YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: CASE OF ILESA EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study analyzed the effect of youth participation in agricultural development in Ilesa East LGA, Osun State. The specific objectives were to examine the socio-economic characteristics of the youth, determine the level of youth participation in agricultural activities, to determine the barriers and challenges faced by youth in agricultural involvement in the study area. Employing a Purposive sampling technique, a well-structured questionnaire was used to elicit primary data from ninth (90) youth. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result showed that (86.7%) were male and (13.3%) were females. It was noted that (45.6%) of the youth have completed tertiary level of education. A total of 67 (74.4%) of the youth were engaged in agricultural enterprises, while 23 (25.6%) were involved in non-agricultural activities. (72.2%) of the youth were involved in agricultural activities full time, while 23 (25.6%) worked part time in agriculture, and 2 (2.2%) of the youth were not involved in agriculture at all.

Keywords: Youth farming, Participation, Agriculture, Development.

Introduction

Agriculture plays a pivotal role in the economic development of nations, and its sustainability relies heavily on the active participation of the youth. In the context of Ilesa East Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria, understanding the dynamics of youth involvement in agriculture becomes crucial for enhancing overall agricultural development (World Bank, 2021)

In Nigeria, the population of youths was put at 64 million with 51.6% female in the age group 15 - 35 which is the international age classification for youths globally. The youth population which is 69% of the Nigerian population of 140 million is a great asset. (NPC 2006). The National Youth Policy defines youth as a Nigerian citizen between the ages 18 - 35 years (NBS 2012). The great youth population is an asset to a developing nation like Nigeria where untapped opportunities abound in all sectors, particularly agricultural sector where the majority adult smallholder farmers are increasing in age and declining in strength. The factor of ageing farmers and the scenario of low level of agricultural mechanization and dependence on rain fed agriculture have downplayed on the efforts of smallholders who dominated sub - Saharan farming population.

According to Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2019), about 34% of the Nigerian population are youths with around 64 million and 1.6 million of them unemployed and under-employed. Ojo et al. (2014) and Obot et al. (2022) affirmed that the aftermath effects of this high rate of unemployment among the youth in Nigeria were the increase in youth migration, terrorism, cultism, kidnapping, prostitution, and cyber fraud, among others. It is believed that increased youth employment could play an essential role in addressing these problems. This observation reveals the great challenge youth unemployment poses to the Nigerian economy but also serves as an eye-opener in realizing the opportunity for youths to become the engine for driving new agriculture and agribusiness enterprises as well as rural transformation

World Bank (2019) has identified the agricultural sector as the only sector that possesses the needed capacity to provide employment opportunities to the youth in the areas of agribusiness and value chain activities. Youth participation in agribusiness activities will enhance sustainable livelihood, mitigate the high rate of unemployment among youth, as well as reduce the crime rate. However, the low participation of young people in agriculture and agricultural-related activities is a threat to the future of agriculture, food security, succession, and economic transformation in Nigeria because most of the farmers that engage in agricultural activities are ageing (Adisa et al. 2017 and Ayodele et al. 2020) and the younger generation needed to replace them to ensure maximum agricultural production to meet its ever-increasing demand for food security are not interested. Despite the historical significance of agriculture in the economy of Ilesa East Local Government Area, there is a noticeable decline in the involvement of youth in agricultural activities. This poses a significant problem as the aging farming population may struggle to sustain and innovate the agricultural sector without the infusion of youthful energy and ideas in the agricultural development of the study area.

The problem extends to the numerous challenges hindering youth engagement in agriculture within the region. Issues such as limited access to agricultural resources, insufficient knowledge transfer from older generations, and the allure of alternative agricultural opportunities contribute to the

decreasing interest of youth in pursuing agricultural endeavors. The diminishing role of youth in agriculture directly impacts the overall agricultural development in Ilesa East. This creates a potential threat to the sustainability of the local agricultural sector and, by extension, the economic stability of the entire region. Understanding the root causes of this issue is crucial for devising effective strategies to reverse the trend. Youth lack knowledge and skills in modern agricultural practices and technologies. This gap further exacerbates the problem, limiting the ability of young individuals to adopt more efficient and sustainable farming methods.

If the declining trend of youth participation in agriculture persists, it could have severe long-term consequences for food security, economic stability, and community well-being in Ilesa East. Recognizing the gravity of this issue and implementing effective solutions are crucial for ensuring the sustainable development of the agricultural sector and the broader local economy

However, the literature reveals a gap in research regarding the specific role of youth in agricultural development in the Ilesa East Local Government Area. While studies on youth and agriculture exist, a focused examination within this geographic area is necessary for tailored policy recommendations (Ajayi, 2018). Previous research has highlighted the declining interest of youth in agricultural production, attributing it to factors such as lack of access to resources, limited knowledge transfer, and the attraction of non-agricultural opportunities (Smith & Ogunleye, 2019). As such, this current research focuses on examining the role of youth in agricultural development in the selected area.

Hence, the primary aim of this research was to comprehensively investigate and analyze the role of youth in agricultural development in the Ilesa East Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study include the following to:

i. describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in Ilesa East LGA.
ii. determine the level of youth participation and the extent of their involvement in agricultural activities in the study area.
iii. determine the barriers and challenges faced by youth in agricultural involvement in the study area.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

The study area was conducted in Ilesa East LGA, Osun state, Nigeria. The study area covers a total area of about 73.6 square kilometers. It is about 32 kilometers northeast of Ile-Ife and about 30 kilometers southwest of Osogbo, the Osun State Capital. The population of Ilesa East has been put at 126,800 in 2022 (city population 2022). The climate is humid tropical, with a mean annual temperature of about 280 °C and a mean annual rainfall of over 1600 mm. The latitudes lies within 7^0 30ˈ and 7^0 35 N and longitudes 4^0 30ˊ and 40 34' E.

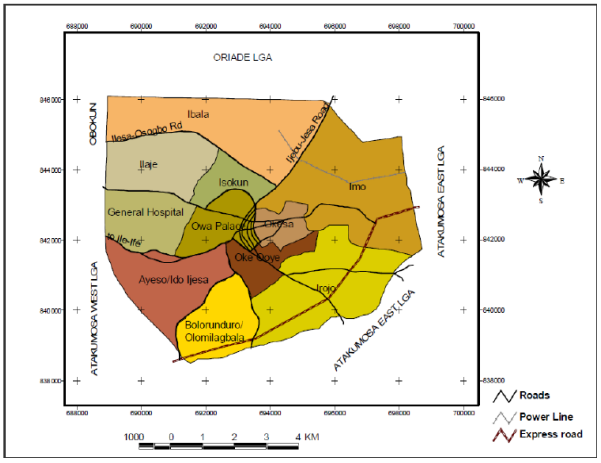

Fig 1: Map of Ilesa East Local Government Area. Source: Google

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size of the Study

The study adopts purposive sampling technique where nine communities were selected from the study area out of which ten (10) youth were selected using random sampling technique from each of the communities giving a total of Ninety (90) youth. The selected communities are Iyegumo, biladu, Ilerin, isokun, imo, bolorunduro, isokun, irojo, ibala.

The simple random sampling technique gives equal chances to the target population of being selected in the sample (Aleigba, 2011). The researcher did not go about selecting the communities within the Local government Area randomly administering the research, he rather selected the communities where he believes they have good knowledge about the participation of youth in agricultural development in the Ilesa East Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. Supporting this view, Ohaja (2003) states that purposive sampling is used when a researcher seeks certain characteristics in sampling elements and wants to ensure that those chosen have those characteristics. Through this procedure, therefore, the researcher eliminates other members of the population and works with those that meet the requirements.

Data Collection

The main source of data collection for this study comprised of both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources used in this research included questionnaires and personal observations. The secondary data, on the other hand, refers to written materials or works by other authors as they relate to the current study.

Data Analysis

The data collected were presented and analyzed in tables and charts. The analytical technique used for the study is descriptive statistics, which include percentages, frequencies and mean, it was analyzed objective by objective. The study adopts descriptive analysis method because they are simple to understand and the clarity of the data is guaranteed.

Result and Discussion

Socio-Economic characteristics of the youth

Results shown that out of the total respondents, 86.7% were male and 13.3% were female; the majority of the respondents were male. This implies that, more male youth are involved in agricultural activities than female in the study area. Similar to the research done by Damisa and Yohanna (2007), that women participation is minimal in all the farm operations

Age

Regarding the age group, it was shown that the majority of the youth, which was 46.7%, fell within the range of 31–40years which formed majority of the youth. It was followed by 20.0%, which fell within the range of 20–30years and41–50 years respectively. The mean age of 40 indicate that most of the youths in the study area falls within the national and globally age prescription of youth.

Marital Status

The most common marital status among youth were married, which was 66.7%, followed by divorce, which was 21.1%, and single, which was 12.2%. Most respondents, 98.9%, had family sizes ranging from 1 to 5, with the lowest being 6 and above, which was 1.1%.

Level of Education

The majority of the youth 45.6% completed tertiary education, followed by 38.9% had secondary education, 12.2%, with primary education, while 3.3% had no formal education. The level of literacy from the youth were high and this is in line with the study of oke, et al. (2007) who reported that 81 percent of his respondents to have had formal education. He therefore stated that this level of literacy is likely to afford respondents some level of managerial ability in their business pursuits. He concluded that members of his study who engaged in bee keeping and snailery were a reflection of higher level of education. It is expected that the higher level of education of the farmers in the study area will contribute significantly to decision making of the farmers. This result supports the findings of Okoli (2014) who reported that exposure to high level of education is an added advantages in term of achieving huge income and promoting youth participation in agricultural practices. As reported by Amaze, (2020), Adewuyi and Okumadewa (2021), education has positive and significant impact on farmers.

Annual Income

Out of the youth involved (38.9%) reported having an annual income between ₦1,000,000 and ₦2,000,000 followed by 37.8%, whose annual income was between ₦600,000 and ₦1,000,000 and 15.6%, which were between ₦2,000,000 and ₦4,000,000, followed by 5.6%, which were between ₦4,000,000 and ₦6,000,000 and lastly, 2.2%, which were between ₦100,000 and ₦500,000.

Access to Extensions

87.8% of the youth reported did not have access to agricultural extension services, while 12.2% did. Which implies that majority of the youth were not involved in any extension services this can be due to the fact that they aren't aware of the benefit of extension service provides to them

Member of Cooperative

74.4% of youth were not members of a cooperative, while 25.6% were members. Implying that rate of participation of youth in cooperative society was low due to various factors.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Youth

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Min	Max	Mean
Sex	Female	12	13.3			
	Male	78	86.7			
Age (years)	20-30	18	20.0	20	61	40.0
	31-40	42	46.7			
	41-50	18	20.0			
	51-60	11	12.2			
	>60	1	1.1			
Marital status	Single	11	21.1			
	Married	60	98.5			
	Divorced	19	1.1			
Family size	1-5	89	98.8	1	6	3.0
	>5	1	1.1			
Educational attainment	No formal education	3	3.3			
	Primary education	11	12.2			
	Secondary education	35	38.9			
	Tertiary education	41	45.6			
Annual income from	100,000-500,000	2	38.5			1,636,670

Agriculture (#)						
	600,000-1,000,000	34	15.6			
	1,000,000-2,000,000	35	15.6			
	2,000,000-4,000,000	14	15.16			
	4,000,000-6,000,000	5	5.6			
Access to extension	No	79	87.8			
	Yes	11	12.2			
Membership of cooperatives	No	67	74.4			
	Yes	23	25.6			

Level of Youth Participation in Agricultural activities within Ilesa East LGA

Categories of occupation

For the main occupation, a total of 67 (74.4%) of youth were engaged in agricultural enterprises, while 23 (25.6%) were involved in non-agricultural activities.

Level of Involvement in Agricultural Activities.

65 (72.2%) were involved full time, while 23 (25.6%) worked part time in agriculture, and 2 (2.2%) of the respondents were not involved in agriculture at all. This implies that formal education enhances participation and adoption of modern agricultural technologies and innovations. This agrees with Angba (2013) that participation increases with increased education.

Table 2: Level of Involvement in Agricultural Activities.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Main occupation	Agric enterprise	67	74.4
	Non-Agric enterprise	23	25.6
Level of involvement in agriculture	Full time	65	72.2
	Part time	23	25.6
	Not involved	2	2.2

Source: Field study, 2024

Extent of Youth Involvement in Various Agricultural Activities and the Participation of Youth in Agriculture.

The survey results indicate that the most common agricultural activities among the youth were crop growing (41.4%), This substantiate the finding of (Adesina and Eforuoku 2012) that youths are more involved in crop production than livestock production and other agricultural activities. land preparation (3.3%), sales of agricultural inputs (1.7%), and sales of agricultural produce (2.8%). Other activities reported by the youth were transportation of agricultural produce (10.5%), processing of agricultural produce (1.7%), weed control (2.2%), animal husbandry (7.7%), fishery (6.1%), beekeeping (6.6%), poultry production (2.8%), and other activities (13.3%).

Table 3: Agricultural Activities Engaged by the Youth.

Agricultural activities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Growing crops	75	41.4
Land preparation	6	3.3
Sales of Agric input	3	1.7
Sales of Agric produce	5	2.8
Transportation of Agric produce	19	10.5
Processing of Agric produce	3	1.7
Weed control	4	2.2
Animal husbandry	14	7.7
Fishery	11	6.1
Bee keeping	12	6.6
Poultry production	5	2.8
Others	24	13.3
Total	**181**	**100.0**

Source: Field study 2024

Barriers and Challenges Faced by Youth in Agricultural Involvement in the Study Area

The survey identified several barriers and challenges that hinder youth involvement in agricultural activities. The most prominent challenges reported by the respondents were difficulty in accessing land (18.9%), According to Onucheyo (2018) Land ownership is a deleterious problem in agricultural production and is not limited to age or gender, in order to drastically improve food production, we need to put some policies in place immediately to facilitate or liberalize land ownership by those interested in agricultural production. Access to land is one of the main factors that refrain the youth from starting a farming activity. Report by FAO (2010) revealed that inheritance is

still the most common system to obtain land in most developing countries. Cotula (2011) observed that life expectancy is increasing in all regions. As a consequence, rural youth often have to wait many years before inheriting their share of the family land, perishability of agricultural produce (16.2%), (Heyes, 2003; Rolle and Mazaud, 2003). Goletti (2003) listed the most relevant issues for controlling perishable agricultural produce as the availability of adequate market for agricultural products and further investment in postharvest research. Poor infrastructure (13.5%), inadequate funds and difficulty in accessing credits (14.6%), market restrictions (15.1%), and agriculture enterprises are capital intensive (14.1%), labor intensive nature of agric work (6.5%), and other challenges (1.1%).

Table 4.4: Barriers and challenges the youth are facing in agricultural participation.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Perishability of Agric produce	75	41.4
Poor infrastructure	6	3.3
Difficulty of accessing land	3	1.7
Inadequate funds and difficulty in accessing credits	5	2.8
Market restrictions	19	10.5
Agric. enterprises are capital intensive	3	1.7
Agric work is laborious	4	2.2
Others	14	7.7
Total	**181**	**100.0**

Source: Field study 2024

Conclusion

In conclusion, the level of youth involvement in agriculture in Ilesa East LGA is high compared to other locations but if given much attention and focus to it could lead to greater innovations beyond rural development in various agricultural sectors. The study shows that access to credit, training in different agricultural techniques, affordable health facilities and good road would greatly contribute in promoting and developing youth interest in agricultural related activities. This study concludes that youth have been performing their roles in agricultural development, there is still more work to be done for a continued performance as each day new innovation comes in place and there is a need to be up to date so as to keep up, increase and promote youth involvement in agriculture development.

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Frequency Percentage (%)

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