

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Rural Youth in Leadership Development in South Western Nigeria: Entrepreneurship Implications

D. O. Torimiro¹ and E. A. Dionco-Adetayo²

1. *Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria*

2. *Department of Management and Accounting, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria*

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ABSTRACT This study was carried out to determine the socio-economic characteristics of youth participating in leadership development activities significant to entrepreneurship in Ogun State, Southwestern Nigeria. Pre-tested and structured interview schedule was used to elicit information from 558 rural youths between the age group of 13 and 30 years that were randomly selected using multi stage and random sampling techniques. Descriptive statistics like frequency counts and percentage were used to analyze the data, while the Pearson's correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between the variables investigated. Co-efficient of determination was used to establish the percentage contribution of each variable to level of participation. The study shows that age, level of education, marital status, membership of association and income have significant and positive relationship with level of participation, while sex and level of youth on their parents had negative but significant relationship. Among the implications drawn were the utilization of their leadership potentials and the dissipation of such potentials in performing different entrepreneurial roles.

INTRODUCTION

One of the major problems confronting most third World countries since political independence is the transformation of the rural sector (Ilo, 1981; Ojowu, 1982). This has necessitated the exploration of several strategies and approaches, which have not been able to accomplish their various set goals as expected (Olatubosun, 1967; Adegbola et al., 1986; Odachebe, 1986 and Akinbote, 1996). It has been observed that the Nigeria rural areas for many decades now remained relatively backward at a time when the global economy is experiencing tremendous forward movements.

Ega et al. (1989) suggested the need to evolve strategies that would widen the opportunity of the rural population to participate in the production and consumption process and strategies that would enable progress to be made in the attack of poverty, unemployment, in equality and the associated problem, if meaningful and significant progress has to be recorded in the Nigeria's rural sector. In this

regard participation of the various stakeholders in the rural leadership is highly desirable, most especially now that leadership has become a more glaring functional index for measuring sustainable development at an organized community.

Leadership in Nigeria rural communities has been noted to be traditionally administered by the aged of old people in the rural communities; while the youth often make to feel unconcerned. This has significantly left out the input of this category of future leaders from current rural administration (Torimiro et al., 2000). These were same reasons why Gobeli (1996) considered the need to improve the condition for rural youth as a necessary approach to sustainable rural development. Of course, youth participation in rural leadership development activities may serve as a basis for improving their condition especially this time around when the focus of economic development is on the utilization of natural resources. The extent to which the youth participate in taking decisions on issues that directly affect their lives in the rural areas, the greater tendency for reduction in rural exodus and urban influx.

It has been a phenomenon that majority of the people in developing countries like Nigeria resides in rural communities. The young men and women, specifically between the ages of 13

Corresponding author: Dr. E.A. Dionco-Adetayo,
P.O.Box 1084, OAU Post Office Obafemi Awolowo
University, Ile-Ife, Osun State 220005, Nigeria
Phone: 234 - 8037180574,
E-mail: eadetayo@oauife.edu.ng.

and 30 can significantly contribute to local food security only if they want to stay on the farm or in their village and make use of the potential resources of the locality. Unfortunately, many of these rural young people are choosing instead to migrate to the city in order to make a better life for themselves an exodus that constitutes a severe threat to global food security (FAO, 1999).

Since leadership is fundamental to rural development through entrepreneurship, it may be critical to study the socio-economic characteristics of the rural youth participating in leadership development activities with a view to draw implications for rural entrepreneurship as the basis for the youth sustainability in the rural areas. Specifically, this paper identified some selected socio-economic characteristics of the rural youth; determined the level of their participation in rural leadership development activities and; implications for rural entrepreneurship were drawn. Also, relationships between the level of participation in the rural leadership development activities and some selected variables. Such as level of income, parental depending, membership of community association, age, sex, education and marital status were established.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Ogun State, one of the seven states in South-west Nigeria. The state has four divisions, namely Egba, Egbado (Yewa), Ijebu and Remo based on the extension coverage as well as political and administrative zoning. Rural youths between 13 years and 30 years were purposively selected for the study, since expected age of entry into secondary education or vocational apprenticeship training in Nigeria is 13 years. That is, the age of entry into youth, while someone above 30 years is not expected to participate in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). This program is intended for graduates from Universities or Polytechnics in Nigeria (Torimiro et al, 2000). This age group was determined in each of the sampled communities through estimated population, which was based on 32% of the total population of each community, since the National Population Census could not provide the actual population figures for that age category.

Multi-stage random sampling technique through the use of table of random numbers was used to select the local government areas (LGAs),

the rural communities covered by the study and the rural youths interviewed from the four divisions. Among the estimated population of the age group between 13 and 30 years in each of the 14 rural communities selected, proportionate sample of 10% was randomly selected to obtain a sample of 558 respondents for the study.

Structure interview schedule was designed and used to elicit information on some selected socio-economic characteristics of youth participating in leadership development activities from the respondents. Descriptive statistical tools like frequency counts and percentage were used to analyze the data. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to establish the relationships between the level participation of youth in rural leadership development activities and some selected variables, such as level of income, parental dependency, membership of community association and so on.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Selected Socio-economic Characteristics of the Rural Youth

Majority (72.58%) of the respondents were in the age group of 13 and 24 years old, while others, 27.42 per cent were between the age group of 25 and 30 years old. The former almost fell into the age category of youth as operationally defined by the United Nations, that is, young men and women between the ages of 15 and 24 (Seiders, 1996). Also, 55.56 percent of the respondents were males and 44.44 percent were females. This agrees with the State's 1991 final population results as reported by Okub Oyejo (1991), which indicated that there are more males (50.04%) than females (49.96%).

It was also revealed that 59.14 percent of the respondents could speak their local dialect, 53.94 percent could speak Yoruba Language, while very small percentage (8.96%) could speak English Language very eloquently. This is an indication that majority of them may not be freely disposed to any activity that is not conducted in either their local dialect or Yoruba Language. 33.69 percent had secondary education, 31.90 percent did not complete their secondary education, 18.82 percent had primary education and 4.30 percent had post secondary education. However, 1.08 percent specifically had University education, while 5.56 percent had no formal education at all.

Table 1: Distribution of rural youth by parental dependency

<i>Dependency variable</i>	<i>Not of all 0</i>	<i>Rarely 1</i>	<i>Occasionally 2</i>	<i>Always 3</i>
Accommodation	218 (39.07)	13 (2.33)	18 (3.23)	309 (55.38)
Feeding	226 (40.50)	27 (4.84)	32 (5.73)	261 (46.77)
Clothing	252 (45.16)	16 (2.87)	29 (5.20)	261 (46.77)

Source: Filed Survey: 2002

Note: percentages are in parentheses.

Multiple response were recorded

This is an indication that majority of the respondents were fairly literates, that is, they could read and write.

A high percentage (68%) of the respondents were not yet married, while those who have married were just 29.57 percent, 1.08 percent were living separately from their spouse as husband and wife; while others, 0.36 percent were divorcees. Concerning the extent to which they depend on their parents for accommodation, feeding and clothing. Results in Table 1 show that 55.38 percent always depend on their parents for accommodation, 46.77 percent for feeding and 46.77 percent for clothing; while 39.07 percent, 40.50 percent and 45.16 percent did not depend on their parents for accommodation, feeding and clothing respectively. This further indicates that majority of the rural youth could still not stand on their own without relying on their parents in one way or the other. This shows that their parents will have a great influence on them. Findings show that all the respondents are based in the rural areas. 33.51 percent were unemployed, 18.82 percent were students, 15.23 percent were technicians, 13.98 percent were farmers, 13.26 percent were traders, 3.76 percent were civil servants and 1.43 percent was drivers. This shows that majority (52.33%) of the respondents were not working, that is, they were either students category or unemployed group. Moreso, very low percentages were working with the government establishments, which implied that majority were self-employed. The unemployed situation of this rural youth may constitute an impending factor to their participation in any activity that may require their financial contribution.

The study also revealed that 47.74 percent of the respondents realized less than Twenty Thousand Naira (N20,000.00) per annum. Naira is the local currency of the country. About 26.69 percent realized between N20,000.00 and N46,000.00 per annum; 12.03 percents realized

between N41,000.00 and N60,000.00 per annum; 7.52 percent realized between N61,000.00 and N80,000.00 per annum; 2.26 percent realized between N81,000.00 and N100,000.00 per annum and; 3.76 percent realized more than N100,000.00 per annum. A strong indication that majority of the employed youth served a very low and meager income from their occupation per annum.

The respondents were asked to mention the profession or trade they intend practicing mostly for livelihood and it was revealed that a total of 36 careers mentioned by the youths. Among which 21.68 percent aspired to become trading careerists, followed by tailoring (8.24%), law (7.35%), medicine (6.81%) and hairdressing (6.27%). This shows that majority of the youths preferred apprenticeship/vocational careers that are self-sustenance. This implies that if they are financially supported they have the tendency to stay in the rural community and establish the career of their choice.

It was also revealed that 55.20 percent belonged to rural community association, while 44.80 percent indicated non-membership of such association. Among those that belonged to rural community association, majority (65.91%) belonged to religious group, among which 50.65 percent were ordinary members, 8.44 percent were committee members and 6.82 percent were executive members. 38.96 percent belonged to social clubs with 26.95 percent as ordinary members, 4.22 percent committee members and 7.79 percent as executive members. 36.04 percent belonged to cooperative society with 22.40 percent ordinary members, 9.42 percent committee members and 4.22 percent executive members. Others, 15.91 percent belonged to political group, 14.29 percent belonged to community development association, 12.66 percent belonged to village council and 9.09 percent belonged to philanthropic organization. These are some of the activities, which the rural youth can participate in rural leadership development.

Participation in Rural Leadership Development Activities (RLDAs)

The results in Table 2 show that majority range from 55.02 percent to 82.44 percent did not participate in one activity or the other while between 6.09 percent and 21.68 percent participated little in one activity or the other. This is an indication that the rural youth did not participate much in rural leadership development activities, which is a very dangerous signal to the future continuity in rural leadership administration. This situation further implies that the potentials of age group between 13 and 30 years old are not fully tapped in the rural communities.

However, majority of the parents believed that

there is limit to which the youth can participate in leadership development activities in the rural areas. Although, they agreed that the youth could participate in activities that are youth – oriented, such as development works that require physical energy. But in the areas of governance and traditional affairs, youth may require proper initiation before they can participate. Some of the rural leadership development activities were: decision making process, resource(s) donation, planning of rural programs and others.

Relationship Between Level of Participation and Selected Socio-economic Characteristics

The findings from Table 3 show that the following characteristics of youth had positive

Table 2: Distribution of rural youth by their participation in leadership development activities

S.No. Activities	No participation	Little participation	Moderate participation	Much participation
1. Decision making process	398(71.33)	90(16.13)	29(5.20)	41(7.35)
2. Resources (s) donation	307(55.01)	121(212.68)	65(11.65)	65(11.35)
3. Planning of rural programme	402(72.04)	72(12.90)	46(8.24)	38(6.81)
4. Execution of rural programme	416(74.55)	63(11.29)	44(7.89)	35(6.27)
5. Supervision of rural programme	428(76.70)	59(10.57)	34(6.09)	37(6.63)
6. Monitoring of rural programme	422(75.62)	66(11.83)	32(5.73)	38(6.81)
7. Officership of development association	459(82.26)	46(78.24)	23(4.12)	30(5.37)
8. Serving in rural government committee	454(81.36)	34(6.09)	27(4.12)	29(5.37)
9. Representing community outside	441(79.03)	53(9.50)	30(5.38)	34(6.09)
10. Helping community in making contact	438(78.49)	53(9.50)	33(5.91)	34(6.09)
11. Advising the community	410(73.48)	72(12.90)	36(7.35)	40(7.35)
12. Settlement of dispute	412(73.84)	57(10.22)	43(7.21)	46(8.24)
13. Headship of rural institution	460(82.44)	45(8.06)	26(4.66)	27(4.84)

Source: Field Survey, 2002

Note: Percentages are in parentheses. Multiple response were recorded

Table 3: Correlation analysis showing linear relationship between the level of participation of the youth in rural leadership development activities and some selected personal and socio-economic characteristics

Characteristics (X – variables)	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	Coefficient of determination (r ²)
Age	0.1479*	0.0219
Sex	-0.2052*	0.0421
Educational level	0.6873*	0.4724
Marital status	0.4967*	0.2467
Parental dependency	-0.2239*	0.0501
Membership of association	0.2292*	0.0525
Income	0.6292*	0.3959

Source:

Calculated from the field Survey, 2002

Number of independent variables

= 12

Number of respondents

= 558

Degree of freedom

= 556

Level of significance

= 0.05

Critical values of “r” at (0.05) (556)

= 0.088

*

= Significant at 0.05 level

and significant relationship with the level of participation in rural leadership development activities: age ($r = 0.1479$), level of education ($r = 0.6873$), marital status ($r = 0.4967$), membership of association ($r = 0.2292$) and income ($r = 0.6292$). Although none of the studies reviewed has empirically considered the relationship between the variables among the rural youth, but reasons for some of the findings can still be deduced based on the general studies of participation. Bevelas et al. (1965) for example have identified age, sex and education as part of determinants to the rate of participation as well as subsequent nominations as leaders. Also, Jibowo (1992) noted that education might allow some members to participate more than others when it is relevant to the topic under consideration. However, Ojolo (1995) empirically found that the level of education and annual income were positively and significantly related to organizational participation in rural women cooperatives' activities in Osun State of Nigeria.

Ekong and Olojede (1980) have also identified some personal characteristics, which have equally been found to relate to participation as follows: sex, age, level of education, occupational status and length of residence in community.

Co-efficient of determination (r^2) as shown in Table 4 further explained the percentage contribution of each variable to the level of participation as follows: age (2.1%), level of education (47.24%), marital status (24.67%), membership of association (5.25%) and income (39.59). This implies that level of education, income and marital status are fairly contributive to youth participation in rural leadership development activities, while the contributions of others can be considered to be relatively low.

The study further revealed that sex ($r = -0.2052$) and parental dependency ($r = -0.2239$) had negative and significant correlation with the level of youth participation in rural leadership development activities, although at a very low percentages of contributions that is, 4.21 percent and 5.01 percent respectively. This further indicates that sex and the extent to which the youth are dependent on their parents for clothing; food and shelter will constitute an impending factor to their participation.

CONCLUSION

Rural entrepreneurship, according to Oludimu and Williams (1996) can be viewed in present day

Nigeria as the purposeful activity of an individual or group of associated persons, initiating, promoting and maintaining business activity for the production of wealth and distribution of goods and services with peculiarly motive, of such benefit in given social and political conditions and enjoying appreciable measure of freedom of choice and decision to run the business units. This view is not in avariance with the import of leadership development activities in which the rural youth are expected to participate. The youth socio-economic variables correlated with participation on potential with a lot of implications for successful entrepreneurship in the rural areas. Married young people with good educational level, membership of social associations and high level of income will highly participate in rural governance and other activities that will promote rural entrepreneurship. This will impel their contributions to issues of entrepreneurial concerns, and most importantly promote their sense of initiative, organization, management and control of affairs relating to their career aspirations.

The youth will constitute a generating force and active human resource for rural economic development. They will serve as multi-functional personalities discharging different roles such as capitalist, investors, promoters, coordinators, managers, administrators, risk bearers, uncertainty undertakers, innovators, decision makers and organizers.

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