UNIJERPS
Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies VOL.19 (2);
January-June, 2025 https://unijerps.org
2023 Impact Factor:* 6.834;** 2022 ***Impact Factor: 5.156; ***2021 Impact Factor: 5.641;***
2020 Impact Factor: 5.355. *Indexing and Impact Factor URL: http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=21363*

EVALUATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RICE FARMER BENEFICIARIES OF THE AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT
The study investigated the socio-economic features of the rice farmer beneficiaries of the agricultural value chain development programme in Anambra State. The features investigated are age of farmers, gender, educational qualification, household size, marital status. The population for the study comprised of all the rice farmers beneficiaries of the programme in the state. 240 of rice farmers were randomly sampled from across the state. A structured interview was designed and used to obtain information from the farmers. Data for the study was analysised was through descriptive statistic tools of frequency count, percentage and mean score. The study showed that most of the rice farmers are female, married with large family size and farm between 2-3 hecter and land. The study recommends among other that more male should be encouraged to undertake rice farming to increase rice production in the state.

Keywords: Socio-Economic Characteristics; Rice; Farmer; Beneficiaries; Agriculture; Value Chain Development; Programme

Introduction
Agriculture is associated with the production of basic food crops and domestic animals. hallison, (1993) noted that agriculture and farming are synonymous as long as farming was not commercialized but as the process of economic

development accelerated, many more other occupations allied to arming came to be a part of agriculture. Today, marketing, processing distribution of agricultural products are all accepted as a part of modern agriculture thereby making the meaning of agriculture to wider in scope Farmkline, 2000). Agriculture may also be defined as the production, Processing, marketing and distribution of crops and livestock products Hufnann, 2006). Agricultural is also defined as the art or science of production of crops and livestock on farm. Nevertheless, either some or portion of a population must be involved in Agriculture in other to ensure food supply for the population (Arcand, 2000). Simons, (2002) stated that despite the immeasurable benefits of agriculture to any society, its development is retarded by certain factors of which inadequate access to agricultural education is one of them.

Rice is an important staple food in Nigeria and it is grown in all the States of the Federation and Federal Capital Territory though production and varies from State to State and the prevalent types of rice production systems in Nigeria include rain-fed upland, rain-fed lowland, irrigated lowland, deep water floating and mangrove swamp (Chukwudebelu, Igwe and Madukasi, 2015). As a cereal grain, it is the most widely consumed staple food for a large part of the world's human population, especially in Asia (Awika, 2011) and it is one of the commodities sugarcane and maize. According to Shrestha (2012), rice is more than just a food, as it plays a key role in food security, while at the same time South-East Asian nations have become the leading rice exporting countries. In most countries, rice cultivation has become the major activity and sources of income for millions of households around the globe. According to Kadiri. Eze, Orebiyi, Lemchi, Ohajianya and Nwaiwu (2014), rice is an increasingly important crop in Nigeria and it is relatively easy to produce for sale and home consumption. In some areas, there is a long tradition of rice growing, but for many, it is considered a luxury food for special occasions only. In terms of comparative advantage, rice can be grown in flooded and non-flooded soils because it has both lowland and upland varieties that can adapt to different agro-climatic and soil conditions (Aja and Aja, 2014).

According to Merem, Twumasi, Wesley, Isokpehi, Shenge, et al (2017), rice in most of the African countries constitutes a bigger portion of the diet on regular basis. Aside a handful of nations that enjoy self-sufficiency in rice cultivation, rice consumption surpasses its production and substantial amount of the crop are imported to sustain local demand at the expense of hard- earned foreign currency reserves. Rice is virtually cultivated in most of the agro-ecological Zones of the country, as it constitutes one major cereal crop produced by an average Nigerian farmer. According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2018), Nigeria is the continent's leading consumer of rice, one of the largest producers of rice in Africa and simultaneously one of the largest rice importers in the world.

According to Global Value Chain Initiative (GVC) (2007) as cited in Ewuzie, Ifediora Anetoh (2020), value chain is an arrangement that describes the linkages of participates their value creating activities that enhance the movement of goods and services from production, processing, marketing to the end user. In agricultural parlance, the term "value chain" is used interchangeably with such terms as supply chain, market system, and agri-food chain, depending on what is being considered.

Based on agri-food sector perspective, Drummond and Goodwin (2011), defined value chain as all activities and processes that occur between producers of food and ultimate consumers. According to Donovan, Franzel, Cunha, Gyau and Mithöfer (2015), donor agencies like USAID, FADAMA, and IFAD usage of value chain is in line with World Bank (2010) definition which describes value chain as full range of value adding activities required to bring a product or service through different phases of production including the procurement of raw materials and other input. The concept of value chain was introduced to improve productivity and profitability of the actors in the agricultural sector (Ewuzie, Ifediora and Anetoh, 2020). The notion of agricultural value chain underscores the system approach to value added activities where the action of one component in a system affects every other component within the system.

According to Ugwuonah (2017), the idea of the value chain is relatively new in agricultural sector, it is however, resides at the core of high-impact and sustainable initiatives focused on improving productivity, competitiveness and growth of Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Recently, most of the agricultural intervention programmes, initiated and implemented in agricultural sectors by both government and non-government agencies (donors) take the value chain approach. The value chain approach has shifted focus and emphasis away from agricultural production to consumer demand, marketing and the coordination of product flow from producer to consumer (Ewuzie, et al, 2020). The value chain concept acknowledges that production must be linked to demand and the critical role of organizing the flow from farmer to consumer opportunities must be taken into consideration. A value chain links the steps a product takes from the producer to the consumer. It, therefore, includes research and development, input suppliers, production. processing. marketing and finance (Norton, 2014).

An agricultural value chain starts with the provision of farm inputs which include seed, fertilizer and other agro chemicals used in the cultivation of crops (Rex, 2013). All the inputs are provided by the agro input dealers to the farmer who uses them in the production of agricultural crops and livestock. Whereas, according to Ewuzie, et al, (2020), the production component entails the actual production activities which culminates in the usage of farm inputs in a way that it is prescribed by the agricultural technologies for a particular commodity to produce the required produce. Value chains are created for the better understanding of consumer needs to respond to these requirements in better and more strategic way. The trade components entail exchange and distribution activities that are carried on at the primary product level by marketing middlemen. Processing has to do with value addition activities which is concerned with the change in form of the produce. Besides these activities that are central to a value chain, the business environment and provision of allied services also affect the value chain and as such constitute part of the value chain. Activities of the various participants in the value chain are expected to increase the value that is added to the products and Shrestha (2012) further opined that participants' conduct along the chain determines the efficiency and return accruing to each participant.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows;

- To determine the socio-economic characteristic of the beneficiary rice farmers of the agricultural value chain development programme in the areas of age, sex, marital status, educational value, house post size, years of family experiences, and farm size.
- To prefer strategies to will harms the socio-economics strength of rice farmers.

Research questions

The research questions for the study are;

- What are the socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiary rice farmers of the agricultural value chain development programme in the areas of age, sex, marital status, educational value, house post size, years of family experiences, and farm size?
- What are the strategies to will harms the socio-economics strength of rice farmers?

Population of the study

The population of the study comprised all the rice farmer beneficiary of the value chain development programme in Anambra State. Multi-stage sampling procedure involving purposive and simple random sampling technique was used to select 240 respondents that were used for the study.

Method of data collection

The data for the study was through the use of structure interview technique which items border on the socio-economic characteristics of rice famers such as: age, sex, marital status, educational value, house post size, years of family experiences, and farm size.

Method of data analysis

The data for the study was analyse using the descriptive statistics such as frequency and mean score.

Programme Beneficiaries Socio-Economic Characteristics

The beneficiaries' socio-economics characteristics that were examined includes: sources of farm Land, educational status, age, sex, marital status, household size, years of experience, farm size, Sources of farm labour, sources of agro-input, sources of fund, and major occupation.

Beneficiaries rice farmers socio-economic characteristics

Socio-economic variables	Frequency (n=240)	Percentage (%)	Mean (χ(score
Age (years)			
21-30	68	28.33	
31-40	104	43.33	
41-50	55	22.92	
51 and above	13	05.42	43.58 years
Sex			
Female	135	56.25	
Male	105	43.75	
Marital status			
Single	48	20.00	
Married	144	60.00	
Divorced	10	04.17	
Widowed	38	15.83	
Educational level			
No formal education	34	14.17	
Primary education	41	17.08	

Secondary education	101	42.08	
Tertiary education	64	26.67	7.28 years
Household size			
1-5	97	40.42	
6-10	117	48.75	
11 and above	26	10.83	8.51 persons
Years of farming experience			
1-10	143	59.58	
11-20	81	33.75	
21 and above	16	06.67	12.38 years
Farm size (hectares)			
Less than 1.9 hecture	28	11.67	
20-30 hectares	170	70.83	
40 and above heactares	42	17.05	2.08 hectares

Result Interpretation

The distribution of the respondents according to age is presented in as indicated in the table, a greater proportion (43.33%) of the respondents were between the ages of 3 1 and 40 Years, 28.33% fell within the age of 21 – 30 years of age, 22.92% were between the ages of 41-50 years of age: whereas, the remaining 05.42% of the beneficiaries were between 51 and above Years of age with a mean age of 43.58 years. As indicated in the results, the majority of the rice farmers were within the active productive age. This further implies that many of them are able bodied men who are still active in carrying out their daily activities as regards to' farming in the area. The dominance of this category of farmers in agricultural production activity is paramount with the findings since age has a significant influence on production output. The finding aligns with of Adam et al., (2018) who reported I that the majority of the programme beneficiaries fall within the age bracket of 31-40 years of age. However, the results contradict the findings of Oladipo, Et al., (2016) and Umar et al., (2019) who reported majority y of the male and female respondents were above 50 years and 41 and 50 years of age, respectively. The majority (56.25%) of the beneficiaries were females, while43.75% were males. The result implies that the programme was dominated by the women folks. It shows that there were more females who participated in the Value Chain Development Programme in the area compared to the males counterparts. The dominance of men in the programme aligns with the popular ideology that women play a central role in food production, processing and marketing. In addition. The result of the analysis is evidence that certain activities, especially farming activities are considered gender specific. The result of the study is in agreement with the findings of Tiku et al (2017) who revealed that a majority (78%) of the rice farmers were males while 22% were females. Similarly, Ibitoye et al (2014) reported that females constitute the majority (84.4%) of the respondents meanwhile males involved in the enterprise were only 15.6%.

The marital status of the paddy rice farmers is presented in as indicated in the table. 144 out of the total sample size of the respondents accounting for 60% were married, followed by 20.00% who were single, 15.83% and 04.17% who were widows and divorced, respectively. It revealed that married people dominated the Value Chain Development Programne in the study area. The dominance can be attributed to the fact that majority of them have family responsibilities which are conferred unto them by virtue or marriage. As such, they participated in

the programme so as to provide food and other nerveless tor their dependents the findings in agreement with the results of Funmilola et al (2018) who reported that the majority (88.5%) of the programme beneficiaries were married. In addition, Adiel et al.. (2019) on the effects of socio-economic and technological characteristic on discontinuance of the adoption of improved Rice production technologies in Nasarawa and Plateau States, Nigeria reported that the majority (80.32%) of the respondents were married. Entries revealed that a greater proportion 42.08% of the rice producers completed their secondary school education, 26.67% of the respondents attained tertiary education, 178% completed primary school, meanwhile 14.17% had no formal education. The implication is that a greater proportion of the programme beneficiaries were educated, hence, they could read and write. The result agrees with the finding of Onyeneke (2017) who reported that the majority of the rice farmers attained secondary education. The result is also in agreement with Umar et al., (2019) who reported that a greater proportion (47.3) of the farmers had secondary education.

The study also revealed that the rice farmers in the study area had household size in this order, 6-10 (48.75%) ranging as the highest, followed by 40.42% of respondents who had household size of between 1 – 5 and 10.83% who had household size of 1l and above with mean household size of 8.51 persons. The result implies that the programme beneficiaries had enough hands to carry out farming labour and as such less spending on labour hence. This may be attributed to the fact that the majority of the programme beneficiaries were married as indicated in their marital status. This finding agrees with the findings of Balarabe Et al (2019) where rice farmers had a household size of 6-10 members. It revealed the distribution of the programme beneficiaries' years of experience in rice Production, the result of the analysis indicated that a greater proportion (59.58%) of the paddy Rice farmers had 1 – 10 years of paddy rice production experience, 33.75% had 11 -20 years of experience while 06.67% had between 21 and above years. The rice farmer's mean years of rice production experience was 12.38 years. These findings imply that the majority of the farmers had a relative long years of paddy rice farming experience which could serve as an advantage in the adoption of improved rice production technologies introduced by the programme. Thus, the longer they continue with the paddy rice production, more likely they acquire the relevant experience to perform better in the future. Therefore, it is expected that a greater number of years in paddy Tice farming would translate to increased crop field, efficiency in crop production and profitability, since majority of the rice farmers can identify problems and proffer solutions. The result agrees with Onyeneke (2017) who reported that the average rice farming experience in his study area was 10 years and above. The results of the analysis on farm size cultivated by the programme beneficiaries are shown in the result reveals that the majority (70.83%) of the respondents cultivated between 2.0 -3.0 hectares, 17.05% cultivated 4.0 and above hectares, while 11.67 % of the respondents cultivated less than 1.9 hectare. Generally, the result suggests that the programme beneficiaries in the study area are smallholder rice farmers, who cultivate a maximum of 4.0 hectares of land irrespective of the system deployed. Thus, the paddy rice farmers do not make use of sufficient farm land for production, and this can be attributed to scarcity of farmland. Meanwhile the low value of

farmland may be attribute to inadequate access and unavailability of land which may result to low production output. The result of the study is in agreement with the finding of Adi. El al (2020) on the impact of value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) on the farmers in Avdo-kola Local Government Area of T araba State, Nigeria who reported that the respondents were small scale paddy rice larmers, Similarly, Samarpitha, et al., (2016) who reported that the majority of the farmers Owned small and medium sized farming areas.

Findings

The result on the socio-economic characteristics of the programme beneficiaries revealed the A greater proportion (43.33%) of the farmers were between the age ranges of 31 and 40 years the majority (56.25%) of the programme beneficiaries were females, while 43.75% were males the result further shows that 144 out of the total sample size of the respondents accounting for 60% were married, followed by a greater proportion 42.08% of the rice farmers who completed their secondary school and 26.67% of the respondents who attained tertiary education. The rice Farmers (48.75%) had household size of 6 – 10, followed by 40.42% of the rice farmers who had household size of between 1-5 and 10.83% who had household mean household size of8.51 persons. The result of the analysis shows that a greater proportion size of 11 and above with (59.58%) of the rice farmers had 1 – 10 years of paddy rice production the farmers cultivated between 2.0 – 3.0 hectares. Of the respondents sourced and used communal land for the Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP).

Recommendations

The study reveals that the agricultural value chain development programme brought about significant positive change in agricultural development in Anambra State. However, the socio-economic characteristics of the programme beneficiaries in the area of rice production have to be improved. More male farmers should be encouraged to undertake rice farming to increase the number of rice farmers. Widow should be empowered by the government and other non-government agencies on rice production/farming. Adult and mass literacy programme on rice farming should be organized by the ministry of education and agriculture in order to transmit agricultural information to the farmers.

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