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Assessment of factors militating against youths participation in Agriculture based livelihood activities in Kuje Area Council, Abuja

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Abstract

The study examined factors militating against youths' participation in agriculture-based livelihood activities in Kuje Area Council, Abuja. The study was conducted in Kuje Area Council of Abuja. Four objectives guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select the youths from the study area. The sample size of the study was 100 youths participating in agriculturally based livelihood activities in Kuje which was purposively selected. Primary data were used for the study; the data were collected using a structured questionnaire and interview schedule, administered to respondents with the help of an interpreter who is fluent in English and Hausa languages. The instrument was designed to capture questions related to all the objectives of the study. Data were analysed using frequency and percentages. Results from the findings of the study revealed that the

major constraints hindering youth participation in agriculture-based livelihood activities were identified, as 30% of the respondents have lack of initial capital as their major limitation in embarking on agriculture, 10% shows that their families will not permit them to venture into agriculture and are scared of an attack by herdsmen men due to insecurity. 12% of the respondents' highlights that the constraints are as a result of insufficient land. 10% attribute their non-participation to lack of interest in agriculture, it also shows that 8% are limited due to lack of infrastructure in rural areas and lack of support from the government. While only 3% shows they are limited due to lack of storage facility. The study therefore recommended provision of credit facilities with less stringent procedures and resuscitation of Agricultural Training Centers across the FCT to enhance youth's participation in agriculture.

Keywords: Youths, Agriculture-Based, Participation, Livelihood, Production

Introduction

Nigeria is currently facing multiple problems of food scarcity, global warming and decrease in the price of crude oil. The economic problem is a problem of the world, but Nigeria is at the forefront of these crises considering her position in crude oil exportation and grain importation. In Nigeria, youths make up about 60% of the population and their contribution to National development cannot be underestimated nor overemphasized. Unfortunately, the present environmental climate has made it nearly impossible for youths to achieve their maximum potential in the area of agriculture, food production and security. Nigeria has recently been struck with the awakening that agriculture is a huge pillar of its economy and that there is a significant link between the nations ability to attain its food security goals and agricultural development (Egboduku *et al.*, 2021)^[6].

It is important for youths to participate actively in the development of its national agriculture scheme Girei (2021)^[8]. Development includes fostering the full participation of youth in the agricultural sector. Youths are the successor farming generation and therefore the future of food security in Nigeria. The aging smallholder farmers are less likely to adopt the new technologies needed to sustain increase in agricultural productivity (Sennuga *et al.*, 2020)^[10]. This effort seeks to change the negative perception of youths in actively participating in agriculture – as farmers are seen as uneducated, unskilled and physical laborers with extremely low economic return. Agriculture possesses significant untapped development and employment creation potential, but despite this ample potential to provide income generating opportunities for the youth, challenges related to their participation in this sector and more importantly, options for overcoming them are not extensively documented (FAO, 2014)^[7].

Over the years, there has been increased effort on the part of the Nigerian government to stimulate youth interest in agriculture,

as part of the efforts to reduce 'unemployment and youth restiveness across the country which accounts for over 70 percent of the national unemployment rate of 23.9 percent (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics) by providing special incentives such as credit facilities for youths involved in agricultural production and processing. Increased involvement of youths in agricultural activities will help reduce the problems of the aging farm population and increasing youth unemployment in the country (Egboduku *et al.*, 2021)^[6].

Due to the high percentage of youth restiveness in Nigeria, the agricultural industry faces serious issues Abdulhameed *et al.*, (2016)^[1]. Unfortunately, the young ones who are meant to replace them are abandoning farming due to a lack of motivation, low production, and low economic returns Akintobi & Aimienho (2020)^[2]. However, the drudgery and low productivity associated with farming constitutes major impediments to young people participation in the sector to reduce restiveness. The role of rural youths in agricultural development is grossly underestimated, in view of the fact that they contribute significant development efforts which, unfortunately, are usually undervalued or unutilized along with their economic potentials. This category of youths, are unfortunately seen as national burden and in fact remain untapped rural resources (Alarima, 2018)^[3].

Reasons for increased youth participation in Agriculture-based livelihood Activities.

- Improvement for Food production, food security and overall increase GDP of the Nation.
- Create employment for youths and make them self-reliant
- Decongest major cities and reduce rural- urban migration
- Reduce importation rate and cost of feeding within the Nation.
- Put youths at the forefront of Nation Building.

In order to improve youth participation in agriculture-based livelihood activities and food processing in Nigeria, deterring youths from showing interest and participating relentlessly in agriculture. In addition, economic constraints facing youth in agriculture such as lack of credit facility, poor access to land, low credit facility should be seriously considered (Egboduku *et al.*, 2021)^[6].

Unfortunately, the present conditions make it even more difficult to explore youths' full potential in agriculture-based livelihood-activities. In order to stimulate the interest of our youth in agricultural production; government has to put in place certain measures that will eliminate the constraints in the sector. Involvement of youth in agricultural activities has suffered nationally in recent years especially in the rural areas. Despite the fast-growing opportunities in the sector, it is disturbing to see many rural youths opting out of farming in search of non-existent white-collar jobs in the cities, leading to unprecedented level of rural-urban migration. This is obviously a potent threat to the aspiration of government to achieve food security by 2010. The over-all effect of this scenario is that more Nigerians are going hungry by today and resources that could be used to improve on our infrastructures are spent on importation of food into the country. There is therefore a compelling need to boost and sustain youth's interest and participation in

agricultural production activities. Examining the factors militating against youth's participation in agriculture-based livelihood activities in Kuje area council is a step in the direction of curbing this situation. This study thus seeks to provide answers to the following: Passion and interest are two interrelated conditions of having concern, emotion and feelings for something. Findings has indicated that most youths have no passion for farming (Egboduku *et al.*, 2021)^[6]. They rather develop what is called "quick money mentality" that generates from the fat remunerations in the oil and gas sector of the economy; and which injects impatience against long-term investment like the agribusiness.

It has been discovered that farming activities were perceived as a job for the low class, illiterates, ages and rural people and therefore belittling. Hence, no matter the efforts/incentives attached to the empowerment program to attract youths, a handful of them still belief that, participation in such program is belittling and as such not appropriate for an enlightened youth; which negatively affects the rate of youth participation in agriculture. This study therefore will attempt to address the factors militating against youths' participation in agriculture-based livelihood activities in Kuje Area Council, Abuja that previous studies did not address. Provision of credit facilities with less stringent procedures and resuscitation of Agricultural Training Centers across the FCT will enhance youth's participation in agriculture. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out the factors militating against youths' participation in agriculture-based livelihood activities in Kuje Area Council, Abuja.

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. describe the youths' socio-economic characteristics;
2. assess the perception of youths towards agriculture-based livelihood activities
3. determine level of youths' participation in agricultural activities
4. find out reasons for youth involvement in agriculture-based livelihood activities.

Materials and methods

The study was conducted in Kuje. Kuje is an area council in the Federal Capital Territory in Nigeria, and houses the Local Government Area headquarters. It is about 40 km southwest of Abuja. Presently, Kuchiyako is the most developed area in Kuje. It has an area of 1,644 km² and a population of 97,367 at the ct 2006 census which is mostly characterized by youths. The postal code of the area is 905. Kuje is a busy market city with a range of roadside stores selling pharmaceuticals, provisions, building materials, ironmongery, tools, phone cards, music CDs. It is also home to several "independent" petrol stations which are unpopular because of the apparent inaccuracy of the calibration of their pumps. Kuje has several state and private schools including Government Secondary School, Kuje Science Primary School, the Capital Science Academy DFGS Glorious Shining Star Academy and Nigeria-Ghana International College and Aflon Digital Academy which makes it a youth friendly environment.

Population of the study and research design

The study was carried out in Kuje Area Council which has vibrant and enabling youths that have the capacity to

transform Agricultural activities in the study area. The study touches various youth across Kuje who are similar in agro climatic, ethnic group, religion and cultural settings. The study employed descriptive research design.

Sample size

The sample size for the study was 100 youths. 100 youths were interviewed through a well-structured questionnaire. From this sampling frame of individuals, youths were randomly selected from each community; primarily on voluntary basis. Other criteria for individual participants were as follows: age between 18 and 35 years, farming experience, interested in participating, and permanent resident of the community.

Data collection

Primary data were used for the study; the data were collected using a structured questionnaire and interview schedule administered to respondents with the help of an interpreter who is fluent in English and Hausa languages. The instrument was designed to capture questions related to all the objectives of the study. It was administered to collect data and the survey took about 1 hour 10 minutes. The key themes in the survey included socio-economic characteristics of youths, Marital Status, household assets, Education Qualification, Farming Experience.

Result and analysis

Section A: Personal and socio-economic characteristics of the youths

Table 1 shows that 65% of respondents are male while 35% are female. This implies that there are more males practicing agriculture than females and this could be because of the physical stress involved and the lack of direct land ownership by women though there has been an increase currently in the number of women in Agriculture due to mechanisation and women empowerment programs. The result equally disagreed with the study of Chikezie *et al.* (2012) [5] that gender is no barrier to active involvement in agriculture production activities.

Marital Status: 62% of the respondents are single while 38% are married, this shows that the respondents are mainly single people and agriculture tends to provide an early avenue for youths and serves as a high source of employment to the youths in this area. The result is contrary to Beyuo and Ernest (2013) [4] who opined that being married is a sense of being responsible and the potential to engage in farming in order to cater for the food and other domestic needs of the family.

Education Qualification: It was observed that 32% of the respondents attained tertiary level of education while 61% attained secondary level education and 7% attained primary school education. This implies that there is an increase in awareness of the benefits and advantage of practicing agriculture as the youths grow older and gain more knowledge. The report shows that 85% of the respondents do not belong to any cooperative while 15% are members of a cooperative. This shows that there will be a negative effect on the respondents in the sense that will not have access to current technology, information and credit facilities that would be useful in their practice.

Farming Experience: This table shows that 40% of the respondents has 6years of experience, while 20% have 10years of experience. Also, 27% have 3years of experience

and 13% have 15years of experience. This shows that there are more young respondents practicing agriculture and those with 15 years of experience are lesser probably the older people have left the rural areas after making enough for themselves and their families.

This shows that 49% of respondents are between age range from 15-25, 34% are within the age range of 26-36 while 17% are within 37-47% within 37-47 years of age. This implies that there are more active engagers of Agriculture within the younger age limit meaning that there is an early understanding of Agriculture and youths are making use of their energy as early as they can but the engagement is seen to decline as the ages increases.

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Percentage
Gender	
Male	65.0
Female	35.0
Total	100
Marital Status	
Single	62.0
Married	38.0
Total	100
Educational Qualification	
Primary	7.0
Secondary	61.0
Tertiary	32.0
Total	100
Membership of cooperative	
Yes	15.0
No	85.0
Total	100
Farming Experience	
3 years	27.0
6years	40.0
10years	20.0
15years	13.0
Total	100
Age of respondents	
15-25	49.0
26-36	34.0
37-47	17.0
Total	100

Section B: Factors militating against youth participation in agriculture-based livelihood activities

The results from Table 2 shows that 40% of the respondents have lack of initial capital as their major limitation in embarking on agriculture, 10% shows that their families will not permit them to venture into agriculture and are scared of an attack by herdsmen due to insecurity. 12% of the respondents' highlights that the constraints are as a result of insufficient land. It also shows that 8% are limited due to lack of infrastructure in rural areas and lack of support from the government. While only 3% shows they are limited due to lack of storage facility.

Table 2: Factors Militating Youths Participation in Agriculture-based Livelihood activities

Constraints	Percentage
Family will not permit	10.0
Insufficient land	12.0
Lack of initial capital	30.0
Lack of infrastructure in rural areas	8.0
Fear of herdsmen attack on farms	10.0

There is little or no support from extension workers and research institutes.	5.0
Government does not support agriculture like they do other occupations	8.0
Inadequate credit facility	4.0
Lack of storage facility	3.0
Lack of interest in agriculture	10.0

Section C: Perception of youths towards agriculture-based livelihood activities in Kuje area council perception of youths towards agriculture-based livelihood activities

The results in Table 3 shows reveals that 47% of the respondents disagree that farming is for illiterates and the uneducated while 16% agrees that indeed farming is mainly for the illiterates. This implies that the majority of the respondents have a downward belief in the ideology that farming is for the uneducated. Also, the results shows that 60% of the respondents strongly disagree that agriculture is for aged people, this shows that there been a metal change in the traditional belief of people that most agriculture practice is being done by the old as now a days a lot of young people venture into agriculture, it also shows that only 10% of the respondents agree showing evidence of the deviation in the mental belief. It also reveals that 52% of the respondents agrees that farming should be restricted to the rural areas while only 13% of respondents disagreed and 8% had no opinion on the restriction. This implies that the respondents believe that agriculture does require space for production on a large scale and there is a reduction in the availability of land in Urban centers due to inflow of people and drastic development. The results reveal that 38% of the respondents agrees that Agriculture does not require education to practice while 33% of respondents disagree with it, only 2% disagree to this. It implies that there is a slim difference in opinion between respondents as there are people currently doing well economically in agriculture with little to no education as well as individuals who are well educated and also practicing intensely in agriculture in the economy. The results also shows that 47% agrees to seeing Farming as having a long period to start taking profit and 18% of the respondents disagree to this duration. This goes to show that the respondents have an understanding on how farming works, there has to be a timeline in place for turnover to be achieved overtime and this can take time. The result also shows that 48% of the respondents strongly disagrees that Farmers have no good social standing in the economy while 14% agrees. This shows that there is an understanding of the economic benefit of farming as an occupation knowing that gives people a source of livelihood and makes them responsible to the society.

Table 3: Perception of Youths towards Agricultural production

Characteristics	Percentage
Farming is for illiterates	
Strongly agree	20.0
Agreed	16.0
No opinion	2.0
Disagree	47.0
Strongly disagree	15.0
Farming is for the old	
Strongly agree	100
Agreed	5.0
No opinion	5.0
Disagree	20.0
Strongly disagree	60.0
Farming should be restricted to rural areas	
Strongly agree	12.0
Agreed	52.0
No opinion	8.0
Disagree	13.0
Strongly disagree	15.0
No education is required to farm	
Strongly agree	21.0
Agreed	38.0
No opinion	3.0
Disagree	33.0
Strongly disagree	5.0
Farming takes too long to pay off	
Strongly agree	14.0
Agreed	47.0
No opinion	9.0
Disagree	18.0
Strongly disagree	12.0
Farmers have no good societal standing	
Strongly agree	14.0
Agreed	15.0
No opinion	6.0
Disagree	21.0
Strongly disagree	48.0

Section D: Level of youth involvement in agriculture-based livelihood activities

Fig 1 shows that 58.5% of the respondents are involved in crop production, 18.9% are involved with cattle rearing, 3.8% are involved in Agro Marketing and Aquaculture, 2. % are involved in swine production and goat rearing while 0.9% of the respondents own an apiary. This reveals that majority of the respondents or youths in the area practice crop production immensely as a result creating room for diversification and improvement of other areas of agriculture which would improve the economic value of the area.

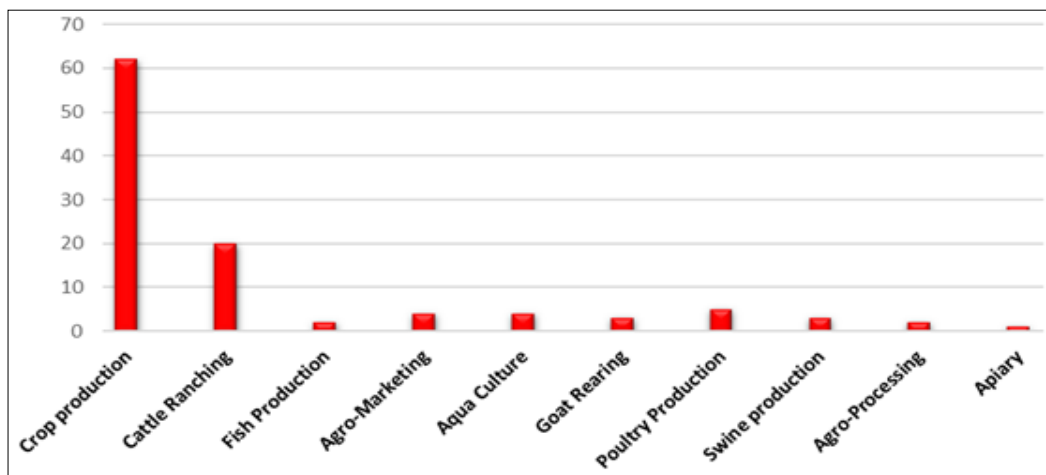


Fig 1: Level of Youth Involvement in Agriculture

The results presented in Fig 2 shows that 55% of youths are involved in agriculture for self-employment reasons as best known to them, 15% are practicing due to food security and possible scarcity for themselves and their families. It shows that 10% are in Agriculture because of the absence of job

opportunities and use it as what is available, while 15% are practicing to aid in poverty reduction in their environment while only 5% are into agriculture as a means of creating employment for other individuals.

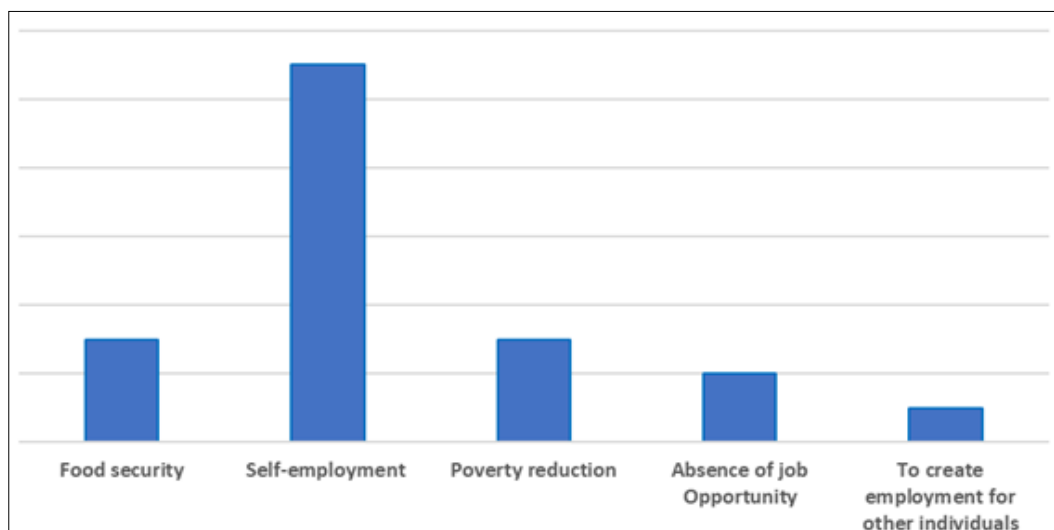


Fig 2: Reasons for youth participation in agricultural production

Conclusion

The importance of youth involvement in agricultural practice cannot be overemphasized. This is because the future of biodiversity and food security in Nigeria rests on the shoulders of the young ones who still have the capacity to be productive and industrious.

Therefore, the Identification of factors militating against youth participation in agriculture - based activities is very important. Based on the findings of this study, Low credit facilities, insufficient land, lack of support from family and fear of herdsmen attack on farmlands have posed as major impediments in the active participation of youths in agriculture-based livelihood activities in Kuje area council of Abuja.

Recommendations

1. Youths should be able to easily access bank loans and credit facilities for acquisition of land, manpower and farm inputs for the purpose of agricultural enhancement within Kuje area council.

2. Sensitization programs on the importance of youth participation in agriculture and nation building should be carried out to help families understand the benefits and importance of youth involvement in Agriculture.
3. The Federal government should put measures in place to help protect the common man from attacks from herdsmen
4. In addition, youth who are currently into agriculture should be encouraged and honored so that others will take interest in agriculture. We can only reduce youth unemployment in Nigeria through sustainable agriculture.

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