



FACTORS INFLUENCING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN EZINIHITTE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined youth participation in agricultural activities in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. Data were collected from 80 randomly selected youths in study area using structured interview schedule. Data analysis was achieved using descriptive statistics such as percentages and rankings. The result revealed that 88.7% of the respondents were below the age of 36 years, 62.5% were male, 37.5% were females, 56.25% married, 43.75% single. It also revealed that more than 90% had formal education from primary to tertiary education, while less than 10% had no formal education. Furthermore, it showed that about 35% of the respondents earned over 80,000 naira as their annual income from agricultural activities. Seven (7) factors were identified as determinant for youth participation in agricultural activities. These were ranked in ascending order which include lack of capital (91.3%), difficulty in accessing loan from banks (85.0%), poor government support (82.5%), high cost of agricultural inputs (67.5%), inadequate extension services (61.3%) and inadequate land (55.0%) and poor transportation (48.8%). The study concluded that the above-mentioned factors were the most important constraints that are affecting youths from effective participation in agricultural activities in study area. This suggests that providing youths with adequate and affordable capital and other farm inputs will enhance agricultural activities such as crop production, fishing, rearing of animals, and livestock production in the area.

Keywords: Youths, Participation, Agriculture, Programmes

Introduction

Agriculture is an important sector in the economy of Nigeria because it provides food, raw materials, income and employment for a large number of people, so, it still remains an important sector towards in areas such as crop production, livestock farming, food processing, storage, transportation, marketing, input supply and agricultural services. Agriculture therefore has the



potential to contribute significantly to employment creation and economic development, particularly among young people (Olaniyan et al 2026).

The issue of youth employment is important in Nigeria because many young people complete their education with the expectation of securing paid employment, while opportunities for formal employment remain limited. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024), the unemployment rate among young people aged 15-24 years was 6.5% in the second quarter of 2024. The same report showed that informal employment accounted for a very large proportion of employment in Nigeria. These figures show that the employment challenge in Nigeria is not only about whether people have jobs, but also about the quality, productivity and sustainability of the jobs available to them. Participation of youths in agricultural production has been described as very important agricultural reform which will go a long way towards self-employment of youths in the agricultural sector of the economy and contribute to the household income and poverty reduction (Osabohie et al. 2021). Over the years, government in Nigeria has made concrete effort to direct the youths back to farm. Various scheme has been formulated to give employment to the youths, such schemes are farm settlement schemes, school to farm programme and National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Universities of Agriculture, Schools and Facilities of agriculture. Generally, agriculture production today is still carried out using physical strength which declines with age. This has therefore been one of the major constraints to agricultural production in Nigeria (Pur, et al. 2007).

The youths, "the Nigeria Gen Z's", have been observed to have apathy towards agriculture. Mohammed 2025 pointed out several factors contributing to the apathy of youths towards agriculture; Some of these factors include the perception of agriculture as unattractive and risky, sociocultural attitudes towards farming, inadequate agricultural education and information, policy and institutional shortcomings. Osuntade et al 2021, reported that the decline of interest amongst the youths towards agriculture is partly due to a lack of adequate information on the career opportunities in the agricultural sector. This has resulted in mass unemployment and lack of sustainable livelihood activities among them (Usman et al, 2014). This has further led most youth into cultism, tribal conflicts, prostitution, and street begging, drugging, among others. With the ageing out of the present farmers in the country, and with the fewer level of youths into agriculture and their increasing number, the long-term future of the agricultural sector of the country is doubtful. The development of agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy therefore depends on the young people, more especially the youths in rural areas. This is because a large population of youths represents the link between the present and future and as well as the reservoirs of labour (Pur, et al. 2007). The successive regimes at the federal and state government level have introduced various agricultural development schemes with the aim of encouraging the youths and boosting food production and farmers' income through provision of agricultural infrastructures, inputs supports and effective extension work. The importance of the efforts of government cannot be ignored considering that every year thousands of youths are graduating from different levels of education institutions. Attempts have been made to study the contributions of youths to agricultural development of the country.



Methodology

This study was conducted in Ezinihitte Local Government of Imo State. It lies within latitudes 4°45' N and 7° 15' N, and longitude 6°50' E and 7°25' E. It occupies the area between the lower River Niger and the upper and middle Imo River. Imo state is bounded on the east by Abia State, on the West by the River Niger and Delta State; and on the North by Anambra State, while river State lies to the South. Imo State covers an area of about 5,100 sq km width and comprises of twenty-seven (27) local government areas. The state occupied a strategic location as the heartland of the eastern region of Nigeria.

Sampling Technique

Mbaise is one of the geographical areas in Imo State comprising of several communities. It consists of three major clan groups. Aboh, Ahiazu and Ezinihitte Mbaise. Ezinihitte Local Government Area which has four rural wards were purposely selected for the study. Out of these wards, twenty-five youths were randomly selected making a total of hundred (100) proportionate to the number of youths in each ward. These hundred youths were served with questionnaire. Out of the hundred questionnaires administered, only eighty (80) were retrieved and used for the study.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of respondents according to socioeconomic characteristics

Variable	Range Percentage	Frequency
Age in years	20-25	6
	7.5	
26-30	37	46.2
31-35	28	35.0
36-40	9	11.3
Sex	Female	30
	37.5	
Male	50	62.5
Married status	Single	35
	43.75	
Married	45	56.25
Level of education	Informal education	5
		6.25
Primary education	20	25.00
Secondary education	38	47.50
Tertiary education	17	21.25
Primary occupation	Farming	36
		45.00
Trading	25	31.25
Civil servant	19	23.75
Annual income	40,000-60,000	22
		27.5
61,000-80,000	30	37.5
81,000-100,000	15	18.7
>100,000	13	16.3



Socio-economic characteristics of the Respondents

Result of Table above reveals that majority (88.7%) of the respondents were below 36 years. This shows that most of the respondents are in their most active ages, hence strong enough to participate in agricultural activities. This agrees with what Onwuorah et al (2024) pointed out when he said that age differences among young people may influence their involvement agriculture. Table 1 also shows that the majority (62.5%) were males while women were 37.5% which could be attributed to the culture of the people in the study area.

About 67% of the respondents were married; this may not be unconnected with the domestic responsibilities in terms of providing the basic family needs that make many to participate in agricultural activities. The educational status of the respondents reveals that 25% had attained primary education, 47.50% secondary education and 21.25% had attained tertiary education. This further explained that more than 90% of the respondents had one form of formal education or the other, therefore adoption of the recommended activities will be easy among the respondents. A little close half (45%) of respondents were engaged in farming as their primary occupation while 31.25% were traders and only 22.75% were civil servants. This also implies that most of the respondents devote their time, resources, d energy into farming as their main source of livelihood. Table 1 also revealed that 35% of the respondents earned more than 80,000 naira as their annual income from agricultural activities. This show on the average, only 35% of respondents are earning 666.7 naira as their income per month. By implications the amount is far below national minimum wage 18000 naira

Factors Affecting Youth Participation in Agricultural Activities

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to factors affecting participation activities

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking order
Lack of Capital	73	91.3	1st
Difficulty in accessing loan from bank	68	85.0	2nd
Poor government participation	66	82.5	3rd
High costs of inputs	54	67.5	4th
Inadequate extension services	49	61.3	5th
Inadequate Land	44	55.0	6th
Poor transportation	39	48.8	7th

The findings in Table 2 above shows that lack of capital was the most important constraint to youth participation in agricultural activities in the study area as it was ranked first with (91.3%) Adeyanju et al 2021 identified lack of access to finance as major barrier to participating in agribusiness and agricultural training programmes.

Nwagboso et al (2026) also pointed out in his finding how financial exclusion limits the ability of young people to enter agriculture. The youths are poor and hardly obtain loan from bank which they only offer loan with collaterals. The youth farmers may hardly have anything to offer as collateral in return to get loan from banks (Komoiafe et al, 2022). This may imply that the



government in the area is not supporting the youth with farm inputs and extension services to boost their farming activities. This finding is in agreement with that of Adeniyi et al 2026 and Aya et al 2026 of inadequate government support among the challenges affecting the participation of youths in agriculture.

Fertilizer at subsidized rate is not easily accessible to the youth farmers for their farming activities. And for the available ones, they are so expensive that the farmers hardly afford to buy

According to the respondents, there are only two extension workers posted to the area which is grossly inadequate to cater for their agricultural needs. The study also revealed 61.3% and 48.8% of inadequate extension services and poor transportation respectively as constraints in youths' participation in Agricultural activities. This is agreement with Ojo et al 2024, who also identified in his findings that these constraints limited the effectiveness of extension agents in disseminating climate-smart agricultural practices.

Finally, the table also revealed inadequate land as among the major constraints to youth participation into agricultural activities in this study area. This inadequate land was attributed to customary land tenure practices intergenerational barriers, high rental costs and complicated government procedures.

Conclusion

The study revealed the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and major constraints Influencing Youth participation in agricultural activities in the study area. It is instructive that financial institution should provide the needed funds at affordable rates to the youths so that they can participate effectively in agricultural activities. Also, government should support the youths with adequate and necessary farm implements and other related inputs and effective and efficient extension personnel to boost their farming activities. Youths should also form cooperative associations so as to have collective bargaining on any activity relating to their farming enterprises and in protection of their interest.



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