

RELEVANCE AND BENEFITS OF AGRICULTURAL YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME TO PARTICIPATING YOUTH IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to identify the relevance and benefit of Osun State Agricultural Youth Empowerment programme (OSSAYEP) to participating rural youths. Multi-stage, simple random sampling procedures were used in selecting youths from each of the seven local governments in Osun central senatorial district to give a total sample size of 70. The instrument used to obtain information from the youths was structured interview schedule. Data were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages and cumulative frequency. Chi-Square was further used to test relationships between variables. The findings showed that 61.4 percent of the youths were male, 41.4 percent were between 21-26 years. Sixty percent were single and had secondary education. The test of hypotheses established significant difference between some demographic characteristics (respondent's village $\chi^2 = 0.00$ $p < 0.05$, educational level $\chi^2 = 0.009$ $p < 0.05$) and benefits derived from the programme. Also there was significant difference between marital status of respondents and the relevance of the programme. ($\chi^2 = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$). It can be concluded that relevance of the programme and benefits derived by the youths was affected by their village and educational level. Based on these findings, it was recommended that creation of more farm centers should be adopted and should be properly located in strategic places in the local governments for the maximum benefit of youths.

Keywords: Youth, empowerment, programme, benefit, relevance

INTRODUCTION

Youth constitute a formidable force for sustainable agricultural development of any nation particularly the agrarian ones including Nigeria. This is because youths possess a lot of energies and other inestimable assets for productivity and general sustainable socio-economic development (Iwala 2006). A major concern of the federal Government in Nigeria is how to tackle the problem of unemployment among the youths in the country. Various regions in Nigeria have designed and executed several self-empowerment programmes to enhance the economic empowerment of youths (Umeh and Odo 2002). One of such programmes is Osun State Agricultural Youth Empowerment programme (OSSAYEP). The programme is to equip about 1,200 young school leavers annually with modern skills and techniques in the agricultural practices with intensive monitoring by government for the first year. They will be assisted with farm land, farm inputs and credit facilities (OSSAYEP 2004).

The poor state of youth participation in agricultural activities in Nigeria has been a matter of great concern among agriculturists, agricultural researchers as well as administrators. This is because the present poor state of decline in agricultural production was dimmed the hope of raising the level of agricultural production to ensure sustainable food security for the ever increasing population of Nigeria. (Daudu et al 2009). With fewer youth into agriculture, the long-term future of the agricultural sector is in question. The development of the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy therefore depends on the young people, more especially the rural youths. This is because a large population of youth represents the link between the present and the future as well as a reservoir of labour (Muhammad-Lawal et al 2009). It should be noted that differences exist in perception of the term “Youth” by government, international organizations and the public. However, the term “youth” generally implies a period of life between childhood and adulthood. In most countries of the world, adult status is officially attained at the age of 21 years. (Fon et al 2011). Adedoyin 2005 defined youth to comprise people between the ages of 19 and 40 years. Non-the-less in many African countries, the ability of a person to enter into or sustain a marriage signifies to the public that one has attained adulthood.

Indeed, since the youths are the future of any country, it is useful to develop them into patriotic citizens, future progressive farmers and better citizens. The youth clubs are the nurseries for them (Ajayi, 2006). The poor state of agricultural productivity and low esteem of agriculture as manifested in rural-urban migration, youths’ low interest in farming, lack of industrial firms to process agricultural products and skilled labour among others has led to worsening Nigerian food deficit (NDE, 2006).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is increase in population and geometrical increase in youth population with an attendant low or zero employment for the learning youths of the Nigerian society. This situation is particularly prevalent in the rural areas eventually leading to rural-urban migration of the youths. It is a chain event that leads to low level of food production and under development of the population. It is in the light of the above problem situation that this study was designed.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study was to investigate the benefits and relevance of OSSAYEP to participating rural youths in Osun State. The specific objectives were to.

1. Determine the personal characteristics of the respondents.
2. Identify the benefits derived by the respondents from OSSAYEP.
3. Examine the relevance of OSSAYEP to the respondents.
4. Ascertain the level of satisfaction of the respondents on the programme.

HYPOTHESES

H1: There is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of the youths and the benefits they derived from the OSSAYEP.

H2: There is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and the relevance of OSSAYEP to their need.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Oyan and Osogbo farm centres located in Osun Central senatorial district. Oyan farm centre is located in Odo-Otun local Government Area of the state, about 92km-suth-west of the state capital (Osogbo). The farm centre was established in September, 2003 by the state government and occupies a total area of 45 ha and situates about 15km from the local government headquarter (Okuku). Osogbo farm centre is located in Osogbo Local Government Area of the state. It is situated in Osogbo, the state capital. It occupied about 52ha and situated about 10km away from Osogbo Township. The population of the study consists of youths from the farm centres. Seven local government areas were selected for the study, 10 youths were randomly selected of L.G to constitute 70 respondents for the study in each to the structured interview schedule was used to collect information from the respondents. The data collected were analysed using such statistical tools as frequency courts and percentages. Chi-square was further used to test the stated hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 show that most respondents were male (61.4%) while 38.6% were female. The reason for this is that practical farming requires physical fitness and so many men can withstand more rigorous works than women. The respondents were within the age bracket of 15-26 (62.8%). Only 1.4% had no formal education while 60.0% of the youths had secondary education, 11.4% acquired post secondary education. This reveals that nearly all the respondents had received formal education, implying that education is accorded relative importance in the study area. More than half (60%) of the youths were single.

Table 1: Personal characteristic of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	43	61.4
Female	27	38.6
Age		
15 – 20	15	21.4
21 – 26	29	4.4
27 – 32	21	30.0
33 – 38	5	7.1
Education		
No formal education	1	1.4
Primary	19	27.2
Secondary	42	60.0
Post secondary	8	11.4
Marital status		
Single	42	60.0
Married	27	38.6
Separated	1	1.4

From table 2 below, almost one third of the youths (32.9%) enjoyed financial benefit and 11.4% enjoyed employment benefit. Some of the youths depended on the monthly allowance as source of income while some saw it as job creation.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to types of benefits derived from OSSAYEP

Benefit Derived	Frequency	Percentage
Financial benefit	23	32.9
Additional qualification	5	7.1
Employment benefit	8	11.4
Knowledge of self reliance	6	8.6
Storage during gloat	3	4.3
Farm practice enlightenment	15	21.4
Rue fare	10	14.3
Total	70	100

Table 3 indicates that majority (74.3%) of the respondents said that they were very satisfied with the programme and almost one quarter (24.3%) of the respondents were also satisfied, while very few 1.4% were slightly satisfied. This implies that the respondents enjoyed the programme.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to level of satisfaction

Extent of satisfaction	Frequency	percentage
Very satisfied		74.3
Satisfied	17	24.3
The fairly satisfied	1	1.4
Total	70	100

The relevance of OSSAYEP to the youths (Table 4) was high on knowledge of records and source of income (21.4%) followed by job security 15.6%.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to ways in which OSSAYEP was relevant.

Ways in which OSSAYEP is relevant to respondent	Frequency	Percentage
1. Meet needs and serve as source of income	9	12.9
2. Improve communication, skill	8	11.4
3. Self employment	9	12.9
4. Knowledge of farm processing	9	12.9
5. Knowledge of record keeping	15	21.9
6. Knowledge of use of machineries	3	4.3
7. Knowledge on welfare (Health)	3	4.3
8. Knowledge on farm practice	3	4.3
9. Job scanty	11	15.6
Total	70	100

From the chi-square test tables 5 and 6 below, respondent's village ($\chi^2=0.018$), educational level ($\chi^2 = 0.000$) and marital status ($\chi^2 = 0.139$) were significantly related to the relevance of OSSAYEP to the youths. Also, respondents' village ($\chi^2 = 0.000$) and educational level ($\chi^2 = 0.000$) were significantly related to the benefits enjoyed by the respondents.

The implication is that educational level and respondent's village played major role in relevance and benefits of OSSAYEP to the youth. The educated the youths are and the closer the location centres to the youths village the more they see the relevance and benefits from the programmes. Education exposed the youths so as to be able to utilize the scheme maximally.

Table 5: Chi-square test of relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and the relevance of OSSAYEP.

Socio-economic Characteristics	χ^2	DF	P-value	Decision
Respondents village	163.89	128	0.018	S
Sex	12.89	8	0.116	NS
Age	34.94	24	0.069	NS
Educational level	63.90	24	0.000	S
Marital Status	22.94	16	0.139	S
Location of Farm Centre	13.26	8	0.103	NS

Chi-square test of relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and benefits derived from OSSAYEP.

Socio-economic Characteristics	χ^2	DF	P-value	Decision
Respondents village	230.74	144	0.000	S
Sex	11.90	9	0.217	NS
Age	24.33	27	0.12	NS
Educational level	98.03	27	0.000	S
Marital Status	13.49	18	0.762	NS
Location of Farm Centre	13.57	9	0.138	NS

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