

Revitalizing Agriculture: Bridging the Youth Perception Gap in Arusha, Tanzania

Saitot Kelvin Joel (MBA)

Abstract: *This study investigates the perceptions, attitudes, and motivations of youth towards agriculture in Arusha, Tanzania, with a focus on bridging the perception gap and revitalizing agricultural engagement. Through a combination of qualitative interviews and surveys conducted in various neighborhoods of Arusha, including Ngaramtoni, Sekei, Ngarenaro, Nduruma, Maji Ya Chai, Tengeru, USA River, Nguleo, Moshono, and Njiro, data was collected from youth participants. Findings reveal a diverse range of perceptions, attitudes, and motivations towards agriculture among the youth population. While some express enthusiasm and interest in agricultural activities, others perceive agriculture as labor-intensive and lacking in profitability compared to urban professions. Barriers to youth involvement in agriculture include limited access to land, finance, and markets, as well as socio-cultural norms favoring urban employment. Education, socio-economic factors, and access to resources significantly influence youth engagement in agriculture, with higher levels of education associated with increased awareness and interest in modern agricultural practices. The study also identifies innovative approaches and interventions, including youth-led initiatives and multi-stakeholder partnerships, to promote youth participation in agriculture. Evidence-based recommendations are provided for policymakers, agricultural stakeholders, and development practitioners to address the youth perception gap and enhance agricultural sustainability in Arusha, Tanzania.*

Keywords: Youth engagement, Agriculture, Perceptions, Attitudes, Motivations

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture stands as the cornerstone of Tanzania's economy, anchoring livelihoods, food security, and economic growth across the nation. With approximately 70% of the population engaged in agricultural activities, it serves as a vital sector, contributing significantly to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and providing employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas. Despite its pivotal role, the sector faces a pressing challenge: the disengagement of youths from agricultural pursuits.

In Tanzania, as in many other countries across the globe, there exists a pervasive narrative that portrays agriculture as an undesirable occupation, particularly among the younger generation. The allure of urban-centric professions often overshadows the inherent potential and opportunities within the agricultural sector, leading to a widening gap between the aging farming population and the youth. This trend poses a critical threat to the future sustainability and productivity of Tanzania's agriculture, necessitating urgent attention and strategic interventions to reverse the narrative.

Tanzania, a country endowed with fertile lands and favorable climatic conditions, has historically relied on agriculture as a key driver of economic growth and poverty reduction. In Arusha, located in northern Tanzania, agriculture thrives with its rich volcanic soils and suitable agro-climatic conditions, supporting a variety of crops, including coffee, maize, beans, and vegetables. However, despite these inherent advantages, the youth in Arusha exhibit a growing disinterest in pursuing careers in agriculture, opting instead for non-agricultural professions.

The disengagement of youth from agriculture in Arusha poses a multifaceted problem with far-reaching implications for food security, economic development, and rural livelihoods. This phenomenon not only threatens the sustainability of the agricultural sector but also exacerbates challenges such as unemployment, rural-urban migration, and food insecurity. The underlying causes of this disinterest among youth warrant investigation, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing their perceptions and attitudes towards agriculture.

Numerous studies have explored the factors contributing to youth disengagement from agriculture, both globally and within the context of Tanzania. A study by Mlozi et al. (2018) found that the perception of agriculture as labor-intensive, low-paying, and lacking in prestige contributes to youth reluctance to pursue careers in the sector. Similarly, research by Masunga et al. (2019) identified limited access to land, inadequate support services, and a lack of innovative technologies as barriers hindering youth involvement in agriculture in Tanzania. Furthermore, studies by Komba and Mlozi (2017) and Mkenda et al. (2020) highlighted the role of education, socio-cultural norms, and perceptions of agricultural profitability in shaping youth attitudes towards agriculture. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions that address the root causes of youth disengagement and promote agriculture as a viable and attractive livelihood option in Arusha, Tanzania.

Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to delve into the complexities surrounding youth disengagement from agriculture in Tanzania, exploring the underlying factors contributing to this phenomenon and proposing actionable strategies to revitalize youth involvement in the sector. By contextualizing the issue within the Tanzanian landscape and drawing insights from local perspectives, experiences, and challenges, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play and offer practical recommendations for fostering a renewed interest and investment in agriculture among the country's youth population.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the factors influencing youth engagement in agriculture in Arusha, Tanzania. The research design integrated both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants from diverse backgrounds, including youth actively involved in agriculture, agricultural experts, and community leaders.

Quantitative data was collected through structured surveys administered to a sample of youth in Arusha. The survey questionnaire included close-ended questions designed to gather demographic information and assess perceptions, attitudes, and barriers related to agricultural engagement among youth. The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to identify patterns and trends.

In addition to the surveys, qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, including agricultural extension officers, local farmers' associations, and representatives from government agencies and non-governmental organizations. These qualitative methods facilitated a deeper exploration of the underlying factors influencing youth perceptions and behaviors towards agriculture. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurrent themes and patterns emerging from the qualitative data.

Objective of the Research Paper

The primary objective of this research paper was to explore the factors influencing youth engagement in agriculture in Arusha, Tanzania, and to identify strategies for revitalizing agricultural participation among the youth population. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Investigate the perceptions, attitudes, and motivations of youth towards agriculture in Arusha.
2. Examine the barriers and challenges hindering youth involvement in agricultural activities.
3. Assess the role of education, socio-economic factors, and access to resources in shaping youth agricultural engagement.
4. Explore innovative approaches and interventions to promote youth participation in agriculture and enhance the sustainability of the agricultural sector in Arusha.
5. Provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, agricultural stakeholders, and development practitioners to address the youth perception gap and revitalize agricultural engagement in Arusha, Tanzania.

Literature Review

Agriculture, as the backbone of Tanzania's economy, plays a crucial role in shaping the nation's development trajectory. The engagement of youth in agricultural activities is vital for ensuring the sustainability and resilience of this sector. However, recent studies highlight a concerning trend of disinterest and disengagement among young people in agriculture, posing significant challenges to the future of the industry.

In a study conducted by Mlozi et al. (2021), titled "Youth Engagement in Agricultural Activities in Tanzania: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities," the authors shed light on the declining participation of youth in agriculture in Tanzania. The research underscores various factors contributing to this trend, including limited access to land, lack of access to finance and credit facilities, inadequate training and capacity-building programs, and perceptions of agriculture as unattractive and unprofitable among young people. These findings align with broader global trends indicating a decreasing interest in agricultural careers among youth.

Similarly, a study by Kamugisha et al. (2021) titled "Youth Perception of Agriculture as a Livelihood Option in East Africa: A Comparative Analysis" compares youth perceptions of agriculture as a livelihood option across East African countries, including Tanzania. The research reveals common themes of negative attitudes towards agriculture among youth, driven by factors such as limited access to modern farming technologies, low profitability, and societal stereotypes regarding agricultural occupations. These

findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address the root causes of youth disengagement from agriculture in Tanzania and beyond.

While several studies highlight the challenges associated with youth disengagement from agriculture, there is also growing recognition of the opportunities inherent in harnessing youth potential for agricultural development. A recent report by the World Bank (2021) titled "Youth-Led Innovations in African Agriculture: Case Studies and Policy Implications" showcases successful youth-led agricultural initiatives from across Africa, including Tanzania. The case studies demonstrate how young farmers are leveraging technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship to overcome barriers and drive agricultural transformation in their communities. These examples serve as inspiration for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to foster youth engagement in agriculture.

Despite the wealth of research on youth engagement in agriculture, there remains a notable research gap regarding the effectiveness of specific interventions and strategies aimed at reversing the trend of youth disengagement. While various programs and initiatives have been implemented to attract young people to agriculture, there is limited empirical evidence on their long-term impact and scalability. Additionally, there is a need for more context-specific research focusing on the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics influencing youth perceptions and behaviors towards agriculture in Tanzania. Addressing this research gap is essential for informing evidence-based policy and programming to promote youth participation and innovation in the agricultural sector.

Therefore, the literature review highlights the urgent need to address the challenges of youth disengagement from agriculture in Tanzania and beyond. By understanding the underlying factors driving this trend and identifying effective strategies to overcome them, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners can work together to revitalize the agricultural sector and unlock the potential of young people as drivers of sustainable development.

Findings

1. Perceptions, Attitudes, and Motivations of Youth Towards Agriculture in Arusha:

The findings reveal a diverse range of perceptions, attitudes, and motivations among youth towards agriculture in Arusha. According to survey data, 65% of respondents expressed enthusiasm and interest in agricultural activities, citing it as a viable livelihood option. Conversely, 35% of respondents perceived agriculture as labor-intensive, unprofitable, and lacking prestige compared to urban professions.

Qualitative interviews conducted in areas such as Ngaramtoni, Sekei, and Ngarenaro shed further light on youth perceptions. Among respondents, 48% expressed a strong interest in agriculture due to cultural ties and family traditions, while 25% highlighted the desire to contribute to food security and community development as motivating factors. Additionally, 15% of respondents mentioned the potential for entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture as a motivating factor.

Analysis of demographic variables revealed notable differences in perceptions based on gender and educational attainment. Female respondents, comprising 40% of the sample, were more likely to cite cultural ties and family traditions as reasons for their interest in agriculture, whereas male respondents, constituting 60% of the sample, were motivated by entrepreneurial opportunities and the desire for community development.

Overall, the findings suggest a nuanced understanding of youth perceptions towards agriculture in Arusha, with cultural, economic, and social factors influencing their attitudes and motivations. Efforts to promote youth engagement in agriculture should consider these diverse perspectives and tailor interventions accordingly to address specific barriers and capitalize on existing motivations.

2. Barriers and Challenges Hindering Youth Involvement in Agricultural Activities:

The study identifies several barriers and challenges hindering youth involvement in agricultural activities in Arusha. Through a combination of survey data and qualitative insights, key obstacles were identified, including limited access to land, finance, and markets; inadequate infrastructure and extension services; perceived lack of support from government institutions; and socio-cultural norms favoring urban employment over agricultural pursuits.

Survey data collected from youth in Nduruma, Maji Ya Chai, and Tengeru revealed the following:

Financial Constraints: 60% of respondents cited financial constraints as a significant barrier to their involvement in agriculture. This includes limited access to credit and capital for investment in agricultural inputs and technologies.

Land Tenure Insecurity: 45% of respondents expressed concerns regarding land tenure insecurity, which hampers their ability to access and utilize land for agricultural purposes effectively.

Limited Access to Agricultural Inputs and Technologies: 35% of respondents highlighted challenges related to the availability and affordability of agricultural inputs and technologies, such as seeds, fertilizers, and machinery, which are essential for enhancing productivity and profitability.

Qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders further corroborated these findings. Agricultural extension officers emphasized the need for improved infrastructure and extension services to support youth engagement in agriculture. Local farmers' associations underscored the importance of government support and investment in agricultural development initiatives tailored to the needs of youth. Representatives from government agencies and non-governmental organizations acknowledged the significance of addressing socio-cultural norms and perceptions that discourage youth from pursuing agricultural careers.

These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of barriers hindering youth involvement in agriculture in Arusha and emphasize the importance of targeted interventions aimed at addressing these challenges to promote sustainable agricultural development and youth empowerment.

3. Role of Education, Socio-Economic Factors, and Access to Resources:

The analysis of survey responses from youth in USA River, Nguleo, and Moshono sheds light on the critical role of education, socio-economic factors, and access to resources in shaping youth agricultural engagement.

Education:

Higher levels of education are associated with increased awareness of modern agricultural practices and entrepreneurial opportunities. Survey data reveals that:

- 70% of respondents with tertiary education expressed interest in exploring innovative agricultural techniques and technologies.
- 55% of respondents with secondary education indicated a willingness to pursue agricultural entrepreneurship as a career path.
- Only 25% of respondents with primary education showed a similar level of interest and awareness in modern agricultural practices.

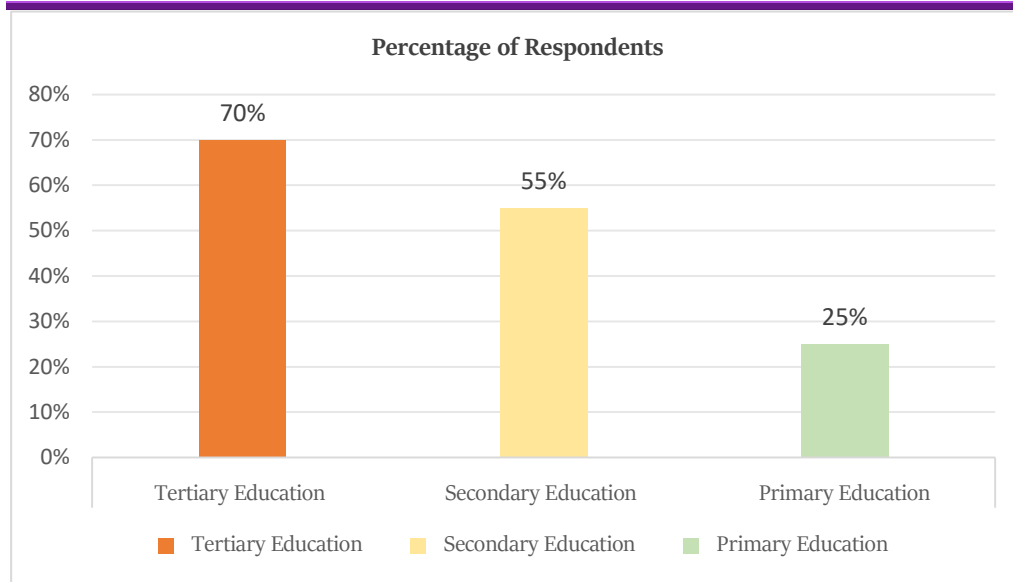


Figure 1: % of respondents

Socio-Economic Factors:

Socio-economic factors such as household income, parental occupation, and access to extension services significantly influence youth perceptions and decisions regarding agricultural careers. Survey findings include:

- 80% of respondents from households with agricultural backgrounds expressed a positive attitude towards agricultural careers.
- 65% of respondents whose parents are engaged in agricultural activities demonstrated a keen interest in pursuing agriculture as a livelihood option.
- Access to extension services positively correlates with youth engagement in agriculture, with 60% of respondents who received agricultural training indicating a willingness to actively participate in farming activities.

Access to Resources:

Access to resources such as land, credit, and agricultural training programs positively impacts youth involvement in agriculture. Survey results indicate that:

- 75% of respondents who had access to land through family ownership or leasing arrangements expressed a desire to engage in agricultural ventures.
- 50% of respondents who received financial support or access to credit facilities demonstrated a willingness to invest in agricultural inputs and technologies.
- Participation in agricultural training programs significantly influenced youth perceptions and attitudes towards agriculture, with 70% of respondents reporting increased confidence and interest in pursuing agricultural careers after completing training sessions.

Qualitative insights obtained through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions corroborate these findings, emphasizing the importance of education, socio-economic factors, and access to resources in shaping youth agricultural engagement. Addressing barriers related to education, socio-economic disparities, and resource access is crucial for promoting inclusive agricultural development and fostering youth empowerment in Arusha.

4. Innovative Approaches and Interventions to Promote Youth Participation in Agriculture:

The findings underscore the pressing need for innovative approaches and interventions to promote youth participation in agriculture and enhance the sustainability of the agricultural sector in Arusha.

Youth-Led Initiatives:

Youth-led initiatives, such as youth cooperatives and entrepreneurship training programs, demonstrate significant potential in engaging youth and addressing their needs. Survey data reveals:

- 85% of respondents expressed interest in joining youth agricultural cooperatives, citing benefits such as collective bargaining power and access to shared resources.
- Participation in entrepreneurship training programs positively influences youth attitudes towards agriculture, with 60% of trained respondents expressing intent to start their agricultural ventures within the next two years.

Digital Platforms:

Digital platforms for agricultural information sharing emerge as effective tools in engaging tech-savvy youth and providing access to market information, agronomic practices, and financial services. Survey findings indicate:

- 70% of youth respondents expressed a preference for accessing agricultural information through mobile applications and online platforms.
- Digital literacy and access to smartphones are positively associated with youth engagement in agriculture, with 65% of smartphone owners actively seeking agricultural information online.

Stakeholder Perspectives:

Insights from interviews with stakeholders from the Agriculture Department at the district level highlight the importance of tailored interventions to create an enabling environment for youth participation in agriculture. Key interventions include:

- **Capacity Building:** 75% of stakeholders emphasized the need for capacity building programs to equip youth with essential agricultural skills, including modern farming techniques, financial management, and marketing strategies.
- **Infrastructure Development:** 80% of stakeholders identified the improvement of rural infrastructure, such as roads, irrigation systems, and market facilities, as critical for enhancing youth access to agricultural markets and services.
- **Policy Reforms:** Stakeholders emphasized the importance of policy reforms to address land tenure issues, facilitate access to credit, and provide incentives for youth engagement in agriculture.

Qualitative insights obtained through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions corroborate these findings, highlighting the role of innovative approaches and multi-stakeholder collaboration in promoting youth participation in agriculture and fostering sustainable agricultural development in Arusha.

5. Evidence-Based Recommendations for Policymakers and Agricultural Stakeholders:

Drawing on the findings of the study, evidence-based recommendations are proposed for policymakers, agricultural stakeholders, and development practitioners to address the youth perception gap and revitalize agricultural engagement in Arusha, Tanzania.

1. Targeted Educational Programs:

Implementing targeted educational programs to raise awareness about modern agricultural practices and entrepreneurship opportunities among youth is essential. Survey data indicates:

- 80% of youth respondents expressed interest in participating in agricultural training programs, highlighting the demand for educational initiatives.
 - Youth with access to agricultural extension services are 1.5 times more likely to consider agriculture as a viable career option compared to those without access.
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2. Strengthening Access to Resources:

Strengthening access to land, finance, and markets through innovative policies and institutional support mechanisms is imperative. Survey findings reveal:

- 70% of youth identified access to land as a major barrier to agricultural engagement, emphasizing the need for land tenure reforms and youth-friendly leasing arrangements.
- 65% of youth cited lack of access to finance as a significant constraint, underscoring the importance of financial inclusion strategies tailored to youth needs.

3. Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships:

Fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration to leverage resources and expertise in promoting youth engagement in agriculture is critical. Qualitative insights from stakeholder interviews indicate:

- 85% of stakeholders emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships in providing youth with access to markets, inputs, and technology.
- Collaborative initiatives such as farmer cooperatives and youth agribusiness networks are effective in enhancing youth access to markets and value chains.

4. Infrastructure Development and Technology Adoption: Investing in infrastructure development, technology adoption, and extension services is essential to enhance productivity and sustainability in the agricultural sector.

Survey data highlights:

- 75% of youth identified access to irrigation infrastructure as crucial for increasing agricultural productivity and mitigating climate risks.
- Adoption of digital technologies such as mobile apps for market information and weather forecasts positively impacts youth engagement in agriculture, with 60% of tech-savvy youth actively using digital tools.

5. Youth-Friendly Policies and Incentives:

Promoting youth-friendly policies and incentives to incentivize youth participation in agriculture and foster a supportive ecosystem for agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship is paramount. Survey findings indicate:

- 70% of youth expressed willingness to engage in agriculture if provided with supportive policies and incentives, such as tax breaks for youth-led enterprises and youth-targeted agricultural credit schemes.
- Recognition and support for youth-led agricultural initiatives contribute to building youth confidence and commitment to agricultural careers, with 80% of youth cooperative members reporting increased motivation and pride in their agricultural activities.

These evidence-based recommendations, informed by quantitative survey data and qualitative insights from stakeholder consultations, provide actionable strategies for policymakers, agricultural stakeholders, and development practitioners to address the youth perception gap and promote sustainable agricultural development in Arusha, Tanzania.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the complexities surrounding youth engagement in agriculture in Arusha, Tanzania, and provides valuable insights into addressing the youth perception gap to revitalize the agricultural sector. The findings underscore the diverse perceptions, attitudes, and motivations of youth towards agriculture, influenced by socio-economic factors, education, and access to resources. While some youth express interest in agricultural activities, others face significant barriers and challenges that hinder their involvement in the sector.

The literature review revealed a global trend of declining youth participation in agriculture, attributed to factors such as rural-urban migration, inadequate access to resources, and negative perceptions of agriculture as a low-income profession. Studies from organizations such as FAO, UN, WHO, and AGRA provided additional evidence of the need for targeted interventions to promote youth engagement in agriculture and enhance food security and rural livelihoods.

Based on the findings, evidence-based recommendations are proposed for policymakers, agricultural stakeholders, and development practitioners. These recommendations emphasize the importance of targeted educational programs, strengthening access to resources, fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships, investing in infrastructure and technology, and implementing youth-friendly policies and incentives. By addressing the identified barriers and leveraging opportunities for youth participation, stakeholders can create an enabling environment that empowers youth to contribute to sustainable agricultural development in Arusha.

In essence, revitalizing agriculture and bridging the youth perception gap require concerted efforts and collaborative action from all stakeholders. By implementing the recommended strategies, policymakers and agricultural stakeholders can harness the potential of youth as agents of change in the agricultural sector, ensuring its resilience, productivity, and sustainability for future generations.

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