

Perceived Barriers that Influence Graduating Degree Students to Engage in Rural Agripreneurial Activities in Lagos State

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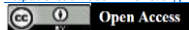
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ABSTRACT

Rural agripreneurship offers graduating students a route into self-employment, yet participation remains low despite repeated policy attention. This study assessed the attitude of graduating degree students towards exploiting and utilising agripreneurial opportunities in rural areas and evaluated the perceived barriers influencing their decision to engage in such activities after graduation. A descriptive survey design was used. Final-year students were drawn from the University of Lagos, Lagos State University and Lagos State University of Education through a multistage sampling procedure. Of the 301 questionnaires distributed, 287 were properly completed, giving a response rate of 95.4%. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages and weighted mean scores. Findings showed that respondents held a positive attitude towards rural agripreneurship, with a grand mean of 3.95 on a five-point scale. They agreed most strongly that exploiting rural agripreneurial opportunities is a worthwhile pursuit (mean = 4.07) and a sensible route to financial independence (mean = 4.05). Their weakest agreement concerned choosing agripreneurship over a conventional office job (mean = 3.79). On barriers, the grand mean was 1.28 on a scale of 0 to 2, indicating that all listed constraints were considered real. Limited access to start-up capital ranked highest (mean = 1.43), followed by poor rural infrastructure (mean = 1.36) and unpredictable agricultural returns (mean = 1.33). Social stigma attached to farming ranked lowest (mean = 1.14). The study concluded that students are willing but constrained, and that the main obstacles are financial and structural rather than attitudinal. Targeted financing, rural infrastructure investment and risk management support were recommended.

Introduction

Nigeria produces a large number of graduates each year, but the formal labour market absorbs only a small proportion of them. Many young people therefore spend long periods searching for salaried employment that may never come. Agriculture and its associated value chains offer an alternative, and government agencies at both state and federal level have promoted agripreneurship as a means of creating jobs, improving food supply and reducing pressure on urban centres.

Rural Lagos presents an unusual case. Communities in Epe, Badagry, Ikorodu and Ibeju-Lekki maintain active farming, fishing and processing activities while sitting close to one of the largest consumer markets in West Africa. A young agripreneur producing vegetables, catfish or poultry in these areas can reach millions of customers within a few hours. Processing firms, hotels, restaurants, supermarkets and export agents all draw supplies from the same corridor. On paper, the commercial logic is compelling.

Yet participation by graduates remains modest. The gap between opportunity and uptake raises two separate questions. The first concerns how students feel about rural agripreneurship. Attitude reflects a person's overall evaluation of a course of action, covering whether it is seen as worthwhile, respectable,

profitable and personally suitable. Ajzen (1991) argued that attitude is one of the principal determinants of behavioural intention, and studies of university students have repeatedly confirmed this relationship (Nasri, 2023; Bayona-Oré, 2023). A student who regards agriculture as demeaning or unprofitable is unlikely to consider it, regardless of the opportunities available.

The second question concerns what stands in the way. Barriers are the obstacles that reduce a person's belief in their ability to act, even when the intention exists. In agripreneurship, these commonly include capital shortages, land tenure difficulties, weak infrastructure, market access problems and production risks. Abdullahi (2024) found that a large majority of Nigerian agricultural students identified inadequate capital and lack of access to land as the constraints most likely to discourage them. Umeh et al. (2020) reached similar conclusions among youths in Ebonyi State, where financing dominated the list of obstacles.

Attitude and barriers work in opposite directions. A positive attitude pulls students towards agripreneurship, while perceived barriers push them away. The outcome depends on which force proves stronger at the point of decision. This is why examining the two together produces a fuller picture than studying either alone. A student may believe firmly that rural agribusiness is rewarding, but still abandon the idea after calculating the cost of leasing land, drilling a borehole, buying a generator and financing an initial production cycle.

The rural dimension adds further complications for students trained in an urban environment. Lagos graduates are accustomed to reliable transport, mobile networks, healthcare facilities and social amenities. Relocating to a rural community may involve accepting a different standard of living. Ajala et al. (2025) reported that a substantial proportion of Lagos youth cited rural lifestyle concerns as a deterrent to agribusiness participation, a finding that reflects the particular character of an urbanised state.

There is also the influence of family and peers. Nigerian parents often invest heavily in their children's education and expect returns in the form of secure, respectable employment. A graduate who announces plans to farm may face resistance at home, particularly where relatives associate agriculture with hardship. Balaji et al. (2023) observed that family discouragement operated as a significant barrier among agricultural students, especially where parents held outdated views of the sector.

Whether these social pressures still carry the weight they once did is an open question. Younger Nigerians have grown up with visible examples of agribusiness success, from commercial poultry operations to packaged food brands. It is possible that the stigma once attached to farming has weakened, leaving financial and structural problems as the dominant obstacles. Establishing this empirically matters for policy, because interventions designed to change perceptions differ considerably from those designed to relieve financial constraints.

This study therefore assessed the attitude of graduating degree students towards exploiting and utilising rural agripreneurial opportunities, and evaluated the barriers they perceive as influencing their decision to engage in such activities after graduation.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions:

1. What is the attitude of graduating degree students towards exploiting and utilising agripreneurial opportunities in rural areas of Lagos State?
2. What are the perceived barriers influencing their decision to engage in rural agripreneurial activities upon graduation?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective was to examine the perceived barriers that influence graduating degree students to engage in rural agripreneurial activities in Lagos State.

The specific objectives were to:

1. Assess the attitude of graduating students towards exploiting and utilising agripreneurial opportunities in rural areas; and
2. Evaluate the perceived barriers that influence the decision to engage in rural agripreneurial activity upon graduation.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted. The design suited the study because it allowed information to be gathered on students' attitudes and perceived constraints without any manipulation of the study environment.

The study covered three government-owned tertiary institutions representing the three senatorial districts of Lagos State: the University of Lagos in Lagos Central, Lagos State University in Lagos West and Lagos State University of Education, Epe Campus, in Lagos East. Final-year degree students in agriculture-related, agribusiness, entrepreneurship and other relevant programmes made up the study population.

A multistage sampling procedure was used. Lagos State was first stratified into its three senatorial districts. One government-owned institution was purposively selected from each district. Relevant departments were then identified on the basis of exposure to agricultural or entrepreneurship education. The sample was allocated proportionally across the institutions, after which eligible students were selected by simple random sampling.

Of the 301 questionnaires distributed, 287 were properly completed and analysed, giving a response rate of 95.4%. These comprised 133 respondents from the University of Lagos, 95 from Lagos State University and 59 from Lagos State University of Education.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The instrument covered socio-demographic characteristics, attitude towards rural agripreneurship and perceived barriers to engagement. Attitude items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), with 3.00 as the decision point. Barrier items were measured on a three-point scale of Critical Barrier (2), Moderate Barrier (1) and Not a Barrier (0), with 1.00 as the decision point.

The questionnaire was reviewed for face and content validity by specialists in agricultural extension, entrepreneurship education and research methodology. A pilot study among 30 graduating students outside the main sample confirmed that the instrument met the minimum reliability coefficient of 0.73 adopted for the study.

Responses were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Frequencies and percentages summarised respondent characteristics, while weighted mean scores and rankings were used to address both objectives.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The respondents were predominantly young, with 55.7% aged between 20 and 24 years and a further 25.8% between 25 and 29 years. Males made up 55.1% of the sample and females 44.9%, indicating a reasonably balanced distribution across gender.

Students of agriculture and agricultural sciences formed the largest disciplinary group at 46.0%, followed by business administration and management at 15.0% and education at 13.9%. The involvement of students from several disciplines reflects the reality that agripreneurship draws on production, marketing, finance, technology and management skills.

Residential background varied. About 27.9% originated from rural areas, 36.9% from semi-urban settlements and 35.2% from urban centres. This distribution is relevant because familiarity with rural living conditions may shape how students evaluate the difficulties of relocating.

Family ties to agriculture were widespread. Agriculture served as the primary livelihood for 22.0% of respondents' families and as a secondary activity for 42.9%, meaning that 64.9% had some household connection to the sector. Despite this, 35.9% had never had any contact with an agripreneurship or government agricultural programme.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 287)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 20 years	29	10.1
	20–24 years	160	55.7
	25–29 years	74	25.8
	30–34 years	17	5.9
	35 years and above	7	2.5
Gender	Male	158	55.1
	Female	129	44.9
Field of study	Agriculture/Agricultural sciences	132	46.0
	Education	40	13.9
	Engineering/Technology	29	10.1
	Social sciences	31	10.8
	Business administration/Management	43	15.0
	Others	12	4.2
Place of origin	Rural	80	27.9
	Semi-urban	106	36.9
	Urban	101	35.2
Family involvement in agriculture	Primary livelihood	63	22.0
	Secondary/Part-time activity	123	42.9
	None	101	35.2
Contact with an agripreneurship programme	Participated	52	18.1
	Heard about it but did not participate	132	46.0
	No contact	103	35.9

Source: Field survey, 2026.

Attitude of Graduating Students Towards Exploiting Rural Agripreneurial Opportunities

The first objective assessed students' attitude towards exploiting and utilising agripreneurial opportunities in rural areas. The grand mean was 3.95 on a five-point scale, comfortably above the 3.00 decision point. Respondents therefore held a positive attitude overall.

The highest-rated statement was that exploiting agripreneurial opportunities in rural areas is a worthwhile pursuit, with a mean of 4.07. Some 115 respondents strongly agreed and another 115 agreed, together representing 80.1% of the sample. Only 28 respondents, or 9.8%, disagreed at any level. This suggests that students recognise the value of rural agribusiness and do not dismiss it as an inferior occupation.

The second-highest item concerned financial independence, with a mean of 4.05. Here 100 respondents strongly agreed and 132 agreed, giving combined agreement of 80.8%. Notably, only nine respondents strongly disagreed. Students appear to associate rural agripreneurship with the prospect of earning independently rather than depending on an employer, which is significant given the uncertainty surrounding graduate employment.

Investing time and effort in rural agribusiness was rated third, with a mean of 3.95. Combined agreement stood at 76.3%. The statement that rural agripreneurship is preferable to remaining unemployed after graduation ranked fourth, with a mean of 3.89. Although still positive, the framing of this item as an alternative to unemployment attracted slightly weaker endorsement, hinting that students do not necessarily view agripreneurship as a fallback option.

The lowest-rated statement concerned choosing agripreneurship over a conventional office job, with a mean of 3.79. Agreement remained positive at 71.1%, but 43 respondents disagreed and a further 40 were undecided. This is the most revealing result in the table. Students value rural agripreneurship in principle, yet a noticeable minority still hesitate when asked to prefer it over salaried employment. The pull of white-collar work persists, a tension Mukaila et al. (2024) documented among Nigerian agricultural graduates.

These findings align with the wider literature. Nasri (2023) found attitude to be a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention among Tunisian students, while Bayona-Oré (2023) reported similar results from a sample of 642 university students. Asiyanbola et al. (2024) recorded attitude scores well above the scale midpoint among Nigerian undergraduates exposed to an agripreneurial curriculum. The consistency across settings suggests that favourable attitudes towards agribusiness are becoming more common among educated youth.

Table 2. Attitude of Graduating Students Towards Exploiting Rural Agripreneurial Opportunities (N = 287)

S/N	Statement	SD f (%)	D f (%)	U f (%)	A f (%)	SA f (%)	Mean	Rank
1	Exploiting agripreneurial opportunities in rural areas is a worthwhile pursuit	11 (3.8)	17 (5.9)	29 (10.1)	115 (40.1)	115 (40.1)	4.07	1st
2	Rural agripreneurship is preferable to remaining unemployed after graduation	14 (4.9)	23 (8.0)	34 (11.8)	127 (44.3)	89 (31.0)	3.89	4th
3	Utilising rural agripreneurial opportunities is a smart way to achieve financial independence	9 (3.1)	14 (4.9)	32 (11.1)	132 (46.0)	100 (34.8)	4.05	2nd
4	Choosing agripreneurship over a conventional office job is a positive career decision	17 (5.9)	26 (9.1)	40 (13.9)	121 (42.2)	83 (28.9)	3.79	5th
5	Investing time and effort in rural agribusiness is genuinely rewarding	11 (3.8)	20 (7.0)	37 (12.9)	124 (43.2)	95 (33.1)	3.95	3rd
Grand mean							3.95	

Source: Field survey, 2026.

Perceived Barriers Influencing the Decision to Engage in Rural Agripreneurial Activity

The second objective evaluated the barriers students perceive as influencing their decision to engage in rural agripreneurship after graduation. Every item exceeded the 1.00 decision point, and the grand mean stood at 1.28 on a scale of 0 to 2. Respondents therefore regarded all the listed constraints as genuine obstacles, though with differing degrees of severity.

Limited access to start-up capital and agricultural financing ranked first, with a mean of 1.43. Some 158 respondents, representing 55.1%, described it as a critical barrier, while a further 33.1% considered it moderate. Only 11.8% did not see it as a barrier at all. This is unsurprising. Establishing a rural enterprise requires money for land, equipment, inputs, labour and working capital, and few fresh graduates possess savings of that scale. Commercial lenders rarely extend credit to applicants without collateral or trading history. Umeh et al. (2020) and Abdullahi (2024) reported the same dominance of financing constraints in their respective studies.

Poor rural infrastructure ranked second, with a mean of 1.36, and 49.8% treated it as critical. Bad roads raise transport costs and cause losses of perishable produce. Unreliable electricity affects cold

storage, processing equipment and irrigation pumps. Weak internet coverage limits access to market information and digital sales channels. For students accustomed to urban services, these deficits are highly visible and immediately discouraging.

Unpredictability of returns, arising from climate variability, pests and diseases, ranked third, with a mean of 1.33. Almost half the sample, 48.1%, described it as critical. Agriculture carries risks absent from salaried employment. A season's investment can be lost to flooding, drought or disease outbreak, and few risk-transfer mechanisms exist. Sadiq and Muhammad (2025) noted that limited access to agricultural insurance compounds this vulnerability for young agripreneurs.

Inadequate market linkage ranked fourth, with a mean of 1.30. This finding deserves particular attention because Lagos is often described as offering excellent market access. The result indicates that proximity to a large market does not automatically translate into market integration. Rural producers still struggle with aggregation, transport, buyer contacts, quality standards and price information. Physical closeness and commercial connection are not the same thing.

Insufficient practical training and technical knowledge ranked fifth, with a mean of 1.27, while insecurity and land tenure challenges ranked sixth at 1.24. Land in Lagos is expensive and subject to competing claims, with rapid urban expansion pushing agricultural areas into conflict with property development. Family and peer expectations to secure white-collar employment ranked seventh, with a mean of 1.17.

Social stigma and negative perceptions of farming ranked lowest, with a mean of 1.14. This is arguably the most encouraging result in the study. It suggests that the cultural prejudice that once made agriculture unattractive to educated youth has weakened considerably. Balaji et al. (2023) found family discouragement to be a leading barrier among Indian students, so the comparatively low rating here may reflect a genuine generational shift. Ephrem et al. (2021) nevertheless caution that social norms continue to influence youth agribusiness intentions in parts of Africa, so the change should not be overstated.

Taken together, the pattern is clear. The three highest-ranked barriers, capital, infrastructure and production risk, are all structural. The two lowest-ranked, family pressure and social stigma, are attitudinal. Students are not held back by embarrassment about farming. They are held back by the practical difficulty of financing and operating an enterprise in an environment with weak supporting services.

Table 3. Perceived Barriers Influencing the Decision to Engage in Rural Agripreneurial Activity (N = 287)

S/N	Statement	Critical Barrier f (%)	Moderate Barrier f (%)	Not a Barrier f (%)	Mean	Rank
1	Limited access to start-up capital and agricultural financing	158 (55.1)	95 (33.1)	34 (11.8)	1.43	1st
2	Poor rural infrastructure covering roads, electricity, water and internet	143 (49.8)	103 (35.9)	41 (14.3)	1.36	2nd
3	Social stigma and negative perceptions of farming among graduates	103 (35.9)	121 (42.2)	63 (22.0)	1.14	8th
4	Inadequate market linkage and access to markets for produce	132 (46.0)	109 (38.0)	46 (16.0)	1.30	4th
5	Insecurity and land tenure challenges in rural areas	121 (42.2)	115 (40.1)	51 (17.8)	1.24	6th
6	Insufficient practical training and technical knowledge	126 (43.9)	112 (39.0)	49 (17.1)	1.27	5th
7	Family and peer expectations to secure white-collar employment	109 (38.0)	118 (41.1)	60 (20.9)	1.17	7th
8	Unpredictability of returns due to climate variability, pests and diseases	138 (48.1)	106 (36.9)	43 (15.0)	1.33	3rd
Grand mean					1.28	

Source: Field survey, 2026.

Conclusion

The study assessed the attitude of graduating degree students towards exploiting rural agripreneurial opportunities and evaluated the barriers influencing their decision to engage in such activities in Lagos State.

Students hold a positive attitude towards rural agripreneurship. They regard it as a worthwhile pursuit and a credible path to financial independence, and they accept that investing effort in rural agribusiness can be rewarding. Their willingness weakens somewhat when asked to choose agripreneurship over conventional office employment, indicating that the appeal of salaried work has not disappeared. Even so, the overall disposition is favourable and provides a reasonable foundation for policy intervention.

The barrier analysis reveals where the difficulty actually lies. Every constraint examined was recognised as real, but the most severe were financial and structural. Limited access to start-up capital emerged as the leading obstacle, followed by poor rural infrastructure and the unpredictability of agricultural returns. Weak market linkage, insufficient practical training and land tenure problems also featured prominently.

Significantly, the barriers rated lowest were social stigma and family pressure. This indicates that the old prejudice against farming as an occupation for the uneducated no longer dominates the thinking of young Lagos graduates. The problem is no longer one of persuasion.

The study therefore concludes that graduating students in Lagos State are willing but constrained. Their positive attitude is undermined by an operating environment that makes rural enterprise financially risky and practically difficult. Programmes designed to change perceptions will achieve little on their own. What is needed is direct action on financing, rural infrastructure, market systems and risk management, so that a favourable attitude can translate into actual enterprise creation.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Financial institutions, working with the Lagos State Government and the Bank of Agriculture, should establish dedicated graduate agribusiness loan windows with reduced collateral requirements, repayment schedules matched to production cycles and grace periods that reflect the time needed for a new enterprise to generate income.
2. Grant and matching-fund schemes should be provided for graduates completing accredited agripreneurship training, so that those who acquire skills are not immediately blocked by capital shortage.
3. The Lagos State Government should prioritise rural infrastructure in the agricultural corridors of Epe, Badagry, Ikorodu and Ibeju-Lekki, focusing on access roads, electricity supply, water systems and mobile network coverage.
4. Off-grid solar systems and shared cold storage facilities should be established in farming clusters to reduce post-harvest losses and lower the operating costs faced by new entrants.
5. Agricultural insurance products suited to smallholder and start-up operations should be developed and promoted to address concerns about unpredictable returns from climate variability, pests and disease.

Structured market linkage systems should be created, connecting rural producers directly with urban buyers, processors, hotels, supermarkets and export agents through aggregation centres and digital trading platforms.

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