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Research Article

Impact Assessment of Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition Programme on Agropreneurial Skills of National Youth Corps Members in Ile Ife, Osun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The rampaging food insecurity around the globe and particularly in Nigeria despite the availability of suitable land mass for agriculture and the teeming youthful population raised concern for the study. The possibility of exploring the opportunity provided by the National Youth Service Corps in reorientating Nigeria graduates in agropreneurship using a self-developed manual necessitated the study. The study employed pretest posttest design. Convenient sampling technique was employed in sampling 73 corps members who were serving in Ile Ife and its environs. Agropreneurship Interest Scale (AIS) a self-developed 20-item likert-type questionnaire was used for data gathering. The content validity ratio ($\alpha = 1$) and reliability coefficient ($r = 0.89$) respectively were obtained for the instrument. Analysis of data showed that participants had low interest in agropreneurship (18.33%) before the commencement of the training. Also, that the training has significant impact on the agropreneurship interest of the participants (mean learning gain of the participant = 67.89%). The study concluded that Nigeria youths particularly the Corpers can be effectively motivated in agropreneurship using appropriate manual and strategies.

Keywords: Agropreneurship, Entrepreneurship, Food insecurity, Skills, Youths

Introduction

The high rates of food insecurity witnessed around the globe is a source of concern to all the citizens around the globe. The mighty and the low, the rich and the poor, the elites and the non-elites, the educated and the non-educated irrespective of the status are feeling the

impacts of scarcity of food all over the world. The recent increase in the price of agro-based commodities can be traced to the aftermath of the lockdown in global economics as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as the world was struggling to come out of this crisis, the war around the globe particular the Russia –

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Ukraine war has significant impact on food particularly wheat production (Lin, Li, Jia, Feng, Huang, Huang & Song, 2023; Ben Hassen & El Bilali, 2022; Bar-Nahum, Finkelshtain, Ihle & Rubin, 2020) and it is expected that if the recent Israeli and Palestinian war is not quickly intervened, the far-reaching effect on global food crisis may be unbearable (Bar-Nahum, et al, 2020).

The drastic change in the climatic conditions, natural disasters in the form of flood, wildfires, tsunami and so on in some other parts of the world is also contributing immensely to the food crisis. The climate induced food insecurity is more prevalent among the developing nations in the world because of limited exposure to appropriate technology and machines that can be effectively deployed in boosting food production. Jones, Mattiacci and Braumoeller (2017) argued that the strength of the agricultural sector and domestic regime type influences the climate-induced food insecurity. And that where there is climate-induced food-insecurity there is likelihood of conflict, because they determine the degree to which countries are able to successfully address insecurity.

Jone et al (2017) estimated the effect of food insecurity and state vulnerability on the occurrence of violent uprisings in Africa for the years 1991–2011 and concluded that a two-pronged approach that both combats the impact of climate variability on food insecurity and strengthens government institutions would be a much more effective strategy for preventing violent uprisings than either policy would be in isolation. The perennial crisis and insecurity as well as military incursions to governance across Africa can be effectively curtailed if the challenges of food-insecurity are tackled headlong by ensuring that the optimum production of food for the citizens.

Nigeria with her vast land and the teeming population of youth is expected to be one of the major producers of food in the world. It will not be out of place if Nigeria is successfully feeding her populations and also be one of the major exporters of food crops including grains to other neighbouring countries but Nigeria is one of the major consumers of imported food in the world. All efforts made by the government of

the food to crash the price of food in the country and probably make the country an exporter of food has been futile.

Fawole, Illbamis and Ozkan (2015) affirmed that the prevalence of undernourishment, food inadequacy and numbers of undernourished people are on the increase in Nigeria from the year 2009 to 2014. Considering the nomenclature of Nigeria has the “poverty head-quarter” of the world will only confirm that the associated indices for food-insecurity in the country is at a very high extreme. The implication of this as identified by Fawole et al (2015) is that if the trend is not halted as quickly as possible it is a time bomb that may pose great security risks and danger to the country and African sub-region as a whole being the most populous black nation.

In order to prevent this, the immediate causes of the rising food insecurity must be identified and also massive food production strategies must be employed. It is important that appropriate measures such as consistent policy framework for agriculture, provision of infrastructures, population control through birth control, provision of storage facilities and abolition of trade barriers among others are employed to solve the food security challenges in Nigeria and by extension other African countries, but more importantly an army of educated manpower who are willing to engage in agriculture and agriculture related businesses should be raised.

The President of Nigeria President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in his inauguration speech acknowledged the challenges of food production and admitted that there is food crisis in the country. The President identified the teaming Nigeria youths as the immediate solution to this challenge and this was posited to be through massive recruitment into agricultural related ventures (Idahosa, Joda, & Asemah, 2023; Akinseye, 2023). Substantial amount was allocated to agriculture as part of the measures to lessen the effects of subsidy removal on petroleum. The removal of the subsidy is the major reason for the hyperinflation of the price of commodities in the country. The high cost of basic needs is biting very hard on the populace. As laudable as the allocation of the fund may appear, the policy may become a wasted effort

if correct manpower is not sourced and engage in massive food production in the country. If the money allocated for this programme will not be embezzled and misappropriated as it is usually done, then conscious effort must be taking in ensuring that right people who are predominantly youths are mobilized to engage in food production and other agro-based businesses.

The high rate of unemployment in the country is another timing bomb that was identified by President Olusegun Obasanjo one of the ex-presidents of the country. As reported in the Vanguard Newspaper of 24/11/2021, Nigeria universities graduate 660,000 annually. These graduate are in their early 30s or below because only those who are 30 years and below are allowed to participate in the one-year National Youth Service. These youths if well trained can be effectively engaged in food production and thus help in ameliorating the challenges associated with food-insecurity in the country. It can be observed that many of these youths engaged in illicit activities after the NYSC programme as a result of high rate of employment. Many of the graduates after completing the NYSC programme are found roaming the streets in search of non-available jobs. Many of the few that are eventually employed are underemployed and therefore cannot successfully fend for themselves. Very few find a means of leaving the country for other countries to search for greener pasture. These youths after been trained in the country at subsidized rate travels to build the economy of their host nations.

Agropreneurship is defined as an act of running agriculture in a business-like manner. It is an entrepreneurship part of agriculture. It is the ability and readiness to develop, organize and run agriculture as a business enterprise, along with any of its uncertainties in order to make a profit. It is the business and job creating aspect of agriculture. This is a process of translating agriculture from crop and animal production to using agriculture as a medium of job creation and professional entrepreneurship. Engaging the youths in profitable agropreneurship will not only provide profitable employment opportunities for them, it will also help in improving the economy of the country.

Availability of food will produce healthy and wealthy community since health is wealth. Adequate food production will lessen the pressure on Naira as a result of demand on dollars for exchange for foreign food. Also, the excess can be exported to other nations and thus increase the forex of the country. All these will help Nigeria to occupy her right position among the comity of nations.

Interest is a fundamental issue in ensuring the success of any laudable policy. While people can be motivated to participate and engage in farming, they cannot be forced or coerced. Funds allocated to farming and food production in the form of subsidizing fertilizer and production of seed and grains for planting are diverted because of lack of interest and passion. Interest determines to greater extent the attitude one will have towards a venture (Jena, 2020). It is therefore imperative that the interest of the youths who are participating in the NYSC programme be determined so as to identify their entry points for further engagements in food production and other agricultural-based businesses.

National Youths Service Corps (NYSC) programme is organized to bring together graduates from Nigeria universities together for the sole purpose of fostering unity and also for re-orientation. Many laudable activities had been inculcated into the programme. The programme can also provide the opportunity for sharpening the agropreneurial skills of the participants. Corps members as they are usually called graduated from different field of studies but they can be made to be interested in food production so as to provide the opportunity to alleviate the challenges of food-crisis that is permeating the country.

The area of interest of the youth in entrepreneurship can be investigated and proper orientation on the need to get involved in agricultural related ventures emphasized so as to enhance local production of food particularly among the graduates instead of searching for non-existing white-collar jobs. The youths can become employer of labour and manager of resources instead of becoming tools for destructions in the hand of unscrupulous and unpatriotic politicians.

Statement of the Problem

The increase in crime rates and unrests witnessed across the country is associated primarily to food-crisis in the country. The high rate of unemployment among the university graduate also militate access to food which is one of the basic needs of man among these youths. The sense of entitlements among these youths that they have paid their dues by graduating from the universities made them to engage in illicit activities like fraud, prostitution, ritual killings, corruption without blinking an eye. These youths can be readymade tools for massive food production if they are positively motivated and engaged. It is important that diagnosis assessment of the youths who are engaging in the NYSC be determined so that they can be adequately directed to engage in agriculture and other agropreneurial exercises so as to enhance food production and reduced the challenges associated with food-crisis in the country. The youths are not positively disposed to agriculture and agriculture related ventures. The study is trying to find out if the interest of the youths can be aroused through training in agropreneurship.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- (i) identify the areas of entrepreneurship interest of the corps members who are in Ile Ife and environs
- (ii) determine the impact of the training on the corps members' interest in agropreneurial ventures
- (iii) determine the association between sex and the impact of the training on the corps agropreneurial ventures

Research Questions

1. What are the areas of entrepreneurship interest identified by the corps members who are in Ile Ife and environs?
2. What is the impact of the training on agropreneurship interest of the corps members?
3. Third research question is required or we take it as hypothesis?

Hypothesis

H₀: sex has no significant effect on the impact of the training on the agropreneurship interest of the corps members

Methods

The study adopted pretest posttest design. The population of the study was all the stream C of the 2022 National Youth Service Corps members that were posted to Ile Ife and its environment in the year 2022. The sample of the study was all the 73 corps members in Ile Ife and environs that showed interest in participating in the study. The sample was selected using convenient sampling techniques. There were 14 (23.33%) participants from the South-East geopolitical zone, 6 (10.00%) from South-South, 22 (36.67%) from the South-West, 0 (0.00%) from North-East and North-West and 8 (13.33%) from North-Central geopolitical zone. Twenty-nine (53.7%) were males while 25 (46.3%) were females. Agropreneurship Interest Scale (AIS) was used for data gathering. The instrument consisted of sections A and B. section A was demographic. Information on entrepreneurship interest of the participants was also elicited in Section A of the instrument while section B was a 4-point likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and disagree. The instrument consisted 20 items that gathered information on the respondents' interest in agropreneurship. Lawshe's test was conducted to determine the content validity ratio of the instrument and CVR $\alpha = 1$ was obtained. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering it on 20 corps members who were outside the scope of the study ($r = 0.89$) was obtained when analysed using cronbach alpha. Thus, the instrument was considered reliable. The AIS was administered at the pretest and at the posttest. The data gathering process lasted for one week. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants in day 1 of the research. The pretest was administered and information on the entrepreneurship interest of the participants was elicited. The participants were taught the concept of agropreneurship, the process, advantages and

disadvantages and importance of agropreneurship to national economy development from day 2 through day 5 of the exercise. The posttest was conducted in day 6. The duration of the exercise was a week so as to control for maturation effects, testing effect and selection effect. In the course of the exercise, the total number of participants reduced to 60 as a result of attritions. The total score of the participants at

the pretest and at the posttest were determined and collated for analysis.

Results and discussion

Research Question One

What are the areas of entrepreneurship interest identified by the corps members who are in Ile Ife and environs?

Table 1. Entrepreneurship interests of the corps members

N = 60

S/N	Entrepreneurship Interest	Frequency	Percent
1	Agroallied and agriculture related ventures	11	18.33
2	Information Technology and Information Technology related ventures	22	36.67
3	Production and waste management ventures	17	28.33
4	Others	10	16.67

The entrepreneurship interests of the participants were categorized into agroallied and agriculture related ventures, Information Technology and digital technology ventures and Production and waste management ventures. Those that were not within the three categories were categorized as others. These includes block molding factory, building and establishment of laboratory, fashion designer among others. As shown in Table I, 11 (18.33%) of the participants showed interest in agroallied and agriculture related ventures, 22 (36.67%) preferred information technology related ventures, 17 (28.33%) were interested in production and waste management ventures while 10 (16.67%) showed interest in other ventures like fashion designer, laboratory for diagnostics exercise, block molding factory and so on. This showed that majority of the corps members are not interested in taking up ventures in agriculture related enterprises. In the light of this, food production will continue to suffer. This could be as a result of poor orientations of the corps members on the potential of agriculture in boosting personal and national economy.

With correct orientation, the corps member would have opted for farming because of the possibility of being the alternative source of income even after getting employed by the government.

Research Question Two

What is the impact of the training on agropreneuship interest of the corps members?

The scores of the participants in the AIS at the pretest and at the posttest were collated. Strongly agree on the AIS was score 4, agree was 3, disagree was 2 and strongly disagree was score 1. Items not responded to were score 0. The total score on the 20 items was determined by adding the scores in each of the items together for each of the participants. The same procedure was followed in scoring the posttest. The learning gain of each of the participants was determined and the mean of the learning gain by the participants was determined. The mean learning gain of the participant equals 67.89%. This implies that the training has significant impact on the participants' agropreneurship interest. Through effective training, Nigerian youths can be encouraged and motivated to engage in massive food production. The interest of the students can be positively enhanced. This will go a long way in boosting the economy of the country. The country can be salvaged from being a consuming economy to producing one at least through food production. Excess food can be exported to other nations and thus reduced the pressure on dollars by naira. The health of the populace can also be improved upon since health is wealth.

Consequences of food security as identified by Fawole (2015), Jones et al (2017) and Bowen (2021) can be drastically reduced through massive food production.

Hypothesis:

H₀: sex has no significant effect on the impact of the training on the agropreneurship interest of the corps members

Table 2. t-test analysis of effect of sex on the impact of the training on the agropreneurship interest of the corps members

Group	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t	df	p
Male	32	71.17	0.18	1.41	58	0.16
Female	28	64.13	0.21			

t-test was employed in testing this hypothesis at 95% level of significant. The hypothesis showed that sex has no significant effect on the impact of the training on the agropreneurship interest of the corps members. Both the male and females are positively disposed to agropreneurship after the training. The training is not gender-biased. The male as well as the female participants were motivated in engaging agroallied and agriculture related ventures. It can thus be inferred that the training manual used is effective and can be optimally used in motivating participants in food production so as to reduce food scarcity as well as crisis associated with it in Nigeria.

Conclusion

National Youths Corps member can be motivated to engage in agriculture and agriculture related ventures when provided with effective agropreneurship skills acquisition training. The use of appropriate manual, resource persons and other relevant logistics can aid the youth interest irrespective of their area of specialization, gender or geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

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