



SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATES OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG CROP FARMERS IN IDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, IBADAN, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to assess perceived social support (PSS) and the socio-demographic characteristics associated with same among crop farmers in Ido LGA of Oyo State, Nigeria. The design is a farmer-targeted cross-sectional survey. Primary data were collected among 215 randomly selected respondents using structured questionnaire, which were administered via structured interview. Cross-tabulation and chi-square were used to show distributions and significance of associations between pairs of socio-demographic characteristics and levels of perceived social support. Contingency co-efficient was used to assess the extent of significant associations. Results indicated that high, moderate and marginal levels of social support were enjoyed by 40.9%, 30.7% and 28.4% of respondents, respectively. Sex and age were significantly associated with levels of social support ($p < 0.05$) but marital status and education were not ($p > 0.05$). Being female and being of decreased age are significantly associated with benefiting higher level of social support. Marital status and education are inconsequential factors in accruing social support among farmers in the study area. Social support is fairly palpable among farmers, but deliberate efforts to instigate its manifestation will open farmers to reaping the enormous advantages that social support offers.

Keywords: Social support, farmers, resilience, welfare, well-being.

INTRODUCTION

In the minds of many, farmers are associated with subjects of food availability cum food security. In other words, the productive capacity of farmers as an occupational group comes too much under scrutiny, at the expense of farmers' personhood and well-being. The literature is so quick to assert dwindling agricultural productivity but dwindling attention is typically accorded farmers' social circle and support. Yet, scientists have long-noted an association between social relationships and health. More socially isolated or less socially integrated individuals are less healthy psychologically and physically, and *more likely to die* (House, Landis and Umberson, 1988: 540, italics ours).

Social support is the "perceived or actual instrumental and/or expressive provisions supplied by the community, social networks, and confiding partners" (Lin, 1986: 18). It is the degree to which individuals can count on other people to help and respond to their needs. Social support is a key factor enabling resilience, the capacity to adapt to unwanted changes, stresses or problems (Southwick *et al.*, 2016). Social support predicts significant health and life outcomes (Uchino *et al.*, 2018). In a study among 601 employees of the Nigerian Prisons Service in a Southeastern State in Nigeria, Onyishi and Okongwu (2013) found that social support was positively related to life satisfaction. Using cross-sectional design, Adejumo (2010) examined the influence of social-support on the general-health of

475 retirees in Lagos, Nigeria and found significantly positive relationship between the two variables. Akanni and Oduaran (2018) conducted a survey among 621 fresh university students in South-western Nigeria and found that perceived social support had a significant, positive effect on academic self-efficacy and life satisfaction among respondents, irrespective of their age and sex. In a community-based descriptive study of 440 hypertensive residents in Idikan community, Ibadan, Nigeria, Osamor (2015) found that social support from friends was significantly associated with good compliance with treatment for hypertension. Olagunju *et al.* (2015) investigated the incidence of depression and its relationship with perceived social support among elderly persons in Mushin LGA of Lagos State, Nigeria. They found significant association between low level of social support and depression. Indeed, social support is a considerable social resource which is even indicative of social vulnerability status of individuals. Yet, the study of social support among farmers as a subset of the population is seemingly non-existent.

Farmers are considerably reputed as people of lower social economic status. The world of the poor has been said to be the rural world where farming predominates (Rigg, 2006). The life of farmers is synonymous with life in rural areas, the regions with poorest access to health and other infrastructures. The most recent Nigerian General Household Survey indicates that while only 16.1% of urban households have no access to electricity, 57.6% of rural households have no access to same (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Dug well/spring is the source of drinking water during dry season in 3.5% of urban but 17.1% of rural households. Pipe water is available to 7.1% of urban and 3.3% of rural households during dry season (Ibid). Rural demographic profile (including fertility rate, birth rate, contraceptive use) is poorer than urban's (Ibrahim, 2019). This makes the rural profile in question to be a greater threat to the actualization of Nigeria's quest for accelerated economic development which is achievable by gaining demographic dividend (Ibid).

The profile of the average Nigerian rural farmer is not enviable. In current times, they have had to deal

more with herdsmen-farmers crisis, which has claimed the lives of over 10,000 people within the last ten years (Ilo, Jonathan-Ichaver and Adamolekun, 2019). Perhaps, the greatest undoing of rural farmers is the susceptibility of agricultural production to environmental hazards, which is bound to affect farmer-income negatively (Cervantes-Godoy, Kimura and Antón, 2013). Adimassu, Kessler and Stroosnijder (2014) similarly asserted that in Africa, farming is the most vulnerable to climate change of all occupations. This is especially because of poor technological development, poverty, and deep reliance on rain-fed agriculture (Mulwa *et al.*, 2017). The reports of Okonya, Syndikus and Kroschel (2013) as well as Hassan and Nhemachena (2008) indicated that more than 95% of agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa are rain-dependent. No wonder there's typically a dearth of youth devotion to agriculture (Mukembo *et al.*, 2014; Adesugba and Mavrotas, 2016). Indeed, rural farmers are bewildered with greater level of stressors, making social capital including social support to be of considerable importance. Although, African communities and peoples are inclined to provide social support to their fellow citizens because of their collectivist culture, we live in a globalizing world where several cultural elements can no longer be taken for granted. It is therefore argued that empirical data regarding social support are called for as indicators of cultural change as well vulnerability or resilience status of farmers. Hence, this study was undertaken to assess perceived social support among crop farmers in Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. In addition, the socio-demographic variables associated with social support in this sample were identified.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The design of this work is a farmer-targeted cross-sectional survey. The people of Ido Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo state, Nigeria, were the study population. Ido LGA is one of the six rural LGAs of Ibadan. The other five LGAs are Akinyele, Lagelu, Egbeda, Oluyole and Ona-ara. Ibadan is a massive community, one of the largest towns in Nigeria and the capital city of Oyo state, southwestern Nigeria. The people of Ibadan are predominantly Yorùbá, but people of other ethnic groups reside in the town. Ido LGA has a land mass

of 800 km² and comprises of ten political wards. There are many towns and villages in these wards. Agriculture is practiced immensely therein, the people grow food crops like maize, yams, potatoes and vegetables.

Randomness was featured in the sampling procedure, which was also multi-staged. According to the 2006 population census, the population of Ido LGA is 103,261 (National Population Commission, 2007). Using this total population (N), the required sample size at 95% confidence level and confidence interval of 6.70 was 214. This was increased to 216. From the ten wards in the LGA, four were randomly selected and two villages were further randomly selected from each of them. The selected villages were Alako, Apata, Idowu, Omu aran, Adegbolu, Abegunrin, Ajeerun and Idiya. Using systematic sampling technique, twenty-seven respondents were selected in each of the eight selected villages. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaire and this was administered via structured interview. The questionnaire was translated into Yorùbá language to ease communication with respondents. Two hundred and fifteen copies of the questionnaire were analyzed. One respondent declined to be interviewed, making response rate to be 99.53%.

Perceived social support was defined as the extent to which respondents are endowed with human and emotional resources (people) which they tap into whenever the need arises. It was assessed using a 12-item scale of social support (Zimet *et al.*, 1988). Examples of items in the scale are 'I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me', 'there is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings' and 'I can talk about my problems with my friends'. Response categories included 'very true', 'true', 'unsure' and 'false' and were scored 1 to 4 such that the higher the score, the

greater the social support. Hence, respondent's total score could range from 12 to 48. After preliminary analysis of data, lowest and highest scores were 13 and 48 respectively. Respondents were categorized as having marginal support if they scored from 13 to 24, moderate social support if they scored from 25 to 36 and high social support if their score ranged from 37 to 48. Socio-demographic variables including sex, age, marital status and education were assessed nominally. Frequency counts and percentages were used to assess distributions of data. Cross-tabulation and chi-square were used to show distributions and significance of associations between pairs of socio-demographic characteristics and levels of perceived social support. Where significant associations were recorded, contingency co-efficient was used to assess the extent of the association. Data analyses were done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 23).

RESULTS

Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Male respondents (56.7%) were more represented in the study sample when compared to their female counterparts (43.3%). Most respondents were aged between 26-35 years (26.0%). This was followed by the 36-45 age sub-category (21.4%) and then the 18-25 age sub-category (15.3%). Other age sub categories were well represented in the study. An overwhelming majority of respondents were married (67.9%), a noticeable proportion (21.9%) were single while 7.0% and 3.3% were widowed and divorced respectively. A sizeable proportion of respondents (34.9%) had no formal education. Respondents having primary and secondary education were 29.3% and 33.5% respectively. Just a negligible proportion (2.3%) of respondents had tertiary education. The distribution of socio-demographic profile of respondents is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 215)

Variable	Sub-groups	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	122	56.7
	Female	93	43.3
Age (in years)	18-25	33	15.3
	26-35	56	26.0
	36-45	46	21.4
	46-55	28	13.0
	56-65	26	12.1
	66-above	26	12.1
Marital status	Single	47	21.9
	Married	146	67.9
	Divorced	7	3.3
	Widowed	15	7.0
Education	No formal education	75	34.9
	Primary school	63	29.3
	Secondary school	72	33.5
	Tertiary education	5	2.3

Perceived Social Support among Respondents
 Most respondents (40.9%) enjoy a high level of social support. Moderate and marginal enjoyers of

social support were 30.7% and 28.4% respectively. The distribution of levels of social support is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of levels of perceived social support among respondents

Variable	Levels of social support	N	%
Perceived social support	Marginal social support	61	28.4
	Moderate social support	66	30.7
	High social support	88	40.9
	Total	215	100

Socio-demographic Characteristics and Perceived Social Support
Sex and perceived social support

Table 3 shows that 91.6% of respondents benefitting marginal social support were male while 67.0% of those enjoying high social support were

female. The chi-square value of this analysis was 50.850 ($p < 0.05$). Hence, sex is significantly associated with levels of social support enjoyed by respondents. The extent of the significant association between sex and social support is 43.7% (contingency co-efficient = 0.437, $p < 0.05$).

Table 3: Cross-tabulation of sex and perceived social support

Perceived social support	Sex		
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Marginal social support	91.6	8.4	100
Moderate social support	56.3	43.7	100
High social support	33.0	67.0	100

Chi-square = 50.850, p = 0.000, Contingency co-efficient = 0.437 (p = 0.000).

Age and Perceived Social Support

The cross-distributions of age and levels of social support indicates that 29.8% of respondents who enjoyed marginal social support belong to the oldest age sub-category (66-above) while 5.6% of youngest age sub-category (18-25 years) enjoyed marginal social support. In a sort of twist of fate, 25.1% of respondents who benefited high social support belong to the youngest age sub-category (18-25 years) while 12.1% of them belong to the

oldest age sub-category (66-above). These cross-distributions generally showcase that increased age is associated with receiving decreased social support. The chi-square analysis yielded 20.906 ($p < 0.05$). Hence, age is significantly associated with levels of social support gained by respondents. The extent of this significant association as assessed with contingency co-efficient is 29.8% ($p < 0.05$). The cross-tabulation of age and social support is shown in table 4.

Table 4: Cross-tabulation of age and perceived social support

Perceived social support	Age (in years)						Total (%)
	18-25 (%)	26-35 (%)	36-45 (%)	46-55 (%)	56-65 (%)	66-above (%)	
Marginal social support	5.6	12.1	16.7	18.6	17.2	29.8	100
Moderate social support	13.0	14.0	20.0	17.7	26.0	9.3	100
High social support	25.1	16.7	16.3	17.2	12.6	12.1	100

Chi-square = 20.906, $p = 0.022$, Contingency co-efficient = 0.298 ($p = 0.022$).

Marital status and Perceived Social Support

Table 5 shows that married respondents dominated the three levels of social support: 72.1% of marginal, 72.6% of moderate and 61.4% of high

social support. Chi-square analysis yielded 5.626 ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, marital status is not significantly associated with levels of social support gained by respondents.

Table 5: Cross-tabulation of marital status and perceived social support

Perceived social support	Education				Total (%)
	Married (%)	Single (%)	Divorced (%)	Widowed (%)	
Marginal social support	72.1	22.8	1.9	3.2	100
Moderate social support	72.6	16.7	4.6	6.0	100
High social support	61.4	25.1	3.3	10.2	100

Chi-square = 5.626, $p = 0.466$

Education and Perceived Social Support

The cross-distribution of education and levels of social support indicates that apart from the tertiary education sub-group which recorded marginal proportions of the three levels of social support, other sub-groups of education recorded a kind of homogenous degrees of social support. Among respondents who enjoyed high social support for

instance, 34%, 27.4% and 35.3% had no formal education, primary education and secondary education respectively. The chi-square of this analysis is 4.798 ($p > 0.05$). Education is not significantly associated with levels of social support enjoyed by respondents. The cross-tabulation of education and social support is presented on table 6.

Table 6: Cross-tabulation of education and perceived social support

Perceived social support	Education				Total (%)
	No formal education (%)	Primary education (%)	Secondary education (%)	Tertiary education (%)	
Marginal social support	31.2	29.3	39.5	0.0	100
Moderate social support	39.5	31.6	26.0	2.8	100
High social support	34.0	27.4	35.3	3.3	100

Chi-square = 4.798, p = 0.570

DISCUSSIONS

The greater proportion of male over female respondents reflects the preponderance of male over female farmers in the study area. The distribution of respondent’s age reflects the youthful farmer-population in the study area. About 6 of every 10 farmers in the study area is aged between 18 and 45 years while roughly 3 in 10 respondents are aged 46 and above. The proportion of respondents that were married is a pointer to the potential of intimate companionship and social support in the study area. The noticeable proportion of respondents who had no formal education is not in the best interest of optimal agricultural production in the study area because education enhances the development and refinement of skills and competencies. Formal educational achievement could be better in the study area.

The ratio of high, moderate and marginal levels of social support enjoyed among farmers in the study area is roughly 4:3:3. Indeed, social support cannot be taken for granted as available to people because of the African-communal nature of social life. Invariably, the social support derived by about 4 of 10 farmers in the study area is potentially predisposing to resilience (Southwick *et al.*, 2016), health and life outcomes (Uchino *et al.*, 2018), life satisfaction (Onyishi and Okongwu, 2013; Akanni and Oduaran, 2018), general-health (Adejumo, 2010), good compliance with treatment for hypertension (Osamor, 2015) and protection against depression (Olagunju *et al.*, 2015). Indeed, the degree of social support gained by farmers in the study area is noticeable and fair, but there is large room for improvement in order to accrue the benefits that social support offers.

Being female is associated with benefiting higher level of social support. This finding is very

instructive. Women farmers enjoy a significantly higher degree of social support when compared with their male counterparts. While men are generally more advantaged in life due to the patriarchal nature of most societies, women are especially more advantaged in tapping ‘people’ resources. This is consistent with the findings of Tam and Lim (2009) who examined social support among young adults in Malaysia and reported that women were significantly better beneficiaries of social support than men. Sharir *et al.* (2007) also reported significantly greater levels of social support among women as opposed to men. However, in the study of perceived social support and depression in Lagos, Nigeria Olagunju *et al.* (2015) reported that sex was not significantly associated with social support. Being younger is also associated with receiving higher levels of social support. This is probably borne out of the fact that parents and significant others take responsibility for younger people. Their youthfulness also grants them the energy and wherewithal to build social networks. However, Olagunju *et al.* (2015) reported that age was not significantly associated with social support. This is probably because elderly persons aged 60 and above constituted the sample of the study reported by Olagunju *et al.* (2015). Being married or otherwise is not significantly protective or predisposing to enjoying social support. This is rather contrary to expectation because marriage ordinarily affords intimate companionship which is a basic ingredient of social support.

Marital status was similarly reported to be insignificantly associated with social support in the study reported by Olagunju *et al.* (2015). Education is neither predisposing to, or preventive against benefiting social support among respondents in the study area. The study of Chovwen and Olapegba

(2006) among widows in Anambra, Nigeria similarly indicated that education was not significantly associated with social support accrued by respondents. Education was similarly found to be insignificantly associated with social support by Olagunju *et al.* (2015).

CONCLUSIONS

Social support is not pervasively obtainable by farmers despite the African-communal nature of social life in the study area. Although social support is quite evident, seeking to improve same is apt.

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