

FARMERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCE OF MIGRANT LABOURERS FOR AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined farmers' perceptions and preference of migrant labourers for agricultural activities in Kogi state, Nigeria. An interview schedule was used in collection of primary data from respondents. A three-stage sampling procedure was used to sample a hundred and fifty households in the study area. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential analytical tools. Results show that 46% of the total respondents had farm size between 1-2 hectares, and that only 22.0% of the respondents employed migrant labourers on seasonal contracts while 78.0% entered into task agreements. About 43.33% of respondents have no secondary occupation while a sizable number (24.67%) of them are employed in the civil service; 11.33 % of the respondents had household size of between 1 and 4 people while 41.33 % had between 5-8 people. A fairly good proportion (47.33%) of the respondents had a household size greater than 8 people. Farmers' perception of migrant labourers is generally positive with statements 'Migrant labourers work longer than the local labourer', 'the availability of migrant labour has improved the supply of labour', 'local labour possess better knowledge of local cultural practices' ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. Results for farmers' preferences in engaging family, local and migrant labour in various agricultural operations showed that more than half (52.0%) of the respondents would prefer migrant labourers to handle their land clearing operations. In the same vein, 58.0%, 50.67% and 46.0% of the respondents would prefer to have migrant labourers handle their ridging/mounding, planting/sowing and harvesting operations. A positive perception of migrant labourers exist with a strong preference by farmers for migrant labour use for such activities as land clearing, seed planting, weeding and harvesting.

Keywords: Perception, preference, migrant labourers, agricultural activities

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian agricultural sector is scourged by many woes ranging from predominant use of crude implements to inadequate market information and land tenure problems with smallholder farmers as major casualties of these problems. Smallholder farming in Nigeria still predominantly relies on manual labour equipped with traditional hand tools, therefore having access to necessary labour for agricultural production directly affects the levels of

household farm outcomes and productivity. There are four traditionally recognized factors of production: land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship and while the advent of capitalism has entrenched capital as the critical factor, the role of labour as a factor of production cannot be overlooked in the modern rural society.

Labour supply is usually a function of the size of the population, the structure of the population, the preparation of those entering into the labour force and the numbers of hours the individuals work (Angba, 2003). Inadequate labour not only reduces the number of farming hands available for work, thereby leading to reduced crop and animal production in general (Hence, 2002), it also limits the scope of the farming activities that can be embarked on in this rural areas. Farmers can neither increase production nor expand their activities because of manpower shortages; new ventures will require additional labour supply. Their household labour may be unable to meet this supply.

According to Tanko *et al.* (2006), Nigeria's food deficient situation has been worsened by declining farm productivity owing to inefficient production techniques, poor resource base and insufficient farm labour supply among others. Labour has been found to constitute a large proportion of cost in the food crop production process in Nigeria and its productivity has become increasingly low because farm households largely comprised fairly old people and very young children coupled with the use of crude implements which impede their ability to raise yield of food crops and income which further entrench poverty.

In the same vein, lack of adequate farm labour could be a barrier to the adoption of more sustainable labour intensive farming system (Tegegne *et al.*, 2001). The strategy of labour intensive farming system offers the potential to increase productivity and farm incomes through the employment of intensive farm labour, yet it has been generally overshadowed instead by loss of labour to other activities. Therefore, given that smallholder farmers in Kogi state have inadequate resources, the limited access to labour may impose constraint on their production and management capacity. This combined with the growing phenomenon of off-farm employment among farming households necessitates examining farmers' perception of migrant labourers and their preference of migrant labour for different agricultural activities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Yagba Federal constituency (Yagba East, Yagba West and Mopa-Muro Local Government Areas) of Kogi state. The local governments lie 8.1378° N, 5.6879° E, 8.3145° N, 5.5197° E and 8.1355° N, 5.8565° E respectively. The study area covered Makutu-Isanlu, Odo-Ere and Mopa which are the three local government headquarters respectively and other villages cum towns in the local governments. The population for this study comprised all farming households in these local government areas of Kogi state. The sample size consists of a hundred and fifty respondents drawn from the local governments. An interview schedule was the instrument of data collection. A three-stage sampling procedure was used in the selection of respondents. First was a purposive selection of three local governments because of the preponderance of migrant labourers. Second was a random selection of five communities each from a list of the communities in the three local governments. The third stage involved a purposive selection of ten respondents each from the selected villages. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential analytical tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of respondents based on socioeconomic characteristics

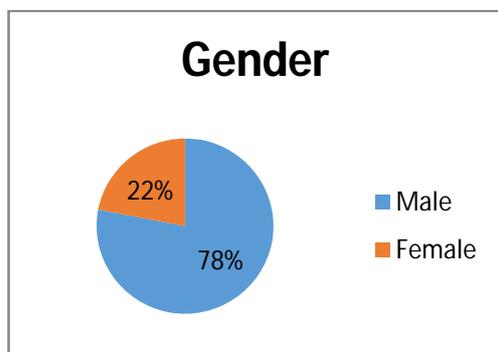


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents according to gender.

Source: Field survey, 2015

Figure 1 reveals that majority (78%) of the respondents were male while females constitute 22%. This inequality could be attributed to the fact that household heads were the ones mostly selected for the study and were in most cases, males (because of the patriarchal system) except in the case of widows. Various studies (Onu, 2006; Idrisa *et al.*, 2007) indicated that gender plays significant role in accessing production resources.

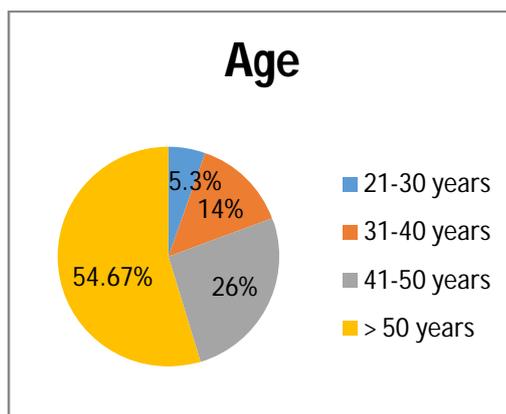


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents according to age.

Source: Field survey, 2015

As indicated in the figure above, more than half (54.67%) of the respondents were above fifty years, 26% were between the age of 41-50 while only a total of 19.33% were between the age of 21-40. This result indicates that the aged abound in their numbers in the study area. The amount of energy available for farm work to farmers also declines with age.

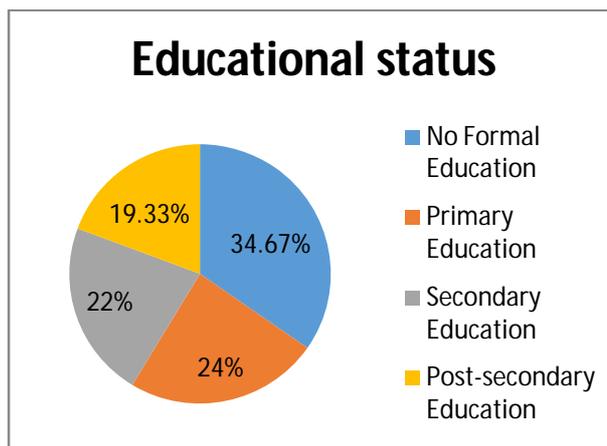


Figure 3: Distribution of respondents according to Educational Status.

Source: Field survey, 2015

The distribution of respondents into the educational levels revealed that 34.67% had no formal education. About 24% of them had primary education, while about 22% others had received some form of secondary school education. The remaining 19.33% had one form of post-secondary education or the other.

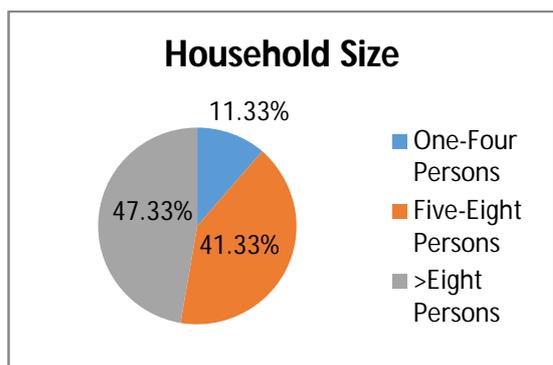


Figure 4: Distribution of respondents according to Household size.

Source: Field survey, 2015

The figure shows that 11.33 % of the respondents had household size of between 1 and 4 people while 41.33 % had between 5-8 people. A fairly good proportion (47.33%) of the respondents had a household size greater than 8 people. Okoye et al (2008) and Udensi et al (2011) reported that a relatively large household size is more likely to provide more labour required for farm operations such as weed control, fertilizer application.

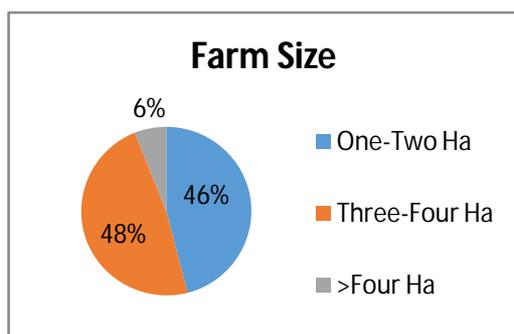


Figure 5: Distribution of respondents according to farm size.

Source: Field survey, 2015

It could be observed from the figure that 46% of the total respondents had farm size between 1-2 hectares while another 48% of the respondents had between 3-4 hectares. This is a finding consistent with those of Adekunle and Okunlola (2000), Olagunju and Ogunniyi (2006) that majority of the farmers in Nigeria have relatively small cultivated land areas. Most Nigerian farmers are small scale farm holders and this has been a contributory factor to the undeveloped state of agricultural development in developing countries.

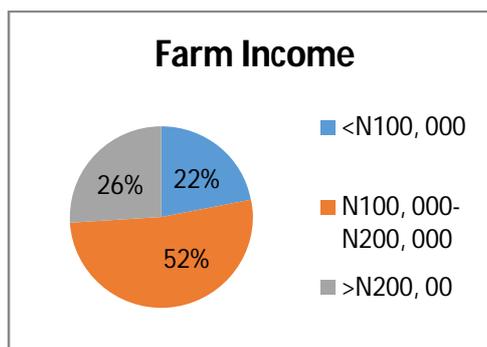


Figure 6: Distribution of respondents according to farm income.

Source: Field survey, 2015

The result of the farm income of the respondents showed that about 22% had less than N100,000 as annual farm income. About 52% had farm income of between N100,000 and N200,000, while 26% had above N200,000 as income from farming. Inadequate resource base is one of the major constraints facing majority of small-scale farmers who constitute the majority of farmers in developing countries, including Nigeria (Bawa and Ani, 2015).

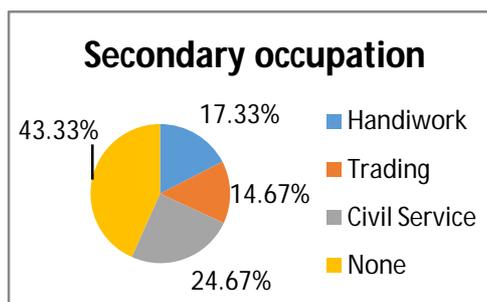


Figure 7: Distribution of respondents according to secondary occupation.

Source: Field survey, 2015

About 43.33% of them have no secondary occupation while a sizable number (24.67%) of them are employed in the civil service. 17.33% and 14.67% of them are involved in trading and handiwork respectively. This buttresses the point that farming is the major occupation of rural dwellers (Ekong, 2003).

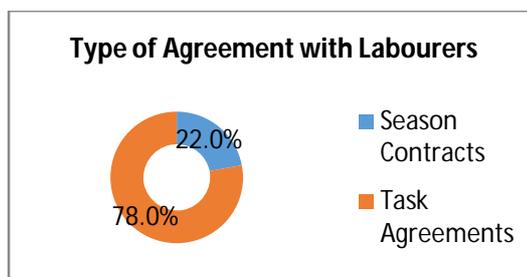


Figure 8: Distribution according to the type of agreement with migrant labour.

Source: Field survey, 2015

The figure above shows that only 22.0% of the respondents employed migrant labourers on seasonal contracts while 78.0% entered into task agreements. Takane (2008) asserted that wealthy farmers are more likely to enter into seasonal contracts with labourers and that they are used for specific crops, mainly cash crops, as well as for any farm task, depending on the agreement made between the employer and labourer. Based on the above, it is implied that there are not many wealthy cash crop farmers in the study area.



Figure 9: Distribution according to the cost of season contracts.

Source: Field survey, 2015

The figure illustrates that of the 33 respondents who had entered into seasonal contracts, the cost of the seasonal contracts was between 100,000- 200,000 Naira for 24 of them representing 72.73% while the cost was greater than 200,000 Naira for the remaining 27.27%. The cost is most likely the inhibiting factor to the employment of migrant labourers for a whole season.

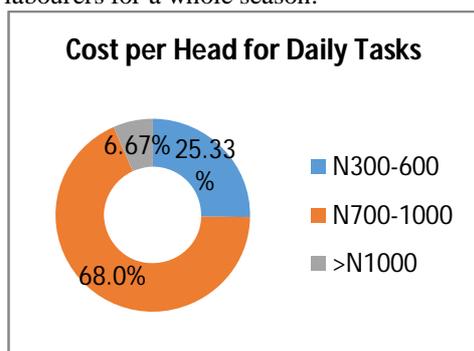


Figure 10: Distribution of respondents according to the cost per head for daily tasks.

Source: Field survey, 2015

From the figure, it could be observed that none of the respondents had paid less than N300 to migrant labourers for daily tasks. About 25.33% of the respondents stated that they pay between N300-600 while 68.0% paid between N700-1000 to migrant labourers for daily engagement. Also, 6.67% stated that they paid more than 1000 Naira to migrant labourers for daily engagement. The variation may

be due to the fact that there are different agricultural operations under the umbrella 'daily task'.

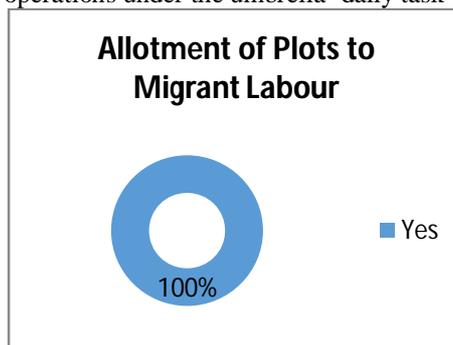


Figure 11: Distribution of respondents according to the allotment of plots to migrant labourers on season contracts.

Source: Field survey, 2015

The figure above shows that all (100%) of the respondents who entered into seasonal agreements with migrant labourers provided plots to them for their private use. This suggests that workers have a weekly free day or regular free time which they can devote to their own private farms. Abila (2012) stated that hired labourers on contracts in Oyo state usually have Sundays as the weekly free day.

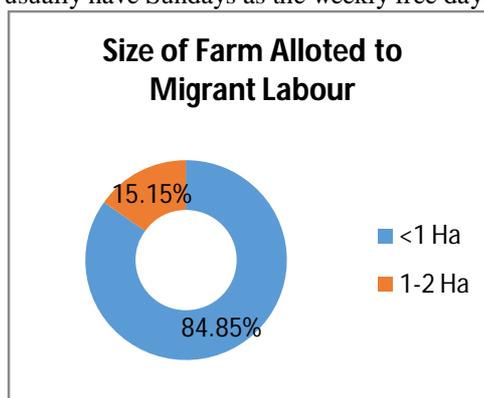


Figure 12: Distribution according to the size of farm allotted to migrant labour.

Source: Field survey, 2015

Majority of the respondents (84.85%) provided less than one hectare of farmland to migrant labourers while 15.15% provided between 1-2 hectares to the migrant labourers on season contracts for their private cultivation. The small size of farmland given indicates that the plots are granted for subsistence purposes.

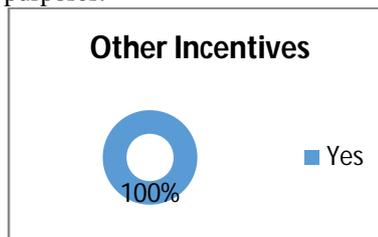


Figure 13: Distribution of respondents according to the giving of incentives.

Source: Field survey, 2015

All (100.0%) of the respondents who had entered into season contracts also provided additional incentives to the migrant labourers. This corroborates

the findings of Takane (2008) and Abila (2012) that migrant labourers are incentivized along with the agreed payment.

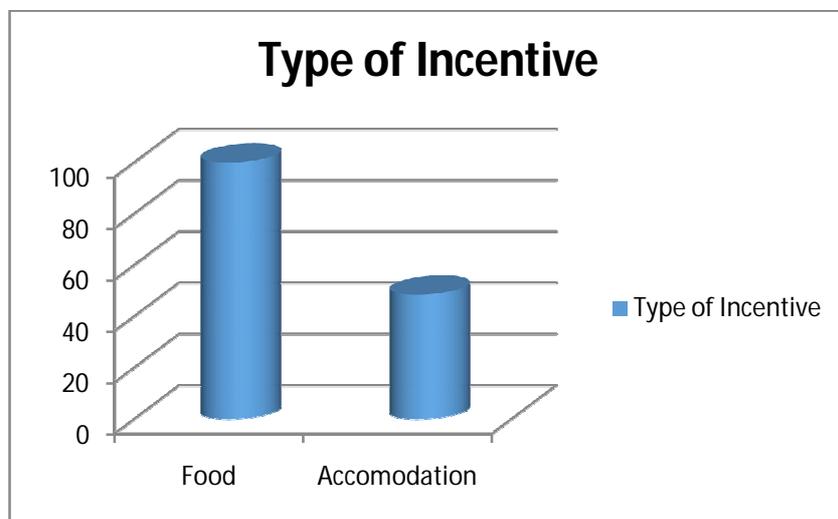


Figure 14: Distribution of respondents according to the type of additional incentives given.

Source: Field survey, 2015

All (100.0%) of the respondents who entered into season contracts with migrant labourers provided feeding while a little less than half (48.48%) provided accommodation to migrant labourers on

season contracts. This signifies that seasonal labourers received their payments both in cash and in kind.

Table 1: Farmers' perception of migrant labourers

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Mean Square	Mean Rank
1. The availability of migrant labourers has improved the supply of labour	87	34	13	16	3.28	2
2. The presence of migrant labourers has regulated the wage rate	47	32	41	30	2.64	8
3. Migrant labourers work longer than the local labourer	91	28	19	12	3.32	1
4. Migrant labourers have increased the drug menace in the society	18	36	69	27	2.30	9
5. Migrant labourers are more trustworthy than local labour	46	59	31	14	2.91	4
6. Migrant labourers assault female farmers	15	18	39	78	1.8	11
7. Most farmers prefer migrant labour to local labour	32	32	17	69	2.18	10
8. Migrant labourers perform tasks better than local labour	48	63	11	28	2.87	5
9. Local labour possess better knowledge of local cultural practices	68	42	35	05	3.15	3
10. Language is a barrier to the use of migrant labour	64	28	31	27	2.86	6
11. Migrant labourers are more readily available than local labourers	51	36	24	39	2.66	7

Source: Field survey, 2015

Table 1 presents the responses to statements depicting general perceptions of migrant labourers. "Migrant labourers work longer than the local labourer, the availability of migrant labour has improved the supply of labour, local labour possess better knowledge of local cultural practices" ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. Also, 'most farmers

prefer migrant labour to local labour', 'Migrant labourers have increased the drug menace in the society', 'Migrant labourers assault female farmers' ranked 9th, 10th, 11th respectively. It is deduced therefore that there is a generally positive perception of migrant labourers.

Farmers' preferences in engaging family, local and migrant labour in various agricultural operations.

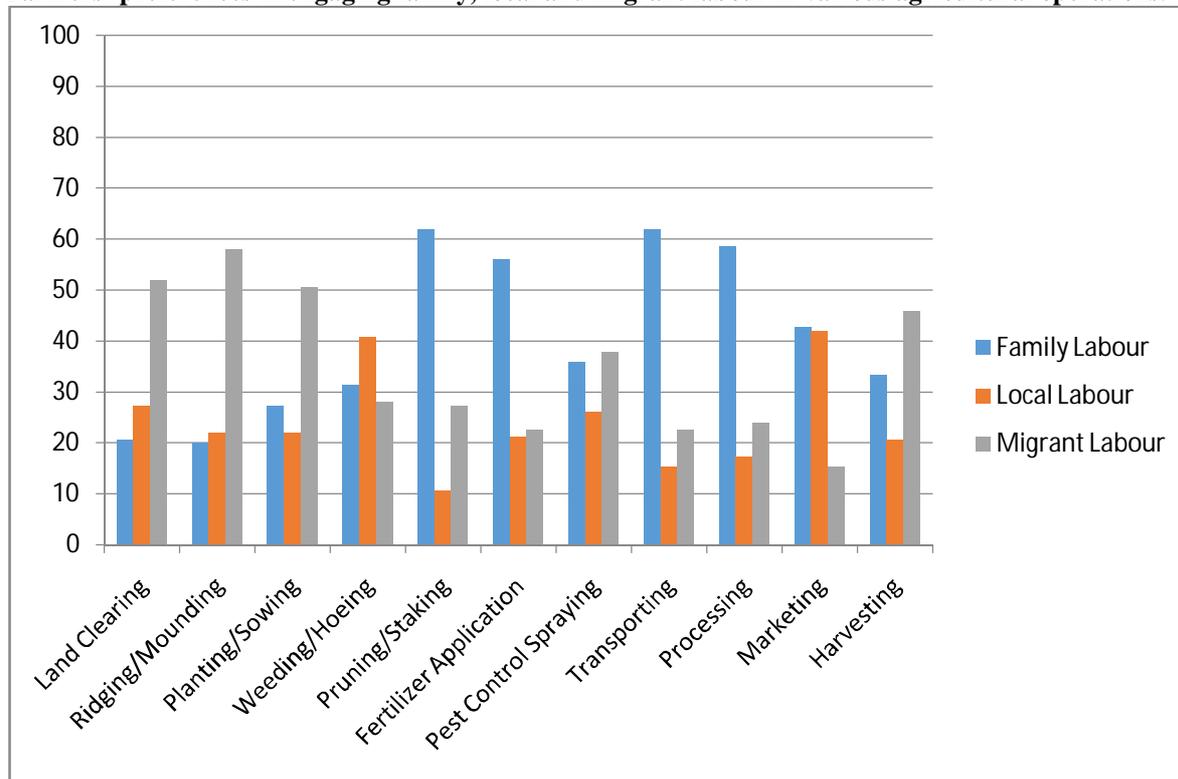


Figure 15: Distribution of farmers' preferences in engaging family, local and migrant labour in various agricultural operations.

Source: Field survey, 2015

The figure displays farmers' preferences in engaging family, local and migrant labour in various agricultural operations. If all else was equal, more than half (52.0%) of the respondents would prefer migrant labourers to handle their land clearing operations. In the same vein, 58.0%, 50.67% and 46.0% of the respondents would prefer to have migrant labourers handle their ridging/mounding, planting/sowing and harvesting operations. This substantiates the findings of Oluyole (2013) who reported that hired labour was mainly used for land clearing; seed planting/sowing weeding/hoeing and harvesting. On the contrary, among the respondents, 62.0%, 56.0%, 62.0% and 58.67% preferred the use of family labour for pruning/staking, fertilizer application, transporting and processing respectively. This is in line with the findings of Akanni and Dada (2012) who submitted that farmers considered household/family labour sufficient for some agricultural operations. It could be implied that the cost and availability may preclude the use of hired

local or migrant labour for some agricultural activities.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, it is concluded that a generally positive perception of migrant labourers exist and there is a strong preference by farmers for migrant labour use for such activities as land clearing, seed planting, weeding and harvesting. The provision of farm machines would significantly reduce the dependence of farmers on migrant labourers, specifically and human labour, generally.

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