Int. j. adv. multidisc. res. stud. 2024; 4(6):260-264

Received: 25-09-2024
Accepted: 05-11-2024

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Entrepreneurship Skills needed by Youths for Entry into Oil Palm Production for Self-Employment and Job Creation in Delta State, Nigeria

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2024.4.6.3427

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Abstract

This study focused on entrepreneurship skills needed by youths for entry into oil palm production in Delta State. Three research questions and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study was one thousand five hundred(1500) youth farmers located in the three (3) senatorial districts in Delta State. The study adopted the use of descriptive survey method. Data was analyzed using frequency distribution, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that more males are involved in oil palm production than females. Also, that the combination of agricultural expertise, business skills, adaptability, and networking can empower youths in Delta State, Nigeria, to engage in oil palm production for self-employment, even while balancing other jobs. Findings also showed that combination of processing knowledge, operational skills, quality control, safety measures, resource management, and environmental considerations are needed. Findings from the research revealed that youth entrepreneurs in oil palm production have strong understanding of agronomy, including soil management, pest control and crop maintenance. The study recommended that Delta State youths can benefit from entrepreneurial education through formal programs and vocational trainings, focusing on oil palm production and self-employment. Special loan schemes and financial literacy training was also recommended.

Keywords: Youths, Entrepreneurship, Skills, Oil Palm Production, Self-Employment, Job Creation

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is the process of identifying areas of need in one's environment and gathering resources to meet those needs in an innovative way, which includes des acquiring the knowledge, skills, ideas, and managerial abilitie required for personal self-sufficiency and self-reliance (Kpera, Dimah, & Meiange, 2008).

One of the objectives of teaching agricultural science in schools is to enable the youths take up the practice of agriculture especially the cultivation of crops for food and production of raw materials for allied agro-industries; with the addition of value along the chain of production (Egun, 2021). More so, the youths are expected to reduce dredging in the traditional cultivation of crops through the use of and technology; for the production of crops especially tree crops like oil palm.

Pindado and Sanchez (2017) [7] has observed that the transfer of food production activities to more energetic young people is gaining wide attention globally. This wide acceptance can be encouraged through agricultural entrepreneurship. Agricultural entrepreneurship according to Mukembo and Edwards (2016) is simply the practice of applying entrepreneurship skills and mindset to create, manage and grow successful and sustainable agricultural business, with the aim of generating profits and improving livelihoods.

An agri-preneur is self-employed.Self-employment in Delta State had become a norm as the conventional Government service of employment has been faced with unprecedented constraints. Self-employment has been defined from many prospective authors; (Karim 2012; Mahjaben, 2022; Oyekunle, 2011; Umar and Abubakar 2015) have concluded that self-employment centers on an individual the advantages of working for self income,ability to create wealth and working without supervision. They all agree that self-employment is a process of working for self, managing prevailing situations and accepting responsibilities as they emerge based on conceived and executed featupres and risk bearing. However, these actions and activities entail skillful and critical thinking to goals resulting usually from trains and experience.

As noted by Aphunu and Atoma (2010) [2], Nigeria's farming population is graying, making it unrealistic to rely on this aging demographic to meet the food demands of a rapidly growing population; thereby necessitating the involvement of a new generation in agriculture to boost productivity and ensure food security.

The oil palm tree (Elaeis guineensis) is a valuable plant that has many useful parts, including its fruits, leaves, branches, trunk, and roots. One way to earn money from oil palm is by turning the palm fruits and other useful parts into products like palm oil, palm wine, palm kernel cake, soap, detergent, margarine, brooms, and snacks. Because of this, oil palm production is a good business that provides a way to make a living for families in rural areas and others with the right skills. However, it seems to be mostly made up of older people who are between 65 and 70 years old. Young people are not involved in the oil palm business because they didn't receive enough training in school about it. This lack of knowledge has led to their absence in oil palm production. Therefore, the research work aimed at finding out the entrepreneurship skills needed by youths for entry into oil production.

Purpose of the study/Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to find out why youths are not engaged in oil palm production on the basis of self-employment in Delta state.

In view of the above purpose, there was need to find answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the socio-economic characteristics youths' involved in oil palm production for self-employment in Delta State?
2. What are the entrepreneurship skills needed by the youths to be involved in oil palm production activities for self-employment in Delta State?
3. What are the self-employment perceptions of youths' involvement in oil palm production in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

H01: There is no significant difference between male youth farmers and female youth farmers involved in oil palm production in Delta State,

H02: There is no significant difference between educated youth farmers and uneducated youth farmers involved in oil palm production in Delta state.

Methodology

This study adopted the use of descriptive survey method of ex-post facto design which according to Nworgu (2006), is a type of research methodology where data is collected and analyzed from a sample of respondents or items that are representative of the complete population. The design was viewed as adequate, as it helped in obtaining the opinions of respondents on youth farmers involvement in oil palm production for self employment in Delta State.

The study was conducted in Delta state, which is located in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of 1500 youth farmers,150 youth served as sample with 50 selected from each senatorial district using random sampling technique.

A 26 item questionnaire on entrepreneurship skills for entry into oil palm production (ESNYEOPPQ) developed from literature served as instrument for collecting data. The instrument had a rating scale of Highly required(HR), Required (R), Not required (NR), and Slightly required (SR) with attending values of 4 point Likert scale 4, 3, 2 and 1. The instrument was validated on face and content value by lecturers in Agricultural business, Vocational Education and Guidance and Counseling departments in Delta State University.

The reliability index of 0.80 was obtained. Three research assistants who were tutored were involved in study for distribution and retrieving of the questionnaires. All questionnaires were retrieved, given 150 copies for the study.

Analysis of data was by mean and standard deviation to answer the questions. Therefore,2.50 was set as decision rule. Mean scores 2.50 and above were accepted as not needed by respondents, while mean scores below 2.50 were accepted as needed. Chi-square and used to test null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results of the study are presented in tables 1-3.

Research Question 1: What are the socio-economic characteristics of youths' involved in oil palm production for self-employment in Delta State?

Table 1: Distribution showing the socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
Age			
20-25	10	6.6	
26-30	61	40.7	
31-35	79	52.7	30.5
Sex			
Male	85	56.7	
Female	65	43.3	
Marital status			
Single	73	48.7	
Married	77	51.3	
Educational level			
Secondary Education	26	17.3	
Tertiary Education	124	82.7	
Number of Dependents			
1-5	121	80.7	3.6
5-10	29	19.3	
Occupation			
Farming with other Job	126	84.0	
Farming alone	24	16.0	
Number of Years spent on oil palm production			
1-5	85	56.7	5.8
5-10	65	43.3	
Number of labourers			
1-5	57	38.0	6.0
5-10	93	62.0	
Sources of Capital			
Personal Savings	59	39.3	
Salary earnings	38	25.3	
Co-operatives	33	22.0	
Bank loans	15	10.0	
Relatives/friends	5	3.3	
Association/group			
Yes	68	45.3	
No	82	54.7	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows the demographic status of the respondents. It shows that Majority of the respondents were between the ages 31 and 35 years, 56.7% were males, indicating that males are more than females involved. 51.3% married, 82.7% of the respondents were literate with tertiary education, 80.7% had 1-5 number of dependents, 84.0% were farming with other Job, 56.7% had 1-5 years of experience. 62.0% had 5-10 number of labourers, 39.3% used personal savings as source of capital, 54.7% were not members of association or group.

Research Question 2: What are the entrepreneurship skills needed by the youths to be involved in oil palm production activities for self-employment in Delta State?

Table 2: Distribution showing the entrepreneurship skills needed by youths to be involved in oil palm production for self-employment

S. No	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Ability to select site	2.43	0.717	Needed
2	Ability to select and apply appropriate seed treatment	2.41	0.657	Needed
3	Skill in managing climate related conditions	2.31	0.785	Needed
4	Ability to analyze and interprete soil test results	2.42	0.667	Needed
5	Ability to identify and select high yielding and disease resistant varieties	2.32	0.789	Needed
6	Ability to prepare and plant oil palm seedlings	2.43	0.628	Needed
7	Irrigation management	2.45	0.728	Needed
8	Fertilizer management	2.23	0.743	Needed
9	Ability to develop integrated weed management plans	2.53	0.746	Not needed
10	Ability to harvest of palm fruits	2.43	0.717	Needed
11	Ability to inspect and evaluate fruit quality	2.43	0.628	Needed
12	Ability to sterilize of bunches	2.32	0.789	Needed
13	Ability to thresh bunches to free the palm fruits	2.27	0.766	Needed
14	Ability to mash the fruits	2.54	0.748	Not needed
15	Ability to press out the crude palm oil	2.23	0.725	Needed
16	Ability to boil palm fruits	2.41	0.761	Needed
17	Ability to extract of crude oil	2.47	0.711	Needed
18	Ability to monitor and control oil moisture content	2.37	0.763	Needed
19	Ability to clarify the drying of oil	2.41	0.657	Needed
20	Ability to remove the debris	2.23	0.743	Needed
21	Ability to store the oil	2.35	0.828	Needed
22	Ability to recovery kernel from fibre	2.13	0.877	Needed
23	Ability to package the product	2.31	0.785	Needed
24	Ability to fry the kernels	2.29	0.885	Needed
25	Ability to Crystallize and filter the oil	2.16	0.905	Needed
26	Ability to market the products	2.50	0.784	Not needed

Source: Field survey, 2023

This table displays the mean scores for youths' entrepreneurship skills in oil palm production in Delta State. Findings revealed that two of the twenty-six items provided indicated that some abilities are not required (ability to build integrated weed control plans with a mean score of 2.53 and capacity to mash fruits with a mean score of 2.54). According to this table, young farmers require fieldwork training as well as excellent practical experience training.

Research Question 3: What are the self-employment perceptions of youths' involvement in oil palm production in Delta State?

Table 3: Distribution showing the self-employment perception of youths in oil palm production

S. No	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Oil palm production activities are very lucrative and highly profitable	3.64	0.522	Agreed
2	Oil palm **production** activities provide employment opportunities	3.22	0.810	Agreed
3	Oil palm fruit processing activities provide a lot of raw materials to the industry	3.14	1.023	Agreed
4	Involvement in oil palm activities can improve standard of living of the youths	3.03	1.049	Agreed
5	Oil palm production enhance growth and development in rural areas	3.11	0.899	Agreed
6	Involvement in oil palm production is a way of reducing poverty	3.21	0.887	Agreed
7	My family encourage my involvement in oil palm fruit production	2.79	1.032	Agreed
8	My friends encourage my involvement in oil palm production activities	3.14	1.017	Agreed
9	The government encourages my involvement in oil palm production activities	2.97	0.893	Agreed
10	Oil palm processing activities require expensive equipment and machinery	3.09	1.083	Agreed
11	Oil palm production activities is labour intensive	3.11	0.863	Agreed
12	A lot of hazards are associated with oil palm production activities	2.99	1.176	Agreed
13	Poor pricing of oil palm products is a major challenge to youth involvement	3.04	1.003	Agreed
14	People in this community look down on youths involved in oil palm production	3.35	0.942	Agreed
15	Farming is a complex business which demands accurate records and careful financial management	3.50	0.721	Agreed

Source: Field survey, 2023

Results from Table 3 reveals that all fifteen (15) items have mean score above 2.50. This indicates that the youths cherish employment in the oil palm industry and are prepared to go into it on the basis of self-employment.

Test of hypotheses

Table 4: Chi-square analysis showing the difference between the skill acquisition of male youth farmers and female youth farmers in Delta State

Variable	χ^2	Df	p	Decision
Male youth famers	10.461.	1	0.001	Significant
Female youth farmers	9.305.	1	0.002	Significant

*Significant $p < 0.05$

Source: Field survey, 2023

Result in Table 4 reveals that since both p-values of both male and female youth farmers are less than 0.05 (0.001 and 0.002), null hypotheses is rejected indicating a significant difference between both variables.

Table 5: Chi-square analysis showing the differences between educated youth farmers and uneducated youth farmers

Variable	χ^2	Df	p	Decision
Educated farmers	0.054	1	0.816	Not significant
Uneducated youth farmers	2.009	1	0.156	Not significant

*Significant $p < 0.05$
Source: Field survey, 2023

Results from Table 7 shows that for educated youth farmers, the high p-value (0.816) suggests no significant difference between the variables while for uneducated youth farmers, the p-value is moderate (0.156) also suggests no significant difference between the variables tested. Therefore, null hypotheses is accepted indicating that there is no significant difference between educated youth farmers and uneducated youth farmers.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from research question one showed that majority (52.7%) were between the ages 31 and 35 years, 56.7% were males, 51.3% married, 82.7% of the respondents were literate with tertiary education, 80.7% had 1-5 number of dependents, 84.0% were farming with other Job, 56.7% had 1-5 years of experience. 62.0% had 5-10 number of labourers, 39.3% used personal savings as source of capital, 54.7% were not members of association or group. The implication of this is that more males were involved in oil palm production in the area. This is in line with Oladeji and Oyesola (2000) that male farmers have access to land than their female counterparts and they have more energy to do many farm operations. It also implies that most of the respondents in the study area were literate which is important in adoption of innovation, because it helps in quick understanding of innovation technical-know-how as in the case of oil palm production. This is supported by Oluyole *et al*. (2007) [9], who reported that high literacy level would predispose farmers to adopt and utilize improved farm practices. This indicates also that the combination of agricultural expertise, business skills, adaptability, and networking can empower youths in Delta State, Nigeria, to engage in oil palm production for self-employment, even while balancing other jobs.

The findings from research question two also revealed that youth farmers need training in field work and effective training in practical experience. According to Duran-Sanchez *et al*. (2019) [10], this emphasized on the role of entrepreneurship skills in the profitability and growth of palm oil ventures.

The findings from research question three showed that the oil palm industry creates jobs at various stages, from planting, harvesting to processing and marketing. This helps in reducing youth unemployment rates in many regions. Farming is a complex business which demands accurate records and careful financial management, people in this community look down on youths involved in oil palm production. This is an indication that there is ample evidence to support its economic viability and potential for youth empowerment. Changing these perceptions often involves a combination of education, policy support, and showcasing success stories within the industry.

The results from Table 6 shows that since both p-values of both male and female youth farmers are less than 0.05 (0.001 and 0.002), null hypotheses is rejected indicating a significant difference between both variables. Results from Table 7 shows that for educated youth farmers, the high p-value (0.816) suggests no significant difference between the variables while for uneducated youth farmers, the p-value is moderate(0.156) also suggests no significant difference between the variables tested. Therefore, null hypotheses is accepted indicating that there is no significant difference between educated youth farmers and uneducated youth farmers.

Conclusion and Recomendation

The study has examined the needed entrepreneurial skills which new entrants into oil palm production should possess. Youth perception of oil palm production as a business and possible constraints or challenges which exist in the business. It is suggested that the constraints be addressed by government and where possible industries that are interested in palm oil as raw materials.

The recommendations are put forward based on the findings of this study. That collaboration among educational institutions, government agencies, and industry stakeholders is necessary to promote entrepreneurial education among Delta State youth through formal education programs and vocational training, with a concentration on oil palm production and self-employment skills. Also, youths should obtain practical technical training in oil palm production, including cultivation, harvesting, processing, and marketing, to gain necessary knowledge.

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