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Young People and Agricultural Employment: Locality and Interest Factors

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Young People and Agricultural Employment: Locality and Interest Factors

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Abstract

Agriculture is a commonly used strategy for providing employment to young people particularly in the developing countries. One of the reasons why this strategy has not been successful is that resources are directed to too many young people that have no interest in agriculture and are not suited to living in the rural areas where agriculture is practiced. The objectives of this paper include to investigate if socio-demographic characteristics influence young people choice of locality; develop measurement scale for measuring the interest dimension of young people's involvement with agriculture; and to determine if correlation exists between locality and interest in agriculture. This study was conducted in Edo State, Nigeria using young student respondents. The result indicates there is a relationship between social demographics and the locality of young people. The study also indicates a correlation exist between locality of young people and their interest in agriculture. Young people from rural background are more inclined to consider agriculture as an employment and are more interested in its development. Therefore the agricultural policy of the government must be redefined with the intent of applying the rule of comparative advantage in engaging the young people in agriculture. The generalisation of the study should be made with caution as the sample size was small and most of the references used are from countries that are different socio-culturally.

Keywords: Agricultural employment; Interest in Agriculture; Rural and Urban localities; Young people and agriculture.

Introduction

Unemployment is a major issue in the developing countries. In Nigeria for example, the National Bureau of Statistics, (2013) National Baseline Youth Survey Report showed that 54.0% of Nigerian youths were unemployed in 2012. Of this, females unemployed youth figure stood at 51.9% compared to their male counterpart at 48.1%. This statistic is frightening when the security, economic and social implications are considered. Youth unemployment has been linked to various social and economic vices such as theft, robbery, thuggery, smuggling, kidnapping of prominent politicians, business executives, top public and private sectors' personnel or their relatives and terrorist act is wide spread now as unemployed youth becomes easy target of recruitment for terrorism mastermind (Adebayo 2013).

IFAD (2011) population analysis indicated that 70 percent of the world's poor live in rural areas and their main source of livelihood, income and employment is agriculture. It also noted that the depletion and degradation of land and other natural resources pose serious challenges to producing enough food and other agricultural products to sustain rural livelihoods and meet the needs of the urban populations.

The major participants in agriculture for example in many developing countries are the elderly males and females, usually the wives of the male farmers or widows. Children do

participate in agriculture helping their parents in farm operations. When they become young adults, the reality of life begins to shape their future. The influence of family, environment, peer pressure and the locality coupled with the personality traits of the individual begins to shape the lifestyle of the young people. On this premise young people are able to determine what interest them or not about their environment, estimate their path, whether to remain in their current locality or migrate to another one for the purpose of social and economic advancement.

Urban and rural localities present different opportunities and challenges to different people. Pampalon (2006) noted that urban areas present more choices for young people and that one is more likely to be exposed to better social amenities, able to find many different types of food, better education and job prospecting environment. Furthermore, urban people have the opportunity to participate in numerous cultural activities; the result is an opportunity to be urban enculturated and the likelihood to encounter those from other class, cultural, and ethnic groups (Pampalon 2006).

Rural locality on the other hand presents a contract scenario. Unemployment is generally lower in rural areas than in the urban due to the high demand for low-skilled labour. However, high paid employment opportunities are limited - pay levels is low and opportunities for progression is also limited. Situation as this, leads to migration from the rural settings; with many young people relocating to urban centres to pursue their career goals (Kakwagh & Ikwuba 2010; Emeh et al. 2012). Ogunleye-Adetona (2000) summed this situation better that the perceived urban economic opportunities encourage migration of people (both male and female) from rural areas. This exodus creates net migration loss to the rural area more so when there is no compensating migration gain from the urban.

Several government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are engaged in agricultural development particularly in the developing countries aiming to improve practices and empower young people. Strategies like communal farm, graduate farming and School-to-land programs have been carried out in the past and some of the programs are on-going. Huge amount - millions of Dollar and Naira has been directed towards such program. Participants particularly young people have been drawn from different skills and social background to the program without regards to their past experience, locality or interest in agriculture. While many young unemployed people from the urban area indicate willingness to participate in such program in order to get the financial benefits, increasingly fewer young people in developing and developed countries actually aspire to live as farmers (Farming First 2013; Murphy 2014). Young people aspire to formal sector employment and modern urban lifestyles, and that farming is a mentally and physically challenging job and, young people don't consider agriculture as a future in part because of a lack of access to the required infrastructure for growth and development (Leavy & Hossain 2014).

One of the reasons why agricultural employment strategy is not successful is that resources are directed to too many people that lack interest in agriculture and not suited to rural locality where almost all agriculture endeavours are carried out. The attempt of this paper is to stimulate engagement on how resources could be effectively and efficiently deployed to improve agriculture and provide employment opportunities to young people.

The objective of this paper is to; (1) Investigate if socio-demographic characteristics influence young people choice of locality; (2) Develop measurement scale for measuring the interest dimension of young people's involvement with agriculture; and (3) To determine if correlation exists between locality and interest in agriculture. A lot of studies have been

carried out on young people/youth and agriculture, the effect of their locality on their interest has not been studied. This study is significant as it will provide inputs into how best to utilise the limited financial and human resources, minimise rural migration, create viable employment opportunities and develop the rural communities.

Literature review

Locality and Young people

In this review, locality is explored in the context of rural and urban dimensions though this study acknowledges the existence of more dimensions when discussing locality. Rural locality definition has three perspectives - occupational, sociocultural and ecological (Bealer, Willits & Kuvlesky 1965; Whitaker 1983, Scott et al. 2007). From occupational perspective, rural locality is associated with the primary industries; specifically farming, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining. Therefore a locality is defined as rural because it has a large percentage of its workforce employed in the primary industries or because a large proportion of the land is in agricultural use. Another criterion for determining locality is the ecological indicator (Dunn 1989). Population size is the most frequently used criteria, but the definition most important to this study is the socio-cultural one.

The socio-cultural definition is predicated on the assumption that rural residents have their own subculture and differ culturally from urban residents (Dunn 1989). While this could be contested, it implies that rural area has a specific and almost homogenous culture, raising doubts about the diversity of multi-ethnic rural locality. Be that as it may, there is usually main culture that is dominant in the broader terms that allows the mini or sub cultures to thrive side by side. The importance of recognising the diversity of young people in terms of gender, age, class, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background, geographic location, is well established by those working with young people. However geographic location is considered a critical social factor. The nature, prevalence and impact of youth opportunities and welfare issues often differ dramatically due to geographical location. This therefore has a significant impact on the nature and the deployment of interventions used in working with young people (Fitzpatrick & La gory 2000).

Issues such as identity development are often similar for urban and rural young people, but the experience is different due to the peculiarity of factors associated with living in rural or remote area (Dunn1989). Young people are predisposed or perceived to be predisposed to the factors in their locality. According to Department of Agriculture and Rural Development - DARD (2007), young people in rural areas do experience a number of problems in relation to employment, but they also consider urban unemployment and social problems in making their decision.

Hoggart and Buller (1987) assume a correlation exists between locality population density and the behaviour and attitude of those that live in it. Therefore locality influences can transform individuals to see themselves and their locality to be mutually inclusive or exclusive in line with their interest and expectation. People particularly the young ones do not leave the rural locality because of abstract and anonymous structural forces but because they do not perceive the rural to represent the means that make up the good life (Berg & Forsberg 2003, Berg & Lysgard 2004, Haugen & Villa 2006b). On this premise, Jones (2011) reported that the individual should be matched to the environment (locality) for employment and that success in it lies on appropriate selection against the required attitude and skills.

Rye (2007) study found that the kind of educational path of young people influences the locality preference. Fosso (2003) noted that “young people’s choice of secondary school

education also places them into two distinct groups and lives. The most prominent difference in youngsters' place narratives is also tied to these two groups - those who have chosen vocational school and decided to stay, and those who have chosen general course studies in secondary school and intend to move to other places". In other words, those taking vocational education prepare themselves for local labour markets and seem happy at the prospect of a rural future. They see the rural locality as safe, clean, beautiful, and healthy, while the city is associated with the opposite characteristics (Jørgensen 1994). Those taking academic courses, on the other hand, prepare for outward-migration.

Young people and agriculture

So many considerations are involved in determining employment preference of young people. According to Sears (1982), a total constellation of the psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic and chance factors combine to shape the employment preference of young individuals. The genetic wiring of the individual and the environment are the main concerns as can be argued from Sears's work. What influences young people are crucial to their decision making, it also in many ways predispose them to certain ways of thinking and action. These predispositions are shaped by a number of factors including geographical location, ethnicity, parental position and social class. These influences are not discrete but interact consistently to shape their experiences (Sears 1982).

Leavy and Hossain (2014) and Murphy (2014) noted that farming is a mentally and physically challenging job and, young people don't consider agriculture as a future in part because of a lack of access to social and economic infrastructures. Young people generally distaste farming and prefer not to choose it because of its low social status, seen as dirty work, harsh on the skin and the rewards from farming can be low, slow and delayed. In addition to the uncertainty widely associated with the returns from farming, this analysis resonates with the views on the challenges of a farmer's life across a range of contexts. For a young farmer, the thought is that agriculture do not adequately compensate for its physical strenuousness on the body is strong (Murphy 2014) and this is a precursor for migration from the rural area to urban (Ogunleye-Adetona 2000).

The confidence and attitudes of young people towards life and work are shaped by their immediate surroundings and are by nature linked to social positioning. Hodkinson (2004) found through biography we develop largely tacit dispositions towards education, work or career and evidence shows clearly that dispositions to education and career are inseparable from dispositions to other aspects of life, including family, friendships, part-time work and leisure. From this we can argue that young people will all have a different starting point from which they make decisions. By the time they reach teenage years many of their values are entrenched and their perceptions already shaped.

An involvement concept in agriculture

This review sees agriculture as a product and the young adults as the consumers. Involvement is the motivational drives or basis of an individual's arousal towards a product due to the inherent needs to be met or satisfied (Ogbeide & Bruwer 2013 Laurent & Kapferer 1985; O'Cass 2000; Schiffman & Kanuk 2006). Contemporarily, involvement concept argues that product – agriculture means different thing to different people, and that individuals see it as such based on the different attachments to the product (Schiffman & Kanuk 2006). Young persons can be involved not only with agriculture but also with the production, marketing and the communications processes associated with it. Hence involvement with products has been found to be dependent on the relevance of the needs to the consumer (Bloch & Richins 1983; Havitz & Mannell 2005; Ogbeide & Bruwer 2013).

Young people involvement with agriculture can vary depending on the sources of the arousal thus it can be ephemeral or permanent and can lead to situational or enduring involvement respectively (Ogbeide & Bruwer 2013; Laurent & Kapferer 1985; O’Cass 2000; Schiffman & Kanuk 2006). For example in the labour market where the pressure for the young people to get a job is high and perennial, tendency exist that people that have been in the labour market for a long time without success can chose to be engaged in any job available even when their interest is not in that job. In the work of O’Cass (2000), it was noted that situational involvement is short term and external to the consumer such that it causes a movement within each level of involvement, but not enough to cause a shift between levels.

Enduring involvement from the work of Rothschild (1984) encapsulated the internality and the permanency of individuals’ arousal towards a product. Enduring involvement encompassed dimensions such as ego, pleasure, lifestyle, interest, cognition and hedonism; and these dimensions arguably create the individuals’ involvement spectrum on the long term (Ogbeide & Bruwer 2013; Schiffman & Kanuk 2006).

Interest dimension of involvement

Product like agriculture communicates personality, culture, value, interest and the ego of individuals that engage in it (Belk 1988; Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry 1989; McCracken 1986; Rook 1985). Interest builds attitude which is an important determinant of an individual’s success in agriculture or other employment pursuit (Othman & Ishak, 2009). Interest enhances the significance and importance of agriculture in the eyes of the practitioner thereby creating and sustaining more attention. Agriculture as a product generates interest (Romani & Gistri 2008) and different interest patterns subsist according to the levels of psychological, economic, cultural and knowledge capital available to the individuals. These interest patterns mainly influence attitudes towards production, marketing and communication processes and the characteristics that distinctively define individuals into involvement groups.

Methodology

This study was conducted using data gathered between September and November 2014 from student respondents of government institutions – Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma and the University of Benin, Benin City, College of Agriculture Iguoriakhi and College of Education, Ekiadolor - all in Edo State, Nigeria. A convenience sampling method was used to select potential young student respondents. The choice of young students in the study was (1) to avoid insincere and dishonest responses, predicated on hardship young unemployed potential respondents may have faced and; (2) they represent a group from which the human capital evolves.

The term locality was defined on whether the respondent lives in the rural or urban area and the predominant occupation in the respondent place of usual residence was used to determine the kind of locality. A predominantly farming area was considered a rural area – consistent with Bealer, Willits and Kuvlesky (1965). The questionnaire comprised socio-demographic details of the respondents and the eight “interest dimension” statements used to determine the involvement of young people with agriculture. The eight statements were adapted from Ogbeide & Bruwer (2013) and developed into a 7 point Likert scale items.

In the questionnaire administration process, the potential respondents were screened using the screening rule for participation in the survey. The screening question “Have you a secured employment or guaranteed to be employed on completion of your course?” was asked and all the potential respondents that answered “Yes” were not allowed to participate in the survey and those that answered “No” continued to respond to the questions in the survey. This was to minimised bias as students already in employment or guaranteed one can provide

responses that does not define their actual situation. Six hundred and ninety nine (699) completed questionnaires were collected, of which Six hundred and ninety (690) of them were used for analysis. The nine questionnaires discarded had a lot of missing values that can impact on the data analysis. The data analysis included data description, factor analysis and regression analyses, all conducted using Stata 12 analysis software.

Result and discussion

Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

From Table 1, it is obvious that the gender was skewed towards male respondents and the young adults combined groups – 18-28 years constituted the bulk of the respondents. Respondent in the Bachelor’s degree/HND class accounted for 66.09% of the respondents while more than 96% of the survey sample was single maritally. The distribution of the sample respondents indicates the effectiveness of the screening question in choosing the respondents. The bulk of the respondents particularly in the age group 18-24 years which accounted for more than 52% of the sample are deemed to constitute the large unmarried and Bachelor’s degree/HND students which can be described as not-have-suffered from lack of employment stress with high certainty. The same can said with the sample - age group 25-28 years deemed to have similar characteristics with respondents in the 18-24 years group but may have held one or more employments or may have searched for employment but have not been conditioned to desperation prior to their studies and the survey.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Profile of Sample (n=690)

Characteristics		# of Respondents	% Respondents
Gender	Male	460	66.67
	Female	230	33.33
Age Group	18 - 24 years	360	52.17
	25 - 28 years	267	38.70
	29 - 34 years	42	6.09
	35 - 40 years	21	3.04
Highest Education obtained	OND/NCE	69	10.00
	Bachelor’s degree/HND	456	66.09
	Higher degrees	93	13.48
	Others	72	10.43
Marital status	Single	663	96.09
	Married or cohabiting	27	3.91

Note: OND/NCE = Ordinary National Diploma/ National Certificate of Education HND = Higher National Diploma.

The distribution of the respondents by locality is shown in Figure 1.

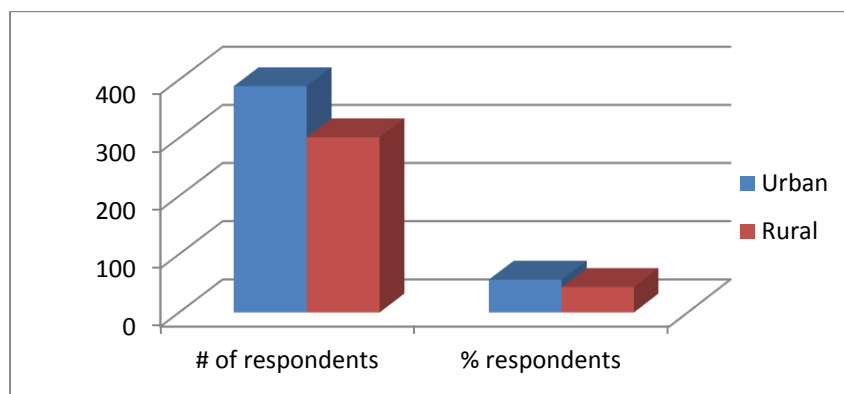


Figure 1 Distribution of respondents by locality

The numbers 0-400 in the Figure 1 are a dual measure that indicate “number of respondent” and “percentage of respondents” in the urban and rural localities. More than 56% of the sample was from the urban area and less than 44% was from the rural area. It is the assumption of this study the rural representation appeared high, though there is no statistics to support it. It was considered that apart from the University of Benin, the other institutions are rurally located (but Ambrose Alli University has transformed its host location - Ekpoma into sub-urban town) and surrounding rural towns may have constituted catchment zones for the institutions.

Young people’s interest in agriculture: Factor analysis and reliability test

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied to assess the observed variables used to represent latent variable – interest of young people in agriculture. Factor analysis was used as there was no sufficient evidence to form hypotheses about the number of factors underlying the data. It was pertinent to use the principal component analysis method of EFA to manage the data set. See result in Table 2. The data was explored for the number or the nature of factors that account for the covariation between the variables (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Of the eight observed variables, those with extracted variance less than 0.5 or had multicollinearity were discarded such that five observed variables were finally used to test the interest latent variable. The statistical assumptions were met; the measure of sample adequacy (MSA) for each variable and the overall test exceeded 0.50. All the variables exceeded 0.5. The Bartlett’s test of sphericity proved that there was correlation among variables in the matrix at statistical significance of < 0.05. This result was consistent with Hair et al., (2010).

Table 2 Result of factor analysis and reliability test

Related items representing the latent factor	Variance Extracted
My interest in agriculture is to become a business owner	0.646
My interest in agriculture is to help develop the rural economy	0.724
I am interested in improving marketing of farm products	0.730
My interest in agriculture is to guarantee my financial future	0.756
My interest in agriculture is to increase its viability in providing employment	0.518
Cronbach’s Alpha 0.70	

Scale reliability was tested using Cronbach’s alpha. The five variables representing the “interest of young people in agriculture” dimension of involvement pooled a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.70. This value indicates a high level of internal consistency for the scale with the sample. The item-to-total correlation was more than 0.50 for all the variables. The Cronbach Alpha outcome was consistent with (Nunnally, 1979; Peter, 1979) as Cronbach Alpha of 0.70 is accepted as a good measure of reliability.

Result of the relationship between socio-demographics and locality

The study also investigated if there is a relationship between socio-demographic variables and young people locality, see Table 3. The variables such as gender, age, education and marital status were specifically tested. The result indicates that there is a relationship between gender and the locality of young people and that they are statistically at 0.100 significant level likely not to stay in the rural areas. The assumption is base of the negative coefficient (-0.190) obtained in the correlation analysis.

Table 3 Result of socio-demographics on locality

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	z	P>z
Gender	-0.190*	0.103	-1.85	0.065
Age	0.043	0.068	0.63	0.529
Education	-0.174**	0.064	-2.70	0.007
Marital Status	-0.769*	0.283	-2.72	0.017

Ordered Probit Thresholds	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error (SE)	(β/SE)
μ 1	-1.209	0.369	-3.276

X2 Log-L -464.234; Chi-square = 16.82, p-v. 0.002 (n = 690)

***, **, * Indicates estimated coefficient is significant at the .01 level, 0.05, level, 0.10 level respectively

The result also shows that age was not statistically significant but education and marital status were significant at respectively. Education had a negative coefficient of -0.174 while marital status also had a negative coefficient of -0.769. The inference here is that young educated persons and young singles are not attracted to living in the rural area. This is consistent with Fosso (2003) that noted the educational pathway – vocational or general course studies by young people affect their choice of employment. Therefore young people that had vocational education would like hands-on activities and will be interested in agriculture and by extension like rural locality.

Result of locality and interest in agriculture

The study analysed the correlation between locality of young people and their interest in agriculture. As interest in agriculture was a latent variable, the observed variables were used. At 0.100 significant level, it was established that living in rural area is positively correlated with young person’s interest in becoming an agriculture business owner.

Table 4 Result of correlation between Locality and interest in agriculture - χ²

Variable	Coefficient	P. value
My interest in agriculture is to become a business owner	14.124*	0.028
My interest in agriculture is to help develop the rural economy	25.692***	0.001
I am interested in improving marketing of farm products	21.797***	0.001
My interest in agriculture is to guarantee my financial future	7.794	0.254
My interest in agriculture is to increase its viability in providing employment	9.000	0.174

***, **, * Indicates estimated coefficient is significant at the .01 level, 0.05 level, 0.10 level and P indicates probability.

Furthermore at 0.001 level of statistical significant, it was noted that living in rural area correlates positively with young person’s interest in helping to develop the rural economy and the same was true at 0.001 level of statistical significant that positive correlation exists between living in rural area and young person’s interest in improving marketing of farm products. Though living in rural area was positively correlated with young person’s interest in agriculture as a means of guaranteeing financial future and increasing the viability of agriculture in providing employment, the outcomes were not significant. Young persons raised in the rural areas are better adjusted to the living conditions and expectations. Often times they have imbibed the way of life in the rural area in terms of social interaction and employment opportunities like agriculture and gaming. Their interest creates arousal towards the opportunities as to how best to develop or harness the benefits.

The young people living in rural area understand the problems in the areas and are better able to adapt to rural based youth developments strategy than the urban people. This is consistent with DARD (2007). Young farmers that live in rural area and well settled in their farm location are able to interact among themselves, gain easier access to financial and technical assistance from support agencies to further improve or diversify their farm business. The support agencies are able to assess and evaluate their seriousness and commitment as farmers and advance assistance as required. They can fit into value chain more easily than absentee farmers that are resident in the urban area.

Conclusion, recommendations, future study and the limitation of the study

In Nigeria, unemployment of young people is high and government is tackling the issue using diverse strategies and programs. The most commonly used youth mobilisation to work approach is to engage them in programs like school-to-land, communal farming, graduate farming or “Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme”. These approaches to providing employment for young is good but does not take into cognisance the personal interest of the young people and the locality where they are raised. The programs are design with no stringent compliance conditions attached. It is not uncommon that young people indicate interest in participating in such agricultural programs without real interest or commitment to the intended outcome. For some it is a way of having their slice of the national cake.

The study highlighted the importance of the place where young people lived and how much their personal interest influence their “real” adoption of agriculture as a means of employment and livelihood, and as a vehicle for rural and economic transformation. The subject “interest in agriculture” was considered from an enduring involvement perspective. All products are laden with emotion and this creates consumers’ arousal towards the products with the aim of meeting the particular goals that are to be met. Agriculture therefore cannot be prescribed as an alternative employment opportunity for all unemployed young people. To be engaged in agriculture as with any products, it must cause an arousal to the prospective people to be engaged in it. The arousal is influenced by the perceived benefits and it is the quality rating of the arousal that drives the level of commitment of the consumers as in young people to ensure the goals of agriculture employment program are met.

Young people from rural background are more inclined to consider agriculture as an employment and would be more interested in its development. Therefore the agricultural policy of the government – federal, state and local should be redefined with the intent of applying the rule of comparative advantage in engaging the young people in agriculture. Emphasis should be placed on young rural people that have acquired the resilience of rural life and whose agriculture has been part of their culture. This firstly will negate urban migration and limit the associated urban problems of pressure on social services, increase in crime rate and homelessness.

When young people that reside in the rural area are involved in agriculture as an employment strategy, their sensitivity to environmental and cultural shocks is minimal as they would have acquired coping strategies. To the urban youths, adjustment to these shocks can be hard and they may not be able to develop coping strategies. Urban youths facing situation as this, can abandon and have been noted to drop out of agriculture and other rural programs. The capital outlay expended on young people from the urban becomes wasted, the government objectives are not met and the issue of dislocation can arise.

This study brought to fore the importance of recognising the role the locality and the interest of young people play in agriculture as an employment and development strategy. Young people living in the rural must be preferentially supported. Agricultural initiatives must first be directed to the young people in the rural areas so as to drive the agriculture

agenda of the country and reduce poverty. It is the recommendation of the study that for any government outlaying huge amount of money into solving youth unemployment through agricultural program must take into cognisance the interest of the target population. As it is important to get the program right so it is the target group. A mechanism that ensures that the right people are aligned to the right program must be applied. It guides against resources wastage, guarantee program success, empower the young people and leads to improved value chain and rural development.

Agriculture program design aimed at reducing young people unemployment should be designed to ensure that the recipients are made to live in the farming area as one of the precondition for participating in the program. When the condition is breached the cost incurred should be converted into a debt owed to the government for the recipient. This is one way of ensuring that the recipients have continuous and regular activities on the farm and are able to monitor progress.

It is the view and recommendation of this paper that using agriculture to negate unemployment should first be directed to the young people in the rural area. This is predicated on the fact that they are more rural-resilient, better prepared and adapted to agriculture requirements and will minimise rural migration that causes social problems in the urban area. It will help to avoid the failures that resulted from opening the program to untargeted young population in the past.

This study relied on existing literature to opine that vocationally trained young people by virtue of the hands-on approach will be better suited for agriculture; future studies are required to investigate the influence of young people's type of education on willingness to practice agriculture. The generalisation of the study should be made with caution due to the small sample size relative to the study population and most of the references used are from countries that may or may not share socio-cultural similarities with the study area.

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