

Full Length Research

Effects of Educational Background on Students' Attitudes toward Agriculture at king Saud University

Mohammed Saleh Shenaifi

Department of agricultural extension and rural sociology, College of agriculture, king Saud University, Riyadh
E-mail: moalsh@yahoo.com

Accepted 30 December 2014

The primary purpose of the study was to determine the attitudes of students at king Saud University toward agriculture programs and the field of agriculture in an effort to better identify, recruit, and retain students in the College of agriculture. The population of the study was 860 students from king Saud University. The retain were 200 from Sciences Colleges and 300 from Humanities Colleges. Questionnaire reviewed for content and face validity by a panel of experts from department of agricultural extension at the college of agriculture, King Saud University. A three-point Likert -type scale was used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.89, which indicated the internal consistency of the scale. Generally, the attitudes of students from Sciences Colleges toward the field of agriculture were positive. The attitudes of students from Humanities Colleges toward the field of agriculture were somewhat negative. Nearly 71% of respondents from Science Colleges and 28% of respondents from Humanities Colleges indicated that Agriculture is a scientific area of study. Only 41% of the respondents from Science Colleges and 20% from Humanities Colleges indicated that more students should be encouraged to enroll in the College of food and Agricultural sciences. Sixty one percent of respondents from Sciences Colleges and 56 percent of respondents from humanities colleges indicated that Colleges of agriculture are better suited to male students. Significant differences at the level of 0.01 were detected, in means of students from Sciences Colleges and those students from humanities Colleges. Students from Sciences Colleges displayed different attitudes toward the field of agriculture than did students from humanities Colleges. Generally, students from Sciences Colleges possessed attitudes, which were supportive of agriculture as a career field. They viewed agriculture as being both scientific and technical. It was recommended that a counseling program should be implemented to better create awareness between students and identify and retain students who may be interested in pursuing degrees from the College of Agriculture

Keywords: attitudes, education, agriculture, colleges

INTRODUCTION

The total population of the Middle East was Bedouin. They are animal herders who migrate into the desert during the rainy winter season and move back toward the cultivated land in the dry summer months. Although the Bedouin, as a matter of caste, traditionally despise agricultural work and other manual labor, many of them

have become sedentary because of political and economic development.

In 1910 King Abdul Aziz worked on the idea of converting Bedouin tribes to sedentary farmers, rather than leaving them to roam desert searching for water and pasture. Programs for the launching of a settlement for

Bedouin were started in 1912. The purposes of the programs were to teach Bedouin how to cultivate the land, and how to live impermanent homes. In each settlement, an agricultural worker was appointed to teach, educate and train the sons of the Bedouin on the arts of agriculture (Al-shenaifi, 1990)

His Majesty the King Abdul Aziz had put the building blocks for the development of technical education and vocational training in the Kingdom. Education and training is of great importance in raising the efficiency of the members of our country to push behind the technological revolution that is taking many forms and dimensions.

The Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, which was formerly known as General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training is the Saudi Government leading provider of Training. With collages and institutions all across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, TVTC caters for more than 120 000 trainees in more than 100 locations (TVTC)

The high economic growth of Saudi Arabia during the oil boom in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in a shortage in the number of workers needed to support the growing economy. It leads Saudi Arabia to relies heavily on a core of foreign workers cutting across all sectors and skill levels. The transformation from an economy based on nomadic trade, fishing, grazing, hunting, and agriculture to an economy based on hydrocarbon, construction and service industries using modern technological production processes, resulted in the need for a new breed of skilled workers, who were not available locally.

Saudi Arabian society holds a negative perception of skilled and manual jobs. One of the main contributory factors is the association of these jobs with expatriates. The absolute majority of these jobs are held by low paid expatriates with a low social status. In addition, Saudi Arabian families and Bedouin tribes take pride in not being involved in the so called downcast work and take pride in working in the prestige sectors i.e. administrative work in the public sector. (KAMEL, 2000)

Research on socialization showed that, attitudes toward things develop very early in life. Parents are known to pass their values onto their children. But, education had a positive impact on the attitude of individuals.

Attitude is a term of favor or disfavor toward a person, event, place or thing. Attitude can be formed from a person's past and present. (Allport, 1935) It can be defined as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, event, activities, ideas, or just about anything in your environment.

Social and cultural values are found to be very strong in discouraging students from acquiring vocational skills leading to skilled manual jobs. Students perceive that their pride and social acceptance are related to the type of work they do and the sector they work in. They argue that Saudi families and Bedouin tribes take pride in not

being involved in manual work associated with dirty work practices. Although, technology has changed the way these jobs are carried out by becoming more technical, society still holds the same views about working in these sectors. For example, after one college secured a job offer for a graduate to work as production supervisor in a footwear company, the college was criticized by the student's family for trying to involve the student in the leather sector.

One of the negative attitudes of youth in Saudi Arabia toward manual labor is to dislike working in agriculture. It is due originally to the Bedouin lifestyle .The Bedouin criticizes working in occupations such as agriculture, forging, and carpentry. This negative attitude has become one of the values of Bedouin. It prevails in many of the Bedouin communities. And even with the changes in circumstances, Bedouin still prefer certain jobs such as driving a car or a guard or military services (Al-shenaifi 1993).

The problem addressed by this study was how to identify students who are likely to enroll in an agricultural program of instruction and seek employment in the industry of agriculture. A person intended to pursue study in a field of agriculture or to become actively involved in an agricultural career may be predicted by analyzing his beliefs about agriculture. Greenwald (1989) reported that individuals with positive attitudes toward a subject or situation tend to evaluate it positively. Indeed, once you know someone's attitudes, you would think you would be able to predict his behavior toward the object. Attitudes can be useful prediction tools

Purpose

The primary purpose of the study was to determine the attitudes of students at King Saud University toward agriculture programs and the field of agriculture in an effort to better identify, recruit, and retain students in the College of food and agricultural sciences. The questions used to guide the study were:

1. What were the attitudes of students toward college of food and Agriculture?
2. What were the attitudes of students toward the field of Agriculture?
3. Was there significant differences between the Attitudes of students from Sciences colleges and students from humanities colleges?

METHODOLOGY

The study was a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 860 students from King Saud University. A questionnaire were distributed on eight hundred sixty students from KSU in student center (Alba

how) on 3 and 4 of September 2014 from 8AM to 2PM. The returned were 200 questionnaires from Sciences colleges and 300 questionnaires from Humanities colleges. Statements of the questionnaire were taken, with some modifications, from research by Osborne and Dyer 1996. Questionnaire reviewed for content and face validity by a panel of experts from department of agricultural extension at the college of food and agriculture, King Saud University. A three-point Likert - type scale (1 = agree, 2 = Uncertain, 3 = Disagree) was used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.89, which indicated the internal consistency of the scale. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, measures of central tendency and T test. Significant differences were tested on the level 0.01 of significance.

FINDINGS

Question one: What were the attitudes of students toward college of food and Agriculture?

Few of the students, as shown in Table 1, indicated that more students should encourage enrolling in the College of food and Agricultural Sciences. Only 41% of the respondents from Science colleges and 20% from Humanities Colleges indicated that more students should be encouraged in enrolling in the College of food and Agricultural sciences. Whereas 41 % students from Science Colleges and 47% from Humanities Colleges disagreed in encouraging students to enroll in the College of food and Agricultural sciences. Forty percent of students from Science colleges and 44% students from humanities colleges reported that only students pursuing careers in agriculture should enroll in the college of food and Agricultural Sciences, sixty three percent of students from Science colleges and 40% students from humanities colleges agreed that studying agriculture is easier than most of other majors. Sixty two percent of students from Science colleges and 56% of students from humanities colleges viewed college of food and Agricultural sciences as better suited to male students than female students.

Question Two: What were the attitudes of students toward the field of Agriculture?

Generally, the attitudes of students from Science Colleges toward the field of agriculture were positive, whereas, the attitudes of students from Humanities Colleges toward the field of agriculture were somewhat negative. As indicated in Table 2. Seventy-one percent of respondents from Science Colleges and 28% from Humanities Colleges viewed Agriculture as a scientific area of study. Sixty three percent of respondents from

Science Colleges and 37% from Humanities Colleges viewed the field of agriculture as blend of scientific principles and agricultural practices. Eighty five percent of respondents from Science Colleges and 35% from Humanities Colleges viewed agriculture as a highly technical field of study. Forty six percent of the respondents from Science Colleges and 51% from Humanities Colleges do not believe that the image of agriculture is improving. Seventy seven percent of respondents from Science Colleges and 62% from Humanities Colleges agreed that only students with a farm background should pursue agricultural careers

Question three: Was there a significant difference between the Attitudes of students from Sciences colleges and humanities Colleges?

Significant differences at the level of 0.01 were detected, in means of students from Sciences colleges and those students from humanities colleges, as shown in Table 3. Students from Sciences colleges displayed different attitudes toward the field of agriculture than did students from humanities colleges. Generally, students from Sciences colleges possessed attitudes, which were supportive of

Agriculture as a career field, they viewed agriculture as being both scientific and technical. They also have more positive attitudes toward agriculture programs, and agriculture as a career than do students from humanities colleges. All students agreed with the statements that agricultural programs courses are better suited for male students and students pursuing careers in agriculture should enroll in agriculture. Students from humanities colleges do not see any changes in the image of agriculture, whereas students from sciences colleges see some improvement in the image of agriculture. Both students agreed that, only students pursuing careers in agriculture should enroll in college of agriculture and all students believed that, only students with farm backgrounds should pursue careers in agriculture.

DISCUSSION

There are a number of colleges in agriculture in Saudi Arabia. The first College of Agriculture was established, at King Saud University (formerly University of Riyadh) in 1965, then the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, in King Faisal University in 1975. The college of veterinary medicine was established in 1976. The Faculty of Meteorology, Environment and Arid Land Agriculture was established in 1981. The establishment of the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine at University of Qassim was established in 1982.

Agricultural education is a kind of technical education,

Table1. Attitudes of students toward college of food and agricultural sciences

Statement		Science Colleges (N200)			Humanities Colleges (N300)		
		Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
More students should be encouraged to enroll in college of agriculture.	F	83	35	82	60	100	140
	%	41.5	17.5	41	20	33.33	46.67
College study in agriculture is easier than in most other majors	F	126	41	33	119	69	112
	%	63	20.5	16.5	39.67	23	37.33
Only students pursuing careers in agriculture should enroll in college agriculture courses	F	98	56	46	131	53	116
	%	49	28	23	43.67	17.67	38.66
Colleges of agriculture are better suited to male students.	F	123	39	38	168	43	89
	%	61.5	19.5	19	56	14.33	29.67

Table 2. Attitudes of students toward Agriculture as an Area of Study

Statement		Science Colleges (N200)			Humanities Colleges (N300)		
		Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
Agriculture is a scientific area of study	F	141	40	19	85	67	148
	%	70.5	20	9.5	28.33	22.33	49.34
Agriculture is a blend of scientific principles and agricultural practices	F	125	29	46	112	46	142
	%	62.5	14.5	23	37.33	15.33	47.34
Agriculture is a highly technical field of study.	F	169	10	21	105	67	128
	%	84.5	5	10.5	35	22.33	42.67
The image of agriculture is improving.	F	70	38	92	123	23	154
	%	35	19	46	41	7.67	51.33
Only students with farm backgrounds should pursue careers in agriculture	F	153	12	35	185	53	62
	%	76.5	6	17.5	61.67	17.67	20.66

which aims to give the individual a degree of culture and technical information in agriculture, and to provide students with practical skills through fielded exercises, to enable them to master the performance of agricultural operations effectively and efficiently. And to prepare workers required for working in the agricultural sector.

Agriculture is a science, an art, trading and industrialization of plant crop and animal that are beneficial to human's consumption. The definition of agriculture as a science is new. Agriculture was used to be seen as old practices. Sowing, plowing, adjustment of land and putting seeds in the soil were seen as old habits. Farmers put seeds in the soil to grow under natural conditions until the time of harvesting. Agricultural practices were seen as an old legacy and experiences that passes from generation to generation.

Agriculture in addition to being science, it is also a profession. The science of agriculture can be acquired

from studying books and references, but the art of agriculture cannot be acquired from studying in books alone. The precision in agricultural work, the conduction of various agricultural practices and agricultural timing, need a lot of individual's training to become an expert in the performance of these practices in the field. Therefore, the field, not the class room, is the best place to master the craft of agriculture.

Agriculture is also an industry. It is as products sold in the market. The prices of agricultural products are affected by many factors that require the farms to be familiar with buying and selling wisely. Farmers should also know the means by which, they can reduce production costs. And they should know the other information that enables them to get a higher profit with minimal effort and low costs.

Agriculture is the main industry, which relies upon it other industries. It is the first industry that pushed the

Table 3. Comparison of Attitudes of students of Science Colleges Versus students of Humanities Colleges

Statements	Groups of students	Means	SD	T	P
1-Agriculture as an Area of Study					
Agriculture is a scientific area of study	Humanities Colleges	4.12	.62	16.96	.0001*
	Sciences Colleges	2.95	.67		
Agriculture is a blend of scientific principles and agricultural practices	Humanities Colleges	4.35	.66	15.41	.0003*
	Sciences Colleges	2.70	.723		
Agriculture is a highly technical field of study.	Humanities Colleges	3.90	.99	13.99	.0005*
	Sciences Colleges	1.71	.59		
The image of agriculture is improving	Humanities Colleges	3.15	.84	5.68	.0003*
	Sciences Colleges	2.45	.51		
Only students with farm backgrounds should pursue careers in agriculture.	Humanities Colleges	1.12	.89	4.68	.15
	Sciences Colleges	1.65	.68		
2- College of Agriculture More students should be encouraged to enroll in college of agriculture.	Humanities Colleges	3.32	.74	4.49	.0001*
	Sciences Colleges	2.53	1.1		
College agriculture courses are better suited to male students.	Humanities Colleges	3.65	.89	12.78	.025
	Sciences Colleges	3.74	.69		
College study in agriculture is easier than in most other majors.	Humanities Colleges	2.54	.60	18.46	.0001*
	Sciences Colleges	4.81	.88		
Only students pursuing careers in agriculture should enroll in college of agriculture.	Humanities Colleges	176	.66	14.34	.062
	Sciences Colleges	1.62	.87		

* Significant differences on level 0.0

industrial sector to the progress. It is the basic supplier of raw materials, capital and manpower needed for other industries. It is the source of the population food and cloths.

Agriculture is not only the land, plant and animal but also the farmer and his family, their social, economic, cultural and physical needs have effects on agriculture. So supplying the needs of farmers are just important as the land and crops

Global agriculture is classified in three group, advanced agriculture, underdeveloped agriculture and third traditional agriculture. Advanced agriculture, uses new technology to produce goods, which led to the satisfaction and wishes of the population. The traditional agriculture uses undeveloped conventional elements in the production of agricultural commodities which hardly satisfy the desires of the population. Developing agriculture is that type of agriculture, which is located between the traditional and advanced agriculture. This agriculture began to take reasons for progress through

the use of modern means of production.

Successful agriculture depends on three main components. Technological success, economic success in marketing agricultural crops, and finally, social success which mean living a good life full of excitement and free of problems.

Attitudes can be defined "as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, event, activities, ideas, or just about anything in our environment" (Zimbardo et al., 1999). Attitudes form from our experiences and serve to guide our future behavior.

Students in Saudi Arabia are taught to dislike agricultural education indirectly. Students who their greed point averages are low, are sent to enroll in agricultural colleges. That gives students an impression that agriculture education is for poor students. The major reason listed for not enrolling in agriculture courses was, the poor reputation of agricultural program among students; it is the education of poor students. (shenaifi, 1993)

In Saudi Arabia, female enroll in colleges of food and agriculture in the areas of human nutrition. They are not allowed to enroll in other departments. Saudi laws based on the Shari's guarantee a woman's right to work, but stipulate that she should work in an appropriate environment i.e., not mixing with men or being exposed to harassment. Occupation gender segregation in professional jobs is therefore prevalent. Women are concentrated in professions that are seen as feminine and remain in less distinguished positions than men.

The Saudi government is making major efforts to improve the status of women in terms of employment. However, a number of social, legal, educational, and occupational factors continue to hinder Saudi women's full participation in the labor market, preventing the Kingdom from reaching its full economic potential. Although incorporating women fully into the labor market may not be achieved overnight, it can and must be achieved if the Kingdom is to transit to a knowledge-based economy.

The public sector is the largest employer of Saudi women, and women currently represent around 30 percent of government employees. Around 95 percent of working Saudi women are in the public sector: 85 percent in education, in both teaching and administrative positions, 6 percent in public health, and 4 percent in administration. (strategy, 2014)

People hold different attitudes toward agriculture, in Texas, USA the minority students had more negative attitudes toward agriculture and agricultural occupations than did white students. (Talbert and Alvin, 1992). The findings of Isabella Gidarakoa (1999) indicated that the attitudes of girls toward farm employments remain extremely negative. Their attitudes to the prospect of having a farmer for husband is more flexible, but only in certain condition. In Illinois, USA results indicated that approximately 90% of both students and parents perceived the science applications in agriculture courses to be of 'Excellent' or 'Good' quality. Both students and parents reported positive attitudes toward agriculture as a career field and toward agricultural technologies. Each expressed views classified as "uncertain" toward educational programs in agriculture. Whereas students expressed positive attitudes toward careers in agriculture, parents were reluctant to recommend those careers (Osborne, and. Dyer2000) .Eck and Torres findings suggest that administrators tend to have a moderately favorable attitude toward agricultural education at the primary school level. Factors found to be associated with attitude were age, level of education, and years experience in public education.

Previous studies in USA showed that high school students had relatively low attitude and belief scores, indicating they did not value learning about international agricultural issues, and had limited awareness of international agricultural concepts .College students

demonstrated a similar lack of knowledge and understanding about international agricultural issues (Redmann, Schupp, & Richardson, 1998).

CONCLUSION

Student from Science Colleges viewed agriculture as being both scientific and technical. They have more positive attitudes toward agricultural programs and agriculture as a career than do students from humanities colleges. If the mission of the college of Agriculture is to produce graduates for entry into the agricultural industry, Improvement needs to be made in both the identification and retention of students who are accepted into colleges of agriculture and who are expected to complete a degree within the college. The agricultural industry places considerable importance on the background and experience of graduates

RECOMMENDATION

1. A counseling program should be implemented to better identify and retain students who may be Interested in pursuing degrees from the College of Agriculture
2. Most students in King Saud University do not have an opportunity to get to know agriculture in high School, therefore the agriculture programs should be expanded to high school so that all students have. The opportunity for agricultural experience

REFERENCES

- Shenaifi MS (1990). the development of secondary and university agricultural education in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the academic symposium and a percentage of establishment, faculty of agriculture, king Saud university, Riyadh.
- Al-shenaifi M (1993). general feature of agricultural education system in Saudi Arabia, research bulletin NO 34 College of agriculture, KSU, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- Allport G (1935). "Attitudes," in A Handbook of Social Psychology, ed. C. Murchison. Worcester, MA: Clark University Press, 789–844
- Dlamini BM (1997). Attitudes of secondary school students toward agriculture in Swaziland. European Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension, volume 4, issue 2
- Dyer James e., Raquel lacey, and Edward W. Osborne, (1996). attitudes of university of Illinois college of agriculture freshmen toward agriculture, journal of agricultural education, vol. 37, no. 3, 1996

- Eck David & Robert M. Torres (1996). factors associated with administrators' attitudes toward agricultural education at the primary school level in Belize, *JIAEE* vol. **3(1)**
- Gidarakoalsabella (1999) Yong women attitudes toward agriculture and women new roles in the Greek countryside: first approach .*Journal of rural studies*, VO15.issue 2, P147
- Greenwald, A. G. (1989). Attitude structure and function, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.
- <http://www.tvtc.gov.sa/English/Pages/default.aspx>
- <http://www.strategyand.pwc.com/me/home> Women's Employment in Saudi Arabia: A Major Challenge
- KAMEL MELLAHI2000 Human Resource Development through Vocational Education in Gulf Cooperation Countries: the case of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, Volume 52, Number 2, 2000 p329
- Marietta p. dlamini and Larry E Miller (1996)attitudes of beginning tertiary students toward senior secondary agricultural education in Swaziland, *Journal of international agricultural and extension education* Fall 1996
- Osborne Edward W, and James E. Dyer(2000) attitudes of Illinois agriscience students and their parents toward agriculture and agricultural education programs*Journal of Agricultural Education*Vol. 41 Issue 3,
- Redmann, D. H., Schupp, A. R., & Richardson, W. B. (1998). International agriculture knowledge of graduating seniors in a U.S. land grant university*Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 5(1), 35-43
- Talbert, B. Allen; Larke, Alvin, Jr. (1992). Attitudes toward Agriculture of Minority and Non-Minority Students Enrolled in an Introductory Agriscience Course in Texas, Department Information Bulletin 92-1Texas A&M university
- .Srećko BRKIĆ, Miroslav TRATNIK, Mate BOBANAC, Đurđica ŽUTINIĆ (2002). Agriculture Students Attitude Towards Family Farming As Profession *Agricultural Conspectus Scientific us* Vol 67, No 2 (2002)
- Zimbardo et al.(1999) *Psychology* (3rd Edition), Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Publishing Co., p. 745