



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' CHOICE OF AGRICULTURAL CAREER AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELING SERVICES: A CASE OF DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

 **Egbule
Elizabetha Osita^a**

^aDepartment of Guidance and Counseling, Delta State,
Nigeria

✉ egbuleosita2@gmail.com



**Corresponding
author**

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ABSTRACT

This study unveils the factors that influence rural secondary school students to choose agriculture as a career or course of study. Many of the students chose a career in medicine and engineering before agriculture. Most (57.89%) had no counseling experience with a Guidance Counselor, but 81.14% were engaged in agricultural child labour. 83.77% were exposed to agriculture programmes on audio-visual media and visit to commercial farms. The few (10.09%) chose agriculture as an opportunity for self-employment, interest, profitable and easy nature of agriculture as a course of study and parents' preference, among others. The social attributes of the students such as age, parents education & occupation, wealth status of parents, sex, knowledge of the subject, aptitude for prerequisite subjects, contact with guidance/counselors, involvement in agricultural child labour, exposure to mass media and visit commercial farms influenced their choice of agriculture as career or course of study.

Contribution/ Originality

Evidence is provided as regards the influence of social attributes on students' choice of career in agriculture and the need for career guidance in secondary schools. This will be of utility in the analysis of career choice in agriculture as being social factors – driven in other nations that are agricultural economies. Insight into policy needs for engagement of guidance counselors to encourage choices of a career in agriculture is also offered.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the mainstay of every economy of the world and it is the wish of every government to make the country self-sufficient in food and raw materials production. To these end younger ones, the youths are encouraged to pick up a career in agriculture, to increase production and sustain increased production. However, it is observed that most secondary school students do not like and would not like to practice agriculture as a career (Adeoti *et al.*, 2013; Apantaku, 2004). The students prefer the first choice of medicine and engineering (excluding agricultural engineering).

It is expected that students in the rural areas will be interested in agriculture as a career and as such, wish to make it the first choice of career, while seeking admission into tertiary schools. While this is the expectation, it should be remembered that individuals possess varying values, differential abilities aptitudes and interest of persons toward a career determines the level of success or failure of such persons in the career chosen (Ezeji, 1998).

Many Nigerians are known to have a negative attitude about agriculture. However, many people are still engaged in agriculture. Most of these people do it as a way of life and not as a business, while those that have the opportunity to leave agricultural practice do so without hesitation. This is prompted by the fact that most Nigerians believe that the practice of agriculture or farming is meant for wretched or poverty-stricken (Adejumo, 1998). Worst still is the serious level of rural-urban migration of labour (Ofuoku and Chukwuji, 2012). The low parental value placement on agriculture also contributes to this phenomenon (Aparentaku, 2004). Zhiri (1998) as cited by Apantaku (2004) reports that most parents, in the rural areas most especially, do not believe or see reasons why their children/wards should be engaged in farming or be trained in agriculture for future livelihood. They prefer their children becoming medical doctors, lawyers, journalists, and army officers or should engage in rural-urban migration (Salami and Salami, 2013; Cheung *et al.*, 2013; Fan *et al.*, 2014; Bubić and Ivanišević, 2016; Hui *et al.*, 2018) because they feel that is how they will make 'quick' money. Despite these undesired circumstances, youths are needed in agricultural production. At least, there is the need to make youths productive so that they can realize their full potentials and become useful to themselves and their societies. However, most parents engage their children in agricultural child labour because of their socioeconomic backgrounds (Ofuoku *et al.*, 2014).

It these ends, the services of guidance counselors are required (Fouad *et al.*, 2016; Gonzalez *et al.*, 2013). It is a common knowledge that in secondary schools in Delta State, guidance and counseling units/offices are non-existent. This is amid guidance counselors trained and graduated annually, from our universities. This challenge is more glaringly observed in rural than in urban secondary schools.

The challenge of students' attitude to agriculture as a career lies mainly in the falling population of youths available for agricultural activities over the years. This is prompted by a series of reasons. The reasons include rural-urban migration which is propelled by the desire and search for white-collar jobs in urban settlements. This gives rise to fewer people that are available for agriculture respectively as a career or school subject (Aparentaku, 2004). Hatred for agriculture is known to be created in the mind of secondary school students where offenders are given punishment to do in the school farm, to manually weed, plant, make beds, and ridges for sowing. This makes students associate agriculture with hard labour (Ofuoku and Ugbechie, 2017) and develops a negative impression of agriculture as a course of study or as a career (Ogunrinde, 2002; Cheung and Arnold, 2014). For any problem to be resolved the root causes of the problem have to be identified. The identification of the causes most would likely form a guide for guidance counselors in the bid to adequately help students to help themselves.

1.1. Objectives of the study

The major objective of the study was to identify the determinants of the choice of agriculture as a career among secondary school students. Specifically, the study sought to:

- (i) Examine the students' social attributes;
- (ii) Determine the most important career choices of secondary school students;
- (iii) Ascertain the reasons secondary school students like agriculture as a career or course of study;
- (iv) Investigate the reasons secondary school students do not like agriculture as a career or course of study;
- (v) Determine the contributions of their social attributes to their choice of agriculture as a career or course of study;

Hypothesis (H₀): Social attributes of secondary school students do not contribute to their choice of agriculture as a career/course of study.

1.2. Conceptual framework

Two factors have been identified by [Ekpere \(1999\)](#) as the key factors that influence career choice. These two factors are genetic and environmental related. [Apantaku \(2004\)](#) observes that a postulation to the effect that intelligent quotient (IQ) which is transferred from parent to child, coupled with other variables such as family background, peer groups, notion attached to the particular career or profession by society and individual's education, influence one's choice of career. [Oladele \(1998\)](#) lists subject combination, interest in school subjects related to the chosen career, knowledge of the tasks attached to a chosen career, academic achievement in subjects related to the career, difficulty perceived in such school subjects and motives for choosing the career as the variables affecting choices of career.

However, [Hoppick \(1997\)](#) opine that choice of career or occupation is influenced by emotional needs and particular values, an individual's attitude, and societal prestige associated with a career and ability to affect occupational change or mobility within a career. [Abiasekog \(1992\)](#) identified the length of the training period, social status attached to career and income of parents, values, and educational level of parents as factors influencing occupational choice. Others identified include rural residence, community background, and socioeconomic status of the family. [Shiertzer and Stone \(1998\)](#) made a review of different variables such as external and internal factors of the individual. These are intellectual ability, aptitudes, the influence of schooling, family, personality, self-concept and self-esteem, values, job stereotypes, expectations, interests, gender differences, and environmental influence. [Ofuoku and Emodi \(2015\)](#); [Ofuoku and Ugbechie \(2017\)](#) identified child labour in agriculture among rural households as one of the contributory variables.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study area was Delta State, Nigeria. Delta State is demarcated into 3 senatorial districts-Delta North, Delta Central, and Delta South Senatorial districts. Delta North Senatorial District is constituted by 9 local government areas, Delta central by 8 and Delta South by 6 local government areas.

Two predominantly rural government areas were selected purposively from each local senatorial districts in Delta North senatorial District, Oshimili North and Ndokwa West were selected. In Delta Central Senatorial District, Ethiope East and Ughelli South; and in Delta South, Patani and Isoko North Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected. Two rural communities hosting secondary schools were randomly selected from each local government areas selected to arrive at the selection of 12 rural communities. This selection based on districts is for equal representation of the districts that constitute Delta State and for generalization in the study area.

The secondary schools in the selected communities had junior (JSS1-3) Students and senior (SS1-3) Students. Senior secondary school students were purposively used because they already know or are already made up their minds on their career choices. The senior students were randomly selected from each school based on stratification. The stratification was used by randomly selecting 20 students from SSC1, SSC2, and SSC3 in each of the schools. This led to the selection of 240 students. However, the actual response rate was 95.25% (38) in each of the selected LGAs, thus making a sample size to be 228.

Primary data were collected through a structured interview schedule personally administered by the researcher and trained enumerators. The interview schedule had sections on the social background of the respondents, career choice, items on reasons students would or would not like agriculture as a career and course of study in tertiary institution, attitude towards agriculture as a career, willingness to practice agriculture and suggestions by respondents on how to improve their willingness to practice agriculture and farming. The content validity of the instrument was determined by a panel of 3 vocational education specialists. These suggestions were inputted into the final draft. The instrument was tested for reliability with the application of the test-retest method at 3 months interval. The reliability coefficient obtained was $r = 0.83$. Collected data were analyzed by the use of frequency counts, percentages, means derived from 4-points Likert-type scale of strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1. The hypothesis was tested with the utilization of logistic regression. The formula was as stated thus.

$$\ln\left(\frac{pi}{1-pi}\right) = \alpha_2 + \sum B_j X_{ji} + \epsilon \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

$$\ln\left(\frac{pi}{1-pi}\right) = \alpha_2 + \beta_i X_i + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \beta_9 X_9 + \beta_{10} X_{10} + \beta_{12} X_{12} + \epsilon \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where

- Y_{ao} = Career choice in agriculture (yes = 1, otherwise = 0)
- 0 = Constant term
- X_1 = Age (years)
- X_2 = Level of education of parent (number of years of schooling)
- X_3 = Occupation of parent (farming = 1, otherwise = 0)
- X_4 = Wealth status of parent (wealthy = 1, otherwise 0 = 0)
- X_5 = Sex (Male = 1, female = 0).
- X_6 = Knowledge of the subject (high = 3, medium = 2, low = 1)
- X_7 = Aptitude for prerequisite subjects (yes = 1, no = 0)
- X_8 = Contact with guidance counselor (No of contact per term)
- X_9 = Involvement in agricultural child labour (Yes = 1, otherwise = 0)
- X_{10} = Exposure to audio visual mass media (Yes = 1, otherwise = 0)
- X_{11} = Visit to commercial farms (Yes = 1, no = 0).
- ϵ = Error term.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Social attributes of the students

Table 1 indicates that many (37.72%) of the students were in the age bracket of 13-15years; 32%, in the age bracket of 19-21 years and 29.82% in the age range of 16-18 years. This implies that most of them were in their teenage years and therefore need close guidance and counseling. This is more so when this stage in life depicts the childhood era. [Ofuoku and Chukwuji \(2012\)](#) found that rural children of 6-17 years of age were engaged by their parents in agricultural child labour in Nigeria, mostly after the close of school daily. Most (43.42%) of their parents had primary education, while 23.68% had no formal education. Education brings enlightenment and modifies

people's attitudes. The educational level of the parents is expected to influence the students' attitude and career choice. [Shiertzer and Stone \(1998\)](#) point to the parental educational background as one of the variables that influence students' choices of career and occupation. It is a known fact that some parents influence their wards while choosing a future career, however, the reasonably experienced ones leave the choice to their children. This means that the level of formal educational attainment of parents has implications for their children's choice of future career and occupation.

Most (60.53%) of the students had parents that were farmers. Others, 27.19% had parents who were either traders or artisans, and 12.28% had parents who earned a livelihood as civil servants. The gain from parents' occupation contributes to the career choices of their children. Children are convinced by their parents to choose their career when they find it rewarding. [Ravallion and Wodon \(2000\)](#) found that most parents want their occupation/career for their children when such occupation/career are found rewarding. Most (53.07%) of the children were of parents who had low wealth status, while 30.26% were children of parents of average wealth status and 16.67% were children of wealthy parents at the rural area standard. [Ekpere \(1999\)](#) points to family wealth background as one of the determinant variables of career choice among people. [Abiasekog \(1992\)](#) mentioned the socioeconomic status of the family as one of the correlates of career choice among students.

To sex, 62.72% of the students were males while 37.28% were females. This is not unconnected with the fact that many rural parents do not like training the girl child. [Ofuoku and Emuh \(2009\)](#) posit that rural parents deprive their female children of formal education because of the belief held by them relating to the loss of their family name once the girl child gets married.

Table 1: Social attributes of secondary school students (n = 228)

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
13 – 15	86	37.72
16 – 18	68	29.82
19 – 21	74	32.46
Level of education of the parent		
No formal education	54	23.68
Primary education	99	43.42
Secondary education	47	20.61
Tertiary education	28	12.28
Occupation of parents		
Farming	138	60.53
Trading	62	27.19
Civil servant	28	12.28
Wealth status of parents		
Not wealthy	121	53.07
Moderately wealthy	69	30.26
Wealthy	38	16.67
Sex:		
Male	143	62.72
Female	85	16.67
Knowledge of agricultural science		
High	76	33.33
Average	101	44.30
Low	51	22.37
Aptitude for prerequisite subjects		
Yes	110	48.25
No	118	51.75
Contact with a guidance counselor (term)		

0	132	57.89
1	54	23.68
2	23	10.09
3	11	4.82
4	8	3.51
Involvement in agricultural Child labour		
Yes		
No		
Exposure to electronic mass media (audiovisual)		
Yes	191	64.77
No	37	16.23
Visit commercial farms (yearly)		
1 - 4	147	64.47
5 - 8	52	22.81
9 - 12	29	12.72
Above 12	0	0

Source: Primary data, 2019

Most (44.30%) of the students had average knowledge of agricultural science as a subject. Others, 33.33% had low knowledge of it. With reference to the prerequisite subjects, 48.25% of them had the aptitude for the prerequisite subjects, while 51.75% did not have the aptitude for the prerequisite subjects. This aligns with [Apantaku \(2004\)](#) who formally similar trends in his study in Ogan State, Nigeria. [Oladele \(1998\)](#) suggests that subject combination, academic acquirement in subjects related to career, difficulty perceived in such school subjects, among others are variables that affect career choice.

Most (57.89%) of the students had no contact with guidance counselors. This is attributable to the dearth of guidance and counseling personnel in rural schools. Counselors are very crucial to the choice of career made by students in secondary schools. [Olayinka \(1992\)](#) state that the counselor is very important in guiding students to make the right choice of career. Through interaction in a counseling session, students make the right choice of career as the counselor makes the students see the reality before them and decide on their career choice without the counselor forcing one on them. After weighing the options, the students make their own choice.

Concerning involvement in agricultural child labour, most (81.14%) of the students were engaged in agricultural child labour. This variable is very crucial to a career choice in agriculture [Ofuoku and Ugbechie \(2017\)](#) found that involvement in agricultural child labour influenced students' choice to study agriculture in various tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. While considering, family farming, the [International Labour Organization \(2014\)](#) suggests that agricultural child labour promotes the inter-generational transfer of skills and children's future food security. It is also worthy of note that the various contributions made by children toward household livelihood have the potentials to make children develop practice and social skills for their future ([International Labour Organization, 2014](#)) and create in them the interest to study agriculture and make a career of it. In the context of the large family farm, [Ofuoku and Ugbechie \(2017\)](#) observe that most often than not, students graduate into their family farms or pressurize their parents to sponsor establishment one for them, so that they do not go back to work in their family farms.

Almost all (83.77%) of them were exposed to audio-visual mass media such as television and video. Agricultural-related programmes are always aired on Television. These programmes are run by agriculture research institutes and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development as extension programmes. These programmes are capable of motivating people to love farming.

Secondary school students, on watching these programmes may develop the desire to chose a career in agriculture.

Most (64.47%) of them visited commercial farms 1-4 times yearly. These visits to see what obtains there may inspire them to want to choose a career in agriculture. This is so especially when they witness the use of machines as a deviation from the manual way of carrying out operations in their family farms. [Ikeoji and Agruibike \(2006\)](#) found that exposure of students to the ideal task environment in agricultural establishments acts to inspire them into planning to choose a career/occupation in farming and other agriculture-related activities.

3.2. Secondary school students' most important career choice

Some (28.07%) of the students chose to indicate taking up a career in medicine, followed by engineering (excluding agricultural engineering) (12.28%) (Table 2). It is noteworthy to see that only 10.09% of the students chose agriculture as their first choice of career/occupation; This implies that many of the students take Agriculture science as a subject just to meet the requirement for their school certificate examination. This trend is congruent with that of [Apantaku \(2004\)](#) findings.

Most students chose medicine either because of the influence of their parents or because of the prestige attached to it and of course the interest of their parents was borne out of the societal prestige it attracts. Those that chose a career in agriculture were either inspired by the recent enlightenment campaign of governments or the fact that they may easily become self-employed after graduation than when they choose to study other courses in the future. They also found the subject and the prerequisite subjects easy for them. Their exposure to agricultural extension programmes on television and visit to established commercial farms are other factors that may have inspired them to choose agriculture as a future career. [Ofuoku and Ugbechie \(2017\)](#) found that students chose to study agriculture because they believed agricultural business is lucrative. The students pointed out that food is one of the basic needs of man, therefore production and marketing of agricultural produces will be very encouraging as they will be highly demanded.

Table 2: Distribution of students according to their first choice of career

Career/course	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Medicine	64	28.07
Engineering (excluding agricultural engineering)	28	12.28
Agriculture	23	10.09
Pharmacy	8	3.51
Nursing	12	5.26
Agricultural Engineering	13	5.70
Aeronautics	5	2.19
Law	13	5.70
Teaching	13	5.70
Computer Science	5	2.19
Accountancy	18	7.89
Mass Communication	13	5.70
Business courses	10	4.39
Armed forces	2	0.88
Police	1	0.44

Source: Primary data, 2019

3.3. Reasons to choose agriculture as a career or course of study among secondary school students

Table 3 indicates that the reasons given by the 23 students who would like to have a career in agriculture or choose it as a course of study include the ones given in item numbers 1-8 and 9-13

respectively. The important reasons given for planning to have a career in agriculture included self-employment, interest, parental influence, peer group influence, economic improvement of the nation, provision of food for the populace, and profitable nature of agriculture. The important reasons they gave for desiring to study agriculture in the college or university included the fact that agriculture is not difficult, parents' preference for a course of study, peer group influence for choosing the course of study, interesting practical aspects and ease of making a good grade. All the reasons given by the students are congruent with those found by [Ofuoku and Ugbechie \(2017\)](#), [Zhiri \(1998\)](#), [Shiertzer and Stone \(1998\)](#), [Abiasekoi \(1992\)](#) in their various studies.

Table 3: Reasons to choose agriculture as a career or course of study among students

No.	Reasons	Strongly agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Score	Mean
1.	Self-employment	21(84)	2(6)	0(0)	0(0)	90	3.91
2.	Interest	20(80)	3(9)	0(0)	0(0)	89	3.87
3.	Parental influence	18(72)	1(3)	1(2)	3(3)	80	3.48
4.	Peer group influence	14(56)	3(9)	2(4)	4(4)	73	3.17
5.	Economic improvement of the nation	13(52)	3(9)	5(10)	2(2)	73	3.17
6.	Agriculture has different enterprises one can engage in	6(24)	7(21)	7(14)	3(3)	43	1.87
7.	Provision of food for the populace	12(48)	5(15)	4(8)	2(2)	73	3.17
8.	Agriculture is profitable	22(88)	1(3)	0(0)	0(0)	91	3.96
9.	Agriculture is not a difficult course	20(80)	1(3)	1(2)	1(1)	86	3.74
10.	Parents' preference for course of study	18(72)	1(9)	2(4)	0(0)	85	3.70
11.	Peer group influence for choosing course of study	17(68)	1(3)	3(6)	2(2)	79	3.43
12.	Interesting practical aspects	16(64)	3(9)	2(4)	2(2)	79	3.43
13.	Ease of making good grade	14(56)	5(15)	3(6)	1(1)	78	3.39

Source: Primary data, 2019

*There are multiple responses

Cut-off score = 2.50 (> 2.50 = important reason, < 2.50 not an important reason)

3.4. Reasons students would not like to go into agriculture as a career or course of study

Table 4 shows the reasons given by 205 students who do not like to have a career in agriculture or study agriculture as a course.

The important reasons included lack of interest in becoming a farmer, drudgery involved in farming activities parental influence/preference. Others included making one dirty and gender consideration. Female students had the feeling that since it involves drudgery, it is only males that could cope with agriculture. This aligns with [Apantaku \(2004\)](#) who found the same reasons among secondary school students in Ogun State.

Table 4: Reasons to not choose agriculture as a career or study course among students

No.	Reasons	Strongly agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Score	Mean
1.	Lack of interest, just do not want to become a farmer	159(636)	30(90)	10(20)	6(6)	752	3.67
2.	Agriculture involves drudgery	159(636)	30(90)	10(20)	6(6)	752	3.67
3.	Parents' influence/preference	73(292)	74(222)	29(58)	29(29)	601	2.93
4.	Agriculture has low societal prestige	76(304)	69(207)	36(72)	24(24)	607	2.96
5.	Agriculture does not yield quick returns	66(264)	74(222)	38(76)	27(27)	589	2.87
6.	Peer group influence	69(276)	69(207)	37(74)	30(30)	587	2.86
7.	It makes one to be dirty	69(276)	68(204)	39(78)	29(29)	587	2.86
8.	Agriculture is a difficult course	81(324)	44(132)	51(102)	29(29)	587	2.86
9.	Gender considerations (Agriculture is not good for females)	59(236)	60(180)	53(106)	33(33)	555	2.71
10.	Difficulty in getting a "non-farming job" with a degree in agriculture	48(192)	49(147)	64(128)	44(44)	511	2.49
11.	Practical aspect of the course is difficult	56(224)	35(105)	63(126)	51(51)	506	2.47

Source: Primary data, 2019

*There are multiple responses.

Cut-off score = 2.50 (> 2.50 = important reason; <2.50 = not important reason)

3.5. Contribution of secondary schools' students' social attribute to their choice of agriculture as a career or a course of study

Table 5 unveils the estimated coefficients of the logit model. The coefficients of the logit do not have a direct interpretation. The quantifications that are familiar had marginal influences. Here, the coefficients are transformed to show the odds ratio of students to choose a career in agriculture or study agriculture as a course. All the variables captured in the equation were a significant factor that influences the students' decision on career or course of study in agriculture.

Table 5: Estimation of social attributes of secondary school students that contribute to their choice of agriculture as a career or course of study

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Wald Stat(x^2)	Exp. (β)
Constant	1.071	1.62	0.066
X ₁ (Age)	10.701	1.13	1.968
X ₂ (Parents' level of Education)	-2.242	-3.46	0.030
X ₃ (Parents' occupation)	0.037	0.24	0.030
X ₄ (Wealth status of parent)	0.069	1.54	0.057
X ₅ (Sex)	-0.555	-2.16	0.594
X ₆ (Knowledge of the subject)	1.045	3.04	2.815
X ₇ (Aptitude for prerequisite subjects)	0.630	3.27	1.886
X ₈ (Contact with guidance/counsellor)	0.48	0.60	0.024
X ₉ (Involvement in agric. Child labour)	1.014	4.57	2.734
X ₁₀ (Exposure to audio visual media)	0.079	3.841	0.061
X ₁₁ (Visit to commercial farm)	1.830	1.755	0.198

Notes: LR x^2 = 68.67; Prob > x^2 = 0.0112; Pseudo R² = 0.4253; Log likelihood = -86.0232

The interpretation given to the significant variables shows that for a unit (years) increase in the age of secondary school students, the odds in favour of deciding to take up agriculture career or course of study in agriculture is estimated to increase by 96%. The odds in favour of educated parents' influences on students to engage in agriculture as a career or course of study are estimated to decrease by 30% than by uneducated parents. This implies that parents who had little or no formal education are more prone to influence their children (students) to take up a career in agriculture or enroll for a course in agriculture. This supports the findings of [Ofuoku and Ugbechie \(2017\)](#).

The odds in favour of male students' decision to make a career in agriculture or take up a course of study in agriculture are estimated to decrease by 59% compared with female students. This implies that female students are more prone to tend to choose agriculture as a career or course of study. This is congruent with [Ofuoku \(2017\)](#), [Beall \(2002\)](#) who observe that females currently take broader and more defined roles on farms and agriculture and its related businesses. According to global census data, 70% of farmers are women ([Beall, 2002](#)).

Parents' occupation, wealth status of parents, knowledge of the subject, aptitude for prerequisite subjects, contact with guidance/counselors, involvement in agricultural child labour, exposure to audiovisual media and visit to commercial farms were the variables that increase the odds in favour of students' decision to choose agriculture as a career or course of study. The implication points to the fact that the more involved parents are in agriculture; the higher the wealth status of parents; the more knowledgeable the student was in agriculture as a subject; the higher the aptitude for prerequisite subjects among students; the more frequent they are involved in child labour; the more exposed they are to agricultural programmes in audio-visual media; and the higher the number of their visit to commercial farms, the higher the likelihood to choose agriculture as a career or course of study among secondary school students.

3.6. Implications for counseling services

[Olayinka \(1992\)](#) as cited by [Alfred \(2015\)](#) says counseling involves a process in which a person (counselor) assists another in a face-to-face encounter. This is indicative of involvement of personal interaction between a client with a peculiar problem, he finds difficulty in solving, and a counselor who has the duty of elucidating the situation to enable the person to decide for himself on what is present before him in the extant situation ([Myles, 1987](#)) as cited by [Alfred \(2005\)](#). Counseling services are needed in schools to help students make beneficial decisions.

The study reveals the dearth or lack of counseling services in rural secondary schools. At the senior level in secondary schools, students are faced with decisions on what career they need to take up in the future. Most times, students make wrong decisions concerning the choice of their various career aspirations for obvious reasons. This makes the students find themselves choosing the wrong careers/courses. This situation is envisaged in the rural areas, as counseling services are absent in rural secondary schools. This situation may not be unconnected with some of the reasons given by the secondary school students on why they would not like to choose agriculture as a career or course of study. Some of the reasons given are against the principles of counseling and it is suspected that the choices made by the students outside agriculture career may not be the best for them. In this situation, counseling services are needed to properly guide the students and if possible, their parents so that the students will be well equipped to make an inappropriate decision on their proper choice of career. This is required so that some students who for the wrong reasons chose other careers instead of an agricultural career, that may be best suited for them will correct the mistake and avoid the difficult situation in the future.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to determine the factors that guide the choice of agriculture as a career or course of study among secondary school students in Delta State, Nigeria. It was found that students

had an average age of 16 years. Most of their parents had one form of formal education or the other, most of who are engaged in farming as an occupation. Most of the parents were not wealthy. The secondary schools were male-dominated, as most of the students had average level knowledge of agricultural sciences and many had no contact with guidance/counselors and were highly involved in agricultural child labour. Their most important career choice was medicine and engineering. However, few of them had an interest in agriculture as a career or course of study. This set of students liked agriculture as a career or course of study for reasons varying from self-employment, interest, parents influence, peer group influence, economic improvement of the nation, agriculture having many enterprises, provision of food, profitable nature of agriculture not being a difficult course, parents' preference for agriculture as a course, peer group influence and preference for agriculture as a course of study, its interesting practical aspects, to ease of making a good grade.

Those who do not like to have a career in agriculture or study agriculture as a course gave their reasons for that decision to include lack of interest, drudgery, parents' influence/preference, low societal prestige, delay in returns on investment in agriculture, peer group influence, filthy nature of farming activities, the difficulty of agriculture as a course and gender consideration.

The social attributes of the students such as age, parents' level of education, parents' occupation, wealth status of parents, sex, students' knowledge of the subject, aptitude for the prerequisite subjects, contact with guidance/counselors, involvement in child labour, and exposure to audio-visual media agricultural programmes, and visits to commercial farms influenced their choice of career in agriculture or course of study. It is expected that from the reasons gives for not aspiring to make a career in agriculture, most of the students may have chosen an inappropriate career.

Arising from the results of this study it is recommended that:

- (i) All the secondary schools in rural areas or communities need counseling units to be manned by qualified guidance/counselors.
- (ii) Public enlightenment encouraging youths to choose agriculture as a career needs to be carried out.
- (iii) The government should develop and encourage mechanized agricultural practice in secondary schools.
- (iv) Students should be taken out to agricultural establishments on field trips and excursions.

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