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Socio-economic Determinants of Agripreneurship Choice among Youths in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The current down turn in the global oil sector has necessitated the quest for alternative means of wealth creation through effective engagement of youths in agripreneurship. However, the socio-economic determinants of agripreneurship choice among youths in Ebonyi State, Nigeria seem not to have been empirically established. The study adopted a multistage sampling technique in eliciting data from one hundred and eighty youth agripreneurs using structured questionnaires. The study also employed both descriptive and inferential statistics to realize the objectives. The result showed that about 60% of the youth agripreneurs in Ebonyi State, Nigeria were males who are within the mean active age of 27 years and earn a mean annual income of N77, 333 on average household size of five 5 persons. The most revealed agripreneurial choices of the youths were farm production (crop and livestock production), farm input supply, agro-processing, and marketing/distribution. The probit regression analysis result revealed that with the Pearson Goodness-of-fit of 1148.799 which was statistically significant at 1% ( $P < 0.01$ ), and the Pseudo  $R^2$  value of 0.058, the socio-economic characteristics of youth has strong significant effect on the agripreneurial choice among the youth. Based on the findings, the study recommended for agripreneurship education and training at all levels to ensure capacity building among the youth for diverse agro-enterprises.

Keywords: Socio-economic, Agripreneurship, Choice, Youths, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Agripreneurship which defines entrepreneurship in agriculture related business is one of the major catalysts for economic growth and development in every emerging economy. It defines the wealth creation activities among economies of both developing and developed countries; and it is also the best solution for reducing unemployment in developing countries. This wealth is created by individuals who take the major risks in terms of equity, time and career commitment of providing value to some product or services, the product or service itself may or may not be new or unique but value must somehow be infused by the agripreneur by securing and allocating the necessary skill and resources. Hence, Mishra *et al.*, [12] posited that entrepreneurship is the application of energy for initiating and building an enterprise. According to Onmonya [17], entrepreneurship is the act of doing something new and of value by converting an idea or invention into profitable innovation. Therefore, entrepreneurship entails the creation of product, new market, industry, innovation and continuous improvement in quality, wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction as well as enhancing multiple effects in both the supply and demand side of the economy.

In Nigerian, the relevance of agripreneurship sector in nation's economy is being recognised. The sector provides enormous and unlimited opportunities for young people especially in this era of growing unemployment. But, identifying the factors that pulls individuals to become agripreneurs is important as it will guide in strategizing the enhancement of the sector. Accordingly, Osondu, Obike, and Ogbonna [20] identified sex, age of the youth, annual income, location, and ethnic as the factors that influence

the individuals to become entrepreneurs. Despite the acknowledged importance of agripreneurship sector in economic growth, unfavourable government policies, multiple taxation, poor access to finance, lack of education and training, environmental issues, and corruption have remained major constraints to start-ups by young people in Nigeria.

In Ebonyi State Nigeria, youth agripreneurship have started to receive significant attention because of its potentials to reduce unemployment and create economic opportunities for the youths. In order to develop young people's interest in agripreneurship sector, Nigerian government has provided different activities and programmes to advance their skills and replace aging farmers in the sector. Moreover, the current glut in oil sector globally has necessitated quest for alternative means of wealth creation through the encouragement and effective engagement of youth in agripreneurial activities in the midst of high unemployment rate among youths. Such issues and incentives that influence agripreneurial choice and preferences among the youths need to be investigated for proper articulation of satisfactory and sustainable self-employment opportunity for the young people of Ebonyi State.

To address the problem, the study described the socio-economic attributes of the youth agripreneurs; determined the agripreneurship activities engaged by the youths in the study area; and determined effects of socio-economic characteristics of the youths on agripreneurship choice.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The study was conducted in Ebonyi State of Nigeria in 2018. The State lies approximately on latitude 7°3' N and longitudes 5°4' E and 6°45' E and in the eastern part of Nigeria. The study employed multistage sampling technique in the selection of the youth agripreneurs. From the two agricultural zones in the State, two Local Government Areas were randomly selected from each zone. Secondly, two autonomous communities were randomly sampled from each of the selected Local Government Areas to give a total of twelve autonomous communities. Thirdly, fifteen (15) youth agripreneurs were randomly selected to give a total of one hundred and eighty (180) respondents who constituted the sample size. To effectively cover the three components of agribusiness, 60 farm input suppliers, 60 farm producers, and 60 distributor-marketers were selected. Meanwhile, for the purpose of this, youth agripreneurs are those youths that own and operate small to medium scale agribusiness venture(s) in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Primary data were obtained through the use of questionnaire. The researchers employed descriptive statistics – tables, percentages, and mean to realise objectives one and two. While, objective three was achieved using probit regression analysis.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the analysis of data collected from the field survey, and the discussion of the result obtained. This was done in line with the specific objectives of the study.

### **Socio-economic attributes of the Youth Agripreneurs**

The socioeconomic attributes of the youth agripreneurs analysed and discussed included the age, gender, marital status, household size, educational status, annual income, source of start-up capital, and family agripreneurial history. Result of the analysis is presented in Table 1. Specifically, the result showed that age played a vital role on ensuring the agripreneurial business success. The result of the socio-economic characteristics of youth agripreneurs as presented in Table 1 shows that the mean of youth agripreneurs in Ebonyi State was 27 years. This implies that the youth agripreneurs are within their productive and active age. This agreed with the findings of Fakoya and Daramola [5] who reported that in Western Nigeria, agripreneurs within this age range are more innovative, motivated and adaptable to new technologies who can with wisdom cope with agricultural challenges. However, it was not in agreement with the finding by Maina [9] who reported that youths that are found within the age bracket of 31-35 years are more in agripreneurial activities.

Gender plays a significant role on agripreneurial activities of youth in Ebonyi State. Nwibo and Alimba [13] posited that gender is a significant determinant of entrepreneurship career choice in agribusiness sector. It was equally revealed that most (60%) of the youth agripreneurs were males and 40% were females. The result support the finding by Esiobu, Onubuogu, and Ibe [4] who observed that male constitute a greater proportion of gender involved in agripreneurship activities in Imo State, Nigeria. They further inferred that it could be as result of customary right of dominances the men have over women on land acquisitions and other factors of production.

Marital Status of youth agripreneurs is an important factor in agripreneurship development. From the analysis, it was observed that most (66.1%) of the youth agripreneurs were single and 30% were married. This finding was in line with the finding of Gwary *et al.* [6] that 61% of the youth agripreneurs in Adamawa State were single while 23% were married youths. Justifying further that married couple can

together generate a better start-up capital and reduce financial risk involved. The finding is also not in support of the Esiobu, *et al.*, [4] who reported that agripreneurs who are engaged in agripreneurship activities has a relatively vast family size that created bulk of the labour demand of the families.

The household size of the youth agripreneurs shows an average of 5 persons. However, 48.9% of the youth agripreneurs have household size between 1-5 persons; as 25% and 18.3% of the youths have household size of between 6-10, and 11-16 respectively. The finding supports that of Odoh, Nwibo and Odom [15] who inferred that a family size had mean of 8 persons for cassava smallholder farmers in Afikpo North L.G.A of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The implication is that large family size could be used to enhance household labour availability. The finding is also in agreement with the findings of Onubuogu *et al.*, [19] who observed that large household increase easy to access production factors such as labour, land and capital that could enhance agripreneurship development.

Education is an important factor in agripreneurship development process. According to Onmonya [17] many entrepreneurs may not be those with higher education in society, nonetheless, they are not less educated or unintelligent as many believed because of some prominent entrepreneurs. From Table 1, it was observed that about 36.7% of the youth agripreneurs in Ebonyi State, Nigeria had completed secondary school. This agreed with the finding of Iheke [8] who inferred that mean years of formal education of farmers is 13 years which implies completion of secondary school education. Esiobu *et al.*, [4] reported that agripreneurs with standard educational status is crucial for adoption of skills and innovations in youth agripreneurship development and career option. This is true because it is predicted that educational status will significantly contribute to youth agripreneurs choice in agripreneurship sector.

According to Nwibo and Alimba [13] the income level of an agripreneur plays a vital role in designing the career choice of that youth agripreneur. Therefore, finance is a dominant factor in the aspect of agripreneurship choice. From the analysis of the annual income of all youth agripreneurs, an average income of ₦77,333 was obtained. But, the individual analysis of youth agripreneurs income range revealed that 39.5% of the respondents earned between ₦ 71,000 - ₦90,000 annually, also 35% of them earned above ₦ 91,000 annually. Nwibo and Alimba [13] maintained that increase in annual income of agripreneurs will increase their quest to invest in their career choice. Again, increase in income can allow the agripreneurs to disseminate their assets more extensively across venture components and consequently, also include riskier venture such as informal investment in his/her portfolio.

The result further showed that 31.7% of the youth agripreneurs raised their start-up capital from financial institutions, while, 24.5% raised it through personal savings. It is therefore evident that youth agripreneurs to raised their start-up capital either from financial institutions or through personal savings. This synchronised with the finding of Abdul and Norhlilmaturun [1] who inferred that veritable source of start-up capital is a push factor for youth interest in agricultural entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, the percentage of youth agripreneurs who intent to acquire their start-up capital through cooperative societies, friends/relations, and government support were 17.8%, 15.6% and 10.6% respectively.

Entrepreneurship history of an intending investor has been identified as one of the greatest factor of successful youth investment in agribusiness. This was justified from 54% of the youths agripreneurs that have gained experience from their parents - father and mother; as others gained agripreneurial experiences from brother/sister (19%).

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of the Youth Agripreneurs According their Socioeconomic Attributes

Parameter	Frequency (N=180)	Percentage	Mean
Age			
15-20yrs	15	8.3	
21-25	41	22.8	
26-30	87	48.3	27
31-35	37	20.6	
Gender		6	
Male	108	60	
Female	72	40	
Marital status			
Single	119	66.1	
Married	54	30	
Divorced	4	2.2	
Widow	3	1.7	
Household size			

1-5	102	56.7	5
6-10	45	25	
11-15	33	18.3	
Above 16	0	0	
<i>Educational Stats</i>			
No formal education	20	11.1	
Primary education	34	18.9	
Secondary education	66	36.7	
OND/NCE	27	15	
HND/B. SC	33	18.3	
<i>Annual income</i>			
≤ 50,000	10	5.6	
51000-70000	36	20	
71000-90000	71	39.5	77,333
Above 90000	63	35	
<i>Sources of capital</i>			
Personal saving	44	24.5	
Friends and relations	28	15.5	
Financial institutions	57	31.7	
Government support	19	10.6	
Cooperative society	32	17.8	
<i>Family agripreneurial history</i>			
Father	49	27.2	
Mother	48	26.7	
Brother/Sister	34	18.9	
Uncle	18	10	
Relatives	31	17.2	

Source: Field Survey, 2018

### Agripreneurial Activities of Youth Agripreneurs

There are three major components of agribusiness which are generally referred to the tri-aggregates of agribusiness. The components include the farm input supply, farm production, and farm processing/distribution. But for the purpose of this study as shown in Table 2, the components are broken down into four-the farm input supply, farm production, agro-processing, and marketing/distribution.

Specific analysis of the components shows that youth agripreneurs in crop production sub-sector are mostly on rice production (26.8%), cassava production (22.9%), and yam production (20.9%). The finding implied that youth agripreneurs were more involved in crop production sub-sector of farm production such as rice production, cassava production, and yam production. This concurs with the finding of Gwary, Pur and Bawa [7] who inferred that young people in agricultural production are more involved in crop production of annual status for quick income generation. Nwibo and Okorie [14] revealed that most of entrepreneurs in South-East, Nigeria are into arable crop production. This disagreed with the finding of Wiklund [21] who deduced that agro-enterprises in Latin American and U.S were involved by marketers of apples, grapes, pears and other fruits as well as vegetables. However, the result further revealed that the youth agripreneurs were also actively engaged in livestock production. This was justified by the 29.4% of the agripreneurs that engaged in poultry production, 15.3% engaged in piggery, 14.7% in fish production, as 11.9% were in goat production. This finding is in consonance with the earlier findings of Akpantuku, Omotayo, and Oyesola [2] who inferred that youth involvement in production of livestock can be attributed to the protein need of the agripreneurs in Abia State, Nigeria.

The involvement of youths in the supply of farm inputs has been established. From the study, it was observed that the most highly supplied farm inputs are: livestock feed (20.8%), farm equipment (18%), agro-chemicals (15.6%), fertilizer (16.4%), and seedlings (14.4%).

Processing in agriculture is the transformation of produce into finished product. The result of this indicated that the youths of Ebonyi State were actively involved in the agroprocessing of cassava, rice, maize, legumes and nuts, livestock, and yam. This is in conformity with findings of Mhlanga [11] who deduced that large African companies are more dominant in West Africa with agro-processing as their most area of choice.

The marketing/distribution component of agriprenurship activities in Ebonyi State, Nigeria revealed that youths are mainly in marketing and distribution of cereals, legumes and nuts, livestock feed, palm products, cassava products and flour respectively. This justified Mbam and Nwibo [10] who reported that the principal agricultural products marketed and distributed are cassava products, flour, confectionaries, palm products, rice, and yam. Meanwhile, they also involved in non-farm activities such as artisans, trading and agro-tourism.

Table 2: Agriprenurship Activities Operated by the Youths in Ebonyi State

Agriprenurial Activities	Areas of Preference	Frequency (N=180)	Percentage	Mean Agro-preference
<b>Farm Production</b>				
<b>(a) Crop production</b>	Cassava	35	19.4	
	Yam	32	17.8	
	Rice	41	22.8	25
	Cocoyam	7	3.9	
	Vegetable	20	11.1	
	Cucumber	3	1.7	
	Watermelon	2	1.1	
	Banana	13	7.2	
<b>(b) Livestock Production</b>				
	Cattle	14	7.8	
	Piggery	27	15	
	Poultry	52	28.9	27
	Fish	26	14.4	
	Goat	21	11.7	
	Sheep	11	6.1	
	Bee keeping	9	5.0	
	Snail	17	9.4	
<b>Farm Input Supply</b>				
	Breeding stock	11	6.1	
	Cassava Products	26	14.4	
	Livestock feed	52	28.9	16
	Farm equipments	45	25	
	Seedlings	36	20	
	Agro-chemicals	45	25	
	Fertilizers	41	22.8	
<b>Agro-processing</b>				
	Cassava Products	45	25	12
	Yam products	29	16.1	
	Fish	12	6.7	
	Palm oil/kernel	34	18.9	
	Livestock products	32	17.8	
	Livestock feed	24	13.3	
	Cereals (e.g rice, maize etc)	43	23.9	
	Legumes &nuts	36	20	
	Timber product	20	11.1	
<b>Marketing/ Distribution</b>	Livestock feed	27	15	
	Flour	23	12.8	
	Cereals (e.g rice, maize etc)	39	21.7	15
	Legumes & nuts	30	16.7	
	Palm products (oil, broom etc)	25	13.9	
	Yam products	17	9.4	
	Cassava products	26	14.4	
Timber products	13	7.2		

Source: survey data, 2018

### EFFECT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH AGRIPRENEURS

Socioeconomic attributes of an individual do have strong influence in shaping his/her entrepreneurial behaviour. This study examined the various socioeconomic characteristics of the youths' agripreneurs with a view of determining the effect each of them has on shaping their agripreneurship choice in Ebonyi State Nigeria. The individual socioeconomic attributes analysed as presented in Table 3 include age, gender, marital status, household size, educational status, annual income, source of investment capital, and family agripreneurial history.

The result of the analysis showed that the coefficient of age was positive and statistically significant at 1% level of probability. This is in line with *a priori* expectation. It implied that as youth agripreneurs increases in age, the higher the tendency to make a decision for agripreneurship choice. This is in line with the finding of Emerole, Dorcas and Kelechi [3] who inferred that older farmer is considered economically and emotionally matured to be involved in agripreneurship business ventures. The result further showed that the coefficient of gender was positively signed and statistically significant at 1% level of probability. This indicates that being a male and female does not have strong influence on agripreneurial choice of youth. This finding is not *in tandem* with Emerole *et al.*, [3] who reported that women generally make highest responsibilities for agricultural productivity and increase economic supports to family needs as the male discard farming work and other associated non-agricultural activities in agribusiness to seek for white collar jobs in the cities.

The coefficient of marital status of the youth agripreneurs was positive and statistically significant at 1% level of probability. This implies that whether an agripreneur is single or not, does not affect his/her choice to invest in agripreneurship sector. This is in agreement with finding of Olatomide and Omowumi [16] who inferred that marital status would lead to an increased entrepreneurship and their career choice. It further revealed that married couples help in active participation in agripreneurship development and making a better decision on venturing in agribusiness. Similarly, the coefficient of household size was positive and statistically significant at 1% probability level. The *a priori* expectation was met as increase in household size of an agripreneur, increases his/her desire to invest in agripreneurship sector so also enhanced resources sufficient to feed the entire household. The findings corroborated the assertion of Onoja and Emodi [18] who reported household size of investors to be positively correlated with the choice to invest in agricultural business in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Education has been identified as one of the key elements in increasing agricultural production, income level, and agripreneurship preference. In this vein, the result of the data analysis showed that the coefficient of educational qualification of the youth agripreneurs was positive and significant. The finding concurs with the *a priori* expectation as educated agripreneur has good potential to make informed choice of investment. Similarly, analysis on the annual income of the youth agripreneurs showed a positive and significant effect at 1% level of probability. This however, implied that annual income had significant influence on youth agripreneur's choice of area of investment.

The result of the primary occupation bore negative sign and is statistically insignificant. It implied that primary occupation has an inverse relationship with youth choice of agripreneurship business. The result is in deviation with the *a priori* expectation of the study as it was expected that if youths will have a well defined occupation, such will help in boosting his/her quest to invest in agripreneurial activity. This is justified as income from the primary occupation will form a strong start-up capital for youth agripreneur. There are basically two major sources of capital – formal and informal. These sources of capital have effect on shaping the investment choice of youth agripreneurs. From the result, it was observed that source of capital has a positive relationship with agripreneurial choice of the youths in Ebonyi State at 1% level of significant. By implication, youth agripreneurs with varying source of capital will have greater quest to think agripreneurship and investment decision.

Meanwhile, the coefficient of family agripreneurial history was positive and significant at 5% level of probability. This implied that an individual whose parents are of agripreneurial decent tend to make a better decision on agripreneurial choice. Thus, the *a priori* was met. This finding tends to corroborate the finding of Nwibo and Alimba [13] who maintained that an entrepreneur who is from the entrepreneurial family would be influenced by family members that are entrepreneurs and hence making decision to invest resources in family business.

However, the overall fit of probit model was explained by the Pearson Goodness-of-fit which was 1148.799 and statistically significant at 1% ( $P < 0.01$ ). The probit model estimate is shown as:

$$Y = 0.217 + 0.325AG + 0.013GEN + 0.013MS + 0.811HHS + 0.180ED + 0.001AI - 0.519PO + 0.315SI + 0.004FAH + \text{et.}$$

(0.598) (0.001) (0.005) (0.007) (0.007) (0.268) (0.000) (0.409) (0.388) (0.293)

Table 3: Coefficient Estimates of Probit Regression Model of the Effect of Socio-Economic Characteristics of Youths on Agripreneurship choice.

Variable Name	Coefficients	Std Error	Z-value
Constant	0.217	0.598	2.632*
Age	0.003	0.001	2.753*
Gender	0.313	0.045	8.238
Marital Status	0.811	0.005	4.718*
Household Size	0.180	0.007	8.025*
Educational Status	0.001	0.268	2.672*
Annual Income	0.001	0.000	2.548*
Primary occupation	-0.519	-1.269	-1.269
Source of investment capital	0.315	0.388	2.812*
Family Agro-entre. History	0.004	0.293	1.913**
Pearson Goodness-of-fit = 1148.799 Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> = 0.058			

Source: Survey Field, 2018

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it was concluded that socio-economic characteristics of youth have significant effects on their agripreneurial choice in the tri-aggregates of agribusiness. The study therefore recommended for the fostering of agripreneurship education and training at all levels to ensure capacity building among the youths for diverse agro-enterprises; and encouraging the financial institution like Bank of Agriculture, Bank of Industry, etc to lend not less than 70 percent of their portfolio to youth agripreneurs as their access to loan facility will ensure increase in the size of their business as bigger business size will increase involvement in agripreneurship development.

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