for this profession is taking a wider spread and alarming dimension. The agricultural productive capacity of the nation dwindles as reflected by high food insecurity status, unemployment, and poverty (UNESCO, 2016; UNCTAD, 2016).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Considering the social learning theory of career decision making, Mitchell and Krumboltz, (1990), posited that there could be a lot of factors interplaying to determine one's career choice such as genetic factors, environmental factors, and cognition/ perception and learning experiences. This implies that the perception and learning experience (tutor/ teachers attitude inclusive) can influence the career choice of students. Hence, this accentuates the imperativeness for this study as it majorly seeks to investigate the perception of the students and the influence of agricultural teachers' attitude on agriculture as a career choice on same in Nigeria using Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State. The demographic characteristics of some secondary school students in Akure South Local Government were examined to do justice to the study. Likewise, the perception of the students on agriculture as a career choice and the teacher's attitudinal influence on the choice of agriculture as a career were determined.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Akure South local government area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Akure south local government area is located between latitude 700'Nand 7030'N of the equator and longitude 500'Eand 50301E of the Greenwich Meridian. The Local Government has an area of 331 square kilometres with population of 353,211 (NPC, 2006), and having 121 registered public and private secondary schools (Ondo State Ministry of Education, 2016).

A Multi-stage technique was used to select respondents from a population consisting of all Secondary School students offering agriculture in the Local Government Area. At the first stage, 10% of registered secondary schools (12 schools) in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State (6 privates and 6 public secondary schools) were purposively selected based on accessibility. Thereafter, random sampling was used to select fifteen (15) students offering agriculture as a course from each of the selected schools (9 SS3 students and 6 SS2 students) making one hundred and eight (108) SS3 students and seventy-two (72) SS2 students. In all, a total of one hundred and eighty (180) students were used for the study. Data were collected through the use of a well-structured questionnaire and the objectives were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The questionnaire elicited information on demographic on demographic characteristics of the students, perception and attitude to agriculture as a subject.

The perception of the students on agriculture as a career choice was measured by asking the students to show their level of agreement to some statements on a 5 point Likert-type scale with 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree, and reversed for negative statements in accordance with Chepllogoi et al. (2015). The mean cut off 3.0 was gotten and the perception index was done using descriptive statistics and mean statistic.

Similarly, in line with Ingram et al. (2018), the attitude of the teachers was determined by asking the students to affirm their agreement to various statements regarding their agricultural teacher's attitude to the course on a 5 point Likert-type scale with 5 = strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= undecided, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree, and reversed for negative statements. The mean cut off 3.0 was obtained and was used to judge if their attitude was favourable (≥ 3.0) or not favourable (<3.0) and vice versa for negative statements. The study also came up with two hypotheses:

H_{01} - There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitudinal influence and student's perception of agriculture as a career choice.

H_{02}: There is significant relationship between teacher's attitudinal influence and student's perception of agriculture as a career choice.

Hypothesis 1 was tested using Pearson product-moment correlation (PPMC) while hypothesis 2 was tested using chi-square analysis. Under hypothesis 1, the mean score for the attitudinal statements was computed and obtained in ratio level of measurement likewise the perception score. Accordingly, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was utilized to determine the relationship between the two variables for relationship testing at that level of measurement. Chi-square was used to test the relationship or association between the variables of interest in hypothesis 2 because variables were measured at the lowest level of measurement (nominal level).

RESULTS

A. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 shows that 56.7% of the respondents were male, which implies that there were more males offering agriculture as a course in secondary schools in the study area. The mean age of the students was 15 years. An indication that majority of the students will be in secondary school at that point. Also, the average number of children per family was 3 with 65.0% of them being the first or second child. This could influence a child's choice of career and parental consent to career choice (Liu, McMahon & Watson, 2015; Godleski & Ostrov, 2020).

Furthermore, the result in Table 1 reveals that majority (83.3%) of the respondents practiced Christianity as their religious belief. Also, 60.6% of the students were science-based students while the remaining 39.4% of students were non-science based. Many of the students offering agriculture as a course in the schools were science-based, while the non-science based (commercial and art students) were fairly represented in the course offering. This could be as a result of the influence of the school through the guidance and counseling unit. The result shows that only 50.6% of the students were willing to register or had registered agriculture as a course in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). This implies that significant proportions of the students were offering the course for knowledge sake and not for certification. The majority (97.8%) of the students had parental support for their intended course of study in the tertiary institutions. This implies that most of the parents were satisfied with the career choice made by their children, this implies that there was no parental constraint/disagreement with the career choice of the students.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondent (N=180)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Gender			
Female	78	43.3	
Male	102	56.7	
Age			
13 – 14 years	36	20.1	
15 – 16 years	123	68.2	
17 - 18 years	21	11.7	15.3 years
Number of Children in family			
1 – 4	142	78.9	
5 – 8	38	21.1	3 children
Position in the family			
1st – 3rd position	145	80.6	
4th – 6th position	35	19.4	
Religion			
Christianity	149	83.3	
Islam	30	16.1	
Traditional	1	0.6	
Subject base			
Sciences	109	60.6	
Non-sciences	71	39.4	
Agriculture as a chosen course in SSCE			
No	89	49.4	
Yes	91	50.6	
Father's Occupation			
Teacher / Civil servant	70	38.9	
Trader / Artisan	54	30.0	
Private worker/self employed	56	31.1	
Mother's Occupation			
Teacher / Civil Servant	76	42.2	
Trader / Artisan	60	33.2	
Private worker/self employed	44	24.4	
Parent's support for the intended course of study			
No	4	2.2	
Yes	176	97.8	

Source: *field survey, 2016*

B. Students Intended Course of Study in the Higher Institution

The result shown in Figure 1 reveals that a higher percentage of the students had the intention of studying medicine and surgery (25.0%), engineering (11.1%), and law (10.6%) at higher institutions. However, a very low percentage (2.8%) intended for studying agriculture (agricultural-related fields) in higher institutions. This shows that the number of students interested in non-agricultural courses far outweighed those interested in agriculture. This implies that lesser young school leavers would opt-in for agricultural-related courses as a chosen course in the higher institutions which has serious implications for food security efforts of the government. This result is in tandem with the findings of Obayelu and Fadele (2019), who found that there was low percentage (4.6%) that showed willingness pursue agriculture in university among the student relative to other professional courses like medicine, engineering, and several others.

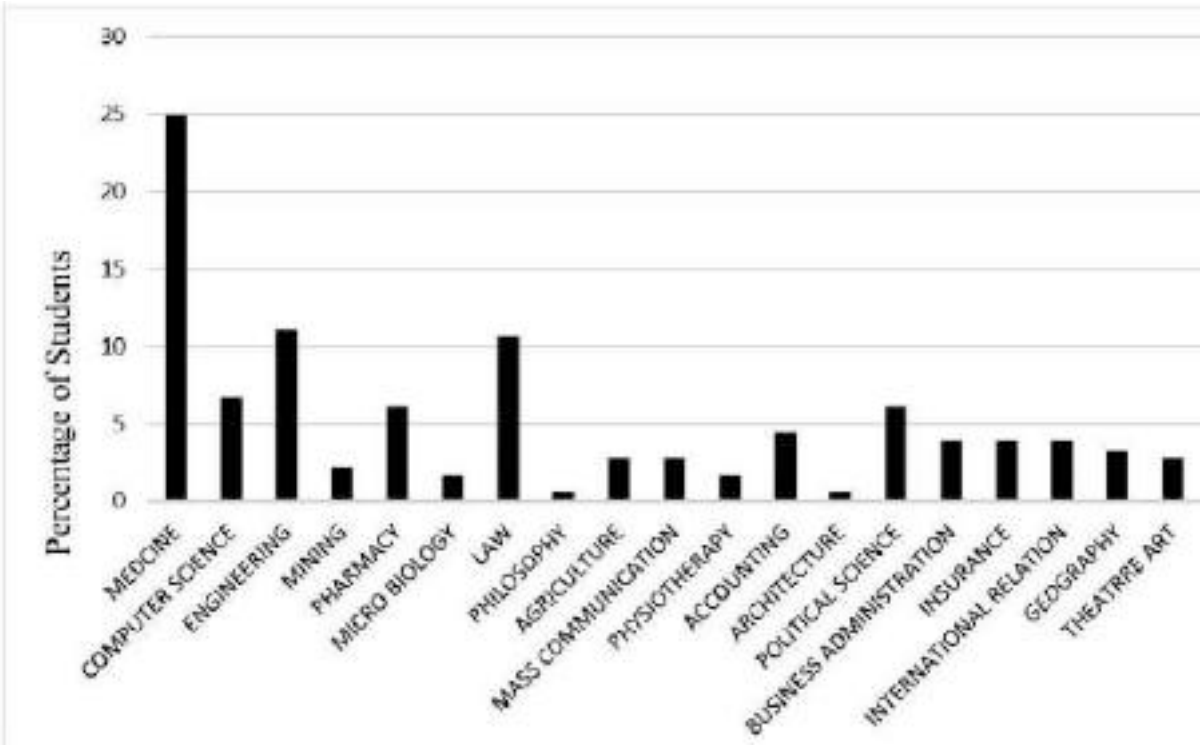

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of respondents according to the intended course of study in the higher institution (N=180)

C. Perception of Students on Agriculture as a Career Choice

The result in Table 2 shows the perception of the students about choosing agriculture as a career. The Perception was measured by asking the students to show their level of agreement to some statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale in accordance with Chepllogoi et al. (2015). The mean cut off 3.0 was gotten and the perception index was obtained. From Table 2, the students disagreed that agriculture is a poor man's job ($\bar{x} = 1.62$), choosing agriculture as a career is

the same as choosing to be poor ($\bar{x}$ = 1.67) and also disagreed with the statement 'agriculture should be left to the illiterate/ rural dwellers' ($\bar{x}$ = 1.50). The implication of this is that the students do not link this career with poverty or wretchedness and also do not hold the belief that only the less privileged and uneducated fellows should be left with the profession.

Moreover, the students have a positive disposition to agriculture as a career choice, as they disagreed with the fact that 'studying agriculture in the university is a waste of time' ($\bar{x}$ = 1.73). Similarly, the students disagreed that they could only study agriculture as a course ($\bar{x}$ = 2.60). This implies that the students were not only willing to offer it as a course but also could take it as a career. This was consolidated with their agreement to the statement that if agriculture becomes mechanized, they will take it up as a full-time career ($\bar{x}$ = 3.28). The implication of this is that the students are aware of the drudgery nature accrued to peasant farming and rather would prefer the mechanized system of farming which comes with ease.

Succinctly, the results shown in figure 2 shows that majority (88.3%) of the students were positively disposed towards agriculture as a career choice while only a few (11.7%) of the students had a negative perception about agriculture as a career choice. This indicates that the students could take up agriculture and its embedded disciplines as a career and course of choice in higher institutions because according to Balyan and Nenly (2015) and Johnson *et al.* (2015) perception of agriculture as a course and exposure to the sector determines the willingness to pursue agriculture as a career choice.

Table 2: Perception of students on agriculture as a career choice (N=180)

Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
	%	%	%	%	%	
Agriculture is a poor man's job	3.9	3.3	3.9	28.9	60.0	1.62
Agriculture should be left to the illiterate, rural dwellers	-	4.4	4.6	23.3	65.6	1.50
Agriculture is all about farming	3.9	12.2	15.6	33.9	34.4	2.17
I can only study Agriculture as a course	6.7	6.1	36.1	33.9	17.2	2.51
Agriculture has too many risk involved	3.9	21.7	22.8	33.9	17.8	2.60
If Agriculture becomes mechanized, I will take it up as a full time career	21.7	27.8	18.9	20.6	11.1	3.28
Agriculture as a business is not very lucrative	8.3	10.6	30.6	23.9	28.7	2.50
Choosing agriculture as a career is the same as choosing to be poor	6.7	4.4	3.9	19.4	65.6	1.67
The future of the nation depends on the development of the agricultural sector	51.1	27.2	6.1	7.8	7.8	4.06
Studying Agriculture at university is a waste of time.	5.0	2.8	8.9	27.2	56.1	1.73

Source: *field survey, 2016* **SA**= Strongly agree, **A**= agree, **U**= undecided, **D**= disagree, **SD**= strongly disagree

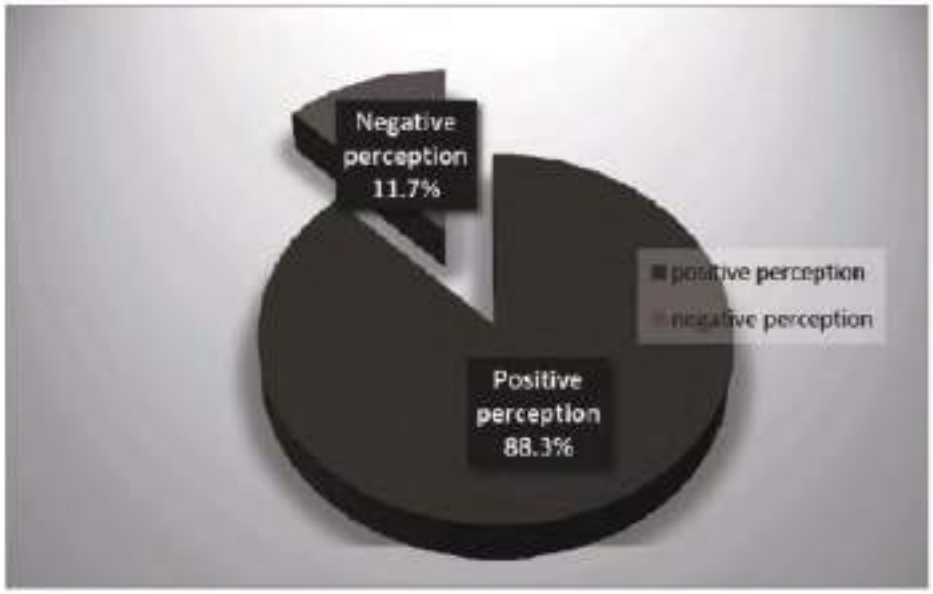

Figure 2: Perception Index of students about agriculture as a career choice (N=180)

D. Teacher's Attitudinal Influence on the Choice of Agriculture as a Career

Table 3 presents information about agricultural teacher's attitude influence on the choice of agriculture as a career. The result shows that the students judged their agricultural science teachers attitude favourable. About 82.3% of the students agree that friendly and good working relationships exist between the agricultural science teacher and students in their school. Also, 76.7% disagree that their agricultural science teacher is not effective in his/her teaching of the subject. This implies that the student's evaluation of their agricultural science teacher in terms of social interaction, mastery and delivery, and teaching effectiveness, were excellent and hence could influence their interest and decisions as regards the course, even to the extent of its choice as a career/course of study in the higher institution.

Furthermore, 80.5% of the students agreed that their agricultural science teachers expose them to career opportunities in agriculture by exposing them to several areas where they could specialize and be gainfully employed in the sector. This implies that their teachers stimulate and arouse their interest for a career in agriculture. This could be the reason for the positive perception towards agriculture as a career choice as seen in figure 2 above. The mean scores above the set cut off 3.0 for positive statements and the reverse for negative statements showed that the teachers' attitudes towards the students and towards the course through their approaches were perceived favourable by the students. Hence this could influence their choice of a career in agriculture.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of teacher's attitude influence on the choice of agriculture as a career (N=180)

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
A friendly and good working relationship exists between the Agricultural science teacher and students in my school	51.7	30.6	7.8	6.7	3.3	4.21*
My Agricultural science teacher is not effective in his teaching	6.1	7.8	9.4	26.7	50.0	1.93*
My Agricultural science teacher is too strict and does not encourage interaction in class	6.7	6.1	12.2	20.0	55.0	1.89*
Communicates to us simply and fluently during the teaching in my school	54.4	20.0	13.3	5.0	7.2	4.09*
My Agricultural science teacher exposes us to career opportunities in agriculture	56.1	24.4	7.2	6.1	6.1	4.18*
My Agricultural science teacher is lazy and motivate to teach	6.1	4.4	8.9	22.8	57.8	1.78*
My Agricultural science teacher makes study of agricultural science boring and uninteresting	5.6	7.7	3.3	27.8	55.6	1.83*
My Agricultural science teacher is usually interested in solving any problem I have in the subject	45.6	29.4	14.4	2.8	7.8	4.02*
My Agricultural science teacher usually ask us questions that stimulate our thought or make us reason well in class	44.4	34.4	7.2	5.6	8.3	4.01*
All we do in my agricultural science class is to write notes	13.9	6.1	4.4	36.1	39.4	2.19*

Source: *field survey, 2016*

SA= Strongly agree, **A**= agree, **U**= undecided, **D**= disagree, **SD**= strongly disagree * = favourable attitude

E. Test of Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between teacher's attitudinal influence and student's perception of agriculture as a career choice.

The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation in Table 4 shows that there was low, positive but significant relationship ($r = 0.245$, $p < 0.05$) between the teacher's attitudinal influence and student's perception of agriculture as a career choice. This implies that students' perception of agriculture as a career choice is influenced by the agricultural science teachers' approach to the subject and attitude to students. The positive relationship connotes that the stronger their perception about their agriculture teacher's attitudes, the more the students' interest in agriculture as a career choice. This result supports the assertion of Adedapo *et al.* (2014) who asserted that guidance/ teacher's role highly ranked (second) among factors influencing career choice of agriculture in their study in India.

Table 4: Correlation between teacher's attitudinal influence and student's perception of agriculture as a career choice (n=180).

Variables	r-value	p-value
Teacher's attitudinal influence vs. student perception of agriculture as a career choice	0.245	0.001*

Source: *field survey, 2016*

* Significant at 0.05 level (5%)

H_{02}: There is no significant association between the demographic characteristics of the students and perception of the students about agriculture as a career choice.

Result of the chi-square relationship in Table 5 shows that there was significant association between religion ($\chi 2 = 8.040$, $p < 0.05$), subject base ($\chi 2 = 4.050$, $p < 0.05$) and perception of the students about agriculture as a career choice. This implies that religion and the subject base (that is whether a science student or non-science students) can influence students' perception about agriculture as a

career choice. Religion could serve as an influence because some individuals contact their religious leaders or deity on the choice of actions and careers of choice, a position supported by Stark and Bainbridge (1985) who believe that religion is an important and influential factor for individuals and society. Also, the subject base of the student could shape the perception of the students about agriculture as a career choice because of the other choices available in their subject base and the linkages with other courses they offer. Fabiyi *et al.* (2015) found that the class of students/subject base had a significant association with students' choice of agriculture as a career. Other selected demographic characteristics have no significant association with students' perception about agriculture as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Association between demographic characteristics of students and their about agriculture as a career choice.

Variables	χ^2 value	Df	Sig. (p-value)
Gender	0.046	1	0.830
Religion	8.040	2	0.018*
Subject base	4.050	1	0.044*
Interest for registration for agriculture at WASSCE	0.261	1	0.610
Father's occupation	4.731	4	0.316
Mother's occupation	5.640	4	0.228
Parental support for the intended course of study	0.623	1	0.430

Source: *field survey, 2016* * Significant at 0.05 level (5%)

DISCUSSIONS

The study assessed the perception of secondary school students in Akure South Local government area about agriculture as a career choice, and also determined the influence of teachers' attitudes on such perception. The mean age of the students was 15 years and very few (2.8%) of the students have the intention of choosing agriculture as a course of study in the higher institution. Obayelu and Fadele's (2019) and Fadeyi et al. (2015) supported the findings. Majority of the students opted for agriculture as the last resort because agriculture has been undignified with decades of neglect by the various arms of government. Also, many of the students offering agriculture as a course in the schools were science-based, while the non-science based were fairly represented. This could be as a result of the influence of the school through the guidance and counseling unit which has implication for food self-sufficiency in the country. The more youth in agriculture in the country, the better for the economy as agricultural productivity would be enhanced. Growing youth unemployment in the country, ageing farmers and diminishing crop yield under subsistence farming approach indicate that youth engagement in agriculture should be prioritized.

The study also reveals that the students judged their agricultural science teachers' attitude and approach to the course favourable and hence, it was found to have a positive correlation with their perception. Religion and subject base were identified as the demographic characteristics that could influence students' perception of agriculture as a career choice. However, the students had a positive perception of agriculture as a career option, although majority of them were not intending to pick up a career in this field. Other factors such as gender, parents' occupation, and parental support were not significant.

Hence this study recommends that collaborative and concise efforts should be made by educational bodies, agricultural experts, the media and Non-governmental organization (NGOs) to stimulate the choice of agriculture as a career by students, leveraging on their positive perception of agriculture as a career choice. Tertiary

institutions should engage in routine sensitization on the need to be food secure as a country and building interest in agriculture as the pathway to food security. Religious leaders also could be sensitised on the importance of agriculture in the development of a nation. In addition, government should connect young entrepreneurs with investors, local and international organisations such as the IFAD and Global Youth Business Incubator to enhance their productivity. The IFAD has many different projects that establish and strengthen micro-lending institutions that give young men and women the jump-start they need for their business. Government should intensify efforts on the Youth Employment in Agriculture Program (YEAP), The Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture (YISA), and Graduate Farmer's Scheme.

CONCLUSION

The influence of perception of students and attitude of teachers towards Agriculture as a Career Choice in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State is the focus of this study. One hundred and eighty (180) respondents from twelve secondary schools were involved in the study. About 97.8% students had parental support on their intended study subject while only 2.8% of the students indicated to take up a career in agricultural field. The agricultural teachers' attitude was adjudged favourable by the students and there was a positive relationship between teacher's attitudinal influence and student's perception of agriculture as a career choice. Also, a positive association between gender, subject base of the students and their perception of agriculture as a career choice existed. Stimulation of the youth on the choice of agriculture as a career, youth sensitization on the need for the country to be food secure and an enhanced youth participation and engagement in agriculture are the recommended pathways to food security. Establishment of linkages between young entrepreneurs, investors, local and international organisations are germane as well as intensifying efforts on youth empowerment programmes in the country.

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