International Journal of Agriculture and Environmental Research

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS TOWARDS AGRICULTURAL CAREER-ORIENTED TRAINING CONTENTS IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

*Ajuwon, Ibrahim Opeyemi, Alabi, Ajeronke Florence, Olabimisi, Akinwale Dami and Oladoyinbo, Oluseun Babatunde

Department of Agricultural Technology, Oyo State College of Agriculture and Technology, Igboora, Oyo State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author

DOI: https://doi.org/10.51193/IJAER.2026.12201

Received: 17 Feb. 2026 / Accepted: 27 Feb. 2026 / Published: 17 Mar. 2026

ABSTRACT

Agricultural education is critical for preparing students for careers in farming, research, extension, and agribusiness, yet youth engagement in agriculture remains limited. This study assessed students' attitudes toward agricultural career-oriented training contents in Southwestern Nigerian universities. Using a multistage sampling technique, 304 final-year undergraduate students from six universities were selected. Data were collected with structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and Duncan Multiple Range Test. Results showed that respondents were mostly young (93.1% aged 21–30 years; mean = 24 years) and single (94.4%). Most studied agriculture as their first-choice course (80.9%). Access to training varied, with agriculture-oriented internships (WMS = 1.95) being most accessible, while film shows (0.78) was least accessible. Attitudinal assessment indicated that 87.2% of respondents had a favourable attitude toward training contents, with highest ratings for hands-on practical skills, capacity building, and career preparedness (WMS = 4.07–4.00). ANOVA revealed no significant difference in overall attitudes across universities ($F = 1.529$; $p = 0.180$). The study implies that practical, career-oriented agricultural training positively influences students' attitudes and engagement, underscoring the need to expand experiential learning, climate-smart curricula, mentorship, facilities, and entrepreneurship support to promote agriculture as a viable career for Nigerian youth.

Keywords: Agricultural education; career-oriented training; student attitudes; experiential learning; Southwestern Nigeria

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has historically been an agrarian nation, with agriculture serving as a backbone of its economy, particularly during the early post-independence period when it contributed significantly to income and foreign exchange earnings. Agriculture continues to be central to the Nigerian economy, supporting food security, employment, and sustainable development. Its importance highlights the need to attract young people to view agriculture not merely as subsistence work but as a viable and rewarding career. Agricultural education is critical in equipping students with the skills and competencies necessary to function as farmers, researchers, extension officers, and agribusiness professionals (Asiyanbola et al., 2024; Ikuemonisan et al., 2022). Attitude, encompassing feelings, beliefs, and behavioral intentions, strongly influences students' career choices. Positive attitudes toward agricultural career-oriented training motivate learning and foster career pursuit, whereas negative attitudes reduce engagement with agriculture as a profession (Abdullahi et al., 2025).

In Nigeria, agriculture is often viewed as a "default" career for rural dwellers with limited education, a perception reinforced by parental expectations, peer influence, and cultural norms, which may discourage youth from pursuing agricultural professions (Asiyanbola et al., 2024). Teachers of agriculture play a pivotal role, as their attitudes, teaching methods, and instructional effectiveness shape students' interests and career aspirations (Ikuemonisan et al., 2022). Practical, hands-on training and exposure to modern agricultural techniques are essential for sustaining students' interest and enhancing career readiness (Ajuwon, Alabi and Adisa, 2025). Structured practical experiences such as the Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) positively influence students' career choices, highlighting the importance of experiential learning and relevant training content in agriculture (Ajuwon, Alabi and Adisa, 2025). Curriculum limitations and inadequate exposure to contemporary agricultural practices can influence students' attitudes toward agricultural careers (Asiyanbola et al., 2024).

Agricultural career-oriented training in Nigerian universities aims to enhance competencies, but students' attitudes remain mixed. Multiple socio-economic and cultural factors shape their orientation, and many perceive agriculture as less rewarding compared with careers in medicine, law, or business (Abdullahi et al., 2025). Understanding students' attitudes toward agricultural career-oriented training contents is crucial for evaluating curriculum effectiveness, identifying gaps, and developing strategies to reposition agriculture as a competitive and desirable career.

This study seeks to address the existing knowledge gap by investigating students' attitudes toward agricultural career-oriented training in Nigeria. Specifically, this study seeks to examine the socio-economic characteristics of respondents in the study area, assess the extent to which students access agricultural career-oriented training contents, and examine their attitudes toward such

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

training contents in Southwestern Nigerian universities. The study also analyzed the significant differences in students' attitudes toward agricultural career-oriented training contents across the selected institutions.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) describes that one's efficiency and effectiveness for some particular tasks is related to choice of the career choices. It discusses the interaction of "learning experiences, self-efficacy and outcome expectations" and the way in which these affect career interest and choices. This theory is relevant to the present study because individual student's capability (Personal conviction) to participate in agricultural activities and societal expectations (parent's advice, parent's profession) will go a long way in measuring their level of involvement and their attitude towards agricultural career-oriented training contents.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in South-western geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The zone has six (6) states which are Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Ogun, and Lagos. The zone lies in equatorial rainforest belt and the rainfall around this area varies from 1500mm to 1800mm per annum. Population of this study comprises of all the undergraduate students in faculty of Agricultural sciences from South-Western Nigerian universities. Data was collected with the use of a well-structured questionnaire.

Multistage sampling technique was employed for this study. The first stage involved random selection of Oyo, Ogun and Osun states representing 50% of the States in the southwest geopolitical zone. The second stage also involved a random selection of two universities from each of the selected states. The third stage involved purposive selection of faculty of agricultural sciences from each of the selected universities because the study focused on agricultural students. The fourth stage involved purposive selection of final year students in the faculty because they are the set of students that had passed through all the agricultural career oriented training contents. The study population was 3,044 which is less than 10,000 and the required sample shall be small (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). In such a case, a final sample estimate was calculated using the formula recommended by Yamane (1967). The sample size for this study was 304.

The research instrument proved reliable with a Spearman's correlation of 0.873, exceeding the 0.7 benchmark. The socio-economic characteristics considered in this study include age, sex, religion, marital status, and membership of social groups. The extent of accessing agricultural career-oriented training contents was measured on a 4-point scale (always, occasionally, rarely, not at all) across twelve training contents, with scores categorized into high, medium, and low using mean ± standard deviation. Students' attitudes toward agricultural career-oriented training contents were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) based on sixteen attitudinal statements, categorized into favourable or unfavourable attitudes using composite scores.

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

Weighted mean scores were interpreted using the midpoint of the scale as a benchmark, where values above the midpoint indicated higher access/positive perception. Data analysis employed both descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and inferential statistics, specifically Duncan, to examine the relationships and differences stated in the hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study revealed that the respondents were predominantly youthful, with 93.1 % aged 21–30 years and a mean age of 24 years, indicating a vibrant and active population likely to engage in agricultural innovations (Onwuaroh et al., 2024). Sex distribution was relatively balanced, with a slight predominance of females (51.3 %), suggesting the need for gender-sensitive agricultural career training (Osabohien et al., 2021). The majority were single (94.4 %) and mostly identified as Christians (67.8 %), highlighting demographic patterns typical of undergraduates and the potential role of faith-based mobilisation in agricultural career initiatives. Parents' occupations showed that farming remained a major livelihood (35.2 %), followed by trading and civil service, reflecting the influence of parental background on students' career orientation toward agriculture (Luka, Murtala and Sani, 2023). Social participation was moderate, with 58.6 % belonging to at least one social group, which can enhance access to information and opportunities. Most students (80.9 %) studied agriculture or had it as their first-choice course, although some expressed interest in other professional fields such as nursing, medicine, and engineering. Overall, the findings indicate that students in Southwestern Nigerian universities are largely young, engaged, and inclined toward agricultural studies, highlighting opportunities to strengthen agricultural career-oriented training and youth participation in the sector.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents (n = 304)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Age (Years)				
≤ 20	14	4.6		
21–30	283	93.1	24.3	3.628
31–40	3	1.0		
Above 40	4	1.3		
Sex				
Male	148	48.7		
Female	156	51.3		
Religion				

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Christianity	206	67.8		
Islam	96	31.6		
Traditional worshippers	2	0.7		
Marital Status				
Single	287	94.4		
Married	12	3.9		
Divorced	4	1.3		
Separated	1	0.3		
Parents' Livelihood Activities				
Farming	107	35.2		
Trading/Private business	89	29.3		
Civil/Public service	85	27.9		
Artisanship	23	7.6		
Membership of Social Group				
Yes	178	58.6		
No	126	41.4		
Agriculture as Course of Interest				
Agriculture	246	80.9		
Non-agriculture	58	19.1		
Course of Interest (if not Agriculture)				
Agriculture	246	80.8		
Nursing	26	8.6		
Medicine	9	3.0		
Computer Science	9	3.0		
Chemical Engineering	7	2.3		
Science Laboratory Technology	5	1.6		
Electrical Engineering	2	0.7		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Extent of Accessing the Available Agricultural Career Oriented Training Contents by Students on Their Career Choice in the Study Area

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

Results in Table 2 revealed that students in Southwestern Nigerian universities had varying levels of access to agricultural career-oriented training contents. Agriculture-oriented internships recorded the highest level of access (WMS = 1.95), followed by field trips and experiential laboratory education (both WMS = 1.75). Activities such as general seminars (WMS = 1.63), off-campus service-learning (WMS = 1.61), and student-led seminars (WMS = 1.57) were also moderately accessible. Other training components including cooperative education (WMS = 1.47), tours/excursions (WMS = 1.45), industry-linked cooperative learning (WMS = 1.40), work-integrated learning (WMS = 1.36), self-directed practicum (WMS = 1.28), and film shows (WMS = 0.78) were less accessible. Overall, most activities had weighted mean scores above the midpoint of 1.5, indicating that students had substantial opportunities to engage in practical and experiential learning. Such exposure is critical for translating classroom theory into real-world applications, enhancing students' career readiness, and fostering interest in agriculture as a profession.

Experiential learning strategies significantly improve students' interest and engagement in agriculture, confirming that exposure to practical training positively shapes attitudes toward agricultural careers (Bala, 2024). Nigerian studies further support this, showing that structured farm practicals and experiential modules motivate undergraduates toward agricultural occupations and improve their preparedness for the workforce (Olorunleke and Olorunfemi, 2024). The findings suggest that while students generally have good access to career-oriented agricultural training, internships and hands-on experiential activities are the most influential in fostering engagement and career readiness.

Table 2a: Extent of accessing the available agricultural career-oriented training contents

Extent of accessing the available agricultural career oriented training contents	Always	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at all	WMS	Rank
Agriculture-orientated internships training	108(35.5)	100(32.9)	70(23.0)	26(8.6)	1.95	1st
Experiential education (laboratory)	73(24.0)	122(40.1)	68(22.4)	41(13.5)	1.75	2nd
Field trips	58(19.1)	143(47.0)	71(23.4)	32(10.5)	1.75	2nd
General seminars	56(18.4)	120(39.5)	89(29.3)	39(12.8)	1.63	4th
Off-campus service-learning opportunities	50(16.4)	139(45.7)	60(19.7)	55(18.1)	1.61	5th
Student-led seminars	62(20.4)	103(33.9)	84(27.6)	55(18.1)	1.57	6th

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

Cooperative education	65(21.4)	73(24.0)	106(34.9)	60(19.7)	1.47	7th
Tours/excursion	42(13.8)	112(36.8)	90(29.6)	60(19.7)	1.45	8th
Cooperative learning experiences with the agriculture industry	49(16.1)	85(28.0)	109(35.9)	61(20.1)	1.40	9th
Work-integrated learning in different academic institutions	29(9.5)	108(35.5)	111(36.5)	56(18.4)	1.36	10th
Self-directed practicums	27(8.9)	97(31.9)	113(37.2)	67(22.0)	1.28	11th
Film show	59(19.4)	24(7.9)	12(3.9)	209(68.8)	0.78	12th

Source: Field Survey, 2025 WMS = Weighted Mean Score

Categorization of extent of accessibility of available agricultural career-oriented training contents

Table 2b presents the categorization of students' access to agricultural career-oriented training contents. The results show that 68.4% of respondents had moderate access, 17.4% had high access, and 14.2% had low access. This indicates that overall access remains at a moderate level, suggesting the need for increased efforts to ensure wider utilization of the available training contents among students.

Table 2b: Categorization of extent of accessibility of available agricultural career-oriented training contents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
High	53	17.4
Medium	208	68.4
Low	43	14.2
Total	304	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Mean -17.21 Standard Deviation - 6.050 Minimum score = 0 Maximum score = 36

Attitude of Students towards agricultural career-oriented training contents in the study area

The study revealed that students in Southwestern Nigerian universities generally held positive attitudes toward agricultural career-oriented training contents. Using a 5-point Likert scale, the strongest agreement was with the statement that agricultural training often involves traditional farming associated with drudgery (WMS = 4.07), closely followed by its role in enhancing

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

understanding of practical agriculture (WMS = 4.06). Other highly rated attitudes included its function as an eye-opener to agricultural opportunities (WMS = 4.04), building capacity for profitable farming (WMS = 4.02), and providing avenues for self-sustenance after school (WMS = 4.00). Students also recognized the contribution of agricultural training to national food security (WMS = 3.90), environmental sustainability (WMS = 3.73), and national development (WMS = 3.70).

Moderate concerns were expressed regarding profitability and limited rural career opportunities (WMS = 3.96), improving the image of agriculture among youth (WMS = 3.83), outdated content and limited global perspective (WMS = 3.76–3.77), and limited field demonstrations (WMS = 3.48). These findings align with recent research showing that practical training and experiential learning increase motivation and positive perception of agriculture (Olorunleke and Olorunfemi, 2024), while broader reviews indicate that youth engagement in agriculture is shaped by perceived opportunities and structural barriers (Boye et al., 2024). Together, the findings underscore the importance of modernized curricula, hands-on training, and exposure to emerging agricultural opportunities to reinforce positive attitudes and encourage youth participation in the sector.

Table 3a: Distribution of respondents by attitude of students towards agricultural career-oriented training contents in the study area

Attitudinal statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	WMS	Rank
Agricultural career-oriented training contents often encompasses traditional farming which is associated with drudgery	125(41.1)	127(41.8)	22(7.2)	8(2.6)	22(7.2)	4.07	1st
Agricultural career-oriented training contents paves ways for a better understanding of practical agriculture	101(33.2)	139(45.7)	49(16.1)	10(3.3)	5(1.6)	4.06	2nd
Agricultural career-oriented training contents is an eye opener to opportunities is agriculture	109(35.9)	128(42.1)	44(14.5)	17(5.6)	6(2.0)	4.04	3rd
Agricultural career-oriented training contents helps build adequate capacity to embark on profitable farming	86(28.3)	162(53.3)	36(11.8)	15(4.9)	5(1.6)	4.02	4th
Agricultural career-oriented training contents is an avenue	84(27.6)	161(53.0)	43(14.1)	7(2.3)	9(3.0)	4.00	5th

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

for self-sustenance after school							
Agricultural career-oriented training contents usually engender uncertainty in profitability and limited career opportunities in rural areas	68(22.4)	187(61.5)	28(9.2)	12(3.9)	9(3.0)	3.96	6th
Agriculture career-oriented training contents is an opportunity to build a nation with sufficiency in food production	86(28.3)	148(48.7)	38(7.6)	23(7.6)	9(2.9)	3.90	7th
Agricultural career-oriented training contents always find it difficult to eradicate poor image of agriculture especially among the youth	73(24.0)	154(50.7)	38(12.5)	27(8.9)	12(3.9)	3.83	8th
Most of the agricultural career-oriented training contents are outdated and do not focus on the current issues and development in global agriculture	90(29.6)	114(37.5)	55(18.1)	36(11.8)	9(2.9)	3.77	9th
Most of agriculture career-oriented training contents fail to address current reality in global food deficit and climate change issues	67(22.0)	156(51.3)	42(13.8)	23(7.6)	16(5.2)	3.76	10th
Despite agricultural career-oriented training contents, the youths often perceived agriculture as an exclusive activity of the rural	62(20.4)	166(54.6)	31(10.2)	29(9.5)	16(5.3)	3.75	11th
Agriculture career-oriented training contents is an opportunity to engender environmentally safe society	85(28.0)	127(41.8)	46(15.1)	22(7.2)	24(7.9)	3.73	12th
Agricultural career-oriented training contents often showcase agriculture as a	84(27.6)	115(37.8)	62(20.4)	22(7.2)	21(6.9)	3.70	13th

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

back bone for sustainable development in any nation							
Agricultural career-oriented training contents does not have a blue print of mechanism to prevent climate change effects of agricultural productivities	63(20.7)	121(39.8)	63(20.7)	42(13.8)	15(4.9)	3.58	14th
Agriculture career-oriented training contents only accommodate limited field demonstration ideologies and mostly theoretical based training	70(23.0)	107(35.2)	58(19.1)	43(14.1)	26(8.5)	3.48	15th
Agricultural career-oriented training contents often conflict with students' prior background knowledge of agriculture	59(19.4)	94(30.9)	67(22.0)	65(21.4)	19(6.3)	3.34	16th

Source: Field Survey, 2025 WMS = Weighted Mean Score

SA: Strongly Agree; A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Categorization of Respondents by Attitude towards Agricultural Career-Oriented Training Contents

Result in Table 3b revealed that the majority of students (87.2 %) held a favourable attitude toward agricultural career-oriented training contents, while only 12.8 % exhibited an unfavourable attitude. Although respondents acknowledged challenges such as drudgery, outdated content, and profitability concerns, the consistently high weighted mean scores across several favourable statements particularly those related to practical skills acquisition, capacity building, career preparedness, and self-sustenance, suggest an overall positive disposition toward agricultural career-oriented training. This indicates that students recognize the value and relevance of the training despite existing constraints. Recent Nigerian evidence similarly shows that students' positive perceptions of agricultural training are associated with increased willingness to pursue agriculture-related courses and careers (Obaruyi, Agbidi and Ikeoji, 2024). However, studies across Africa highlight that favourable attitudes alone may not fully translate into career uptake without supportive structures, practical exposure, and enabling environments (Gervas, 2024; Boye et al., 2024).

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

Table 3b: Categorization of Respondents by Attitude towards Agricultural Career-Oriented Training Contents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Unfavourable	39	12.8
Favourable	265	87.2
Total	304	

Source: Field Survey, 2025 Mean - 60.98 Minimum score = 16 Maximum score = 80

There is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards agricultural oriented career training contents among the selected institutions

Result in Table 4 examined differences in students' attitudes toward agricultural career-oriented training contents across six selected universities. ANOVA results ($F = 1.529$, $p = 0.180$) indicated that there is no statistically significant difference in overall attitudes among students from different institutions. Despite the absence of a statistically significant overall difference, Duncan Multiple Range Test showed slight variations in mean attitude scores across institutions. LAUTECH recorded the highest mean score (61.93), while OOU had the lowest (55.42). However, the overlapping groupings (a, ab, b) indicate that these differences are marginal and not statistically distinct. This suggests that students across the universities generally share similar attitudes toward agricultural career-oriented training contents. The observed variations may reflect differences in training emphasis, availability of facilities, and institutional context rather than fundamental differences in students' attitudes. Recent studies support these findings, indicating that demographic or institutional factors often do not significantly influence students' attitudes when structural and educational contexts are accounted for (Isahac, 2024).

Table 4: Summary of Analysis of Variance of variation separated by Duncan's multiple effect tests

University name	Mean value
OOU	55.42^{b}
UNIOSUN	58.63^{ab}
UI	60.19^{ab}
OAU	60.39^{ab}
FUNAAB	60.76^{ab}
LAUTECH	61.93^{a}

Source: Data analysis, 2025

A, b, c, ab = values on the same column with the same superscript are not significantly different from each other

ISSN: 2455-6939

Volume: 12, Issue: 02 "March-April 2026"

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that students in Southwestern Nigerian universities generally hold a favourable attitude toward agricultural career-oriented training contents. Greater access to practical training components, including internships, field trips, and experiential laboratory education, was associated with more positive attitudes, highlighting the importance of hands-on exposure. Despite this, challenges such as limited access, outdated content, and rural-centric perceptions continue to affect students' full engagement and enthusiasm toward agricultural careers. Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that universities expand access to practical agricultural training, such as internships, field trips, and cooperative education, while updating curricula to reflect current global trends, climate-smart practices, and entrepreneurship skills. Adequate facilities, competent trainers, and mentorship programs can enhance students' hands-on experience and career interest. Encouraging participation in agricultural clubs and outreach programs can improve awareness and perception of agriculture, promoting it as a viable and innovative career. Lower-performing institutions should adopt best practices from higher-performing universities, and government support through incentives, scholarships, and credit facilities can further make agricultural careers attractive and sustainable.

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