

Attitude of Undergraduate Agricultural Education Students towards Agricultural Science in University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to investigate the attitude of undergraduate agricultural education students' towards agricultural science in the University of Ilorin. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting the department and 120 students with the use of structured questionnaire to elicit information. The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study revealed that majority (86.0%) of the respondents were within the age categories of 20-25 years with an average age of 21 years. The preponderance (86.7%) of the respondents was single. Of 120 respondents, 54.2% were female with 40.8% in 100 level, 23.3% in 400 level, 19.2% in 200 level, while, 16.7% were in 300 level. The results showed that 49.2% of the respondents made agriculture as their choices, 32.1% preferred microbiology, 19.6% biochemistry, 14.3% plant biology and few (8.9%) of them preferred medicine as course of study. The attitude of the respondents influenced their learning and performances in agricultural science through a well preparation for exams and tests ($M = 2.6$), hardwork to get good grade ($M = 2.6$), close attention when lecturers were teaching ($M = 2.5$), and finding time for practice and extra work ($M = 2.1$). The respondents perceived agricultural science to be important to society in general ($M = 2.7$), an important subject to study ($M = 2.5$), and also enjoy learning agricultural science ($M = 2.2$). The results of the Pearson Product Moment of Correlation (PPMC) between personal characteristics and students perception towards agricultural science indicated that university level is positive and significantly related ($p < 0.05$). The study therefore recommended that, government should provide more career opportunities in agricultural science to accommodate teeming unemployed graduates and endeavour to make robust policies that will promote agriculture as a lucrative profession in order to encourage youths who have developed positive attitude towards agricultural science.

Keywords: Attitude, Performance, Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural education is the teaching of agriculture, natural resources and land management. At higher levels, agricultural education is primarily undertaken to prepare students for employment in the agricultural sector (Phipps, Osborne, Dyer, & Ball, 2008). Classes taught in an agricultural education curriculum may include horticulture, land management, turf grass management, vocational studies, small animal care, extension services, health and nutrition, livestock management, and forestry. Agricultural education is common at the primary, secondary, tertiary (including vocational schools and universities) and adult levels (Phipps *et al.* 2008). Elementary agriculture is often taught in both public and private schools, and can cover such subjects as how plants and animals grow and how soil is farmed and

conserved. Vocational agriculture trains people for jobs in such areas as production, marketing, and conservation. College agriculture involves training of people to teach or conduct research in order to advance the fields of agriculture and food science. General education informs the public about food and agriculture.

In psychology, attitude is a psychological construct, a mental and emotional entity that characterizes a person (Perloff, 2016). It is an individual's predisposed state of mind regarding a value and it is precipitated through a responsive expression toward a person, place, thing, or event which in turn influences the individual's thought and action. Prominent psychologist Gordon Allport described this latent psychological construct as "the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary social psychology."

An attitude is an evaluation of an attitude object, ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive. Most contemporary perspectives on attitudes also permit that people can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object by simultaneously holding both positive and negative attitudes toward the same object. This has led to some discussion of whether individual can hold multiple attitudes toward the same object (Olowa, 2007). An attitude can be as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, events, activities, and ideas. It could be concrete, abstract or just about anything in your environment, but there is a debate about precise definitions. Though it is sometimes common to define an attitude as affect toward an object, affect (i.e., discrete emotions or overall arousal) is generally understood as an evaluative structure used to form attitude object (Ajzen, 2001). Attitude may influence the attention to attitude objects, the use of categories for encoding information and the interpretation, judgement and recall of attitude-relevant information (Vogel, 2014). Attitudes are seen as more or less positive and encompass emotions, beliefs, values and behavior and hence, affect individual way of thinking, acting and behaving which has a lot of implications to teaching and learning (Mensah, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

A negative attitude towards any course of study in the university system may be an impediment to better performance in such a subject particularly, now that various university authorities dish out admission to students against their preferred courses of study. A negative attitude in the subject will create a lot of fear and anxiety among undergraduate students and a positive attitude in the subject will give a boost in self-confidence and possibly better performance and academic achievements. Previous studies on students' achievements in academics have mostly pointed to the fact that student's attitude is a major contributor to success and yet it has received very little attention in academic research. This study would concern itself with a variety of beliefs that students harbor and which have potential effects on their learning processes as would determine their ability and

willingness to learn. Possible questions like students' opinions regarding agricultural science, how much they like it, how difficult they perceive it is and their future expectations towards agricultural science. However, it is as a result of this that the study sought to examine the attitude of undergraduate agricultural education students towards agricultural science in university of Ilorin.

METHODOLOGY

Population for the study

The population for the study comprised all students in the Department of Agricultural Education University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The Department of Agricultural Education was selected using purposive sampling technique as the major in agricultural science among the other departments in the faculty of education. Students from all levels of the department were allowed to participate. There were about 600 students in the department's population where only 120 students were randomly selected as participants, making about 20 per cent of their total population. The 100 level students were particularly targeted due to their untold responses as they have little or no orientation about agricultural science. And also, the 400 level students as they must have got adequate knowledge on agricultural science therefore were having a better orientation including the 200 and 300 level students. A sample size of 120 respondents was used for this study.

Instrument for Data Collection

A well-structured questionnaire was administered to elicit information from the respondents.

Measurement of Variables

Dependent variable was the attitude of undergraduate agricultural science education students.

- How students' attitudes affect their learning and performance in Agricultural Science. Using a 3-point Likert type Scale: Always = 2, Sometimes = 1, Never = 0

- Factors influencing the students' attitudes towards Agricultural Science. Using a 5-point Likert type Scale: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided= 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1
- Perceptions of undergraduate agricultural education students towards Agricultural Science. Using a 3-point Likert type Scale: Yes = 3, Not Sure = 2, No = 1. The perception of the respondents was measured by a bench mark of 2. That is, any mean score from 2 and above represents high

perception, while, less than 2 connote low perception.

Data Analysis

The data from the research study was subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and means were employed to present the findings of the objectives while the hypothesis was tested through Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Table 1
Personal Characteristics of the Respondents (n=120)*

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Age			
≤ 20 years	71	59.2%	21 years
21 – 25 years	32	26.7%	
>25 years			
Gender			
Male	55	45.8%	
Female	65	54.2%	
University level			
100 level	49	40.8%	
200 level	23	19.2%	
300 level	20	16.7%	
400 level	28	23.3%	
Course of study			
Agricultural Education	120	100%	
Choose to study your current course			
Yes	59	49.2%	
No	61	50.8%	
Preferred course			
Biochemistry	11	19.6%	
Microbiology	18	32.1%	
Medicine	5	8.9%	
Pharmacy	7	12.5%	
Plant biology	8	14.3%	
Physics	7	12.5%	
Marital status			
Single	104	86.7%	
Married	16	13.3%	

Source: Field survey, (2019).

Table 4.1 shows that the majority (86.0%) of the respondents were between the age categories of 20-25 years of age with an average age of 21 years. This implies that the respondents were in their younger and productive ages. The significant percentages (87.0%) of the respondents were single and this reflects their youthful exuberance to develop interest in agricultural education. The findings reveal that above average (54.2%) of the respondent was female. This means that there were more female students in the agricultural education department than their male counterparts of 120

respondents, 40.8 per cent of the respondents were in 100 level, while, 23.3 per cent of the respondents were in 400 level. This implies that most of the respondents in Agricultural education were in 100 level. Then, it means both 100 and 400 levels represent the opinion of generality of the students. Moreover, 49.2 per cent of the respondents chose agricultural education as a course of study, 50.8 per cent of the respondents did not choose Agricultural Education but preferred Microbiology and Biochemistry to Medicine and Pharmacy.

Table 2
How Respondents' Attitudes Affect Their Learning and Performance in Agricultural Science

S/N Attitudinal Statement	Always	Sometimes	Never	Mean	Rank
1. Prepare well enough for tests and exams	80(66.7%)	33(27.5%)	7(5.8%)	2.6	I
2. Work hard to get a good Grade	78(65.0%)	36(30.0%)	6(5.0%)	2.6	I
3. Pay close attention when the lecturers are teaching	68(56.7%)	41(34.2%)	11(9.2%)	2.5	III
4. Ensure completion of assignments	58(48.3%)	57(47.5%)	5(4.2%)	2.4	IV
5. Agricultural Science assignments are boring and waste a lot of time	45(37.5%)	41(34.2%)	34(28.3%)	2.1	V
6. Got adequate time for practice or to do extra work	33(27.5%)	64(53.3%)	23(19.2%)	2.1	V
7. Feel like changing course of study	35(29.2%)	32(26.7%)	53(44.2%)	1.9	VII
8. Government make favorable policy for agriculture as a profession	21(17.5%)	52(43.3%)	47(39.2%)	1.8	VIII
9. Regrets for attending Agricultural Science Classes	22(18.3%)	43(35.8%)	55(45.8%)	1.7	IX
10. Feel like missing the class if it is Agricultural science	6(5.0%)	49(40.8%)	65(54.2%)	1.5	X

Source: Field Survey (2019).

Table 2 shows that the students indicated they prepare well enough for their tests and exams and they also claimed they work hard to get good grade. This implies that agricultural education students were hardworking and got good grades in agricultural science.

Table 2 further reveals that the respondents indicated close attention when their lecturers were teaching and they always ensured they completed their assignments. The attitude of the respondents was more pronounced when most of them never felt like missing the class if its agricultural science and they did not have regrets of attending agricultural

science class. This result however, not in congruent with Boucher (2018) who opined that majority of the students were not interested in agriculture and thereby do not put in their best in the course. This positive attitude is a recipe for high achievement in agricultural science. This finding corroborates the assertions of Azubuike (2011) and Faulkner (2009) who concluded that positive attitudes are connected to good performance and would serve to predict better achievement in agricultural science. Learning becomes very difficult when the students do not like agricultural science as they will find the subject boring and would never anticipate for the lesson.

Table 3
Respondents' Perception towards Agricultural Science

Sl.No.	Statements	Yes	Not sure	No	Mean	Decision
1	Do you think Agricultural Science is important to the society in general?	89(74.2%)	24(20.0%)	7(5.8%)	2.7	High
2	Do you think Agricultural Science is an important subject?	82(68.3%)	31(25.8%)	7(5.8%)	2.5	High
3	Did you like Agricultural Science?	84(70.0%)	15(12.5%)	21(17.5%)	2.2	High
4	Did you enjoy learning Agricultural Science?	80(66.7%)	17(14.2%)	23(19.2%)	2.2	High
5	Did you think you need Agricultural science for your career?	67(55.8%)	12(10.0%)	41(34.2%)	1.9	Low
6	Do you think Agricultural Science is your choice?	59(49.2%)	26(21.7%)	35(29.2%)	1.6	Low
7	Do you think that Agricultural Science is a very difficult subject?	23(19.2%)	45(37.5%)	52(43.3%)	1.3	Low
8	Is Agricultural Science a boring subject to you	28(23.3%)	25(20.8%)	67(55.8%)	1.1	Low

Source: Field Survey, (2019).

Table 4 shows that the majority of the respondents had high perception on the following; Agricultural Science is important in the society (2.7), Agricultural Science is an important subject (2.5),

respondents like Agricultural Science (2.2) while the respondents enjoy learning Agricultural Science as a course of study (2.2). This implies that high perception assisted the respondents to have positive

attitude towards agricultural science as a course of study with more inclination to record high performance in learning it.

Test of Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between selected personal characteristics of the students and their perception towards agricultural science.

Table 4
Correlation Analysis Showing the Relationship between Selected Personal Characteristics of the students and their perceptions towards Agricultural Science

Personal characteristics	Perception towards agricultural science		
	r value	p- value	Decision
Age	-0.147	0.109	Not Significant
Gender	0.259	0.054	Not Significant
University Level	0.428	0.001**	Significant
Marital Status	0.009	0.946	Not Significant

Source: Field survey, (2019).

**Significance level = 0.05

The result of the correlation analysis indicated that age, gender and marital status of the respondents did not have significant relationship with the respondents' perception towards agricultural science. However, university level of the respondents had a positive and significant relationship with the students' perception. That is, the higher the correlation coefficient of 0.428 (p<0.05) the higher the students' perception towards agricultural science. This implies that, as the students' level increases, the students tend to have higher inclination towards agricultural science. This finding is not in support of Bosso (2015) who stressed that fresh university students studying agriculture are not satisfied with the course while those in their final years are more satisfied with the course of study.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the majority of the respondents were in their productive ages. They were female and single. The respondents had positive attitude and high perception towards agricultural science as an important course of study. However, the more the respondents' progress to designated levels in the university the higher their inclination towards studying agricultural science. Hence, the study recommended that, the government should provide more opportunities in agricultural science since most of the respondents had penchant for agricultural science as a career and make robust policies that will promote agriculture as lucrative profession.

Paper received on 22.08.20

Accepted on 28.09.20

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