

The Roles of Youths in Maize Production in Surulere Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Maize (*zea mays*), is one of the oldest and widely cultivated cereals in the world. It provides food for man and livestock. The roles performed by the youths in maize production in Surulere Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Random sampling method was used in choosing five villages used from which 120 youths as respondents, and structural interview schedule was used. Data analysis was done with descriptive statistical tools and the hypotheses were tested with the Person Moment Correlation. The study revealed that, 83.3% of the selected youths were male and 17.5% have no formal education, 65% were single. Age and level of education were not significant to participation in land preparation while gender is negative. Also, youths engaged in post-harvest activities (such as milling, drying, processing e.t.c) in the study area. It is recommended that education and training, financial support, and extension package should be provided for the youths to boost maize production.

Keywords: Roles, Youths, maize production.

INTRODUCTION

Maize (*Zea mays*) is one of the oldest and widely cultivated cereals. It provides food for man and feed for livestock. In many parts of West Africa, it is a staple food and is sometimes grown on a garden scale where it cannot be grown as a farm crop. It is an important source of carbohydrate and if eaten in the immature state, provides useful quantities of Vitamin C. The yellow grain varieties also contain Vitamin A (FAO, 1990). Maize thrives best in a warm climate and is now grown in most of the countries that have suitable climatic conditions. Its growth depends more on a high mean temperature. It will ripen in a short hot summer

can will withstand extreme heat. A large amount of water is needed during the growth of maize. Its average maturing period is relatively short and this makes it possible to grow at fairly high latitudes. Maize, or corn, is one of the main staples of West Africa. It originated in the American continent, probably in Guatamala or Mexico. Maize is an important food crop grown in much of Nigeria, Ghana and to a lesser extent in Sierra Leone. It can be grown in areas with a rainfall higher than 760mm a year. In drier area guinea corn is grown instead of maize (Komolafe *et al*, 1981).

Nigeria population was 131, 839,73 in July 2006 (National Population commission,

2006), with a land area of 923.8 sq km in 2005. World development indicators in 1990, Nigeria had 43% of its population working in agriculture. In 1977-79, the population of youths aged 15-17 totalled 12.4 the 15years old were more likely to work in agriculture, particularly male youths (Education Statistics, 1999).

The word Youth is mostly used to refer to a person who is neither an adult nor a child, but, somewhere in between. This is scientifically referred to as an adolescent and in most English speaking countries or commonly referred to as a teen or teenager (Wikipedia, 2006). Arokoyo *et al* (1992), consider youth as people who have the age maturity but have not yet acquired the full right and duties of adult life. Youth have some potentials which needs to be tapped for economic growth and their role in economic development may have been neglected, and problems of using primitive tools in land clearing, weeding and inadequate fertilizer to improve soil fertility, pests attack on storage crops which leads to lost of large quantities of farm produce and reduction in quality which constitute a great danger to food security.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the roles played by the youths in maize production in the study area. The specific objectives are to;

- i. determine the demographic characteristics of the youth in the study area;
- ii. ascertain the specific roles that youth play in executing the cultural practices involved in maize production.
- iii. ascertain post-harvest handling activities used by youth in the area.

Hypothesis of the Study

H₀: A significant relationship does not exist between the selected demographic characteristics of the youths (Age, gender and level of Education) and their involvement in maize production.

H₁: A significant relationship exists between the selected demographic characteristics of the youth (Age, gender and level of Education) and their involvement in maize production.

METHODOLOGY

A purposive sampling method was used to select five villages as the sample, these includes; Iresa-Apa, Iresa-Adu, Arolu, Oko and Iranhin. 120 youth were purposely sampled in the study area.

The major method used for data collection was the use of questionnaire and complimented with an interview. This was done to guide some of the respondents with little or no education. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages were used for demographic characteristics and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used for testing the hypothesis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 revealed that, 8.3% of the respondents were less than 15 years, 35.8% between 15-20 years, 35.0% were between 20-25years while 20.8% of the respondents fall between 25-30years. This showed that, most of the respondents fall between the ages of 15-20 years; these youth are less cautions of undertaking new risks thus implore and adopt new methods in order to enhance their economic

position. 83.3% of the respondents are male while 16.7% are female. That means, male are more involved in maize production than female in the area, this is due to the fact that male are more involved in farming.

Table 1 also shows that 60.0% were Christians, 26.7% were Muslims and 9.2% belong to traditional religion. This is due to the fact that, both Christianity and Islamic are the common religions in Nigeria .It was shown in Table 1 that, 65.8% of the youths were single, 25.8% were married and 8.3% divorced. The bulk of the youths were still single, this may be due to the fact that, they still depend on their parents in one way or the other because, they were not mature enough to be on their own. While 8.3% who were divorced may be due to their early marriage or as a result of pre-marital sex, which result in pregnancy when they were not ready to have a home.

It was also found out that 17.5% have no formal education, 7.5% made it up to primary level, 41.7% had post-primary education while 33.3% acquired higher level of education. This findings supports (Torimiro, 1995) that majority of rural youths are literate.

Table 1. Distributions based on respondents demographic characteristics

Age	Frequency	Percent
Less than 15years	10	8.3
15 – 20 years	43	35.8
20 – 25 years	42	35.0
25 – 30 years	25	20.8
Gender		
Male	100	83.3
Female	20	16.7
Religion		
Christianity	72	60.0
Islam	32	26.0
Traditionalist	11	9.2
No response	5	4.2

Marital Status

Single	79	65.8
Married	31	25.8
Divorced	10	8.3

Educational Level

No formal Education	21	17.5
Primary Education	9	7.5
Secondary Education	50	41.7
Tertiary Institution	40	33.3
Total	120	100.0

Table 2 shows that, 50.9% agreed that, tractor is available for land clearing, while 49.2% disagreed. Also, 96.7% agreed that, hoe and cutlass are used in land clearing 2.5% undecided. Moreover, 83.3% agreed that, they are personally involved in clearing the land, and 18.3% disagreed. This implies that, hoe and cutlass are more used in clearing the land and that, youths are also personally involved in land clearing.

Table 2. Distributions based on land clearing

	SA F (P)	A F (P)	U F (P)	SD F (P)	D F (P)
Tractor is available for land clearing.	29 (24.2)	32 (26.7)	-	29 (24.2)	30 (25.0)
Hoe and cutlass are used in land clearing.	72 (60.0)	44 (36.7)	1 (.8)	1 (.8)	2 (1.7)
You are personally involved in land clearing.	63 (52.5)	37 (30.8)	2 (1.7)	15 (12.5)	3 (2.5)
Labour is hired in land clearing.	39 (32.5)	56 (46.7)	3 (3.5)	6 (5.0)	16 (13.5)

Table 3 below revealed that, 87.5% agreed that, youth involved themselves in maize planting and 79.2% were against the use of machine in maize planting, that means, youth also partake in maize planting.

Table 3. Distributions based on maize planting

	Yes Frequ ency	Perce nt	No Frequen cy	Percent
Youth make use of machine in planting your maize	21	17.5	95	79.2
Labour is employed in maize planting.	78	65.0	38	31.7
Youths involve themselves in maize planting.	105	87.5	11	9.2

In Table 4 below, it is observed that 79.2% agreed that, chemical is used in controlling weed, 17.5% disagreed. Also, 90.8% were in support that, hoe and cutlass are used in controlling weed, while 6.6% disagreed. More so, 81.7% agreed that, labour is hired during weed control and 13.3% disagreed.

Table 4. Distributions based on weed control by the respondents

	SA F (P)	A F (P)	U F (P)	SD F (P)	D F (P)
Chemical is used in controlling weed.	53 (44.2)	42 (35.0)	1 (.8)	13 (10.8)	8 (6.7)
Youth make use of hoe and cutlass in controlling weed.	76 (63.3)	33 (27.5)	1 (.8)	4 (3.3)	4 (3.3)
Labour is hired during weed control.	54 (45.0)	44 (36.7)	5 (4.2)	9 (7.5)	7 (5.8)

From Table 5, it is shown that 88.3% agreed that, chemical is used in controlling pest and disease and 89.2% supported that, matured maize on time are used to control pest and disease. This implies that, chemical and prompt

harvesting of maize are used to control pest and disease in the study area.

Table 5. Distributions based on Pest and Disease Management

	SA F (P)	A F (P)	U F (P)	SD F (P)	D F (P)
Chemical is used in controlling pest and disease	66 (55.0)	40 (33.3)	3 (2.5)	9 (7.5)	1 (.8)
Resistance variety is planted to reduce pest and disease.	52 (43.3)	35 (29.2)	2 (1.7)	23 (19.2)	7 (5.8)
Matured maize is harvested on time to avoid invasion of pest and disease.	77 (94.2)	30 (25.0)	4 (3.3)	4 (3.3)	3 (2.5)

Table 6 revealed that, 80.8% of the respondents agreed that, their village tradition permits them to own land. While 15.8% disagreed, 71.7% owned a piece of land for farming, 16.0% did not, and 33.3% work on their father's farm and 6.7% on rentage. This findings show that youth in the study area owns a piece of land for farming and thereby contribute to maize production in the area. In relation to this, Jibowo (1992) stated that, in Southwest Nigeria, the father gives a small portion of land to the son to practice his own independent farming during his spare time.

Table 6: Result of correlation analysis

	Land Clearing	Maize Planting	Acquisition of Land
Age	r = -.109 P = .237	r = .163 P = .080	r = -.009 P = .314
Gender	r = .275** P = .002	r = .164 P = .079	r = .022 P = .822
Level of Education	r = .157 P = .086	r = .305** P = .001	r = .024 P = .811

** = significant

Table 7 revealed that, majority of the respondents performed post-harvest handling activities such as storage, milling, drying and processing. This is because youth in the study area were industrious and major work force who carried out the major activities in the study area.

Table 7. Distributions based on post-harvest activities used

Post-harvest activities	youth	Percentage
Storage	100	83.3
Drying	89	74.1
Processing	110	91.6
Shelling	90	75
Milling	95	79.1

Multiple responses

Hypothesis of the Study

The hypothesis of the study, stated in null form, is as given below;

H₀: A significant relationship does not exist between the selected demographic characteristics of the youths (Age, gender and level of Education) and their involvement in maize production.

The hypothesis testing was pursued between some selected characteristics of the respondents and their level of involvement in maize production. Involvement in maize production was measured via the activities of maize production enterprise in which the respondents are involved in. Pearson's correlation was used to measure association between the variables. Fasina (2004) used Pearson's Moment Correlation in measuring the participation of children in Agriculture.

1. Age of respondents being personally involved in land clearing and acquisition of land was

observed to be negatively correlated but not significant, which means that, the older the youth the less they involve in those activities and may prefer to make use of hired labour. But, positive correlation was observed in maize planting. It means that, the older the youths, the more they involve in maize planting.

2. Gender of respondents to land clearing was observed to be positively correlated and significant. The reasons for this may be due to the fact that, land clearing is tedious and more energy involved and that is why male are more involved in maize farming than female. Also, male youths are agile and energetic, have strength than female and can do some of the works that their female counterparts may not be able to do.

3. Level of education of the respondents to maize planting was observed to be negatively correlated but significant. This means that, the higher the level of education of the respondents, the less they are involved in maize planting. This can be adduced to the exposure and level of civilization of the respondents might have changed their orientation and see farming as a dirty job. They may also feel superior and themselves as not be in the same category with those who are not educated.

Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative accepted. Sex and level of education were significant to the involvement of youth in maize production in the study area, while age is not significant. This is in agreement with Pur *et al* (2007) that age was not an influencing factor in participating in agricultural activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, youth played a prominent role in maize production. The age distribution indicated that they were energetic, agile and within the economically active range that favours agricultural production. However, majority of the respondents engage in land clearing, planting, weed, and pest management. The result also revealed that sex and education have positive correlation while age has negative correlation to maize production. Also the youth were involved in post harvest operation.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need for extension and educational departments to work together in providing the youth with education and training to support their role in maize production.
2. Extension package on weeds and pests control should be made to reduce the amount spent on weeds and pests control.
3. Government should provide the youth with financial assistance to assist them in post harvest operation.

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