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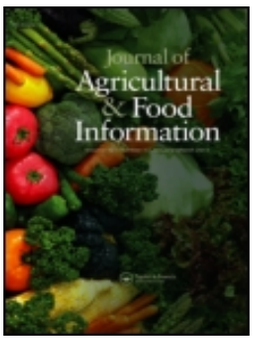
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Impact of Internship Training on Faculty of Agriculture Undergraduates of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT. This study assessed the impact of internship training on undergraduates of agriculture in the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The job aspirations and attitudes of preinternship and postinternship undergraduates toward studying agriculture and toward participating in internship training were compared and the students' preferred courses and reasons for studying agriculture were identified. A multistage sampling procedure was employed to select an equal number of respondents from both preinternship and postinternship students; a pretested and validated structured questionnaire was used to elicit qualitative information from 130 respondents; frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe the data; one-way-ANOVA test was used to test the hypotheses in order to make deductions from the data. The result of ANOVA revealed that at $P \leq 0.05$ significance level, there were significant differences in the preinternship and postinternship students' attitudes toward studying agriculture and toward participating in internship training. However, at $P \leq 0.05$ significance level, there was no significant difference

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in the job aspirations of preinternship and postinternship students. It was, therefore, concluded that the internship training changed only the attitude of postinternship students toward studying agriculture and participating in internship training, with no significant impact on the job aspirations of the students. Hence, the study recommended overhauling the internship training program through adequate funding, logistics, and curriculum revision; so as to enable it to attain its goals and promote improvement and retention of educated and able-bodied youth in the agricultural sector.

KEYWORDS. Attitude, internship training, agricultural development, job aspiration, labor depletion

INTRODUCTION

The depletion of the Nigerian agricultural labor force that engenders the retardation of agricultural development, has assumed a dangerous dimension. Rural-urban migration of youth and brain drain have continued unabated, just as the Young Farmers' Club and Young School Leavers' Farm Settlement Scheme have become items in the garbage of history. The attitude of youth towards studying agriculture—let alone pursuing a career in agriculture upon graduation (job aspiration)—has become a recipe for perpetual food crisis in Nigeria. The unfavorable attitude of young people toward agriculture and farming may not be unconnected with the stick-and-hoe type of agriculture which is painfully predominant in Nigeria. Accordingly, merely mentioning *agriculture*, *farming,* and *farmer* to young people readily evokes a mental picture of a ragtag individual, whose face is marred by sweat and dust, with callused hands firmly holding the hoe under a harsh climatic condition. Also, lack of information on career opportunities and poor training in agriculture could have contributed to the young people's cold attitude toward agriculture. Indeed, a dark cloud has appeared on the horizon of Nigerian agriculture. It is against this background that the National University Commission (NUC), in 1981, restructured the curriculum of agriculture by introducing internship training.

Williams (1978) defined training as the process of applying appropriate educational methodology to those situations in which improved performance can result from effective learning. Van Dersal (1968) considered training as the process of teaching, informing, and educating people so that

they become well qualified to do their work and to perform in a position of greater difficulty and responsibility. Bernardin (2003) defined training as any attempt to improve employee performance on a currently-held job or one related to it. This usually means changes in specific knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors. Ajayi (1995) stated that training is the acquisition of the best ways to utilize knowledge and skill to achieve a specified goal of production. In relation to agriculture, training is the acquisition of knowledge, skill, and required attitude or behavioral change which, if applied to a specified job situation, results in a better performance in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and quality output. This presumes that training is not just a cramming of facts, methods, and information but includes interaction in real situations in which such knowledge, skills, and change in attitude are applied for desired results and outputs. Therefore, internship training is meant to change the knowledge and attitude of undergraduates of agriculture toward studying agriculture, participating in internship training, and pursuing a career in agriculture upon graduation; thereby ensuring the retention of well-trained manpower in the sector. However, many graduates of agriculture—although having gone through the internship training—have continued to migrate to other sectors of the economy (Omolaja 2001).

The foregoing, therefore, necessitates the following research questions as the prerequisite for the evaluation of internship training's impact on undergraduate agricultural students: What are the respondents' preferred courses and reasons for studying agriculture? What are the attitudes of the respondents toward studying agriculture and participating in internship training? What are the respondents' job aspirations? Empirically investigated responses to all of these questions would generate responses to the following: Could internship training significantly influence respondents' job aspirations, attitudes toward studying agriculture, and participation in internship training?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective is to evaluate the impact of internship training on attitudes toward studying agriculture and participating in internship training and job aspirations among undergraduates of agriculture of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine and to compare the attitudes of preinternship and postinternship respondents toward studying agriculture and participating in internship

training, to identify the respondents' preferred courses and reasons for studying agriculture, and to compare the job aspirations of the preinternship and postinternship respondents.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the Faculty of Agriculture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The Faculty is one of the oldest in the University, and it has six departments; namely, Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, Agricultural Economics, Animal Science, Plant Science, Soil Science, and Home Economics. Undergraduates of Agriculture usually spend three years taking the same classroom courses on basic agriculture from the five departments. This is to enable the students to acquire basic knowledge in general agriculture. The fourth year is devoted to an internship training program in the University's Teaching and Research Farm, where the students are exposed to the practical realities of general agriculture. The objective is to affect substantial changes in the students' knowledge, attitude and skill—that is, to train well-rounded graduates of Agriculture. Thus, the students are exposed to the following: Science and Practice of Agricultural Production and Management of Agricultural Business, On-Farm Demonstration, Small Plot Adoption Techniques, Soil Management Techniques, Livestock and Crop Breeding, among others. In the fifth year, the students return to their various departments for specialization. However, students are allowed to take elective courses which are considered to be useful to their fields of specialization, within and outside the Faculty. In order to be awarded a Bachelor of Agriculture degree, a student is expected not only to have passed all the required courses and participated in the internship training but also to have conducted, defended, and submitted a research project report that stems from a well-designed research problem identified during the classroom and internship training.

A multistage sampling procedure was used to select 130 respondents. At stage one, purposeful sampling was used to select two categories of students: preinternship and postinternship. At the second stage, random sampling was used to select 65 respondents from each of the two categories. A pretested, structured interview schedule was used to elicit quantitative data from 130 respondents. Some of the variables, such as sex and department, were measured at the nominal level; while others, such as age, year of education, and income generation, were measured at the ratio level. Students' attitude toward studying and participating in internship training

were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale. Job aspirations were measured at the nominal level. The data collected were summarized using descriptive statistics such as mean**,** standard deviation, percentage, and frequency distribution. Analysis of variance was used to make deductions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic and Other Characteristics

Data presented in Table 1 show selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents. Of the respondents, 72.3% were males, out of which 34.6% and 37.7% were postinternship and preinternship students, respectively. About 27.7% of the respondents were females, out of which 15.4% were postinternship students, while 12.3% were preinternship students. The mean age is 24.4 years. The age range with the highest frequency is 21–25 years for preinternship students and 26–30 years for postinternship students. None of the students were younger than 18 years of age. This indicates that, legally, the students are old enough to make a choice of their own. As to department, 26.6% of the respondents were in Animal Science; 20.8% in Plant Science; 13.8% in Soil Science; and 22.3% and 16.9% in Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Extension, respectively.

With regard to reasons for studying Agriculture, the majority (56.2%) of the respondents indicated there was no other option, while 13.8% were studying it because someone strongly advised that *Agriculture be chosen at the point of entry into the university*. Only 21.5% were studying it because of a fondness for the profession. A majority (58.5%) of the respondents preferred to study Pharmacy or Medicine, just as 3.1% and 16.9% preferred to study pure Science and Engineering, respectively. Only about 19.2%, of which 11.5% and 7.7% were postinternship and preinternship students, respectively, preferred to study Agriculture. The change from 11.5% to 7.7% of the respondents who preferred to study Agriculture could be a reflection of the continual decline in the number of Nigerian youth who are willing to study Agriculture or take up farming.

A majority (56.9%) of the respondents preferred a particular course because of *personal ambition*. Some (12.4%) of the respondents based their preferences on *prestige*, just as 3.1% preferred a particular course because *those who studied it in the past are today's societal elites*. However, 27.7% of the respondents gave other reasons apart from those specified. This

TABLE 1. Distribution of the Respondents by Socioeconomic Characteristics

Variables	Post-internship		Pre-internship		
Central tendency*	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Sex					
Male	45	34.6	49	37.7	
Female	20	15.4	16	12.3	
Age					
<20	0	0	18	13.9	$X = 30.5$
21–25	22	16.9	42	32.3	$SD = 2.9$
26–30	30	23.1	3	2.3	
30+	13	10.1	0	0	
Department					
Animal science	16	12.3	18	13.8	
Plant science	8	6.2	19	14.6	
Soil science	10	7.7	8	6.2	
Agric. economics	20	15.4	9	6.9	
Agric. extension	11	8.5	11	8.5	
Reasons for studying Agriculture					
I like it	16	12.3	12	9.2	
I chose it	8	6.2	3	2.3	
I was advised to choose it	5	3.8	13	10	
I had no other option	36	27.7	37	28.5	
Preferred course of study					
Pharmacy	14	10.8	13	10	
Medicine & surgery	19	14.6	30	23.6	
Physical science	3	2.3	1	0.8	
Engineering	12	9.2	10	7.7	
Agriculture	15	11.5	10	7.7	
Social sciences	2	1.5	1	0.8	
Reasons for preference courses					
It is prestigious	8	6.2	8	6.2	
Personal ambition	44	33.8	30	23.1	
Guaranty job on graduation	12	9.3	24	18.5	
Societal elites studied the course	1	0.8	3	2.3	
Do you still want to change to another faculty?					
Yes	8	6.2	27	20.8	
No	57	43.8	38	29.2	

*SD = Standard deviation, X = Mean.
(Field Survey 2006)

implies that the respondents' behavioral preferences are within Maslow's hierarchical matrix of needs. Accordingly, ensuring that agriculture and farming conditions in Nigeria guarantee physiological, security, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs (Maslow 1954) might contribute to the respondents' retention in the agricultural sector.

Of the respondents (57.7%) that attempted to change to *preferred courses* after the first year, 25.4% and 30.8% were postinternship and preinternship students, respectively. Of the minority (42.3%) that did not attempt to change, 23.8% were post-internship and 18.5% preinternship students. The 5.4% incremental change in the number of the respondents who attempted to change from Agriculture to *preferred courses* could be a conservative estimate of the annual increase in the rate of agricultural labor force depletion in Nigeria, which has been variously identified as the bane for agricultural development in Nigeria (Jibowo 2000; Ekong 2003).

Although the postinternship and preinternship respondents have spent 5 and 3 years, respectively, studying Agriculture, the data revealed that 6.2% and 20.8% of the postinternship and preinternship students were still willing to change from Agriculture to some other preferred courses. This implies that at least 26.9% of the respondents may not likely stay in the agricultural sector even if they remain in the Faculty to complete their course of study. However, the sharp decline from 25.4% of postinternship students who, before the internship training, attempted to change to 6.2% of the postinternship students who, after the internship training, were still ready to change from Agriculture to *preferred courses* indicates the potential of the internship training program to enhance the retention of the youth within the agricultural sector. It is, therefore, expected that the alarming number (20.8%) of the preinternship students who were still ready and willing to change from Agriculture to *preferred courses* may eventually drop after the internship training.

Students' Attitude Toward Studying Agriculture and Participating in Internship Training

The data in Table 2, summarized in Figure 1, show the students' responses to statements that were used to determine their attitude towards studying Agriculture. The data in Figure 1 revealed that 23.1% and 10.8% of the postinternship and preinternship respondents, respectively, had a favorable attitude toward studying Agriculture. About 13.8% and 15.4%

FIGURE 1. Distribution of respondents according to their attitude toward studying agriculture (Field Survey 2006).

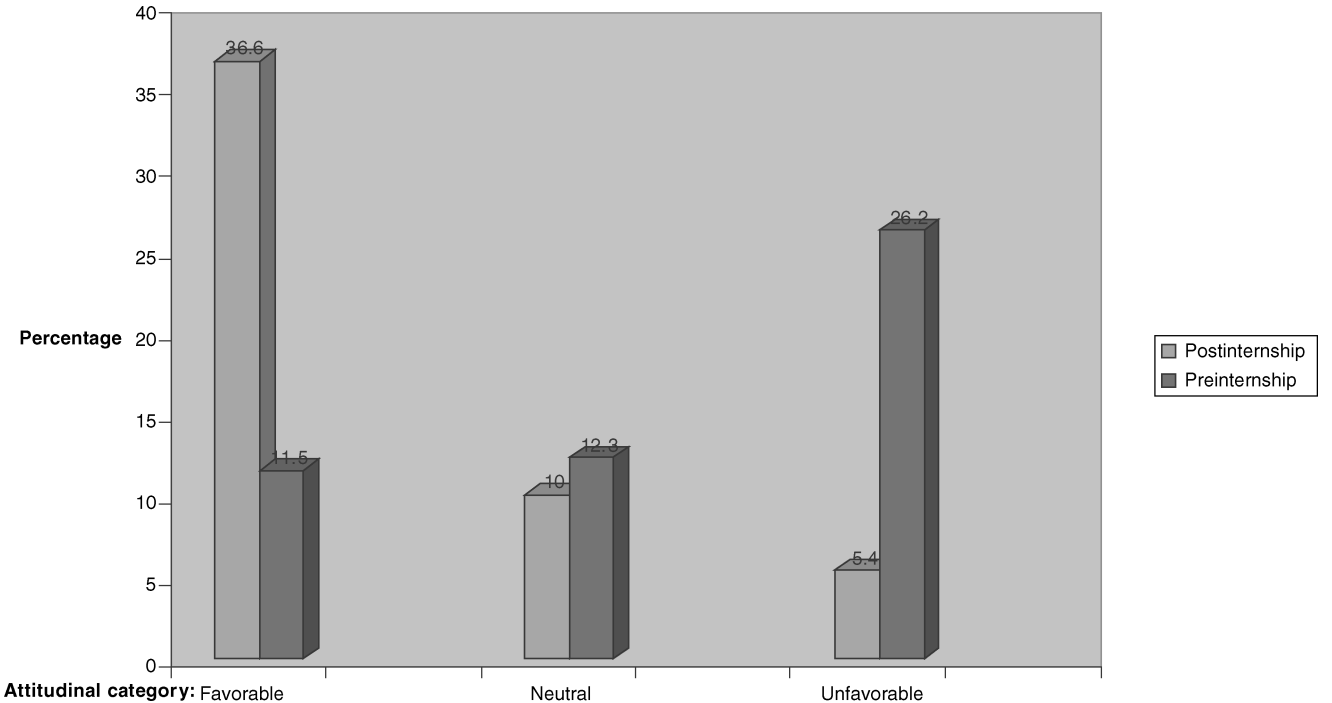


TABLE 2. Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Their Responses to Attitudinal Statements on Studying Agriculture

	Postinternship students					Preinternship students				
Attitudinal Statements	SA*	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. Agriculture is a respected profession in Nigeria.	15.4	4.6	5.4	6.9	7.7	13.8	14.6	2.3	13.8	5.4
2. No one can make a decent living from Agriculture.	2.3	3.1	6.2	3.8	24.6	0.8	3.1	1.5	7.7	36.9
3. I am studying Agriculture because I have no other option.	18.5	16.9	3.8	4.6	6.2	20.0	10.0	0.8	6.2	13.1
4. I would not allow my children to study Agriculture.	3.1	3.8	17.7	6.9	18.5	6.2	2.3	7.7	10.0	23.8
5. I would rather prefer to leave Agriculture for my desired course.	12.3	7.7	1.5	15.4	13.1	6.9	5.4	5.4	13.1	19.2
6. I would not opt to study Agriculture if opportune to live again.	6.9	3.1	14.6	10.8	14.6	7.7	4.6	10.8	10.0	16.9

*SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.
(Field Survey 2006)

of the postinternship and preinternship respondents had a neutral attitude toward studying Agriculture. While 23.8% of preinternship respondents had an unfavorable attitude towards studying Agriculture, only about 13.1% of the postinternship respondents had an unfavorable attitude toward studying Agriculture. The data revealed that internship training could influence the attitude of participants towards Agriculture. In general, 33.9%, 29.2%, and 36.9% of the respondents had favorable, neutral, and unfavorable attitudes toward studying Agriculture.

The data in Table 3, summarized in Figure 2, show the responses to statements that were used to determine students' attitude toward participating in internship training. The data in Figure 2 show that 36.6% and 11.5% of the postinternship and preinternship respondents, respectively, had favorable attitudes toward participating in the internship training. About 10% of the postinternship respondents and 12.3% of the preinternship respondents had an indifferent attitude toward participating in the internship training. However, while only 5.4% of postinternship respondents had an

TABLE 3. Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Their Responses to Attitudinal Statements on Internship Training

	Post-Internship Students					Pre-Internship Students				
Attitudinal Statements	SA*	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. The bachelor of Agriculture program is incomplete without the Internship training.	18.5	20.8	5.4	1.5	3.8	23.8	12.3	3.1	6.2	4.6
2. Internship training helps to develop a positive attitude toward Agriculture.	16.2	23.8	6.9	2.3	0.8	13.8	20.0	5.4	5.4	5.4
3. Internship training does not impart new agricultural skill.	3.1	4.6	11.5	16.9	13.8	5.4	7.7	3.8	21.5	11.5
4. Internship training influences a change in job aspiration.	5.4	6.9	22.3	10.0	5.4	5.4	13.8	19.2	12.3	9.2
5. The skill acquired during the internship training is insufficient to enable students to establish own farm.	3.1	9.2	20.0	13.1	4.6	18.5	14.6	5.4	6.9	4.6
6. The internship scheme is a mere waste of time and resources.	0.8	3.1	6.9	20.0	19.2	0.8	7.7	5.4	15.4	10.8
7. The internship training should not be scrapped.	0.8	25.4	6.2	2.3	5.4	15.4	15.4	6.2	3.8	9.2
8. Internship training improves students' aspiration to become a professional in the agriculture profession.	6.2	16.9	18.5	5.4	3.1	10.0	16.9	4.6	10.8	7.7
9. Internship training does not afford students the opportunity to practice what is learned in class.	3.1	6.9	15.4	18.5	6.2	10.0	10.8	4.6	18.5	6.2
10. The internship training is adequately funded.	3.8	3.8	14.6	8.5	19.2	3.1	2.3	6.2	10.0	28.5
11. Material available on the teaching and research farm are not adequate and functional.	14.6	9.2	20.0	3.1	3.1	32.3	11.5	2.3	1.5	2.3

*SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.
(Field Survey 2006)

unfavorable attitude toward participating in the internship training, about 26.2% of the preinternship respondents had an unfavorable attitude. This implies that 48.1%, 22.3%, and 31.6% of the respondents had favorable, neutral, and unfavorable attitudes toward participating in the internship training.

FIGURE 2. Distribution of respondents according to their attitude toward participation in internship training (Field Survey 2006).

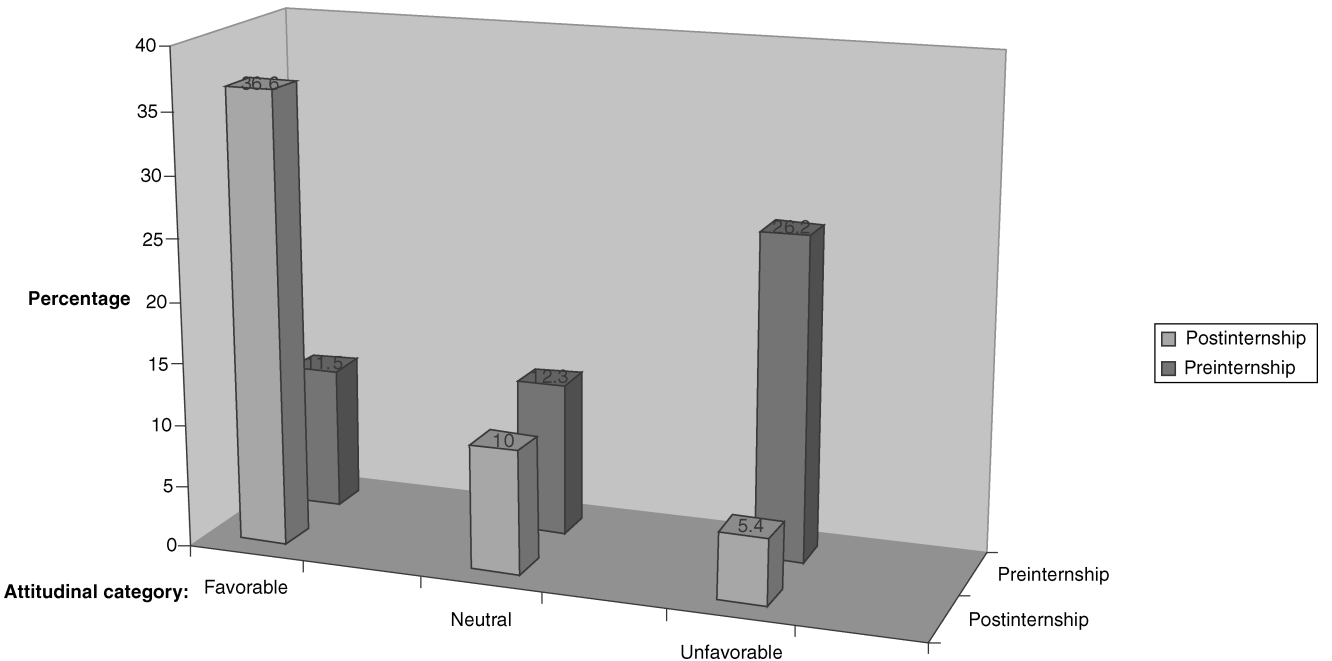


TABLE 4. Distribution of the Respondents by Job Aspiration

	Postinternship		Preinternship		Total	
Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture/ Farming	26	20.0	21	16.2	47	36.2
Agriculture-related jobs	14	10.8	12	9.2	26	20.0
Civil service	5	3.8	6	4.6	11	8.5
Management	6	9.6	2	1.5	8	6.2
Others	12	9.2	12	9.2	24	18.5
No response	2	1.5	12	9.2	14	10.8
Total	65	50	65	50	130	100.0

(Field Survey 2006)

The Students' Job Aspirations

Data in Table 4 show that 20.0% of the post-internship and 16.2% of the preinternship respondents, for a total of 36.2%, aspired to go into the field of Agriculture/Farming; 10.8% of the postinternship and 9.2% of the pre-internship students, for a total of 20%, aspired to Agriculture-related jobs; 3.8% of the postinternship students and 4.6% of the preinternship students, for a total of 8.5%, aspired to civil service jobs; 9.6% of the postinternship and 1.5% of the preinternship students, for a total of 11.1%, preferred management jobs; while 18.4%, comprising 9.2% each of both postinternship and preinternship students, preferred other jobs such as *Photography, Database Administrator*, *any lucrative job*, *whatever job comes my way*. This indicates that approximately 56% and 33% aspired to Agriculture/Farming-related and Nonfarming/Agricultural-related jobs, respectively (the rest—approximately 11%—did not respond).

The Impact of Internship Training vis-à-vis Students' Attitude Toward Studying Agriculture, Participating in Internship Training, and Job Aspirations

Data in Table 5 show the ANOVA results, which reveal that, at $P \leq 0.05$ significance level, there were significant differences in attitude toward studying Agriculture ($F = 6.29$) and participating in Internship Training ($F = 15.56$). However, at $P \leq 0.05$ significance level, there was no

TABLE 5. One-Way Analysis of Variance Results

Variables	*F*-values	Level of significance
Attitude toward studying Agriculture	6.29	0.045*
Attitude toward internship training	15.56	0.032*
Job Aspiration	1.35	0.78

*F is significant at $p < 0.05$ level.
(Field Survey 2006)

significant difference in the job aspiration ($F = 1.35$). This implies that the Internship Training aroused the interest of the participants in studying Agriculture and participating in Internship Training, however, it has not had any significant impact on the post–internee's job aspiration.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The 5.4% incremental change in the number of respondents who were ready to change from Agriculture to *preferred courses* could be a conservative estimate of the annual increase in the rate of agricultural labor force depletion. Although 48.1%, 22.3%, and 31.6% of the respondents had favorable, neutral, and unfavorable attitudes toward participating in the internship training program, 6.2% and 20.8% of the postinternship and preinternship students were still ready to change from Agriculture to preferred courses. This implies that at least a total of 26.9% of the respondents may not likely stay in the agricultural sector. The sharp decline from 25.4% of postinternship students who, before the internship training, attempted to change to 6.2% of the postinternship students who, after the internship training, were still ready to change from Agriculture to preferred courses indicates the limitless potential of the internship training to hold the respondents' interest in agricultural-related professions. However, lack of impact on the respondents' job aspirations evidenced the inability of the internship training to promote entrepreneurship skills in participants. It is, therefore, recommended that the internship training be overhauled vis-à-vis funding, logistics, and curriculum to include a course in agricultural entrepreneurship. Also, repositioning the entire agrarian sector through a policy-based affirmative program to guarantee physiological, security, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs, could be a boost to this University-based internship training.

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