

ATTITUDE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS TOWARD AGRICULTURAL FORESTRY CAREER IN AKURE SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ONDO STATE

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Abstract.

This study assessed secondary school students and their parents' attitude towards agriculture and forestry career. Multistage sampling was used to select one hundred and eighty (180) students for the study. A validated questionnaire known as students/parents' attitude towards agricultural/forestry career with reliability coefficient of students' attitude $r = 0.83$ and parents' attitude $r = 0.74$ was used to collect data for this study. Descriptive statistics was used in data analysis. The results showed that students and their parents' attitude towards agriculture and forestry career were negative. In addition, there was a negatively significant relationship between students' and parents' attitudes towards agricultural and forestry careers (pearson $r = 209$) due to their level of awareness, poor teaching methods, possibly no job opportunities, poor societal value placed on farming which makes parents dislike the profession among others. The paper therefore concludes that, there should be sensitization in schools for the students and parents teachers association meetings to educate both the students and parents on the importance and benefits of agricultural/forestry career. Based on the findings from this study, it was recommended that secondary school curriculum should be reviewed as to accommodate the topic from the junior class to the senior class and be taught more than a term and competent or qualified forestry experts in agriculture should be employed to teaching the topic more effectively and efficiently among others. The study further recommended targeted advocacy, career counseling, and financial incentives to improve perceptions and interest

Keywords: attitude, agriculture, forestry, students, Parents

Introduction

Agriculture and forestry are important sectors for Nigerian economic development with high potentials for employment, food security, poverty reduction and environmental protection. Agriculture is the engine of growth for most developing countries and its development is one of the most effective

ways to alleviate hunger and poverty (Ogunjobi *et al*, 2020; Faleyimu, 2021). Forestry plays an essential role in maintaining ecological balance, combating climate change, and supporting livelihoods through sustainable resource management. As a sub-sector of agriculture, forestry offers diverse career opportunities ranging from

forest conservation to research and eco-tourism.

In the same vein, forests provide important environmental services that contribute to the wellbeing and security of human; they are needed to maintain the atmosphere and its destruction is a major contributing factor resulting in rising level of carbon dioxide emission and global warming. To ensure sustenance of forest resources and its role for economic development and environmental protection, there is need to train more professionals in the field of forestry as those already employed are bowing out of the service. It is imperative therefore to develop skilled human resources in order to sustain, diversify and realise the potentials of agriculture and forestry sectors. Hence, agriculture and forestry human resources development in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State is a continuous process undertaken by educational sectors both in secondary schools and especially tertiary institutions through their attitudes. Despite its importance, forestry careers are often perceived with disdain by students and their families. This attitude undermines efforts to build a sustainable forestry workforce and limits the development of forest resources.

Attitude is a way in which an individual feel, thinks and is predisposed to act towards a particular situation which can be favorable or unfavorable, positive or negative typically directed towards some specific object. Attitude can also be viewed as a mental state that disposes a learner to choose to behave in a certain way. An attitude involves the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the students. Adewale, et al, (2017) defined attitude as an evaluative judgement either favourable or unfavourable, that an individual possess and direct towards some object, which it

abstract or concrete may be. The researcher therefore sees attitudes as how one thinks and feels about an act towards an objective or idea. According to Olujobi and Sale, (2015) and Ogunsola *et al* (2020) that a person's beliefs, feelings, or intentions (attitude) towards an object can predict behaviour. The perceptions or beliefs and feelings towards agriculture and forestry can influence attitude in agriculture and forestry in particular. The attitude of the students either male or female have not really been positive and this could also be one of the reasons for the decline in the enrolment of the student in the training.

Training to become agriculture and forestry professionals generally requires a diploma certificate from technical and vocational institutions or a degree from the university. Agriculture and forestry education are offered in universities, technical and vocational training institutions in Nigeria. Despite all the issues addressed by agriculture and forestry education, students' enrolment into forestry and agriculture in Nigerian tertiary institutions are at the lowest ebb (Alao, 2010; Adebo and Semade, 2013; Areo, 2019; Adebayo, *et al*, 2022). Most students prefer other courses compare to agriculture and forestry courses but enrol in agricultural and forestry only when they are unable to undertake alternative courses or programs of study. This is supported by Appah and Tokede, (2020) and Olaniyi, *et al*, (2022) that some students found in forestry department are there because they could not meet up to the cut off mark of their chosen courses and they accept forestry courses as they have no option because the students doesn't want to return home in other to sit for another examination. The poor enrolment in agriculture and forestry in schools is a major concern for agriculture and forestry sectors and this might make

it unfavourable towards government efforts at improving agricultural and forestry sectors. However, considering strategic contributions of agriculture and forestry education in sustaining national development, there is urgent need to encourage the younger generation (graduating class of secondary schools) to take up agriculture and forestry as a career especially in Akure South LGA of Ondo State.

In Nigeria, according to the National Policy on Education, (FGN, 2014), Agricultural science is a compulsory subject in junior secondary education but optional at senior level, in that case, secondary school students have the choice of deciding whether to offer the course or not. Majority of these students still regard agriculture as nonprofessional and less profitable livelihood option for less privileged young adults and sees any one returning to farming after university to be a failure (Okiror & Otabong, 2015; Faleyimu, 2021). Forestry is found in the senior secondary school curriculum, and it is taught for just a term in SSS III which seems not to be adequate for the students to have a good attitude towards the subject as it is only at tertiary education level that forestry is known as a career. And once the students are not properly groomed from secondary school particularly about a subject, there will no consciousness for the student to see such a subject as a career course in the higher institution. Based on the fact, there is need to increase forestry education advocacy and literacy of the people and the need to inculcate awareness of forestry education and its importance; it will also improve students' positive attitude towards forestry education.

There can be many reasons for attitudinal disposition towards agriculture especially forestry education among

senior secondary school students. Adejoh, Edokah and Shuiab, 2016; Olaniyi, et al, (2022) found that parents were the dominant influence on a student's decision due to Parental influence, societal views, and poor career orientation. Based on the fact that forestry is in the secondary school curricula but appears not taught at all, possibly there is no qualified or competent teacher to handle such aspect of Agriculture, therefore, there is need to increase the advocacy on forestry education literacy of the citizen and the need to inculcate in students and their parents a positive attitude to forestry education through proper teaching of the subject. It is against this backdrop that the study examined the attitude of secondary students' and their parents towards agriculture and forestry education in Akure South LGA of Ondo State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to examine the attitude of secondary students' and their parents towards agriculture and forestry education in Akure South LGA of Ondo State.

Research questions

The following research questions were addressed:

- What is the attitude of agricultural science students towards agriculture/forestry as a career?
- What is the attitude of parents' of agricultural science students' towards agriculture/forestry as a career?

Hypothesis

There is no significant correlation between agricultural science students' attitude and their parents' attitude towards agriculture/forestry career.

Methodology

A descriptive and correlational survey was adopted for this study hence no variable was manipulated or controlled. The study was conducted in the Akure South local Area, Ondo State, Nigeria. The target population for this study comprised all public senior secondary school three (SSS 3) students in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State. Multistage sampling procedure was employed. A simple random sampling technique was used to select six (6) public secondary schools and thirty (30) students were randomly selected from each of the schools, making a total of one hundred and eighty (180) comprising 81(45%) female students and 99(55%) male students. A structured questionnaire known as 'Students and their Parents' Attitude Towards Agricultural/Forestry Education' (SPATAFE) was used in collecting data. The questionnaire consisted of sections A and B. Section A consisted of respondents' demographic variables. Section B consisted of ten (10) items used to elicit information on respondents' attitude, measured on a four-point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree). The instrument was

subjected to face and content validity. The internal consistency and reliability of the instrument in sections A and B were established using cronbach alpha to get the values of 0.83 and 0.74 respectively. The instrument was administered on the respondents. to the sampled senior secondary schools, each students chosen were given students' copy of the questionnaire to respond to. Face to face method was adopted to make sure that the students filled the questionnaire effectively through the assistant of their class teachers. Questionnaires were also distributed to the parents to fill, making a total of one hundred and eighty (180). All the parents' questionnaire were retrieved and found valid. The parents' that responded to the questionnaire were 113(62.8%) female and 67(37.2%) male. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) to answer research questions 1 and 2 while correlation method was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the attitude of students towards agriculture/forestry career?

Table 1: Response on the attitude of students towards agriculture/forestry career

S/N	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Students feel they choose agricultural science to enable them study agricultural/forestry courses after their secondary education	3 (1.7%)	30 (16.7%)	99 (55.0%)	48 (26.7%)	4.75	0.64	Disagree
2	Students believe that there are no job opportunities in forestry/ agriculture profession	55 (30.6%)	40 (22%)	57 (31.7%)	28 (15.6%)	3.48	0.93	Agree
3	Student believe joining forestry/ agriculture profession will make them useful in the society	10 (5.6%)	54 (30.0%)	74 (41.1%)	42 (23.3%)	3.49	0.92	Agree
4	Students believe forestry/ agriculture will give them prestigious status	33 (18.3%)	30 (16.7%)	74 (41.1%)	42 (23.3%)	3.78	0.72	Disagree
5	Students believe forestry/ agriculture will equip them to be self-reliant	32 (17.8%)	68 (37.8%)	61 (33.9%)	19 (10.5%)	3.53	0.90	Disagree
6	Students feel forestry/ agriculture education will not provide them suitable jobs	68 (37.8%)	33 (18.3%)	55 (30.6%)	24 (13.3%)	2.69	1.09	Agree
7	Poor societal value placed on farming make students dislike the profession	84 (46.7%)	33 (18.3%)	24 (13.3%)	39 (21.7%)	4.00	1.09	Agree
8	Students believe forestry/ agriculture is meant for those in urban areas	15 (8.3%)	30 (16.7%)	89 (49.4%)	46 (25.6%)	3.59	0.92	Disagree
9	Student believe that forestry /agriculture practices are tedious	16 (8.9%)	61 (33.9%)	83 (46.1%)	20 (11.1%)	2.90	4.05	agree
10	Students prefer forestry/ agriculture profession to other profession.	12 (6.7%)	30 (16.7%)	99 (55.0%)	48 (26.7%)	4.33	4.05	agree

As shown in table 1, the findings of this study reflect students' negative attitude towards forestry/agricultural education. For instance, only 18.3% of the students admitted they choose agricultural science to enable them offer forestry/agriculture education in higher institutions (item 1). Over 60% of the students disagreed that forestry/agricultural education will make them useful in the society (item 3), will give them prestigious status (4), such

education is meant for those in rural area (item 8). Also 65% of the students agreed that poor societal value placed on farming make students dislike the profession (item 6) while only 23.4% of the students prefer forestry/agricultural profession to other profession (item 10).

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of parents' towards agriculture/forestry career?

Table 2: Response on the attitude of parents towards agriculture/forestry career

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD	Decision
Parents believe their wards offering agricultural science is to enable them study agricultural/forestry courses in university.	12 (6.7%)	26 (14.4%)	55 (30.6%)	87 (48.3%)	4.07	0.71	Disagree
Parents believe that there are no job opportunities in forestry/agriculture profession	87 (48.3%)	43 (23.9%)	22 (12.2%)	28 (15.6%)	4.00	0.68	Agree
Parents believe their wards joining forestry/agriculture profession will make them useful in the society	18 (10.0%)	38 (21.1%)	48 (26.7%)	76 (42.2%)	3.30	0.98	Disagree
Parents believe forestry/agriculture will give their wards prestigious status	34 (18.9%)	40 (22.2%)	43 (23.9%)	63 (35.0%)	3.30	0.98	Disagree
Parents believe forestry/agriculture will equip their wards to be self reliant	51 (28.3%)	54 (30.0%)	40 (22.2%)	35 (19.4%)	3.35	0.98	Agree
Parents feel forestry/agriculture education will provide suitable jobs for their wards	19 (10.6%)	39 (21.7%)	58 (32.2%)	64 (35.6%)	3.93	0.95	Disagree
Poor societal value placed on farming makes parents dislike the profession	45 (25.0%)	30 (16.7%)	34 (18.9%)	71 (39.4%)	3.74	1.67	Disagree
Parents believe forestry/agriculture education is meant for those in urban areas	54 (30.0%)	34 (18.9%)	43 (23.9%)	49 (27.2%)	3.78	0.90	Agree
Parents feel that agricultural/forestry practices will be tedious for their wards.	22 (12.2%)	60 (33.3%)	38 (21.1%)	60 (33.3%)	3.31	1.03	Disagree
Parents prefer other education to forestry/agriculture profession.	100 (55.6%)	29 (16.1%)	25 (13.9%)	26 (14.4%)	3.97	0.98	Agree

As shown in table 2, the findings of this study also reflect parents' negative attitude towards forestry/agricultural education. For instance, 78.9% of the parents disagreed that their wards will go for forestry/agriculture education after their secondary education. The respondents also agreed that there are no job opportunities in forestry/agriculture profession (item 2), it will not make their wards useful in the society (item 3), it will not give them prestigious status (item 4). Although 58 % of the parents believe

forestry/agriculture will equip their wards to be self-reliant and over 55% disagreed that agricultural/forestry practices will be tedious for their wards (item 9) yet over 70% of them prefer other education to forestry/agriculture education (item10).

Hypothesis: There is no significant correlation between students' attitude and parents' attitude towards agriculture/forestry as a career.

Table 3: Response on the correlation between students' attitude and parents' attitude towards agriculture/forestry as a career.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Pearson r	sig	Decision
Students' attitude	180	25.96	5.05	.209	0.05	S
Parents' attitude	180	25.64	5.08			

Correlation is significant at 0.05

Table 3 showed that a significant positive relation existed between students' attitude towards agriculture/forestry career and parents' attitude towards agriculture/forestry career (pearson $r = .209$; $n = 180$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis that there is no significant correlation between students' attitude and parents' attitude towards agriculture/forestry as a career is therefore rejected. This result implies that students' attitude is dependent on parents' attitude.

Discussion on the findings

The findings from the study revealed that students and parents' responses were similar in majority of the items. They both showed negative attitude towards agriculture/forestry as a career, the negative attitude could be attributed to their limited knowledge of what the career entails. This finding is supported by Alao, (2010); Baliyan and Nenty (2015); Okiror and Otabong (2015) and Areo, (2019) that motivational strategies should be used to improve students' attitude towards agriculture. Their negative attitudes could be because of their misconceptions about the career which they showed in responding to some of the items. This is in line with Olujobi and Sale, (2015); Adejoh, Edoke and Shaibu (2016) and Ogunsola et al, (2020) that students attitudes towards agricultural science can be attributed to their misconceptions about the career opportunities in agriculture. The finding agrees with Appah and Tokede (2019) and Olaniyi et al, (2022) that many people are not aware of what forestry education entails. The results also showed that students and their parents prefer other courses to agriculture/forestry which makes them disagree to the fact that they chose agricultural science to enable them offer

forestry/agriculture education in higher institution. This could be attributed to the fact that the students and their parents do not understand what agriculture/forestry education is all about and its prospects. This corroborates with Adebo and Semade, (2013); Areo, (2019); Adebayo et al, (2022) that stressed the need for massive public enlightenment on forestry education and its prospects to improve students' attitude towards the career.

In this study also the preposition that there is no significant correlation between students' attitude and parents' attitude towards agriculture/forestry as a career was found to be false. In essence, students' attitude towards agriculture/forestry career is dependent on their parents' attitude towards agriculture/forestry career. This is an indication that students' attitude to agriculture/forestry career are influenced by their parents. This finding supported Ogunsola et al, (2020) and Olaniyi et al, (2022) that the attitude of agricultural science students' toward agriculture is influenced by their parents' attitude to the career.

Conclusion

This study concluded that students' and their parents' showed negative attitude towards the profession due to their level of awareness, poor teaching methods, possibly no job opportunities, poor societal value placed on farming which makes parents dislike the profession among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made;

- The secondary school curriculum should be reviewed as to accommodate the topic from the Junior class to the senior class and be taught more than a term

- Competent or qualified forestry experts in agriculture should be employed to teaching the topic more effectively and efficiently
- Government through the Ministry of Agriculture should assist the secondary schools to make seedlings of different trees available for planting
- Students should be more exposed to the practical knowledge with the new technology
- Career talk through school counsellor should be engaged to enlighten the students

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