

## EVALUATION OF THE ATTITUDE OF AGRICULTURE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS TOWARD SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN DELTA STATE

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### Abstract

*The study investigated the attitude of agriculture undergraduate students in tertiary institutions toward self-employment and entrepreneurship in Delta State. Three research questions guided it. Also, two research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level with 242 degrees of freedom. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study population consists of 921 agriculture undergraduate students from the four State Universities in Delta State. Purposive and Disproportionate Stratified random sampling techniques were used to select a sample size of 257 respondents. Data were collected through the use of a self-developed structured questionnaire of 33 items. Mean, Standard deviation, and t-tests were used to analyze the data. The findings show that agriculture undergraduate students have positive attitudes toward self-employment/entrepreneurship in agriculture; the respondents also identified twelve lucrative agriculture entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State, and their major impediments to successful self-employment in agriculture upon graduation which include, lack of practical knowledge, and fear of failure/initiative, lack of confidence to secure funds/resources, etc. The findings of the null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance with 242 degrees of freedom, indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female agriculture undergraduate students regarding their attitude toward self-employment/entrepreneurship in agriculture and entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State. The study therefore, recommended that state government should provide tertiary institutions with adequate infrastructure, and modern agricultural and entrepreneurial equipment/facilities, build entrepreneurship centers, and employ quality personnel to aid the transmission of entrepreneurial skills to students and foster a supportive environment.*

**Keywords:** Attitude, Agriculture, Students, Tertiary Institution, Self-employment, Entrepreneurship

### Introduction

Entrepreneurship refers to all new businesses, including self-employment and businesses that never intend to grow big or become registered (Small business (2023, In Wikipedia). Entrepreneurship is an adjective of entrepreneur that originated from the French word, "entreprendre", which means "to undertake", to pursue opportunities, to fulfil needs and wants with innovation to undertake business (Hussain, 2015). Entrepreneurship can be considered a national asset, and entrepreneurs are the drivers of that asset for any country. It is a dynamic process that not only increases wealth but can also create value that results in improved well-being.

Olagunju 2004, cited in Oni, (2012), stated that Entrepreneurship is an undertaking in which one is involved in creating and managing an enterprise for a purpose. It entails planning, organizing, and coordinating activities and resources necessary to manage an enterprise. Similarly, Egbule, (2018) defines entrepreneurship as the process of initiating, organizing, managing, and assuming risks of a business venture.

Considering the importance of entrepreneurship to economic development. He Furthermore, remarked that many governments around the world now view entrepreneurship as the key to economic development and are offering entrepreneurship education and programmes in schools and training centres.

For instance, in Nigeria, the government has become aware of the fact that many graduates turning out of tertiary institutions lack basic and essential information, ideas, and relevant skills needed to achieve their dream job upon graduation. This has prompted the presidency to mandate all tertiary institutions of learning irrespective of their disciplines, to study entrepreneurship as a unit course before they obtain their degrees and diplomas. To create a critical mass of graduates who are better prepared for employment in both public and private sectors, and creators of knowledge-based enterprises (UNESCO, 2010). Many universities in Nigeria and other tertiary institutions are offering entrepreneurship courses as part of their curriculum, but what is lacking is equipment for modern

agricultural practice and facilities (Ikeoji, 2018).

It therefore means that Entrepreneurship is now increasingly understood as a set of competencies required for many professions to be integrated into education and training, even in such seemingly distant areas as, public administration, management, sport, agriculture, tourism, etc., (Klucznik-2020). Entrepreneurship education as an academic learning program, prepares students or learners for their future careers. Arnaut, (2020) stated that entrepreneurship education is crucial to help young people develop entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, and behaviours, as well as to embrace a career option. Similarly, Okebukola (2012) views entrepreneurial education as an offering that tools students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be an entrepreneur.

On the other hand, Self-employment intention in the agriculture sector in Nigeria has gained recognition over the years and is well appreciated among higher education students, especially agriculture practitioners due to the unavailability of conventional employment and the increasing numbers of unemployed graduates. Self-employment is considered worldwide as a significant source of new jobs and an alternative to salaried employment (Sala-Velasco, (2022). Abdul Karim (2012), describes self-employment as an act of working for oneself. Umah and Abubakar, (2015) remarked that Self-employment offers individuals several advantages, such as freedom to work without supervision, income, and wealth creation. It also has some potential drawbacks, including the level of income and long working hours.

Meanwhile, a 2015 Tanzanian study by Mahjabeen and Bazuhair (2022) found that many young people engage in self-employment out of necessity rather than choice due to the low wages and challenging entry criteria for traditional employment. This has been underlined by (Msuya, 2020) cited in Bazuhair, (2022), who finds that persons with more favourable views about risk and independence are more likely to intend to work for themselves. However, the essential steps of developing entrepreneurship and self-employment among students are influencing their attitudes. The attitudes of youths toward a subject or course of study influence the number of content materials they internalize and their application (Adegboye, 2016). Given this, Isiorhovoja (2020) viewed attitude as a way of thinking or feeling of a person that makes him or her behave or act in a particular way.

Uman & Abubakar, (2015) stated that an Attitude is a mindset or a tendency to act in a particular way due

to both individual experience and temperament. Ajzen (1991, cited in Amofah, and Saladrignes, 2022) conceptualized attitude as the extent to which an individual has a positive or negative evaluation of the behaviour in question. Therefore, in this study, the attitude of Agriculture students toward self-employment and entrepreneurship can vary based on individual aspirations, experiences, and cultural influences. However, working in an agriculture establishment or venture is often perceived as being less desirable than other fields, and not a viable or compelling option for students who have received a post-secondary education (Jones et al, 2016). Hence, a lot of young people have no interest in farming because they don't see it as a lucrative business. According to Abdulsalam-Saghir et al. (2018), youths see agricultural practices as inferior, unfulfilling, and very hard.

Ijiomah cited in (Nwankwo, 2015) found in his study that the youths (students) surveyed detested agriculture and regarded it as an unattractive occupation. The reason was that farming involved the tilling of soils to grow crops with such peasant tools as hoes and cutlasses. In line with this, Agusiobe cited in (Nwankwo, 2015) stated that the perception of a subject affects the interest of students in the particular subject area and this in turn has a significant relationship with the choice of occupation of the students. He further states that some agriculture students did not regard their agricultural studies as a preparation for immediate employment after school. Whereas, Agriculture education is designed to develop skills, abilities, and attitudes in students. Agriculture education is well positioned to prepare and help students exploit entrepreneurship opportunities in agriculture to achieve food security in Nigeria, and Delta State in particular (Ikeoji, 2018).

Given the unique agricultural landscape of Delta State, located in the south-south region of Nigeria, the state possesses rich agricultural potential. Despite the recognized potential of the agricultural sector in fostering economic development and curbing youth unemployment in Delta State, Nigeria, and the increasing awareness of the importance of self-employment and entrepreneurship in agriculture, youth participation in farming is decreasing by the year. Most agriculture graduates prefer working in other non - agricultural establishments and fail to engage in farming and other agricultural ventures. It, therefore, remains uncertain whether the educational initiatives effectively translate into the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset among undergraduate agriculture students in Delta

State.

One perceived problem contributing to this issue is the lack of awareness and information about the opportunities available in the sector. Many agriculture students are not adequately exposed to the vast potential and range of career paths available in the field. This limited knowledge restricts their understanding of the diverse avenues for self-employment/entrepreneurship opportunities within the agricultural industry, resulting in poor interest in pursuing such opportunities. The limited availability of financial resources and support systems specifically designed to promote and encourage agricultural self-employment accelerated the problem. Access to start-up capital, credit facilities, and financial incentives are essential components for motivating and empowering agriculture entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, the current financial landscape in Delta State does not cater adequately to the specific needs of budding agricultural entrepreneurs, thereby creating setbacks for entry and further hindering the cultivation of a thriving environment for self-employment in the sector. Meanwhile, Agriculture plays a vital role in job creation, economic development, and food security of any nation, and Delta State is no exception. To address these challenges, the attitude of agriculture students is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. Therefore, this study was set to evaluate the attitude of agriculture undergraduate students of tertiary institutions toward self-employment and entrepreneurship in Delta State.

### Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research question:

1. What are the undergraduate's student's attitudes towards self-employment/entrepreneurship in agriculture in Delta State?
2. What are the entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State?
3. What are the perceived impediments to successful self-employment in agriculture by undergraduate students of Tertiary Institutions in Delta State?

### Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested in this study.

$H_1$ : There is no significant difference in the mean score between male and female undergraduate students toward entrepreneurship in agriculture in Delta State.

$H_2$ : There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female undergraduate agriculture students based on the entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State.

### Methodology

The study was carried out in Delta State, the south-south region of Nigeria. The study covered all the Tertiary Institutions Faculty of Agriculture and the Department of Vocational Education in Delta State, but it is limited in scope to the environment of Universities of higher learning in the State. It focused on knowing the attitude possessed by agriculture students in tertiary institutions in the state towards self-employment and entrepreneurship. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 921 agriculture undergraduate students from the four State Universities in Delta State. Purposive and Disproportionate Stratified random sampling techniques were used to select a sample size of 257 respondents. The study was guided by three specific objectives and three research questions. Also, two research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level with 242 degrees of freedom. Data were collected with the use of a self-developed structured questionnaire of 33 items rated on a four-point rating scale of Agree, Strongly Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree respectively. The instrument went through face and content validation by four lecturers from the Department of Vocational Agricultural Education and the Faculty of Agriculture both at Delta State University Abraka. Frequency count, percentage, Mean, and Standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the research hypotheses were tested with independent t-tests at a 0.05 level of significance.

### Results

Research Question 1: What are the undergraduate students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship in agriculture in Delta State?

**Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation on the undergraduate student's attitudes towards entrepreneurship in Agriculture in Delta State (n=244).**

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	DECISION
1.	I have taken an entrepreneurship course(s) or training	3.22	0.79	Agree
2.	I consider entrepreneurship as being as important if not more important than any other subject	3.28	0.65	Agree
3.	I consider entrepreneurship a desirable career option	3.35	0.67	Agree
4.	I am happy to have learned about entrepreneurship education	3.34	0.66	Agree
5.	I have the confidence to start and manage a business	3.37	0.69	Agree
6.	Entrepreneurship offers better opportunities for personal growth compared to traditional employment.	3.47	0.61	Agree
7.	I enjoyed entrepreneurship education lessons	3.36	0.65	Agree
8.	Entrepreneurship education prepared me to make innovative and informed decisions about career choices	3.35	0.66	Agree
9.	I feel that the education system should provide more support and resources for aspiring entrepreneurs	3.56	0.65	Agree
10.	I want to work for myself after completing school	3.58	0.61	Agree

The data presented in Table 1, the result showed that respondents agreed with all the items on undergraduate's student's attitudes toward entrepreneurship in agriculture since their mean scores which ranged from 3.22 to 3.58 are greater than the cut-off point of 2.50. The Standard deviation item statement

ranged from 0.61 – 0.79 indicating that they are close to one another and not far from the mean. This indicates that they have a highly positive attitude towards entrepreneurship in agriculture in Delta State.

Research Question 2: What are the entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State?

**Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation on the entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State (n=244).**

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	DECISION
1.	Delta State has sufficient entrepreneurship opportunities in snail farming	2.51	0.98	Agree
2.	There is access to financial resources and funding opportunities for agriculture entrepreneurs in the state	2.37	0.88	Disagree
3.	Horticulture development is an investment opportunity in Delta State	2.76	0.82	Agree
4.	Livestock cultivation-dairy, fish farming, and poultry farming constitute great investment opportunities in Delta State	3.31	0.68	Agree
5.	The exploitation of timbers and wood processing activities are lucrative ventures in Delta State	2.93	0.75	Agree
6.	The sale of improved agricultural seed and agrochemicals is an entrepreneurship opportunity in Delta State.	2.96	0.69	Agree
7.	Agricultural input supplies and machinery are a lucrative business option in Delta State	3.91	0.78	Agree
8.	Cash crop processing such as palm oil, and rubber, among others, are entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State	3.22	0.68	Agree
9.	Feed formulation and sale of poultry equipment is a lucrative venture	3.21	0.70	Agree
10.	Sale and supplies of agricultural farm produce to food vendors are investment opportunities in Delta State	3.39	0.65	Agree
11.	The vegetable garden is an investment opportunity in Delta State	3.24	0.66	Agree
12.	Marketing and distribution of agricultural products is a lucrative business in Delta State	3.34	0.66	Agree
13.	Orchard farming is a lucrative business in the Delta State	2.83	0.89	Agree

Sources: Field Work (2024)

The data presented in Table 2 shows that item two (2) had a mean value of 2.37. This value is less than the benchmark of 2.50 indicating the one (1) item the respondents disagreed on the itemized statements. Items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, with mean scores that range from 2.51 to 3.91 indicate that the respondents agreed with the itemized statements regarding their level of awareness of entrepreneurship opportunities that abound in the state. Meanwhile, the

Standard deviation values range from 0.65 -0.98, these values indicated that the respondent's opinions were close to the mean and one another in their responses about entrepreneurship opportunities in the State.

Research Question 3: What are the perceived impediments to successful self-employment in agriculture by undergraduate students of tertiary institutions in Delta State?

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on the perceived impediments to successful self-employment in agriculture by undergraduate students of tertiary institutions in Delta State (n=244).**

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	DECISION
1.	Lack of practical knowledge on how to turn my academic expertise into a viable and profitable business	3.10	0.78	Agree
2.	Lack of confidence in my ability to secure funding or resources to initiate a self-employment venture	3.06	0.76	Agree
3.	I perceive a lack of awareness about the available support systems and resources for aspiring entrepreneurs	3.26	0.75	Agree
4.	Limited availability of land or suitable farming spaces is a significant obstacle to self-employment in agriculture	3.30	0.69	Agree
5.	Inadequate access to market information and market linkages poses difficulties in reaching target consumers and buyers	3.36	0.58	Agree
6.	Geographic constraints and limited market	3.23	0.71	Agree
7.	Lack of business management skills	3.25	0.71	Agree
8.	The stigma associated with business failure discourages individuals from pursuing self-employment	3.31	0.71	Agree
9.	Fear of failure/business initiative	3.32	0.68	Agree
10.	Lack of confidence in one's ability	3.25	0.75	Agree

Source: Field Work (2024)

The result presented in Table 3 shows that all respondents agreed with all the statement items on the perceived impediments to successful self-employment in agriculture by undergraduate students of tertiary institutions in Delta State. They had a mean of 3.03 – 3.36; these values were above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviation of the statement items ranged

from 0.58 – 0.78, which indicates that the responses of the respondents were close to each other and also to the mean. This implies that the respondents have high responses to the itemized impediments to successful self-employment in agriculture by undergraduate students of tertiary institutions in Delta State.

**Table 4: Summary of independent t-test analysis of the difference between mean responses of male and female agriculture students in tertiary institutions on attitude towards entrepreneurship in agriculture in Delta State.**

Gender	N	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Df	LS	t-cal	t-tab	Decision	Remark
Male	96	33.33	4.27	242	0.05	-1.69	1.96	Accepted	Not Significant
Female	148	34.26	4.39						

P=0.05 Source: Field Work (2024).

Table 4 shows the summary of an independent t-test of male and female agriculture undergraduate students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship agriculture. The data showed that the t-calculated value was -1.69 and the t-critical value was 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and

242 degrees of freedom, indicating that the t-calculated is less than the t-critical. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicated that there is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female agriculture students in tertiary institutions towards

entrepreneurship in agriculture in Delta State.

**Table 5: Summary of independent t-test analysis of the difference in the mean response of male and female undergraduate agriculture students based on entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State.**

Location	N	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Df	LS	t-cal	t-tab	Decision	Remark
Urban	96	39.28	5.75	242	0.05	0.53	1.96	Accepted	Not significant
Rural	148	38.88	5.45						

Table 5 shows that the t-calculated is 0.53 while the t-critical is 1.96 at 242 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-calculated value of 0.53 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is accepted as postulated. This reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female undergraduate agriculture students based on entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State.

### Discussion of the Findings

#### The attitude of undergraduate agriculture students toward entrepreneurship in agriculture

The findings of research question one indicated that the attitude of undergraduate agriculture students toward entrepreneurship in agriculture is positive. This implies that agriculture students will take risks and contribute to the growth and development of the agricultural sector through new venture creation and initiatives. This is in line with the findings of a study conducted by Shiri et al, (2013), the results showed that attitudes of agricultural students toward entrepreneurship have positive and significant effects on entrepreneurial motivation. Undoubtedly, students have to perceive entrepreneurial activities and have a positive attitude toward it, perceive it as a possible task and there is more probability that they have powerful motivations to commence a business. Additionally, the lack of employment opportunities in the public sector has doubled the necessity for entrepreneurship, particularly in agriculture (Jayasudha and Maruthu, 2020). The result of hypothesis one in Table 4, shows that there is no significant difference in the gender variable on the attitude of students toward entrepreneurship in agriculture

#### Entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State

This finding in research question two shows that agriculture students in Delta State recognized that numerous entrepreneurship opportunities in agriculture abound in the State and are open for exploitation. The study showed that agriculture undergraduate students agree on twelve items identified as entrepreneurship opportunities in the study areas, they are: Agricultural input supplies and machinery, Sale and supplies of

agricultural farm produce to food vendors, marketing and distribution of agricultural products, Vegetable garden, Cash crop processing such as palm oil, and rubber, Feed formulation and sale of poultry equipment, fish farming, and poultry, Sale of improved agricultural seed and agrochemical, Orchard farming, etc. In line with the study, Hephzibah and Oyinkan, (2022) reported that Delta State is distinctive and a hotspot for entrepreneurship. This implies that numerous opportunities exist in its economic environment. They added that the State's diverse landscape provides favourable conditions for a wide variety of crops such as rice; fruits and vegetables, yams, cassava, mangoes, pawpaw, oranges, plantain, banana, capsicum, tomatoes, palm oil, rubber, etc. Similarly, Oxford Business Group, (2023) reported that Delta State water supply, the extensive water channel, and the rainy season, provide great opportunities for lucrative fish farming. The result of hypothesis two in Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female undergraduate students based on entrepreneurship opportunities in Delta State.

#### The perceived impediments to successful self-employment in agriculture

The results of research question three show that agriculture students agreed to all the 10 statement items as impediments to successful self-employment in agriculture. They include lack of practical knowledge, fear of failure/initiative, lack of confidence to secure funds/resources, geographical constraint/limited markets, the stigma of business failure, inadequate access to market information, limited availability of land, lack of support system awareness, lack of confidence in one's ability, and lack of business managerial skills. In line with the findings, Aiello et al. (2019) remarked that starting and running a business can be stressful and negatively influence psychological well-being, particularly in the face of failure.

### Conclusion

Delta State is distinctive and a hotspot for entrepreneurship. The undergraduate agriculture students in Delta State are aware of the numerous

opportunities that abound in the agricultural sectors, and their attitude towards self-employment and entrepreneurship in the agricultural industries is highly positive despite their identified impediments to successful self-employment and entrepreneurial careers that may hinder their entrepreneurial intention in the sector. However, the students need to be motivated through financial grants, loans, and other resources that aid the establishment of ventures or businesses within their local environment. Regular teaching, workshops, and training on entrepreneurial and business management skills, with constant sensitization of students on the importance of self-employment and entrepreneurship to economic growth and development, using the experience of top existing entrepreneurs can enhance students' entrepreneurial mind-set, which serves as a motivating factor in creating and running their businesses. This can reduce the level of unemployment among educated graduates.

## Recommendations.

1. Tertiary institutions should provide agriculture students access to quality entrepreneurial education and equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge, so students will be able to launch and manage their businesses effectively and successfully.
2. The State government should foster a supportive environment that promotes creativity and encourages innovation and risk-taking, to help students overcome their lack of self-confidence and fear of failure and take bold steps in achieving their entrepreneurial and self-employment goals in the agricultural industry.
3. The Federal government should also provide tertiary institutions with adequate infrastructure, relevant entrepreneurial facilities/centers, and quality personnel.

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