

# **AGRICULTURAL EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME ON THE LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN ODEDA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Institutional students can be encouraged in agricultural activities by providing opportunities such as agricultural empowerment programmes after graduate. The study focuses on agricultural empowerment programme on the livelihood activities of graduate students in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. The study objectives are to: examine the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents; identify benefits experienced by rural youths from participating in the Agricultural Empowerment Programme; perceived effects of Agricultural Empowerment Programme on the livelihood's activities of the respondents and barriers preventing respondents from participating in agricultural empowerment programmes in the study area. The research was conducted in Ogun State, Nigeria, using questionnaires to gather information from one hundred and twenty (120) beneficiaries of the Graduate Youth Empowerment Programme (GYEP) at Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority. Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that the average age of the beneficiaries was 28years. The empowerment programme had a positive impact on their income status ( $\bar{x}$ : 4:19), while and 99.2% of the respondents observed an increase in their agricultural productivity since joining the programme and climate change ( $\bar{x}$ : 1.74) has discouraged youth from engaging in agricultural activities. The study concludes that the Agricultural Empowerment Programme has demonstrated potential rise in enhancing the skills and economic conditions of rural youths and recommends that creating comprehensive training programmes to establish financial support mechanisms is essential for facilitating youth involvement in agriculture.

**Keywords:** Effect, Agriculture, Empowerment, Programme, Youth, and Livelihood

## **Introduction**

Agriculture is not merely the cultivation of crops and the rearing of animals; it plays a vital role in the global economy, providing employment and improving the livelihood of a significant portion of the population (Fischer, 2019; Bilal & Jaghdani, 2024). Various governments in Nigeria have supported youth with different initiative such as Graduate Youth Empowerment Programme (GYEP), N-Power Agro, Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP), and Ogun-Osun River Basin

Agricultural Empowerment Programme have been launched to engage youths in agribusiness, enhance skill acquisition, and promote sustainable livelihoods (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, FMARD, 2019). However, the effectiveness of these empowerment initiatives varies across regions due to differences in implementation strategies, socio-economic conditions, and policy environments. There is therefore a need to assess how these programmes have impacted the livelihoods of rural youth, particularly in terms of skill development, income generation, and access to resources. Such evaluations are crucial in informing policy and refining programme designs to meet the specific needs of young people in agriculture (FAO, 2021). Research has shown that agricultural empowerment programmes can have significant positive effects on rural communities, particularly among graduate youths. For instance, studies have indicated that such agricultural programmes can lead to increased productivity, enhanced income levels, and improved food security in the society (Adebayo *et al.*, 2019; Ojo & Adebayo, 2020). To comprehend the magnitude of the unemployment crisis in Nigeria, it's important to understand that the country has experienced fluctuating unemployment rates over the years. The unemployment rate for Q1 2024 was 5.3%, an increase from the 5.0% recorded in Q3 2023. The unemployment rate among males was 4.3% and 6.2% among females (NBS, 2024). The World Bank notes that unemployment is a significant driver of income inequality, with adverse effects on poverty levels (World Bank, 2020). As good as empowerment programmes were, there are concerns about the sustainability of their impact (Olawale and Adebayo, 2020). Social intervention programmes need to be seamlessly integrated into broader economic policies. Unemployment is a pressing socio-economic challenge that plagues countries in the developing world, and Nigeria is no exception. In Nigeria, the problem of unemployment has far-reaching consequences, one of the most pronounced being its role in perpetuating poverty. The inability of young people to find gainful employment not only hinders their personal development but also undermines the nation's potential to leverage the demographic dividend. This phenomenon is widely recognised as a ticking time bomb that could worsen poverty if not effectively addressed (Adebayo, 2013). The study took cognisance of the impact of Agricultural empowerment on the livelihood of rural youth anchored by the Ogun-Osun River Basin.

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents participating in the study;
2. examine the benefit of the agricultural empowerment programme on the livelihoods of participating respondents in the study;
3. analyse the perceived effect of the agricultural empowerment programme on the livelihood of respondents in the study area.
4. identify the barriers preventing youth participation in the Ogun-Osun River Basin agricultural empowerment programme.

## **Hypothesis of the study**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the perceived effect of the agricultural empowerment programme on the livelihood of the respondents.

## **Methodology**

### **The Study Area**

Odeda Local Government Area is located on the outskirts of Abeokuta, an ancient city in the southwestern part of Nigeria, extending from longitudes 3.3899E to 3.47950E and latitudes 7.1745N to 7.2300N. Abeokuta is located in Ogun State, Southwestern Nigeria. The study area is characterised by a tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. The wet season is associated with the prevalence of the moist maritime southwesterly monsoon from the Atlantic Ocean, while the dry season is caused by the continental northeasterly Harmattan winds from the Sahara Desert. The area is located within a region characterised by a bimodal rainfall pattern (commencing in March; plentiful in July and September, with a short dry spell in August). The long dry season extends from November to March. Annual rainfall ranges between 1400 and 1500 mm in Abeokuta and environs. The region is characterised by relatively high temperatures, with a mean annual air temperature being about 30 °C. The greatest temperature variation is experienced in July (25.7 °C) and in February (30.2 °C). Humidity is lowest (37%–54%) at the peak of the dry season in February and highest at the peak of the rainy season between June and September (78%–85%). The predominant ethnic group in the area is the Yoruba, alongside a presence of Hausa and Igbo traders. Within the LGA, there exist 25 semi-urban settlements and 860 villages and hamlets, with notable local markets such as Kila (Ilugun) and Olodo, frequented by traders from the Ibadan and Abeokuta regions (OGADEC, 2010). The foodstuffs traded in these markets encompass gari, yam, cocoyam, sweet potato, maize, cassava, various vegetables, pepper, tomatoes, and cowpea, while the principal livestock includes goats, pigs, poultry, sheep, and cattle (OGADEC, 2010)

### **Sampling Procedure**

A two-stage sampling technique was employed to select rural youth. From the four divisions in Ogun State, the Egba division was chosen for the initial stage of the study. The subsequent stage involved a purposive selection of the Odeda Local Government Area, owing to its close proximity to Ogun-Osun River Basin Authority that is within the study area. In the third stage, list of participants was compiled for Agricultural Empowerment Programme that is cut across the entire villages or communities were selected from the previously identified local government area. Ultimately, all the participants were grouped into five and a simple random sampling technique was utilised to select thirty (30) from each group, culminating in the administration of one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires to the respondents. Out of the one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires distributed, thirty (30) were not well filled or completed, while one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were collected and utilised for further analysis as well as the sample size for the study.

### **Analytical techniques**

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics, including frequency tables, percentages, and means. Chi-square was used to test the relationship

between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the perceived effect of the agricultural empowerment programme on the livelihood of the respondents.

## **Results and Discussion**

The mean age was reported as 28 years, suggesting that all the respondents were youths who were involved in the agricultural programme. About 83.3% of the respondents were single, while 16.7% were married. The high percentage of single individuals indicates a larger pool of graduate youth who are potentially more open to engage in agricultural empowerment programmes and adopting new agricultural practices, which is critical for fostering agricultural development (Adeola *et al.*, 2020). Findings revealed that all (100%) were knowledgeable and have completed tertiary education. This high level of education suggests that the participants are likely equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to benefit from the programme. Results also showed that the majority of respondents were Christians (74.2%), followed by Muslims (25.8%). This implies that the programme is not religiously biased. The average household size was 4 persons. Smaller household sizes may facilitate more focused investment in agricultural activities per capita, potentially leading to better economic outcomes for family members involved in farming (Ogun State Government, 2021). Findings revealed that majority (66.7%) of the respondents were into farming activities while artisan (11.7%) and trading (21.7%) respectively. The diverse occupational background indicates a multifaceted approach to livelihood among respondents sampled as many were used to agricultural activities and operations. It suggests that while some are directly involved in agriculture, others may support agricultural activities through various roles (Adeola *et al.*, 2020). The average monthly income of respondents was ₦165,345.13; this implies that the occupation is lucrative enough to sustain their livelihood activities.

**Table 1: Socio Economic characteristics of the respondents in the study area (n=120)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Mean <math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>S.D</b>
<b>Age (Years)</b>				
18 – 23	20	16.7		
24 – 29	80	66.7	28.12	5.121
30 – 35	14	11.7		
36 – 41	6	5.0		
<b>Marital status</b>				
Single	100	83.3		
Married	20	16.7		
<b>Educational level</b>				
Tertiary education	120	100		
<b>Religion</b>				
Christianity	89	74.2		
Islam	31	25.8		
<b>Household size</b>				
1 – 5	40	33.3	4 persons	2.236
6 – 10	32	26.7		
11 – 15	36	30.0		
Above 15	12	10.0		
<b>Occupation</b>				
Farming	80	66.7		
Artisan	14	11.7		
Trading	26	21.7		
<b>Monthly income (₦000)</b>				
<100	43	35.8		
100 -199	44	36.7	165,345.13	94562.541
200 – 299	28	23.3		
300 - 399	4	3.3		

Source: Field survey, 2025

### **Benefits of the Agricultural Empowerment Programme to Respondent Livelihood Activities in the study area.**

Result in Table 2 reveals the mean value ( $\bar{x}$ ) benefits of the agricultural empowerment programme among the graduate sampled for this study. The respondent attested that the empowerment has positively impacted their income level with the ( $\bar{x} = 4.19$ ). This implies that the beneficiary usually receives a stipend, probably every month to encouraged and enable their commitment to the programme. Also, findings revealed that the training sessions were beneficiary and were able to meet the respondents' needs ( $\bar{x} = 4.16$ ). Access to information and networks, because of the programme, was the third most enjoyed benefit of the empowerment, with a mean score of ( $\bar{x} = 4.13$ ). This implies the beneficiaries were able to utilise the agricultural empowerment programme to create and build a network among themselves. The study also showed that among the benefits derived by the respondents was the ability to gain new skills that can enhance employability ( $\bar{x} = 3.99$ ) into some big or medium farm enterprises in the country. This implies the empowerment programme has made the respondent a better individual and open their eyes to various agricultural enterprise. The least benefit of the empowerment programme contribution to the overall development of community with the mean score of 1.82, this implies that the respondent is now giving back to the community at a minimal level. This result is supported with the findings of Adeola *et al.*, (2020) who reported that youth employment usually has community impact but may not be more pronounced or tangible when compared with other derived benefits.

**Table 2: The benefit of Ogun Osun River Basin Agricultural Empowerment Programme on Rural Youth Livelihood in Odeda Local Government Ogun State (n=120)**

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Mean±S.D</b>	<b>Ranked</b>
Positive impact on income level	4.19±1.03	1 <sup>st</sup>
The training sessions provided are not beneficial and relevant to my needs	4.16±1.04	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Access to information and networks because of the programme	4.13±1.12	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Gained no new skills that can enhance employability	3.99±1.19	4 <sup>th</sup>
Provision of sufficient resources (e.g., seeds, tools) to improve farming activities.	1.97±0.69	5 <sup>th</sup>
Overall, satisfaction with the Ogun Osun River Basin Agricultural Empowerment Programme.	1.92±0.74	6 <sup>th</sup>
Positive impact on income level.	1.85±0.72	7 <sup>th</sup>
Contribution to the overall development of community	1.82±0.82	8 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field survey, 2026

### **Perceived Effect of Agricultural Empowerment Programme on the Livelihood Activities of the respondents.**

Result in Table 3 revealed that majority (99.2%) of the respondents indicated that there is an increase in agricultural productivity since joining the programme, while majority (98.3%) reveals that the programme has improved the agricultural skill beyond campus level, 97.5% also indicates that the empowerment programme has had a positive impact to their livelihood activities in the study area and all these were ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> as perceived effect of agricultural empowerment programme on the live;ihood activities of the respondents sampled. This implies

that the beneficiaries have observed a high or better production in their agricultural activities since joining the empowerment programme, improved their skills and had positive impact in the livelihood. As noted by Adeola *et al.*, (2020) that the effectiveness of programme in enhancing participants' capabilities, which is critical for increasing productivity and overall agricultural success. Also, the high attendance rate reflects the programme's commitment to providing educational opportunities, which are essential for skill development and knowledge transfer (Adeola *et al.*, 2020).

**Table 3: Perceived effect of Ogun Osun River Basin Agricultural Empowerment Programme on Livelihood of Rural Youths in Ogun State, Nigeria (n = 120)**

Variables	Frequency	(%)	Ranked
An increase in agricultural productivity since joining the programme	119	99.2	1 <sup>st</sup>
The programme has improved your agricultural skills.	118	98.3	2 <sup>nd</sup>
The programme has had a positive impact on your livelihood.	117	97.5	3 <sup>rd</sup>
The training and workshops organized had an impact on knowledge acquisition	109	90.8	4 <sup>th</sup>
The programme provided you with access to better farming tools or equipment.	106	88.3	5 <sup>th</sup>
Have you implemented any new agricultural practices learned from the programme?	105	87.5	6 <sup>th</sup>
You have made valuable connections with other farmers through the programme.	102	85.0	7 <sup>th</sup>
Your income from agricultural activities has increased because of the programme.	101	84.2	8 <sup>th</sup>
The programme has contributed to better food security for your household	99	82.5	9 <sup>th</sup>
You believe the programme has positively affected the overall economy of your community.	97	80.8	10 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field survey, 2026

### **Barriers Preventing Respondents Participation in the Agricultural Empowerment Programme**

Result in Table 4 various barriers preventing respondents (i.e Graduate students) from participating in the agricultural empowerment programme in the study area. Finding shows that climate change concerns affect the respondents in develop interest in agriculture with mean value of ( $\bar{x}$ ) 1.74 and ranked first. Climate change poses significant challenges to youth engagement in agriculture and poses difficulties in understanding or predicting weather and climate. As noted by Smith *et al.*, (2021) that awareness and training on sustainable agricultural practices can empowered many

young ones to adapt to these challenges and be able to develop adequate interest in agriculture. The second barrier that hindering the youth from the agricultural empowerment programme was their perception towards agricultural work than other professions ( $\bar{x} = 1.68$ ), while the third barrier to participation in agricultural empowerment was insufficient availability of inputs (such as improved seeds, fertilizer, chemicals, etc) ( $\bar{x} = 1.66$ ). This implies that the high cost of input plays a significant role in engagement in agricultural activities and affect their perception towards involvement in agricultural programme. Also, the respondents said insufficient training opportunities have hindered many graduate involvements in agriculture ( $\bar{x} = 1.58$ ). This implies that adequate training is essential by the respondents from professionals with vast practical experience to enable more involvement of graduate in agricultural activities. Simplifying agricultural practices through effective training and support could alleviate this barrier, making agriculture more accessible to young one after education (Ogun State Agricultural Policy, 2020). The least barrier, as attested by the respondents was lack of government policies to support youth participation in agricultural programmes was with a mean score of 1.32, it can be inferred that government policies (such as: tax, credit/loan) have hindered the participation of the youths in the agricultural empowerment programme.

**Table 4: Barriers to Youth participation in Agricultural Empowerment Programme in the study area**

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Climate change concerns affect youth interest in agriculture.	1.74	0.518	1 <sup>st</sup>
Perception among youth that agricultural work is less prestigious than other professions	1.68	0.502	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Availability of resources (like seeds, tools, etc.) a concern for youth participation in agricultural programs	1.66	0.496	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Insufficient training opportunities hinder youth involvement in agriculture.	1.58	0.490	4 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of access to land is a barrier to youth in agriculture	1.47	0.484	5 <sup>th</sup>
Peer influence discourages youth from participating in agriculture	1.42	0.531	6 <sup>th</sup>
Family support crucial for youth considering participation in agricultural programs.	1.39	0.476	7 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of awareness about agricultural empowerment programs	1.36	0.470	8 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of mentorship opportunities for youth in agriculture	1.35	0.465	9 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of government policies to support youth participation in agricultural programs	1.32	0.453	10 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field survey, 2026

## Test of Hypothesis

### Relationship between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the perceived effect of the agricultural empowerment programme in the study area.

Table 5 presents the results of a Chi-square test conducted to examine the relationship between various socio-economic variables and their potential effects on the outcomes of the Agricultural Empowerment Programme. Table 5 revealed the Chi-square values, degrees of freedom (df), p-values, and decisions regarding the significance of the relationships tested. Result shows a significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ) between sex ( $\chi^2 = 18.331$ ), marital status ( $\chi^2 = 12.415$ ), and educational level ( $\chi^2 = 15.417$ ) and perceived effect of the agricultural empowerment programme in the study area. This indicates that the sex, marital status, and educational level of the respondents influence the perceived effect of the agricultural empowerment programme in the study area. Other variables did not show a significant relationship with the perceived effect of the agricultural empowerment programme in the study area. This suggests that sex, marital status and educational level may influence participation or benefits derived from the programme. Marital status correlates positively and significantly with the agricultural empowerment programme. This finding shows that marital status and education level of unemployed graduates are determinants for their participation in the agricultural training programme (Coster and Adekoya, 2010).

**Table 5: Test of the relationship between socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and the perceived effects of agricultural empowerment programme in the study area.**

Variables	$\chi^2$ - value	Df	p-value	Decision
Sex	18.342	1	0.022	S
Marital status	12.215	2	0.013	S
Religion	3.231	2	0.327	NS
Ethnicity	1.211	5	0.113	NS
Educational level	15.347	3	0.008	S

Source: Field survey, 2026

Table 6 shows that Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) revealed significant relationships ( $p < 0.05$ ) between age ( $r = 0.676$ ), household size ( $r = 0.782$ ), farming experience ( $r = -0.788$ ), and the perceived effect of the agricultural empowerment programme in the study area. This suggests that all these variables (i.e., age, household size, and farming experience) are related to the perceived effect of the agricultural empowerment programme.

**Table 6: Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation result showing relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the perceived effect of the agricultural empowerment programme.**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>r-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Age	0.676	0.010	S
Household size	0.782	0.026	S
Farming experience	0.788	0.012	S
Total land size	0.363	0.235	NS

Source: Field survey 2026: Decision criteria: Reject null hypothesis if  $p \leq 0.05$ , accept null hypothesis if  $p > 0.05$

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

The unemployed graduate youths were able to secure a livelihood through the agricultural training programme and thus became useful to themselves and the state at large. The Agricultural Empowerment Programme has demonstrated potential in improving the skills and economic conditions of the graduate students sampled; that is, it has a positive effect on the beneficiaries. Participation in the programme was motivated by the need to be gainfully employed after the completion of the training programme. Also, the participating unemployed graduates were able to acquire different agricultural skills needed to start their own firm and develop adequate potential that will enhance their knowledge in the agricultural field.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made as follows:

- i) Establishing financial support mechanisms is essential for facilitating youth involvement in agriculture.
- ii) Developing policies that provide young farmers with easier access to land is vital for enabling effective engagement in agricultural production.
- iii) Integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) into agricultural training and practices can significantly enhance the knowledge acquisition process and operational efficiency among youth.

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