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ASSESSMENT OF ADULT YOUTHS' PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN ZARIA, KADUNA STATE

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ABSTRACT----------
This study assessed the adult youth's participation in agricultural production and its impact on employment opportunities in Zaria, Kaduna state, Nigeria. Three specific objectives and three research questions were formulated. Descriptive survey design was adopted and population of the study was all youths participated in farming production in Zaria Birni Constituency. A sample of 60 adult youths was purposively selected from 3 wards out of 6 wards in Zaria Birni and its surrounding. Instrument used was a structured questionnaire with a four rating scale titled "Adult Youths Participation in Agricultural Production and its Impact on Employment Opportunity" (AYPAPIEO)". It was validated by three senior researchers in the faculty of education Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. Descriptive statistics (percentage, mean and standard deviation) was used to answer the research questions. The findings revealed that the adult youth in the study area participated actively in agricultural production to produce foods for their family and provide employment opportunity to their family, friend and community. The findings also revealed that the adult youth participated in the agricultural production because of the food security and to have other sources of income for the family. The findings of the study equally revealed that adult youth participation in agricultural production reduces the level of social vices. It was therefore recommended among others that government and non-governmental organizations should increase efforts to provide adult youth with easier access to land, credit facilities, and inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and machinery. This can be achieved through targeted subsidy programs, low-interest loans, and land reform policies that prioritize youth engagement in agriculture.

KEY WORDS:*Adult youths, Agricultural production, Employment opportunities* ----------

INTRODUCTION

The significance of youth engagement in agricultural production and its impact on employment cannot be over emphasized. Youths are very important resources for every nation especially for sustaining agricultural productivity, an important sector for the development. The youth is a stakeholder in the development process especially in view of the great assets of youth, resilience, resourcefulness and perseverance. Youth in the whole world occupied a highly position on the production of good and services. No country no matter how neglect the impact of their youth in what so ever because they are the nation great wealth. Nigeria as one of such country that proudly with the teaming number of youth population but the most unfortunate thing is that unemployment is on the increase and is disadvantage to the country's well-being. Therefore, the concern is that the growth of a country's population comes along with it food security challenges, because environmental resources must be over tapped to meet up with needs of the population encouraging the youth who are highly dynamic and flexible could lead to agricultural development (Njeru, 2017). The country like Nigeria we have graduate from different field of experiences, knowledge and skills that acquired by the youth could be useful in raising awareness among other members of the society on better ways of conserving our nature by adopting farming practices that are socially and environmentally friendly (Barreda, 2018).

Adult youth participation in agricultural production significantly influences employment opportunities. Active involvement of adult youth in agriculture can lead to the creation of numerous direct and indirect jobs. As young adults engage in farming, there is a demand for services related to agriculture, such as transportation, marketing, agro-processing, and input supply. This expansion of the agricultural value chain provides employment

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opportunities not only within farming but also in related industries. Moreover, youth participation introduces new ideas and technologies into the agricultural sector. With proper support, young farmers can become agripreneurs, starting businesses that add value to agricultural products, thus generating additional jobs and economic activities in the community. Equally, increased youth engagement in agriculture can help mitigate the trend of rural-urban migration, where young people leave rural areas in search of employment in cities. By making agriculture a viable and attractive livelihood option, youth are more likely to remain in rural areas, thereby reducing urban unemployment and easing the pressure on urban infrastructure and services.

However, it was since being the practice of African people Nigeria in particular that Agriculture used to be the mainstay of Nigerian economy before the discovery of crude oil. The country's economy rested highly on agricultural export which represented 66% of foreign exchange and later increased to 73.4% in 1968. In the 1960s, agriculture sector was the most important in terms of contributions to domestic production, employment and foreign exchange earnings. As it was observed since the last three decades till when it was understood could no longer remain the foreign exchange means of the country, because crude oil has taken it over (NBS, 2012). Agriculture still indicates the main enterprise of family members, community, society and Nigeria as youth embrace it with seriousness, women and men of all categories participated in the production and process of agricultural products of any kind and means. As it rightly observed that a country relied heavily on their youth productivity likewise the agaric production is bested the youth work force for the nation. World Bank (2010) reported that about 50 percent of the developing world population is youths estimated at about 1.2 billion of age between 15 and 24 years. These statistics indicate that youths constituted a serious development opportunity as well as a challenge particularly in developing countries. This is the generation which is expected to rise in the coming years for food production and food security (Proctor and Lucchese, 2012). Umeh and Odom (2011) argue that, the contribution of agriculture to farmers' income and rural development depends on the active participation of youth who are the potential labour force. The immense contributions of youth on agricultural development could never be emphasize as it directly ensure the attainment of food security but properly utilized by the authority concerns and general public. According to Katunyo, Otieno, Oluoch-Kosura, and Okello, (2018) peasant farmers, produce the bulk of the food with the help of their children (most of who are at their youthful age) who participate in agricultural production activities such as weeding, clearing, planting, harvesting, and processing among others. In Nigeria as observed by Aphunu and Natoma (2010), the younger generation is not interested in farming even though youth have been identified as constituting the major resource base agricultural productivity.

Notably, as the world continue to grow in science and technology ICTs is now identified as a tool which make youth participated in agricultural productivity most especially in kenya. For instance, Katunyo, Otieno, Oluoch-Kosura & Okello (2018) have the believe that with the adoption of ICTs in agriculture is an advantage for the youth since they have the interest and excitement to try new things, technical know-how to operate ICTs and are always alert on any ICT updates. Youth participation in agriculture using ICTs is likely to stimulate development of the entire value chain, including; production, marketing, provision of extension, input supply, transport. The question, however, is where are the youth concentrated along the agricultural value chains and how has ICTs impacted on their incomes and adoption of new production skills? Knowing this is important for policy makers to discover how youth can navigate and transform agriculture by use of ICTs in the Kenyan context.

Socio-ecomic life of people is tied down with level of social services provided to such individual. The teaming population of Nigerian youth is always in the increase therefore, their social amenities requires also increased. In and estimation by the Nigeria Demographics Profile (2015), youth constitute about 60% of the country's population. Youth are prime movers of any nation, and their involvement in rice production will not only boost the much needed narrowing gap of demand and supply of rice in the Nigerian markets, improve the socioeconomic life of the rural people but will also encourage development of vocational agriculture among the rural youth.

The impact of agriculture to nation and its teaming population of youth on the huge of employment potentials embedded in the agricultural sector, there has been a growing commitment from the Nigerian government and development partners towards engaging youths in agribusiness (Awogbenle & Iwuamadi, 2010). These commitments are reflected in several programmes which have been implemented over the years such as the Youth in Commercial Agriculture Development Programme (YCAD), Youth Employment in Agriculture Program (YEAP), Youth Initiatives for Sustainable Agriculture (YISA) program, the Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprise (LIFE) programme, and the Fadama Graduate Unemployed Youths and Women Support (FGUYS) Programme.

In an effort of the Federal Government to reduce youth unemployment and empower young people through agribusiness, the FGUYS programme was introduced in 2017 by the Federal Government of Nigeria, in collaboration with the World Bank and participating State Governments. The major objective was to expose

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unemployed youths to new agribusiness ideas so as to leverage their energy and motivation towards strengthening the drive for the national economy diversification and achieving food security (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, FMARD, 2018).

A series studies were conducted on youth participation in agriculture in different perspectives. For instance, Haruna, Asogwa, & Ehzim (2019) examined the role of youth associations in empowering youths in Adamawa State Central Senatorial District, Nigeria. The study adopted random sampling in selecting 31 associations from 71 registered associations. The findings of the study revealed that due to the skills acquired, 72.6% of the beneficiaries were engaged in the personal agricultural activities. In conclusion, the study noted that participation of the school youth in agricultural related associations was very important. This is because those who participate learn various skills and majority of them extended those same to their own farms. Considering the role of media advocacy in youths' participation in agriculture, this will imply targeting such associations with communication needed to bring about youths' participation in agriculture. Haruna, Asogwa, & Ehzim (2019) carried out a study on youth in agriculture, prospects and challenges in the Sissala area of Ghana. A focus group discussion revealed that 95% of the respondents kept a pair of bullock. Findings further revealed that up to 52.22% of the respondents were between ages of 15 and 35 while 20.54% were above 35 years but without formal education. Majority (69%) indicated that the youth were willing to participate in agriculture in the study area. The study recommends that stakeholders needs to embark on mass education of the populace because they showed high enthusiasm for growing crops but were less educated. The finding thus explains why food crop cultivation was the major agricultural activity of the people in the study area.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Zaria, like many other regions in Nigeria, the agricultural sector has long been a cornerstone of the economy, providing livelihoods for a significant portion of the population. However, despite its potential, the sector is facing numerous challenges, including declining youth participation. Adult youth, typically ranging from ages 18 to 35, represent a critical segment of the workforce, yet their engagement in agricultural production has been observed to wane over the years. This decline is often attributed to factors such as limited access to land, inadequate financial resources, lack of modern agricultural knowledge, and the allure of urban opportunities. This reduced participation has significant implications, not only for the agricultural sector but also for employment opportunities in the region. As fewer young adults engage in farming, the sector may struggle to meet the growing demand for food, leading to increased food insecurity and a potential rise in unemployment rates. Additionally, the migration of youth to urban areas in search of better job opportunities has led to an aging farming population, further jeopardizing the sustainability of agricultural production in Zaria.

Therefore, the problem this study seeks to address is the critical need to assess the level of adult youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria and to understand its impact on employment opportunities. By examining the factors influencing youth engagement in agriculture, the study aims to identify barriers and propose strategies to enhance participation, thereby improving employment outcomes and revitalizing the agricultural sector in the region.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research objective below was formulated to serve as a guide to the researcher

1. Assess the current level of youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria local government.
2. Identify the factors influencing youth participation in agriculture production in Zaria local government.
3. Evaluate the impact of youth involvement in agriculture on employment opportunities in Zaria local government.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions below was formulated to serve as a guide to the researcher

1. What are the current levels of youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria local government?
2. What are the factors that influence youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria Local Government?
3. What are the impact of youth involvement in agricultural and employment opportunity in Zaria local government?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted at Zaria Local Government Area Zaria Birni Constituency which has six wards are: Kwarbai ''A'', Kwarbai ''B'', Kaura, Anguwan Fatika, Limancin Kona and Anguwan Juma. The Zaria Birni and its surrounding are dominated by Hausa Fulani which their major occupation is farming since time immemorial.

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The population of this study consists of all youths who participated in farming production in the study area. Purposive sampling technique was used to select three wards (3) out of six (6) in Zaria Birni and its surrounding. The three ward were purposively selected are: Kwarbai ''A'', Anguwan Juma and Kaura Wards. The researchers did that in order to have adequate representation that may cut across the angle of the area in terms of distance. The respondents were selected using snow bowling method which involves asking one person to identify others who participation in agricultural production in the three wards. From each ward 20 persons were identified which make the sample of 60 youths who actively participated in agricultural production in Zaria Birni and its Surrounding.

The data were collected through the instrument developed by the researchers; tittle: "Adult youth's participation in agricultural production and its impact on employment opportunity" (AYPAPIEO). The instrument comprised of 15 item statement which included close ended questions that the respondents were limited or confined to options given by the researchers. Thus, a four-point scale was used. For research question one: Very High (VH) = 4, High (H) = 3, low (L) = 2 and Very Low (VL) = 1 was used to answer the research question while Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 was used for research question 2 and 3 respectively.

The instruments was validated by three senior researchers in the faculty of education Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto who compared items in the research instruments with the research questions and determined their appropriateness. The inputs of the three experts were incorporated together and used for the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean score and standard deviation)

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Research Question One: What are the current levels of youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria local government?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Respondent's Opinions on the Current Levels of Youth Participation in Agricultural Production in Zaria Local Government

S/N	Item statement	Category of Respondents	Opinion of Respondents					
			Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Mean	SD
1.	How often do you participate in agricultural practices	Adult Youth	90.4%	7.6%	0.00	2.0%	3.82	0.481
2	Do you normally have high production at each year of harvest	Adult Youth	87.4%	10.6%	0.00	2.0%	3.47	0.181
3.	At what level can you measure your cost and production at the end of the season s	Adult Youth	82.3%	11.8%	5.9%	0.00	3.37	0.312
4.	At what instance can you measure the level of employment opportunity you provide to your family, friend and community	Adult Youth	81.7%	7.6%	9.5%	1.2%	3.29	0.126
5.	At what level of your agricultural production provide you foods for your family or parents	Adult Youth	74.8%	7.6%	15.3%	2.3%	3.19	0.803

Source: Field Study 2024

Table 1 shows the analysis of item statements 1-5 used to answer the research question one on the current levels of youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria local government. The table revealed that the adult youth in the study area participated in agricultural practices, have high production at each year of harvest, provide foods for their family or parents and provide employment opportunity to family, friend and community. As presented on the table, all the items have a mean score of above 3.00 and item number 1 attracted the highest mean score of 3.82, with details showing 90.4% of the respondents participated in agricultural practices and provide employment opportunity to family, friend and community. The standard deviation recorded for the item statements was .481 indicating that the current youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria local government is very high.

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Research Question Two: What are the factors that influence youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria Local Government?

Table 2: Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Respondent's Opinions on the Factors that Influence Youth Participation in Agricultural Production in Zaria Local Government

S/N	Item statement	Category of Respondents	Opinion of Respondents SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1.	I participated in agricultural production because of the food security	Adult Youth	90.0%	8.1%	0.00	1.9%	3.82	.321
2.	I participated in agricultural production to have other sources of income and food for my family and my parents	Adult Youth	72.4%	17.6%	7.0%	3.0	3.57	.179
3.	Participating of youth in agricultural production created employment to teaming population of Zaria youth	Adult Youth	66.5%	23.5%	0.00	10.0%	3.56	.970
4.	I participated in agricultural production to feed my family and relatives	Adult Youth	79.4%	17.6%	0.00	3.0%	3.76	.179
5.	I participated in agricultural production because of intervention from our local government and community philanthropist	Adult Youth	84.1%	5.9%	0.00	10.0%	3.86	.176

Source: Field Study 2024

Table 2 shows the analysis of item statements 1-5 used to answer the research question two on the factors that influence youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria Local Government. The table revealed that, the adult youth in the study area participated in the agricultural production because of the food security, to have other sources of income and food for the family and parents, to feed family and relatives and because of intervention from the local government and community philanthropist. As presented on the table, all the items were agreed by the respondents, and item number 1 attracted the highest mean score of 3.82 with details showing 90.0% of the respondents agreed that they participated in agricultural production to have other sources of income and food for my family and my parents. The standard deviation recorded for the item statements was .321 and all the items have the mean score of 3.00 and above indicating that food security, employment opportunity and intervention from the local government and community philanthropist are the factors that influence youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria Local Government.

Research Question Three: What are the impact of youth involvement in agricultural and employment opportunity in Zaria local government?

Table 3: Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Respondent's Opinions on the Impact of Youth Involvement in Agricultural and Employment Opportunity in Zaria Local Government

S/N	Item statement	Category of Respondents	Opinion of Respondents SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1.	Participation of youth in agricultural production reduces the level of social vices in Zaria	Adult Youth	88.9%	4.2%	3.8%	3.1%	3.82	.098
2.	Participation of youth created opportunities youth in Zaria to be self-reliant individual	Adult Youth	87.4%	7.6%	2.0%	3.0%	3.80	.179
3.	Participation of youth in agricultural production increases the level of food security in Zaria	Adult Youth	82.4%	10.6%	5.0%	2.0%	3.47	.181

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4.	Participation of youth in agricultural production in Zaria offers job opportunities	Adult Youth	82.4%	12.6%	2.5%	2.5%	3.57	.179
5.	Participation of youth in to agricultural production most especially on poultry provide enough chicken in Zaria	Adult Youth	84.1%	5.9%	0.00	10.0%	3.79	.176

Source: Field Study 2024

Table 3 shows the analysis of item statements 1-5 used to answer the research question three on the impact of youth involvement in agricultural and employment opportunity in Zaria Local Government. The table revealed that, the adult youth participation in agricultural production reduces the level of social vices, created employment opportunities to youth, increases the level of food security and production many product in Zaria. As presented on the table, all the items were agreed by the respondents, and item number 1and 2 attracted the highest mean scores of 3.82 and 3.80 with details showing 88.9% and 87.4% of the respondents agreed that participation of youth in agricultural production reduces the level of social vices and provide employment opportunity. The standard deviation recorded for the item statements was .098 and .179 respectively. All the items have the mean score of 3.00 and above indicating that adult youth participation in agricultural production has positive impact and creates employment opportunity for youth in Zaria Local Government.

DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the adult youth's participation in agricultural production and its impact on employment opportunities in Zaria, Kaduna state. The first finding of this study revealed that the adult youth in the study area participated actively in agricultural production, have high production at each year of harvest, provide foods for their family or parents and provide employment opportunity to family, friend and community. This finding was presented on table 1 by answers to research question 1 where the respondents agreed to that. The finding is in line with the views of Nnadi and Akwiwu (2018) who reveal that agriculture remains the mainstay for both skilled and unskilled labor, at least in the short- and medium term and could be a viable solution to tackling rising youth unemployment as the industrial sector picks pace. Thus attracting and maintaining the youth in agriculture does not only mean improvements in the ongoing unemployment levels but will enhance exploiting their capabilities for national development in terms of increased agricultural outputs and productivity. The finding is equally in line with the views of Aphunu and Natoma (2010) who asserted that when adult youth are gainfully employed in agriculture, it can lead to improved household incomes and a reduction in poverty levels. Increased agricultural production and productivity not only provide employment but also stimulate economic growth

The second finding of this study revealed that the adult youth in the study area participated in the agricultural production because of the food security, to have other sources of income and food for the family and parents, to feed family and relatives and because of intervention from the local government and community philanthropist. The finding is in line with the view of Sharma (2017) who reveal that with more youth participating in agriculture, there is a greater potential for increased food production. This not only improves food security but also contributes to regional and national food supply, potentially opening up export opportunities and further driving economic growth. Therefore, the participation of adult youth in agricultural production plays a crucial role in enhancing employment opportunities, driving economic development, and ensuring the sustainability of the agricultural sector.

The last finding of this study revealed that the adult youth participation in agricultural production reduces the level of social vices, created employment opportunities to youth, increases the level of food security and production many product in Zaria. The finding is equally in line with the view of Akpan (2010) who supported that involvement of youth in agricultural activities has the potential of reducing the problems of the ageing farm population and increasing youth unemployment and this calls for securing the interest and participation of young people in agriculture in the form of deliberate shift in policy, training and promotion that specially targets the youth. This category of people are not only the productive backbone of every society, the major source of ideas and innovation, but also the main market for food consumption and very often the leaders and drivers of public opinion, public policy and action

CONCLUSION

The study on adult youth participation in agricultural production in Zaria highlights the critical role that this demographic plays in driving the agricultural sector and, by extension, enhancing employment opportunities. The

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findings suggest that while there is significant engagement of adult youth in agriculture, several factors such as access to resources, modern farming techniques, and supportive government policies influence the level and effectiveness of their participation. Moreover, the study demonstrates that increased participation in agriculture has the potential to reduce unemployment rates among adult youths by providing them with sustainable livelihoods. Agricultural production not only offers direct employment but also creates opportunities in related sectors such as agro-processing, marketing, and supply chain management. However, the study also identifies challenges, including limited access to credit, inadequate infrastructure, and the perceived unattractiveness of agriculture as a career among youth. Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions could enhance youth participation, thereby maximizing the sector's potential to reduce unemployment and contribute to the economic development of Zaria. In conclusion, fostering greater involvement of adult youth in agriculture through supportive policies, capacity building, and infrastructure development is essential for creating more employment opportunities and ensuring the sustainability of the agricultural sector in Zaria local government, Kaduna state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

1. Government and non-governmental organizations should increase efforts to provide adult youth with easier access to land, credit facilities, and inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and machinery. This can be achieved through targeted subsidy programs, low-interest loans, and land reform policies that prioritize youth engagement in agriculture.
2. Government and non-governmental organizations should establish vocational training centers and agricultural extension services focused on modern farming techniques, entrepreneurship, and sustainable practices. This will equip youth with the skills and knowledge needed to increase productivity and make agriculture a more attractive and viable career option.
3. Government and non-governmental organizations should encourage partnerships between the government, private sector, and academic institutions to develop programs that support youth involvement in agriculture. These partnerships can provide mentorship, funding, and access to markets, creating a more robust agricultural ecosystem that benefits young farmers.

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