

## **Awareness and attitude of some Secondary School students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State towards Animal Science**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study assessed the awareness and attitude of some secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State towards Animal Science as a course in higher institutions. Their willingness to study Animal Science as a course and their awareness of prospects that abound in Animal Science was also tested. A multistage random sampling technique was used to select 112 respondents that were used in this study. A well-structured questionnaire to meet the objectives of this study was designed and administered to the respondents for data collection. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Frequencies, Percentages and Means). The results revealed that just above average the number of respondents (51.8%) were aware of Animal Science as course in higher institutions. Also, 55.4% of the students were willing to study Animal Science in higher institutions. Out of the 21 prospects in Animal Science listed in this study, the students were aware of 11 and unaware of 10. It is therefore recommended that programmes on the awareness of Animal Science as a course and its prospects be organised for secondary school students in the study area to promote this important career that is a noble and wealth creating profession for them to develop interest in it.

**Key words:** Awareness, attitude, career, secondary school students, animal science

### **INTRODUCTION**

The role of Agriculture in the development of any society can never be over emphasized. At one time in the history of Nigeria before the oil boom, Agriculture was the mainstay of the populace. However, the oil boom after the 1970s triggered a shift in the economy from agriculture to crude oil exploration. Despite this shift, agriculture and its related sectors still remains significant to the development of the economy. This is evident in the report by National Bureau of Statistics (2013) which indicated that about 34.47% and 40% growth in the economy in 2011 and 2012 respectively was from the Agricultural sector. It is the opinion of many that farming is a default

career for villagers with little or no education, but this assertion is in error. According to Wilson (2008), it is agreeable that in some parts of the world, youths in rural areas with limited access to higher education simply choose to inherit their family farms and continue to raise livestock animals or cultivate crops to earn a living. This on its own cannot justify the belief that farming is primitive and should remain in primitive level in rural communities. It is however necessary to encourage the younger generations to take up farming, either animal or crop cultivation so as to sustain food production, security and safety and to ultimately succeed the old farming populace using modern farming techniques

(Akinsorotan *et al.*, 2007). This succession will depend largely on the perception of these youths to Agriculture and Animal Science in particular.

Interest for a career has been observed to differ among individuals (Ezebuio *et al.*, 2014). Most young people prefer white-collar jobs. As a result of this, they read courses that will enable them work in the offices leading to many being unemployed. Fasoyiro *et al.* (2015) has emphasized that, to curb the menace of unemployment resulting from the yearly graduation of students from higher institutions into the labour market, it will be important to begin to re-orientate the younger generations especially adolescents in secondary schools on the need to make wiser decisions when choosing disciplines or careers. Disciplines and work prospects like Animal Science that lead towards self-reliance are encouraged. This will make graduates entrepreneurs who will employ labour instead of looking for jobs.

Choice of career is influenced greatly by many factors. Some of these factors partly emanate from the influence and affluence of our elites in the society. So called high paying jobs like Engineering, Medicine and Law are encouraged while Agricultural courses are relegated by parents, teachers and even adolescents in secondary schools. Ferry (2006) identified social and economic environment as factors that influence parental guidance in the area of career choice. Also, Azubuike (2011) cited peer influence as a factor that determines the choice of academic disciplines by adolescents. Adolescence as a critical phase in an individual's life is where career decisions about the individual's future is developed (Ogunleye, 2002). Children tend to develop knowledge about and foster their decisions regarding their career options when they are teenagers (Gati and Saka, 2001). It is important to state that self-awareness in adolescence as explained by

Bandura *et al.* (2001), leads to self-efficacy and/or actualization of career decisions which directly or indirectly set the stage for success into adulthood. Hence, to effectively inform the choice for career identity, it is necessary to emphasize career education programmes as essentials in aiding student progress toward satisfactory career choice (Conroy *et al.*, 1996). Little or no career programmes for secondary school students will result in poor information gathering on careers and lack of clarity on the career decision process (Julian, 1999) which will result in many adolescents leaving secondary school inexperienced and with indecision about their future careers (Vidal-Brown. and Thompson, 2001). This study therefore tried to assess the awareness and attitude of secondary school students in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State towards Animal Science and its prospects.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was conducted in some selected private and public secondary schools in Ikwerre Local Government of Rivers State. One hundred and twelve (112) secondary school students were randomly selected from some selected private and public secondary schools in the Local Government Area. The students were drawn from both the Junior Secondary and the Senior Secondary classes. A well-structured questionnaire was designed to gather data on demographic structure, awareness of Animal Science as a course in the higher institution as well as the career prospects in Animal Science. A 4-point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree, to which the highest score of 4 points was assigned to strongly agree and lowest of 1 point to strongly disagree was used to assess the awareness of Animal Science career prospects. Responses with mean score of 2.5 and above were considered to be positively disposed to items investigated. Data obtained were analyzed using SPSS

(Statistical Package for Social Sciences) Version 16 for descriptive statistics (Frequencies, Percentages and Means).

## RESULTS

The demographic structure of the respondents is presented in Table 1. The results showed that majority (60.7%) of the students were from the Junior Secondary School category while 39.3

% were from the Senior Category. There was no gender discrimination in the choice of respondents as both sexes were represented fully with percentage scores of 51.8% and 48.2% for female and male respectively. Students from private schools (64.3%) were more represented as compared to those from public schools (35.7%).

**Table 1: Demographic structure of respondents**

	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Sex of students</b>		
Male	54	48.2
Female	58	51.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<b>Class of students</b>		
JS1	28	25.0
JS2	22	19.6
JS3	18	16.1
SS1	14	12.5
SS2	14	12.5
SS3	16	14.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<b>Type of school</b>		
Private	72	64.3
Government	40	35.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages of students that were aware of Animal Science as a course in higher institutions and their attitude towards it. The results showed that 51.8% of the respondents have heard about the discipline called Animal Science while

48.2% had not heard about it. However, 55.4% of the students showed a positive attitude towards the subject matter while 44.6% stated that they would not like to study Animal Science as an academic discipline in higher institution.

**Table 2: Awareness and attitude of secondary school students towards Animal Science**

Questions	Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
Have you heard about Animal Science before?	Yes	58	51.8
	No	54	48.2
	Total	112	100.0
Will you like to study Animal Science in higher institution?	Yes	62	55.4
	No	50	44.6
	Total	112	100.0

Students' awareness of the various career opportunities in Animal Science is shown in Table 3. Of all the 21 itemized career opportunities in this study, the students were only aware of 11 of them. As high as 39.9% of the students strongly disagreed that Advertising Specialist is a career opportunity in Animal Science while 25% of the students were unaware that an Animal Scientist could be an Artificial

Insemination Technician. Furthermore, 39.3% of the students strongly disagreed that Embryo Transfer Technician and Animal Journalism were both career opportunities in Animal Science. In addition, 33.9% and 23.2% of the students were not aware that Public Relations and Quality Assurance Specialist were career opportunities in Animal Science.

**Table 3: Awareness of career opportunities in Animal Science of secondary school students**

Animal Science jobs	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Mean	Decision
Advertising Specialist	14.3	21.4	25.0	39.9	2.11	Not aware
Agricultural Insurance Specialist	39.3	26.8	25.0	8.9	2.96	Aware
Agricultural Real Estate Specialist	19.6	26.8	35.7	17.9	2.48	Not aware
Animal Welfare Specialist	58.9	21.4	8.9	10.7	3.29	Aware
Artificial Insemination Technician	16.1	28.6	30.4	25.0	2.36	Not aware
Breed Association Sales/Promotion	37.5	32.1	12.5	17.9	2.89	Aware
Cell Culture Specialist	14.3	32.1	28.6	25.0	2.36	Not aware
Embryo Transfer Technician	14.3	19.6	26.8	39.3	2.09	Not aware
Equipment Sales Representative	8.9	30.4	30.4	30.4	2.18	Not aware
Extension Educator	37.5	23.2	16.1	23.2	2.75	Aware
Feed Sales/Consultant	42.9	33.9	8.9	14.3	3.05	Aware
Food Processing Manager	28.6	39.3	23.2	8.9	2.88	Aware
Journalist	19.6	19.6	21.4	39.3	2.20	Not aware
Laboratory Animal Technician	46.4	28.6	14.3	10.7	3.11	Aware
Meat/Milk/Feed Testing Service	55.4	28.6	7.1	8.9	3.30	Aware
Pharmaceutical Sales/Service	17.9	28.6	33.9	19.6	2.45	Not aware
Poultry Unit Manager	58.9	21.4	12.5	7.1	3.32	Aware
Public Relations	12.5	25.0	28.6	33.9	2.16	Not aware
Quality Assurance Specialist	14.3	21.4	41.1	23.2	2.27	Not aware
Research Farm Manager	44.6	28.6	16.1	10.7	3.07	Aware
Zoo Animal Specialist	66.1	17.9	8.9	7.1	3.43	Aware

## DISCUSSION

The results from this study show that majority of the students were from the junior Secondary School category as compared to their senior secondary counterparts. Several factors could have been responsible for this. It has been observed over time that students drop out of school as they progress in school. This could be as a result of inability to pay fees, teenage pregnancy, expulsion, amongst others (Mørcke *et al.*, 2012). There was no gender discrimination among the respondents. Furthermore, the higher representation of students from private schools when compared to public schools might or might not be unconnected to the fallen standard of education and dilapidated infrastructures in the later.

The extent of students' awareness of Animal Science and their attitude towards Animal Science as a discipline could be attributed to many reasons. One of these is parental influence. It can be assumed that most decisions made by secondary school students especially those related to choosing a career path are greatly influenced by their parents' background amongst other factors (Adejoh *et al.*, 2016). More so, this study revealed that a majority of the students have heard about Animal Science as a course but are not willing to take it up as a course in the higher institution. The reason for this might not be unconnected with the general reasoning that Agriculture including Animal Science is a dirty profession that is meant for rural dwellers. This result could also be attributed to students' level of awareness and misconception on agriculture and its related careers. This is in agreement with Chee and Leong-Yong (2011) who reported that students have misconceptions on agriculture work-related careers because they are unaware of the various career prospects in this sector. The wrong impression that all jobs in Agriculture including Animal Science have very low pay could also be another

reason. In addition, Esters and Bowen (2004) reported that interest in a course, its perceived usefulness or importance, ability or success of the course, career preference amongst others are the key factors that are the major contributors in students' selection of courses.

The level of positive attitude towards Animal Science seen in this study could be as a result of the recent massive shift from oil economy to agriculture based economy policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria as a result of the dwindling oil revenue that has led to a global economic recession. Esters and Bowen (2004) observed a poor enrolment in post-secondary school students into agriculturally related disciplines, including Animal Science. So many reasons have been attributed to this low enrolment among which is parental influence. Azubuike (2011) observed that parents play a significant role in the final choice of their wards towards taking up certain academic disciplines.

Less than half of the students strongly disagreed that Advertising Specialist is a career opportunity in Animal Science and only a few were unaware that an Animal Scientist could be an Artificial Insemination Technician. This trend was also observed for Embryo Transfer Technician and Journalism as well as Public Relations and Quality Assurance Specialist. These responses could be as a result of ignorance on the side of the students which can be attributed to lack of career guidance/mentorship in secondary schools. This is supported by Ohiwerei and Nwosu (2009) who opined that although parents play a major role in career choices made by their children by generally wishing their children achieve where they have failed, there is need to take career choice very seriously as this could make or mar them in future. Adebo and Sekumade (2013) also reported that lack of guidance and counselling teachers in most

secondary schools in Nigeria has really contributed to wrong choices of careers by youths. These results further suggest that where career guidance/mentorship is lacking, students will show negative attitudes towards academic disciplines they know little or nothing about its opportunities or prospects.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was observed that some of the students were aware of Animal Science as a course that could be studied in higher institutions and they were willing to take it up as an academic discipline. However, most of the students were unaware of the fact that Animal Science is a professional career and its prospects. This low level of awareness was attributed to students' level of awareness and misconception on agriculture and its related careers. It is therefore recommended that, proper education and orientation of secondary school students about Animal Science as a noble and a profitable career should be encouraged in secondary schools in this study area. This should be done through guidance and counselling and as well sensitization of teachers, practitioners, mentors and role models. If this is done, secondary school students will see as an entrepreneurial course which is capable of making one generate income for self but can also make one highly employable.

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