

Full Length Research Paper

## Grass-root youth involvement in cattle rearing activities Oyo State, South western Nigeria

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The study determined the involvement of youths in cattle rearing at the rural community level using six randomly selected communities in Oyo State in the South western part of Nigeria. Twenty – five youths were randomly selected from each of these communities and interviewed. The study found that 68% of the respondents who were involved in cattle rearing were males, 32% were females, while seventy three percent (73%) were between 21 and 30 years. The most significant finding of this study is that 16% of these youths possessed tertiary (that is, post secondary) education. These Nigerian youths perceived cattle rearing as labour - intensive, non - mechanized and unattractive. Chi - square analysis showed that there was no significant association between respondents' age and cattle rearing ( $\chi^2 = 5.935$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) while there was significant association between respondents' educational status and cattle rearing ( $\chi^2 = 35.042$ ,  $P < 0.050$ ). In view of this, it is recommended that the state government should give maximum encouragement (in form of definitive cattle ranching and mechanization) to this small group of literate youths involved in cattle rearing and encourage more of such to remain in the business through motivational strategies.

**Key words:** Grass - root, youth involvement, cattle rearing, Southwestern Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION

Grass - root involvement implies the participation of the ordinary people of a community, organization or given society in a given activity (such as agriculture). Such people live in the rural communities where the nation's agricultural products are generated from. The agricultural economy of the nation is dependent upon the vast majority of such agrarian groups. Nigerian rural communities are endowed with youths between the ages of 13 and 30 who are highly energetic, strong, and mentally alert and who constitute more than 32% of the rural population which is nearly 45% of the country's population (Torimiro, 1999). Most of these youths are unemployed, and even those employed are not motivated

because of low remuneration, insecurity and low prospects for advancement.

Cattle are large bodied ruminants that feed on pastures and forages or fodder. They are mammals of the Family: *Bovidae*, Class: *Mammalia*, Genus: *Bos* and Species: *taurus* (for exotic breeds) and *indicus* (for local breeds). Cattle rearing in Nigeria is an old occupation which is traditionally practiced by Fulanis and Shuwa Arabs in northern Nigeria with an extremely few local villages in the southern Nigeria (Erebor, 2003). According to Nori et al. (2005), the asset base of this tribe of Nigerians is basically on cattle production done by each household on a relatively lower scale of production and as major source

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of livelihood. To the few who keep them, the livestock is taken as a source of security and independence through which each household member is able to meet his / her cultural obligations and assignment within the household (Sodiya, 2005). Ibarapa East local government Area (LGA) of Oyo state in south – western Nigeria seems to contain or harbor a reasonable number of these non – indigenes, who are into cattle rearing as a traditional heritage. The breeds of cattle so kept by them in Nigeria are the indigenous White Fulani, Kuri, Keteku, Adamawa, Red Bororo, Shuwa etc and Muturu (which is exotic, highly beefy cattle) which are often subjected to nomadic rearing by their owners.

In modern times, and in developed countries, cattle management or production has been mechanized and handled by large scale commercial farm owners or entrepreneurs. Even up till now, only a handful of Nigerian farmers fall within this category of mechanized cattle producer. In Nigeria, cattle are reared primarily for meat which is a veritable source of protein for humans, and for milk such as found with government – aided industries like Kano Dairy farm noted for large scale production of Milk, Yoghurt etc in the 80's; hides and skins; bones, hooves etc, all of which serve as raw materials for some agro – allied industries. These industries serve as income and employment opportunities for the people (youths inclusive) wherever they exist.

The concern about youth involvement in agriculture especially cattle rearing borders on the abundant physical energies, greater knowledge acquisition propensity they possess (Torimiro, 2008; Jibowo, 1989) and that they are the future of the nation. These youths could form a formidable human resource - base or work force for agriculture production. With specific reference to livestock production, Nigerian youths have shown negative attitudes towards cattle rearing among other segments of agriculture because they see it as labour intensive, long time investment, providing slow and low income opportunities and unattractive (Erebor, 2003; Adeiga, 1997). Other factors often given for the non – participation of youths in livestock agriculture include mass illiteracy, unstable government policies, lack of incentives, negative peer pressure effect and poor infrastructural state of the farming communities (Siyabola, 1997). Time is now ripe to mobilize and organize youths towards effective cattle rearing and productivity at this time when there is so much cry for putting more animal protein source into the average Nigerian diet (FAO, 2007). Current changes in the development of any area is so demanding that only the participation of energetic, creative, innovative and committed people can bring effective development. However, there is visible and enough evidence as reflected in the increased rural – urban migration records, massive involvement of Nigerian youths in motor cycle riding (both in the villages and in the cities), social vices, even prostitution etc among youths, which are indicators

that the vibrant energies and alacrity of these teeming youths are not adequately harnessed and tapped for agricultural production. For example, U S A which has a farming population of 5% which is a far cry from Nigeria's' 75% has been able to achieve food security for its nation (FAO, 2007) while Nigeria is still ravaging in poverty and hunger, unable to achieve this feat.

In view of the aforementioned, there is the need to study and analyze the involvement of youths in cattle rearing using the Ibarapa East LGA of Oyo state as a case study because cattle rearing appears to be an occupation of the people to be reckoned with in this area. The overall intention of which was to provide information on how to stimulate the youths of these study areas and Ogun state at large towards cattle rearing. The objectives of the study were to:

1. Describe the socio – economic characteristics of the youths in Ibarapa East LGAs of Oyo state
2. Determine the population and caliber of the youths involved in cattle rearing in this area
3. Determine their level of involvement in cattle rearing
4. Identify the factors that affect or determine the youth's participation in cattle rearing
5. Identify the constraints faced by youths who are into cattle rearing.

## Hypothesis

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the socio – economic characteristics (gender, age and educational status) of the rural youths and their involvement in cattle rearing.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the youth's present active participation in cattle rearing activities, government supply of inputs for cattle rearing and their involvement in cattle rearing.

## MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

### Sampling

The sample frame for this study are the rural youths within the age range of 13 to 30 years, resident in either Eruwa and / or Lanlate wards in Ibarapa East LGA of Oyo state. Almost all the cattle rearing households in these areas are represented in the study. The Ibarapa East LGA of Oyo state has a population of 118,226 people (NPC, 2006). It lies between latitude 7° to 32° N and longitude 3° to 25°E. It is bordered in the North by Iseyin; to the west by Odeda LGA in Ogun state; to the south by Iddo LGA which falls into Oyo state; and to the east by Igbo – ora in Oyo State. It consists of ten wards with many major towns out of which six, namely: Apode, Eruwa, Lanlate, Maya, Okolo, and Temidire were randomly selected for the study. Twenty – five (25) youths per town or community chosen were randomly selected thus giving a population size or respondents of 150 youths.

The choice of the study area is premised on the fact that: (i) It is a tropical rain forest area with abundant availability of grasses all

**Table 1.** Socio- economic characteristics of youths involved in cattle rearing (N = 150).

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	100	68
Female	48	32
<b>Age (years)</b>		
13 - 15	12	8.0
16 - 20	26	17.3
21 - 25	69	46.0
26 - 30	41	27.3
<b>30 years and above</b>	02	1.3
<b>Currently in school</b>		
Yes	33	22
No	117	78
<b>Educational status</b>		
Primary	54	36
Secondary	33	22
Colleges	10	6.7
Polytechnic	06	4.0
University	08	5.3
None	39	26
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	77	51.3
Married	73	48.7
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	47	31.3
Islamic	84	56.0
Traditional religion	12	8.0
None	07	4.7
<b>Number in the household</b>		
Self	11	7.3
2 - 5	62	41.3
6 - 10	69	46.0
11 and above	08	5.3

Source: Field Survey (2011).

year round for the cattle to feed on; (ii) It is an agrarian community fully engaged in farming activities; (iii) A large presence of some northern, migrant livestock farmers who keep varieties of animals ranging from cattle, sheep, goats etc. They are Fulanis or Kwarans who migrated and settled in these areas. Over the years they have made the place a base from where they take their herds out for grazing and return in the evening to sleep with their farm families or households.

#### Instrument

The instrument used in gathering relevant information from these randomly selected respondents was an interview schedule. The administration of the interview involved the researcher and two veterinarians from the Eruwa veterinary field station. They are those who the cattle rearers had been familiar with or used to because of

the veterinary services they have been receiving from them. These assistants had to do the initial introductory talk with them so as to gain their confidence, cooperation and this was readily given to the team. The interview schedule (instrument used) consists of thirty – five (35) items on personal characteristics of the youths who rear cattle (in Section (A)), their cattle rearing activities (Section B), perception of cattle rearing (Section C), and their awareness about agricultural extension services in their communities. In addition, an “Own a Cattle Club Registration Form” was designed and distributed to the respondents and their counterparts who are non – rearers of cattle to see if they can be enlisted into the club at the community level. The intention is to initiate a socialization programme through this club and get to sensitize the non – rearers to develop interest in cattle farming / business.

#### Statistical evaluation

The data collected on the socio – economic characteristics of the respondents and the opinion of these youth cattle rearers about cattle rearing (nomadic life) was expressed with descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and means so as to indicate the population of the youth under each group or category stated. Chi – square differential statistics was used to test the hypotheses raised. The presence or absence of relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables were established using this differential statistics. A four – point Likert scale of always participating, often participating, occasionally participating, never participating was used in determining the involvement of the respondents in a few identified cattle rearing activities. The result obtained was then used in obtaining the participation index showing the ranking the respondents accorded the different cattle rearing activities they participate in.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The socio – economic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The findings of the study indicate that 68% (N = 102) of the respondents were male youths, while 32% (N = 48) were female youths. Majority of these youths whose ages range from between 21 and 25 years (being 46%, N = 69) are the predominant cattle rearers in Ibarapa East L G A of Oyo State. This means that the visible nomadic rearing of cattle observed in this area of study is done by these age group because they are culturally used to it. However, it was found that 26% of the respondents had no formal education at all, 36% had primary education, 22% had secondary education, 6.7% completed colleges of education or agriculture, 4% from Polytechnic and 5.3% from the University. Earlier research reports, including that of UNESCO (2003) have shown that cattle rearing is time consuming and does not give room for school enrollment in that most youths in the rural areas are out of school. As if to lend credence to UNESCO's report, Ismail (2004) and Iro (2004) posited that virtually all cattle rearers, who invariably are found in the rural areas do not have formal education. This study in Ibarapa East LGA of Oyo State is in tandem with the latter assertion in the sense that 22 and 16% of the respondents are youths involved in cattle rearing and are found to possess secondary and post secondary education respectively.

**Table 2.** Respondents' perception about cattle rearing.

Respondent's perception	Frequency (f)	Percentage
Unattractive	52	35
Tradition	48	32
Long - time business	31	20.7
Laborious (Labour - intensive in nature)	09	06
Low – Income Output	06	04
None	04	02.7

Source: Field Survey (2011).

These few literate, cattle rearing youths, need maximum encouragement to remain in the business and serve as a motivation for other literate youths to join them. The previous impediment of innovation dissemination which had often been hinged on illiteracy of agricultural farmers, even with livestock farming could be overcome if these small groups are concentrated upon and are given high encouragement, incentives to enlarge and improve on their productivity, as well as their management methods. However, there is still the need to marry the interest of these few youths with the currently existing management style by encouraging improved or mechanization of cattle production or management, dairy farming as against the current roaming or nomadic system so as to enlist the interest of many more youths. By this, it means that the large scale cutting of legumes and grasses, packaging and storing them as bales of hays to be fed to the cattle in the confinement of their housing will enlist the interest of the youths more than what obtains now. This is because of the observed ease with which these activities will be carried out and the efficiency associated with productivity. The automation of the milking of the dairy cattle etc would serve as additional source of attraction and employment to the youths.

There is almost an equal proportion of singles (51.3%, N = 77) and married (48.5%, N = 73) cattle rearers in Ibarapa East LGA, a probable indication that most communities in the study area have come to terms with nomadic system and migrant cattle farmers by integrating with them and allowing their households that move with them to settle within the communities close to where they are keeping their cattle. For this reason, married cattle rearers in this area are on the increase. Their wives provide the needed supportive activities in cattle farming, like cleaning of animal house, sales of milk and milk products etc. In fact, on daily basis a lot of their wives hawk processed milk products mainly fermented milk especially the local cheese called "wara".

Table 2 represents the perception of the youths in Ibarapa East LGA about cattle rearing. 32% of the youths in this study area felt that cattle rearing are a traditionally – operated or engineered entrepreneur which according to 35 and 6% of these respondents is unattractive and also too labour intensive respectively.

This corroborates the previous submissions of Erebor (2003), Adeiga (1997) who posited that an extremely low proportion of youths to the tune of 6% consider cattle rearing as too laborious. This could be attributed to the fact that with the onset of modern technology and the modern management methods in use (intensive system) in the developed countries, the idea of following animals around in search of forage (nomadic system) is repulsive and seen as energy sapping and time consuming, by the youths, hence many more youths currently perceive cattle rearing as highly labour intensive. To them, the final output in form of revenue generated is not commensurate with the energy expended in rearing the animals.

Table 3 shows that 45.3% of the youths could not give any reason for their non – involvement in cattle rearing. However, the reasons given by the remaining 54.7% of the youths for their non – participation include (i) inadequacy or non - availability of forage or grasses for the cattle (being reason given by 19.3% of the respondents) as responsible for their having to take the cattle out in search of food (nomadic system), (ii) the prohibitive cost of stocking the cattle farm and the initial capital which the youths cannot afford on their own except they are aided or assisted., (iii) the land acquisition problem which poses a big problem for them as cattle farming requires a reasonable expanse of land for paddock and grazing. In spite of the indication of non-attractiveness of cattle rearing by 35% of the youths (Table 2) and the many reasons adduced for the non-participation in cattle rearing (Table 3), up to 15. 3% of the youths in Ibarapa east LGAs of Oyo state were found to be involved in all the varieties of the cattle – related activities (Table 4). Their order of priority in participation reveals that the youths' participation in direct sales of the cattle to buyers ranked highest and even higher than taking them round (that is, herding) in search of food. This indicates that the main reason for cattle pastoralism by the respondents is to feed the animals until they can be disposed or sold off to buyers for their economic asset acquisition.

Table 5 shows that 44% of the respondents lack exposure to enlightenment programmes on cattle rearing. However, 36.7% of the respondents admitted having

**Table 3.** Reasons for the non – involvement of the Youths in cattle rearing.

Constraints	Frequency ( f )	Percentage	Rank
None (No reason given)	68	45.3	1 <sup>st</sup>
Food availability	29	19.3	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Finance	23	15.3	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Sales	03	2.0	4 <sup>th</sup>
Veterinary needs and care	12	8.0	5 <sup>th</sup>
Land acquisition	11	7.5	6 <sup>th</sup>
Problems of pests and diseases	04	2.6	7 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: Field Survey (2011).

**Table 4.** Participation Index of the Youths in Cattle rearing in Ibarapa east L.G.A., Oyo State.

Variables(management practices)	Frequency (f)	Percentage	Ranking index order
Feeding (Herding)	17	11.3	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Cleaning	03	2.0	5 <sup>th</sup>
Milking	16	10.7	4 <sup>th</sup>
Sales	22	14.7	2 <sup>nd</sup>
All the above activities	23	15.3	1 <sup>st</sup>
None of the activities above	69	46	
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: Field Survey (2011).

**Table 5.** Respondents' sources of exposure to enlightenment programmes in cattle rearing (N = 150).

Variable	Frequency ( f )	Percentages
<b>Exposure to awareness programme(s) recently</b>		
Yes	55	36.7
No	66	44
Unsure	29	19.3
<b>Source(s) of the enlightenment</b>		
OYSADEP	14	9.3
Eruwa veterinary station	08	5.3
Not known	128	85.4
<b>Frequency of the enlightenment programme</b>		
Daily	04	2.7
Weekly	60	40*
Bi – weekly	01	9.7
Monthly	02	1.3
Occasionally	12	8.0
No response	71	47.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey (2011).

been exposed to awareness or enlightenment programmes organized by Oyo State Agricultural Development Programme (OYSADEP) and supported by the clinical treatment of their animals by the veterinary

field station in the area. The result of the study also shows that 40% of the respondents indicated that the extension and veterinary services are mostly provided on weekly basis.

**Table 6.** Relationship between personal characteristics (age, gender, educational status) and level of participation in cattle rearing.

Variable	Chi - square ( $\chi^2$ )	df	P – value	Decision
Gender	3.648	4	0.456	NS
Age	5.935	10	0.821	NS
Educational status	35.042	10	0.000	S

Source: Field Survey (2011).

**Table 7.** Relationship between present participation, government intervention (through supply) and involvement in cattle rearing.

Variable	Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	df	P value	Decision
Active participation in cattle rearing	28.969	4	0.000	S
Personal possession of a cattle	24.806	4	0.000	NS
Governments' supply of inputs for cattle rearing	15.674	14	0.334	S

Source: Field survey (2011).

## Hypothesis testing

Table 6 shows that respondents' gender ( $\chi^2 = 3.648$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) and age ( $\chi^2 = 5.935$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) had no significant association with their participation in cattle rearing. The hypothesis one is therefore upheld. However, respondents' educational level was found to have a significant association with cattle rearing ( $\chi^2 = 35.042$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ). This implies that the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the educational status of the youths and their participation in the cattle rearing is rejected.

Table 7 shows that significant association exists between the youths' present active participation in cattle rearing ( $\chi^2 = 28.969$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ), government supply of inputs for cattle rearing ( $\chi^2 = 15.674$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ), and their involvement in cattle rearing. The null hypothesis II is thus rejected.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results of this study have shown that the majority of those involved in cattle are males, while the females give supportive services such as cleaning, milking and sales of animal products. A few of the cattle farmers in the study areas have been found to possess post secondary (especially tertiary) education. The study also identified the constraints faced by those involved in cattle rearing as inadequacy of forage or feed all the year round, lack of capital, impediment posed by land acquisition system, pest and diseases, insufficient interaction of the cattle farmers with extension practice providers and veterinarians, lack of interest by the energetic, non-Fulani youths etc. The labour intensiveness and the stress involved in trekking a long distance in the bush with the

animals in an hazardous environment were the reasons given overtly and covertly by the youths for their non – attractiveness to cattle farming. The vibrant energy of these Nigerian or indigenous youths of the state (especially ages 15 to 30 years) in the rural areas where there are enormous hectares of unused land need to be redirected or rechanneled to cattle farming instead of the rural – urban migration to the city for ultimate settlement for unproductive, non – challenging, menial jobs like motor cycle riding which are prevalent nowadays. Efforts to tackle these constraints in addition to motivating and training the youths in modern livestock husbandry (like ranching, machine usage for cutting grasses, legumes and turning them to bales of hays and silage; milking machines etc) will assist in reducing youth unemployment and alleviate poverty in Nigeria.

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