

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS ON COLLEGE SOCIAL SUPPORT ENVIRONMENT TOWARDS FARM ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS: EVIDENCE FROM FOLK DEVELOPMENT COLLEGES IN TANZANIA

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Abstract

Supporting the development of entrepreneurial behaviour and competencies among youth is currently critical as many governments are looking for methods of achieving job creation and economic growth. However, in achieving that, social support is vital among youth during the process of choosing an occupation. It involves provision of tangible, informational and emotional resources. This paper aimed at assessing the youth perception on college social support environment towards farm entrepreneurial intentions. Two specific objectives that were addressed in this study include: first, to identify the levels of youth perception on college social support environment towards youth farm entrepreneurship, and second, to determine the relationship between perceived college social support environment on farm entrepreneurship and youth farm entrepreneurial intention. The study employed cross-sectional design and 300 respondents were randomly selected from three Folk Development Colleges offering agricultural programmes. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics where percentages, frequencies, mean, standard deviation and Somers's D Model were specifically employed. The findings generally show that youth have favourable perception towards college social support environment for farm entrepreneurial intentions. The approval from friends provided highest influence while direct support from college had the lowest influence on intention to farm entrepreneurship. It can be concluded that the social support environment in FDCs contribute positively to youth farm entrepreneurial intention. The support is more in the form of moral and social support rather than material support. It is recommended that colleges should design and establish various collaborative programmes that make social agents active in supporting farm entrepreneurship.

Key words: Perception, social support environment, youth, Folk Development Colleges, farm entrepreneurial intention, unemployment

1. INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognized that social interactions can influence a person's occupational choices through the stock of knowledge and experiences available in the community (Kew, 2015; Giannetti and Andrei, 2004). The significant change elicited by social agents depends on the kind of social support demonstrated by agents. Nurullah (2012) conceptualized social support as emotional, informational and practical assistance from significant others; that support may be actually received or simply perceived to be available when needed. In the developing countries, agriculture provides various opportunities for employment but is not seen by the youth as a viable income source and often the youth view agriculture as employment of last resort since they consider becoming a farmer as condemning oneself to subsistence and poverty (Heinert and Roberts, 2016; Kusi et al., 2014; Jochaud, 2013; Zagata and Lostak, 2013).

Basically, the introduction of entrepreneurship courses into agricultural colleges aimed at producing graduates with competencies, capabilities and mindsets to work in the agriculture sector. Yet, youth still perceive farm related activities as characterized by drudgery, minimal financial returns and therefore meant for the least educated in society (Bojang and Ndeso-Atanga 2013; Amegnaglo et al., 2014; Eissler and Brennan, 2015). Emerole et al. (2014) revealed that 35.0% of graduates had poor

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perception of agricultural business and intention in agriculture. Studies conducted in FDCs that offer agricultural education and training have also indicated similar trends of disinterest in farm entrepreneurship as few of them joined a farming career (URT and IIEP, 2011; Christian, 2002). In the face of growing youth unemployment, poverty in rural areas and slow growth of agriculture there is a need of entrepreneurship in farming for more employment and profitability of agriculture (Bairwa *et al.*, 2014; White, 2012; ILO, 2014). The negative perception of the agricultural graduates raises a debate on whether the social learning environment in agricultural colleges supports the youth farm entrepreneurial intention.

Theoretically, normative beliefs contribute to a person's intention toward a planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The normative belief is formed due to close interaction with important referent persons. In the training institutions, these referent persons include tutors, friends, colleagues and other administrative supporting staff. Rodrigues (2012) posits that individual acceptance of a given behaviour depends on his or her perception within the context of the environment in the process of interaction; such social environment may be pleasant or unpleasant. Similarly, Lent *et al.* (2000) in their Social Cognitive Career theory categorized the social support into positive and negative support.

In analysing the support of teachers as among the components of the social environment, Dollisso (2010) surprisingly found that only ten percent of agriculture teachers indicated that they always saw business opportunities and desired to establish and become bosses of their own businesses. Agri-entrepreneurship mentoring for young graduates is not carried out by successful agribusinesses and that the graduates get less moral and material support (Uneze, 2013; Kashani *et al.*, 2015). Corps (2011) found that teachers largely emphasize compliance with the norms especially on examination and test scores rather than building skills and values through projects. Ruskovaara and Pihkala (2013) found that teachers who have no entrepreneurship education skills used lightweight methods such as discussions and ready-made materials, whereas the application of more demanding project work and entrepreneurship games was nearly non-existent. In the same vein, Pyburn (2015) identified that youth developed neither the interest nor the necessary skills to effectively engage in agricultural activities because of unfocused and low quality curriculum which lacked soft skills.

On the other hand, Falck *et al.* (2009) noted that the influence of peers at school is more pronounced than neighbourhood effects in one's future occupation. Colleagues, even through informal conversations, can help individuals to come out as an entrepreneur to launch a new venture (Akhter and Sumi, 2014). However, Lewis *et al.* (2012) found that agricultural education courses, parental and teacher support and encouragement, resources, and opportunities for awards and recognition did not seem to influence student supervised agricultural experience participation. In addition, Sadi *et al.* (2013) found that about 73% of students faced initial challenge in convincing their parents, relatives and friends to start an enterprise in agriculture sector as they consider it as the most risky option. They further noted that ignoring the needs of the labour market by agricultural colleges and universities were the main obstacles to youth agricultural entrepreneurial intention.

Jacob and Ariya (2015) observed that more than 75% of the students claimed that the entrepreneurship training has not prepared them for self-reliance after graduation and preferred a government job. There was a negative relationship between entrepreneurial interest and technical knowledge in poultry farming, which implied that the entrepreneurial interest was not increasing with technical knowledge (Inyang and Eko, 2015). In schools where agriculture is not taught very few would make it a career of choice; however, where agriculture is taught, students were generally favourable in their overall attitudes to agriculture, but there was only moderate indication that they would pursue the field further as a career (Ramdwar and Ganpat, 2010).

In contrast, Farah and Abu (2014) found that the majority of students from four agriculture institutes are encouraged by their social environment to get involved in agriculture entrepreneurship. Esters and Bowen (2004) further found that the agriculture teacher has an influence on student enrolment to urban agriculture although the teacher is ranked second to parent/guardian. Guthrie (2013) found that 66.7% of respondents strongly agreed that their FFA advisor and/or agriculture teacher influenced

their decision to participate in entrepreneurial Supervised Agricultural Experience. Tateh *et al.* (2014) found that the respondents' entrepreneurial intentions are positively correlated with their social learning (knowledge and experience, family upbringing) and personality traits.

Moreover, Hashemi *et al.* (2012) found that the perception of agricultural personnel about their organizational commitment had positive effects on their entrepreneurial behaviour. Saeed *et al.* (2014) found that perceived educational support exerted the highest influence on entrepreneurial intention via self-efficacy. Rahmawati and Suranto (2015) found that the provision of material in the field of entrepreneurship through an incubator programme improved mental independence. Also Gelard and Salehe (2011) found a significant relationship between entrepreneurial intention of the students and perceived educational support. Eesley and Wang (2015) observed that entrepreneurship mentorship has significant relationship on early stage of ventures as a career choice.

Studies have shown that social agents (friends, colleagues, teachers and other staffs) differed in their perception on their support to youth farm entrepreneurial intention (Dolliso, 2010; Farah and Abu 2014; Lewis *et al.*, 2014; Sadi *et al.*, 2013). Also, the theoretical analysis has shown that the context or environment has an impact on the kind of influence produced by the agents. Therefore, this paper aimed to assess the influence of college social support environment on youth farm entrepreneurial intention among FDC final year certificate students. The colleges were chosen because they offer agricultural training that aims at preparing them to be self-reliant citizens. The specific objectives were: First, to determine the perception of youth on college social support environment towards youth farm entrepreneurship; and secondly, to determine the relationship between perceived college social support environment on farm entrepreneurship and youth farm entrepreneurial intention.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 The study area

The study was conducted in three selected Folk Development Colleges from three regions namely: Mamtukuna (Kilimanjaro Region), Monduli (Arusha Region) and Chisale (Dodoma Region). These FDCs were selected for this study because one of their major objectives of training is to equip the learners with the knowledge and skills that would enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant based on their local situations. The three colleges were selected purposively because of the similarity in the nature of the agricultural programmes which were blended with entrepreneurship courses. The study population was all final year certificate students pursuing agriculture programmes.

2.2 Study design, sampling procedures and sample size

A cross-sectional design was employed in this study. It was fit for this study because the data were collected from three colleges which are located in three different regions at one point in time. A sample size of 300 students was created from an estimated population of 1200 from the three colleges using the formula by Israel (2009):

$$n = N / (1 + N(e^2)) \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where n is the sample size, N population size, e is the level of precision. The formula assumes that $p=.05$ (maximum variability). The desired confidence level is 95% and the degree of precision/sampling error accepted is $\pm 5\%$. Therefore $n = 1200 / (1 + 1200(0.05)^2) = 300$

Every element in the sample was selected by using simple random sampling technique, as this procedure considers the sampling elements to have homogenous characteristics (all are finalists and their courses are blended with entrepreneurship courses). The sample was drawn from admission records/directories.

2.3 Data collection

Three data collection techniques were employed in this study. These include: questionnaire survey, focus group discussions and interviews. Pre-testing of questionnaires was conducted before it was administered, whereby the questionnaire forms were distributed to 12 respondents, equivalents to 4 per cent of a sample size. Few unfamiliar terms were noted, whereby the researcher replaced them with more familiar terms. A total of 300 questionnaire forms were administered but properly filled

questionnaire forms were 294 (98.0%). Six focus group discussion sessions were organized, each consisting of seven students selected through nomination strategy. Also six college staff (two staff per college) and two Ministry of Health, Community Development Gender, Elderly and Children officials were purposively selected and involved in interviews based on their role, knowledge and experience. The perception of college social support was assessed by eleven items. The eleven items were measured on 5 level Likert scale labelled as strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree and strongly agree. The five points were scored as 1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. Likewise, the intention was assessed by nine items developed under the guidance of Linan and Chen (2006) and Malebana (2012), and measured on 5 level Likert scale labelled as strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree and strongly agree.

2.4 Data processing and analysis

Both objective one and two of this study were analysed by using descriptive statistics and content analysis. Specifically, respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and youth perception on the college social support environment towards farm entrepreneurial intention were analysed by using frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. The differences in perceived college social support environment towards entrepreneurship across sex were analysed by using Mann Whitney U model. The relationship between college social support environment and youth farm entrepreneurial intentions were analysed by using Somers' D model.

Somers' D of Y with respect to X is defined as $D(Y/X) = \tau(X,Y)/\tau(X,X)$(2)

Where: Somers' D-coefficient of association for asymmetrical variables; X- independent variable pair which include college social support environment factors and Y- dependent variable pair which is intention factors. If Somers' D coefficient $> 0 \leq + 1$, the variable is regarded to have impact on intention. The choice of Somers' D is based on the central role it plays in rank statistics for non-parametric (Newson, 2013).

2.5 Reliability and validity

Internal reliability of items for self-administered questionnaire was measured by Cronbach alpha as defined by Fami (2000): $\alpha = K/K - 1 \times S_T^2 - \sum S_I^2$ (3)

Where α (alpha) is the coefficient; K the number of items; S_T^2 is the total variance of the sum of the item and the S_I^2 variance of individual item. The positive alpha coefficient ranging from 0.7 to 1 was taken into consideration. Pair-wise deletion method was applied in performing the reliability analysis. To obtain the required alpha results some of the items that were in the questionnaire were deleted. The reliability test Cronbach alpha coefficient for perceived college social support items assessed is 0.746 while for entrepreneurial intention is 0.870. To ensure that the instrument covered all the components of information, content validity was determined through reviewing previous studies in assessing the adequacy, accuracy of what it measures. The questionnaire items that measured farm entrepreneurial intention and college social support environment were adopted, modified and fixed to the context from work of Liñán and Chen (2006), Ajzen (1991) and Malebana (2012).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The basic social and demographic characteristics of respondents studied include age, sex and programme pursued. Findings show that the mean age of the respondents was 20.6 years, the lowest being 15 years, and highest age was 31 years with a standard deviation of 2.439. The average age falls within the age criterion of youth by the United Nations definition. It is also according to the operational definition of youth as used in this study. The distribution by sex shows that there were 11.6% more females than males as shown in Table 1. The respondents involved in the study were in two main groups. The first group was those who specialized in animal husbandry and the second group is those who studied general agriculture. The second group did not specialize because they are not sitting for Vocational Education Training Authority (VETA) exams which have enrolment

limitation as per Form Four national examination results. In the analysis, the two groups were combined since they are taught using FDC and VETA curricula.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Type of variable	Sub items in the variable	Frequencies	Percent (%)
Sex	Male	130	44.2
	Female	164	55.8
	Total	294	100
Programme pursued	General Agriculture	73	24.8
	Animal husbandry	221	75.2
	Total	294	100

3.2 The perceived college social support environment

The perceived college social support environment for youth engagement in farm entrepreneurship was assessed. The specific areas in college social support environment that were assessed include: Knowledge about people who are farm entrepreneurs in college environment; approval of the decision to engage in farm entrepreneurship by tutors, friends, colleagues and other people who were part of the college environment; valuation of farm entrepreneurship career from tutors, friends, colleagues and other people who are in the college environment; and knowledge about the support provided for start-up in the college environment. All these were measured by eleven items as shown in Table 2.

The findings show that item 1-7 received higher ratings of above 75% when the scores of agree and strongly agree scales are combined. The seven items which received higher ratings are mainly measuring moral and social support from the college environment. For example approval from friends received the highest ratings. This means that the environment is socially supportive for youth to engage in farm entrepreneurship. However, in terms of material support such as financial support for start-ups, the college environment is less supportive. Also some social support items received lower ratings. The lowest rating from the respondents was on the items that deal with support from the college. In general respondents have favourable perception of the college social support environment toward farm entrepreneurship. The findings are in line with other studies such as Farah and Abu (2014) and Tateh *et al* (2014), who found positive perception of the social support environment towards farm entrepreneurship.

Table 2: Perceived college social support towards farm entrepreneurship of the respondents

	College social support attributes	Frequencies	SD%	D%	U%	A%	SA%	Total
1	I personally know someone who is farm entrepreneur in my college environment	294	3.7	8.2	13.6	40.5	34	100
2	I have a friend who is farm entrepreneur	294	0.7	12.6	9.5	40.8	36.4	100
3	I personally know other people who are farm entrepreneurs	294	0.3	11.9	10.5	39.8	37.4	100
4	My immediate class teachers/tutors would approve my decision to start farm enterprise	294	2.0	6.1	8.2	50.0	33.7	100
5	My friends would approve of my decision to start farm enterprise	294	1.4	2.0	14.6	45.6	36.4	100
6	My colleagues would approve of my decision to start farm enterprise	294	1.7	4.8	16.7	50.7	26.2	100
7	My teacher/tutors value farm entrepreneurship above other activities	294	2.0	6.5	15.6	43.5	32.3	100
8	I can rely on my teachers/tutors for assistance in starting farm enterprise	294	7.1	9.2	25.2	36.1	22.4	100
9	Our college provides good support for people wanting to start farm enterprise	294	17.1	16.0	20.7	29.7	16.3	100
10	I know different types of support that are offered to people who want to start their farm enterprise	294	5.8	9.2	15.0	45.2	24.8	100
11	It would be easy for me to access support from our college	294	12.6	11.9	20.1	33.7	21.8	100

Note: SD-Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, U-Unsure, A-Agree and SA-Strongly Agree

An index was developed to determine the overall youth perception for social support environment towards farm entrepreneurship. As shown in Table 2 the Likert scale consists of 11 items and five response options with their respective weights reading as Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Unsure (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5). With respect to respondents' responses, the total minimum score for the eleven items was 11, the total neutral or unsure scores for nine items was 33 and total maximum score for the nine items was 55. In developing the index the researcher grouped the strongly disagree and disagree score and labelled them as no social support, unsure was labelled as undecided and agree and strongly agree were grouped as there is social support. The findings through descriptive statistics as provided in Table 3 show that majority of youth recognize the presence of social support in the college environment.

Table3: Overall perception of social support towards youth farm entrepreneurship

Social environmental support indicators	Frequency	Percent (%)
No social support	31	10.5
Undecided	11	3.7
There is social support	252	85.7
Total	294	100.0

Mann Whitney test was conducted to assess whether there was a significant difference between male and female respondents in terms of perceived college social support environment for youth engagement in farm entrepreneurship. The findings in Table 4 show that there are no significant differences for ten out of the eleven items. Only one item is significant at 5% level of significance,

which is “I can rely on my teachers/tutors for assistance in starting farm enterprise” with mean ranking value of 158.12 for males and 139.08 for females, and their respective p-value was 0.047. Although in ten items no significant differences were observed, the mean rankings for males was higher than for females in nine items. With higher scores in descriptive statistics, it implies that the college social support environment favours both males and females in engaging in farm entrepreneurship.

Table 4: The differences in perceived college social support environment by sex

	College social support environment items	Sex	Mean Rank	P. values
1	I personally know someone who is farm entrepreneur in my college environment	Male	145.76	0.741
		Female	148.88	
2	I have a friend who is farm entrepreneur	Male	152.65	0.325
		Female	143.42	
3	I personally know other people who are farm entrepreneurs	Male	147.96	0.930
		Female	147.13	
4	My immediate class teachers/tutors would approve my decision to start farm enterprise	Male	149.03	0.763
		Female	146.28	
5	My friends would approve of my decision to start farm enterprise	Male	139.37	0.114
		Female	153.95	
6	My colleagues would approve of my decision to start farm enterprise	Male	148.21	0.890
		Female	146.94	
7	My teacher/tutors value farm entrepreneurial above other activities	Male	154.00	0.213
		Female	142.35	
8	I can rely on my teachers/tutors for assistance in starting farm enterprise	Male	158.12	0.047*
		Female	139.08	
9	Our college provides good support for people wanting to start farm enterprise	Male	149.50	0.712
		Female	145.91	
10	I know different types of support that are offered to people who want to start their farm enterprise	Male	151.11	0.492
		Female	144.64	
11	It would be easy for me to access support from our college	Male	151.59	0.449
		Female	144.26	

Note * Significant at 5% level of significance

3.3 The relationship between college social support environment and youth farm entrepreneurial intention.

The factors for college social support were developed from the component of subjective norm as used by Ajzen in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Somers' D test was used to assess the relationship between college social support environment and youth farm entrepreneurial intention, since the data for both college social support environment and intention are at ordinal scale (categorical forms) which does not follow the assumption of normality. The findings are presented in Table 5.

The findings show that for all nine items measuring intention, significant items at 5% surpass insignificant items against college social support environment meaning that there is significant and positive relationship between the two variables. However, the findings further show that there is systematic pattern for non-significant items specifically for the pairs which involved item 1-8 for intention items against item 8-11 for college social support items. This implies that the colleges did not provide direct support for entrepreneurship in farming while friends, colleagues, tutors and other people morally supported their intention to farm entrepreneurship. Since coefficient of Somers' D ranges from 0.0 to 0.3, therefore the strength of relationship ranges from very weak to moderately weak. The finding is consistent with Eesley and Wang (2015) and Salehe (2011) who found significant relationship between social support and farm entrepreneurial intention.

Table 5: The relationship between farm entrepreneurial intention and college social support

Intention items	Social Support Environment attributes*										
	S ₁	S ₂	S ₃	S ₄	S ₅	S ₆	S ₇	S ₈	S ₉	S ₁₀	S ₁₁
I am ready to do anything to be a farm entrepreneur	W	W	W	W	M	W	W	ns	ns	ns	ns
My professional goal is to be a farm entrepreneur	ns	W	W	W	W	W	W	ns	ns	ns	ns
I will make every effort to start and run my own farm enterprise	ns	W	ns	M	W	W	W	ns	ns	ns	ns
I am determined to create a farm enterprise in the future	ns	W	ns	W	M	W	M	ns	ns	ns	ns
I do not have doubts about ever starting my own farm enterprise	ns	ns	ns	W	W	W	W	ns	ns	ns	ns
I have very seriously thought of starting farm enterprise in the future	ns	ns	ns	W	W	W	W	ns	ns	ns	ns
I have strong intention of ever starting a farm enterprise in the future	ns	W	W	W	M	M	W	ns	ns	ns	ns
My qualification has contributed positively towards my interest of starting a farm enterprise	W	M	W	M	M	M	M	ns	ns	ns	ns
I had a strong intention to start my own farm enterprise before I started my study	W	W	ns	W	W	W	W	W	W	ns	W

Note: MW Significant at 5%; M moderate Weak (> 0.2) and W very weak (<0.2) ns not significant

*(S₁) I personally know someone who is farm entrepreneur in my college environment. (S₂) I have a friend who is farm entrepreneur. (S₃) I personally know other people who are farm entrepreneurs. (S₄) My immediate class teachers/tutors would approve my decision to start farm enterprise. (S₅) My friends would approve of my decision to start farm enterprise. (S₆) My colleagues would approve of my decision to start farm enterprise. (S₇) My teacher/tutors value farm entrepreneurial above other activities. (S₈) I can rely on my teachers/tutors for assistance in starting farm enterprise. (S₉) Our college provides good support for people wanting to start farm enterprise. (S₁₀) I know different types of support that are offered to people who want to start their farm enterprise. (S₁₁) It would be easy for me to access support from our college.

1. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth perceive positively the social support environment in the college as indicated by the findings shown in table 3. However, the perception varies by social agents (friends, colleagues, tutors and supporting staff) as indicated in the findings. Youth mainly receive approval for farm entrepreneurship related career from their friends, colleagues, tutors and other people in the college. However, they rarely received direct support from the college. This means that the social agents in the colleges do provide social cognitive level of support for youth farm entrepreneurship but when it comes to seeking assistance in terms material support such as capital, grant or any subsidy the environment is not very supportive. In other words, it may imply that the agents and colleges at large do not actively participate in farm entrepreneurship.

No significant gender differences were found in terms of perceived college social support environment, although males seemed to have more positive perception than females, probably due to the existence of male dominance in their culture. A significant relationship exists between perceived college social support environment and youth farm entrepreneurial intention, however the strength of relationship ranged from weak to moderately weak. It implies that the agents being part of learning

environment consider farm entrepreneurship as future occupation. Nevertheless, the fair ratings may mean the occupation is less attractive to them compared to other existing occupations.

It is recommended that colleges need to design and establish various programmes such as hands-on projects, enterprise start-ups and competition programmes which will actively impact the social agents and consequently producing the support to youth farm entrepreneurship. These programmes need to be implemented collaboratively among students, tutors and support staff. Also tutors need to be encouraged to practice farm entrepreneurship and share their experience with students. There is also need to develop a national strategy for farm entrepreneurial support by providing a clear definition of entrepreneurship in the national education policy specifically for the context of agricultural training environment.

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