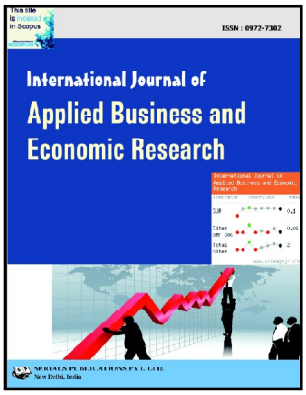

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Born Free but 'NEET': Determinants of Rural Youth's Participation in Agricultural Activities in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

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Abstract: This study investigated 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET) status, reasons for being NEET and the determinants of rural youth participation in agricultural activities in South Africa. A multistage random sampling technique was used to interview 167 youth aged 16 to 25 using a semi-structured questionnaire. Data generated was analysed using descriptive statistics and probit regression model. Result shows that 21% of the youth are NEET and that 77% of the NEET cohort are within the age bracket 20-24. Findings further revealed that age, government funding and parent participation in farming increase the likelihood of young people's participation in agricultural activities while being married, number of babies and receiving social grants reduce likelihood of participation. The study reinforced growing concerns of NEET cohort among youth and emphasized factors that may both catalyze or inhibit youth participation in agricultural activities.

Keywords: Agricultural activities; NEET; Probit regression; Rural youths

INTRODUCTION

In terms of age demographics, South Africa is a young country, as 50% of the total population is below the age of 25 (Mathivha, 2012). Evidence reveals that youth participation in agricultural activities in South Africa is dismally low despite disturbing rate of youth unemployment in the country. Several factors have been implicated for young South Africans less appreciation for the opportunities offered by the agricultural sector (particularly farming) (Brown, 2012). Prominent among these factors are lack of enabling environment and focused support for youth's participation in agriculture. Moreover, majority of young people perceive agriculture as old fashioned, offering little opportunities for making money and only reserve for the elderly and the poor in rural areas. For these reasons, most young South Africans are attracted by the possibilities of well-paid jobs in the towns and cities rather than farming, while the ageing farmers who are mostly above 60 years (Dube, 2013) are left behind to till the land in rural areas.

For South Africa to ensure smooth transition of agricultural practices from ageing farmers to youthful and energetic generation of farmers will require proper harnessing and channelling of the creative and innovative energies of youths. The cohort of young people of interest to take up these responsibilities are the growing number of youths that are not in education, employment and training (i.e. NEET) (Magongo & Motimele, 2011). Majority of these NEET are made up of teenagers and young adults born after 1990, the year in which Nelson Mandela was released from prison and for this reason are popularly refer to as 'born free' (Kane-Berman, 2015). As a way to engage these cohort of youth, the New Growth Path (2011) has emphasized the need for the state to create jobs through direct employment schemes, targeted subsidies and expansionary micro economic package; supporting labour-absorbing activities, particularly in agriculture (National Youth Development Agency, 2015). This study therefore set out to achieve the under listed objectives and answer the questions that follow:

(i) To determine the prevalence of 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) status among rural youth in Eastern Cape Province

(ii) To identify various reasons why youth are 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) in Eastern Cape Province

(iii) To examine determinants of rural youth participation in agricultural activities in Eastern Cape Province

Research Questions

(i) What is the prevalence of 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) status among rural youth in Eastern Cape Province?

(ii) What are the reasons why rural youth are 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) in Eastern Cape Province?

(iii) What are the factors determining the participation of rural youth in agricultural activities in Eastern Cape Province?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although there are many definitions of youth found in the literature, the term youths remain one of those sociological terms for which a consensus definition do not exist. According to Friedman (1971), youths are group of human beings who have attained the age of puberty, but are yet to acquire the full rights and duties of adult life. The most common denominator for the definition of youths is the age grouping. For instance, the UN Secretary-General report (1982) states that, 'the United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines "youth", as those persons between the ages 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions of Member States' (UNDESA, 2008). Whereas, African Union has adopted the 15-35 years as the age definition of youth. In South Africa, 'youth' are defined as the 14-35 age cohort. In this study, however, information was gathered from youth within age group 16 to 25, which fall within the age group regarded as youth by both African Union and South African government.

Youth, aged 15-24, represent a substantial and increasing proportion of the rural population globally (Bennell, 2010). Worldwide, youth account for about 1.3 billion people and are anticipated to peak at 1.5 billion in 2035 (Bennell, 2007). Across the continent of the world, Africa has the world's youngest population

and is home to over 200 million young people (FANRPAN, 2012; African Development Bank, 2012). Most of these youth constitute a major source of work force for socio-economic development of the society and serve as conduit for the transmission of culture and preparation of a people's recognisable identity (Auta, et al., 2010). For many youth that are resident in the rural areas of developing countries, particularly in Africa, agriculture has been the mainstay of livelihood and investment in the agricultural sector has been demonstrated to be effective means to lift many out of poverty (Bennell, 2010; Diao, et al., 2010).

Painfully, youth engagement and interest in agriculture the world over has been low in recent years and potential entry into agriculture has carried a host of challenges (FAO, 2014). Generally, youth globally have lacked motivation to enter and persist in the agricultural industry (FAO,2014; Sharma,2007). 'Agriculture is not seen as a viable income source and often the youth view agriculture as employment only for last resort and may consider becoming a farmer as condemning oneself to subsistence and poverty' (Muir-Leresche, 2013 p.8). Consequently, the average age of farmers in many nations has risen and, perhaps as a result, in some areas farming innovations have decreased. Majority of youth who might otherwise have been employed in agriculture and helped to maintain vibrant rural communities have continued to bypass agricultural vocation and location for seemingly more lucrative prospects in urban areas (Bennell, 2010).

In the last two decades, there has been an unprecedented emphasis on forms of public policy directed specifically at young people, emanating from UK (Yates & Payne, 2006). These policies focus around the issue of 'social exclusion' and its effects. This focus has brought about concern for youth employment, and specifically with the retention of young people in education and training, and their transition from education to work. Reflecting this policy concern, policy literature and research places a good deal of emphasis on the 'NEET and EET' status of young people – that is, whether they are not in employment, education or training (NEET), or they are in employment, education or training (EET).

The NEET concept includes young people who are able to work and are actively searching for work, as well as those who are not able to work or who are not working by choice. Some of these young individuals may not be seeking work for health reasons or household responsibilities like caring for children. This means that NEET category combines both young people who are involuntarily excluded from the labour market and the educational system with privileged young people who can decide their own futures (Furlong, 2007). In this sense, NEET status cannot be generally interpreted to convey negative meaning (Simmons and Thompson 2011).

Theories of reasoned action and planned behaviour

This study is supported by theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behaviour propounded by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Ajzen (1991). These theories highlight the need for measuring attitudes towards a specific behaviour such as youth participation in agricultural activities. The theory of reasoned action considers two independent determinants of intention: (1) the degree of favourable or unfavourable evaluation of behaviour and (2) a subjective norm referring to perceived social pressures to perform or not to perform a behaviour (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). The theory of planned behaviour (Figure 1) extend the theory of reasoned action by including behavioural control. Ajzen (1991: 188) opines that 'the relative importance of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control in the prediction of intention is expected to vary across behaviour and situations.' Hence, the type of behaviour and nature of situations can influence the magnitude of the perceived behavioural control-intention relationship.

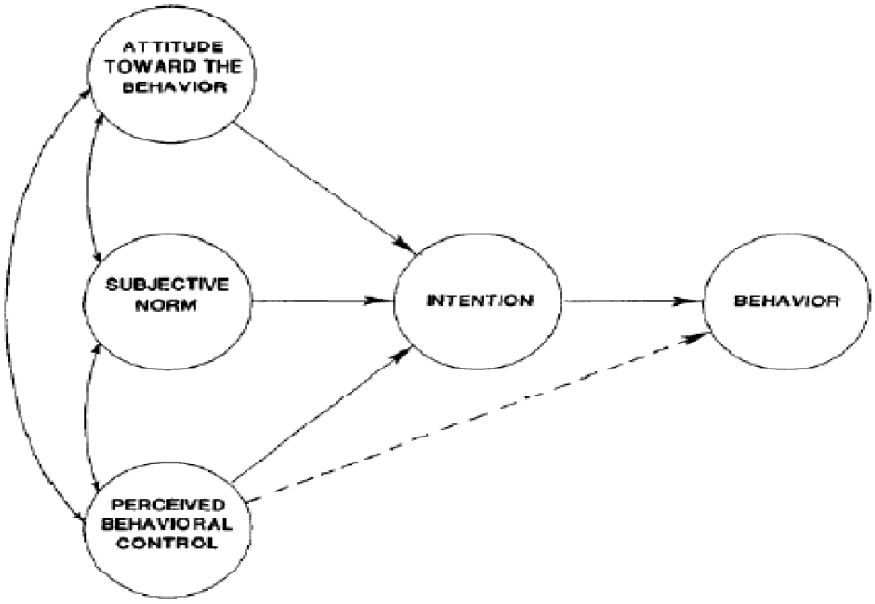

Figure 1: Illustration of the theory of planned behaviour (Source: Ajzen (1991: 182))

In the present study, the theories were adopted based on the assumption that sociodemographic characteristics, government funding in agriculture, parent participation in farming and being NEET may explain rural youth behaviour (i.e. participation) towards agricultural activities in the study area. Several studies have employed these theories to examine factors influencing behavioural outcomes (Moolman, 2015; Falalu, 2003; Kimaro *et al.*, 2015). For instance, Faralu (2003) applied the theory of reasoned action to show that a person's intent to pursue a study in a field of agriculture or to become actively involved in agriculture as a carrier may be predicted by analyzing his/her beliefs on agriculture. Similarly, Kimaro *et al.* (2015) also adopted the theory to examine the determinants of rural youth's participation in agricultural activities in Tanzania. Hence, we anticipated that youth sociodemographic characteristics, farming experience, parent participation in agriculture and provision of agricultural funding would in turn affect the decision of rural youth in Eastern Cape Province to either participate in agricultural activities or not.

Conceptual framework for youth participation in agriculture

A plethora of research on youth participation in agriculture in developing countries have produced sufficient evidence to support youth dislike for agricultural activities and farming in particular. Yet, recent research on NEET points to growing number of youth with NEET status in most of these developing countries where agriculture offers opportunities for large-scale employment and agricultural training opportunities (Simmons & Thompson, 2013; Kraak & Dieltiens, 2015). The question then arise as to why young people who are not engaging in any economic activities will rather prefer to be NEET (literarily idle) than taking up agricultural activities as livelihood portfolio.

In light of strong evidence of growing NEET status among rural youth in South Africa (Kraak & Dieltiens, 2015; Kraak, 2013), we conceptualise rural youth decision to participate in agricultural activities as a function of socio-demographic characteristics of youth and being NEET. In the context of participation in agricultural activities, the socio economic characteristics of youth that may influence participation in

agricultural activities may include variables such as gender, age, marital status, having baby or babies to look after, the number of babies, receiving social grant from government and parent participation in farming activities. Other factors which are not youth specific but may influence participation in agricultural activities include government funding to support youth participation in agriculture and being NEET.

METHODOLOGY

The population targeted for the study are rural youths from the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. A multistage random sampling technique was adopted for the study. In the first stage, four district municipalities (Amathole, Chris Hani, Joe Gqabi and OR Tambo) was randomly selected in the study area. The second stage involved random selection of two local municipalities in each district municipality making eight (8) local municipalities from the four districts initially selected in stage 1. Since most of the rural villages/towns belong to the former homeland in Ciskei and Transkei sharing similar physical and socio-economic characteristics within the communities, one rural town/village was randomly selected in the third stage. Finally, twenty-five youths within age bracket 16-25 years were randomly selected for the study from each town/village. In all, 200 youths were surveyed but 167 gave valid information that was used for data analysis. Data were collected through the administration of questionnaire to respondents that participated in the study.

The descriptive statistics was used to describe composition of young people that are NEET in the study area while probit regression model was adopted to estimate the drivers of their participation in agricultural activities. Probit model involves a binary choice dependent variable based on the assumption of utility theory, or rational choice perspective on behavior, as developed by McFadden (Gujarati & Porter 2009). To motivate for the probit model, we assumed that the decision of *i*th young person to participate in agricultural activities or not depends on *unobservable* **utility index** I_i (also known as a **latent variable**), that is determined by one or more explanatory variables, such as age, gender, parent participation in agriculture, receiving social grant X_i, in such a way that the larger value of the index I_i, the greater the probability of young person participation in agricultural activities. We thus express the I_i as

$$I_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 X_i \quad (1)$$

where X_i represent the various factors influencing the unobservable utility index I_i.

Assuming that $Y = 1$ if the young person participate in agricultural activities and $Y = 0$ otherwise. Given the assumption of normality, we thus estimated the parameters of the index given in equation 1, using the empirical specification stated below in equation 2:

$$Y_I^* = \beta_0 + \beta_1 I_i + \beta_2 2_i + \ldots \beta_k k_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

The explanatory variables used in the probit regression model to analyse the factors influencing the participation decision were selected based on literature review of young people participation in agriculture (Agwu *et al.* 2012; Akpan *et al.* 2015; Amegnaglo *et al.* 2014; Dube 2013; Ruta 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Characteristics of NEET Youths

The result of socio demographic characteristics of the respondents disaggregated into NEET and Non-NEET young people is presented in Table 1. Finding from the analysis indicate that 21% of the respondents

are not in education, employment or training. This is lower compared to 30.2% NEET reported for the country in Quarterly Labour Force Survey in 2013 (QLFS 2013). In terms of gender distribution, there seems to be equal representation among male and female young people that participated in the study as indicated by 48.5% and 51.5% for male and female respectively. Similar patterns is observed among NEET and Non-NEET young people that participated in the study. The variable age groups indicates that majority of the respondents are in the age range 20 to 24 among the NEET (77.1%), Non-NEET (76.5%) and Total (76.7%). Only 10.7 per cent of the total respondents are 25 years old while the remaining 12.6 per cent are in the age bracket 16 to 19.

Majority of the respondents are not married (95.8%). This is expected since most of the young people do not have financial means to sustain responsibility of marriage. Very few married young people (4.8%) in this study are all Non-NEET members and none of the NEET members responded yes when asked if they were married. Even though, very few of the young people are married, yet substantial percentage of them already had baby or babies (38.3%). Incidentally, there is high percentage of young people among the NEET (68.6%) compared to those that are Non-NEET (38.3).

In relation to the participation of young people in agricultural activities in the study area, less than halve of the respondents (44%) are currently participating in agricultural activities. More of the NEET cohorts (60%) are currently engaged with agriculture compare to 56 percent of the Non-NEET that are participating in various agricultural activities (see Table 1).

When the respondents were asked if they have been in education before, almost all the respondents (98.8%) responded in affirmative that they have been attending school before now. A very negligible percentage (1.2%) however said they have not been attending school before now. Similar high school attendance is observed among the NEET and Non-NEET young people. Only 30.5 per cent of the respondents have been in formal training in the past, whereas 69.5 percent have not participated in any form of training in the past. The NEET cohorts recorded the highest percentage of none participation in training (71.4%) compare to Non-NEET (68.9%). Unemployment rate is highest among young people that are NEET (74.3%), followed by the total (68.3%) and Non-NEET (66.7%). The unemployment rate reported in this study is much higher than the 8.3% reported by Baldry (2015) study on *Graduate unemployment in South Africa: social inequality reproduced.* This disparity in findings may give credence to the fact that unemployment in South Africa is more of rural phenomenon than urban where there is limited employment opportunities (Brown, 2012).

Reasons for Not in Education, Employment and Training

Figures 2, 3 and 4 show the various reasons why young people are not in education, employment and trainings in the study area.

Figure 2 shows the various reasons why young people are not in education in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. Majority cited unspecified reasons for not in education (83%). Others mentioned inability to afford cost of education (9%), finding school work too difficult (5%) and lack of interest in attending school (3%). Among the NEET group, cost of schooling and unspecified other reasons are the two main reasons mentioned.

Table 1
Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	*NEET Youth*		*Non-NEET Youth*		*Total Youth*	
Gender	*Freq.*	*Percent*	*Freq.*	*Percent*	*Freq.*	*Percent*
Male	17	48.57	64	48.48	81	48.50
Female	18	51.43	68	51.52	86	51.50
Total	35	100.00	132	100.00	167	100.00
Age Groups						
16-19 years	5	14.29	16	12.12	21	12.57
20-24 years	27	77.14	101	76.52	128	76.65
25 years old	3	8.57	15	11.36	18	10.78
Total	35	100.00	132	100.00	167	100.00
Married						
Yes	0	0	7	5.30	7	4.19
No	35	100.00	125	94.70	160	95.81
Total	35	100.00	132	100.00	167	100.00
Have baby/babies						
Yes	24	68.57	79	59.85	64	38.32
No	11	31.43	53	40.15	103	61.68
Total	35	100.00	132	100.00	167	100.00
Participation in agriculture						
Yes	21	60.00	74	56.06	95	56.89
No	14	40.00	58	43.94	72	43.11
Total	35	100.00	132	100.00	167	100.00
In education before						
Yes	35	100.00	130	98.48	165	98.80
No	0	0	2	1.52	2	1.20
Total	35	100.00	132	100.00	167	100.00
In training before						
Yes	10	28.57	41	31.06	51	30.54
No	25	71.43	91	68.94	116	69.46
Total	35	100.00	132	100.00	167	100.00
In employment before						
Yes	9	25.71	44	33.33	53	31.74
No	26	74.29	88	66.67	114	68.26
Total	35	100.00	132	100.00	167	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2016

Indicated in the Figure 3 above are the various reasons why young people are not in employment in the Eastern Cape Province. Thirty-six percent of the respondents cited lack of academic qualifications as the reasons for their lack of employment. Whereas 8% have qualifications that made them suitable for

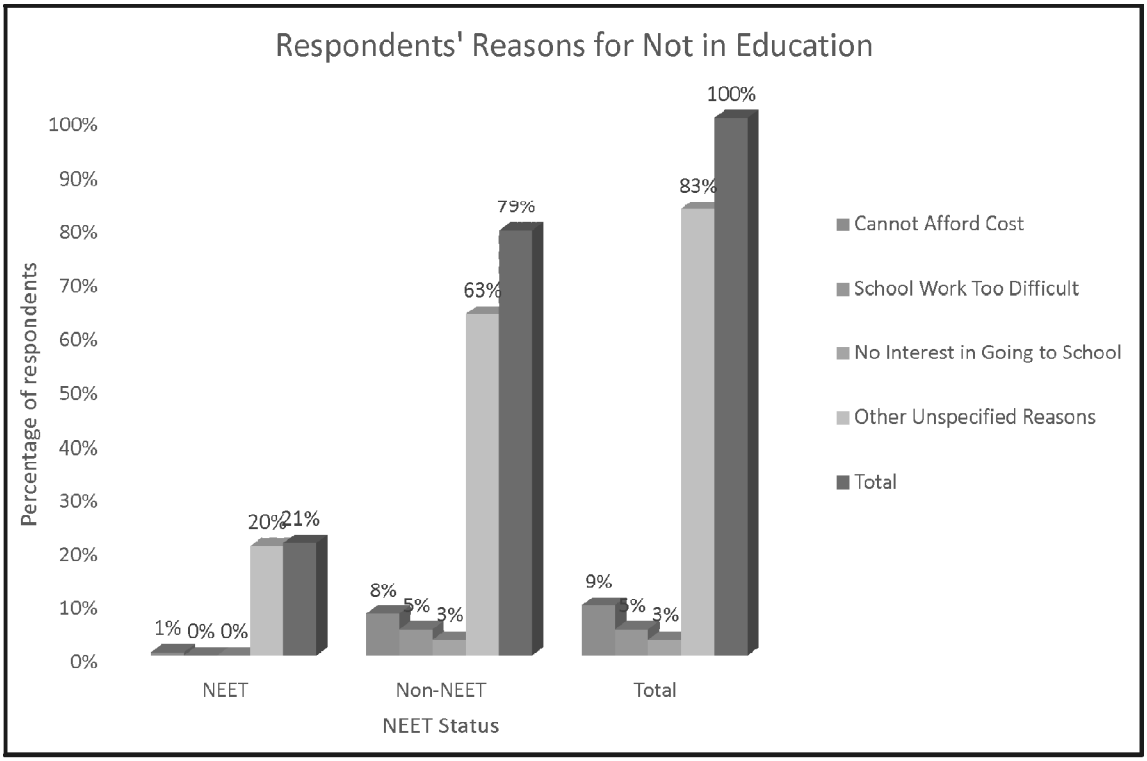

Figure 2: Reasons for not in education

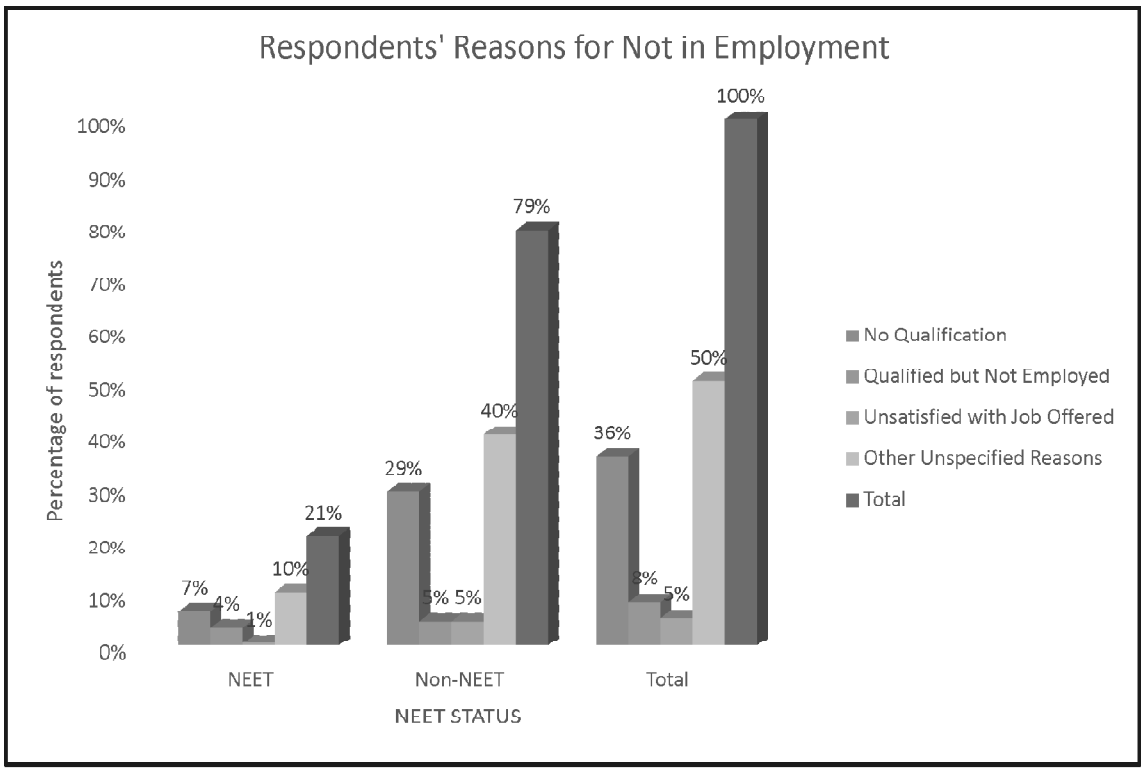

Figure 3: Reasons for not in employment

employment, yet they are unemployed. Five percent refused to take job offered them because they considered it unsatisfactory. Halve of the respondent (50%) gave unspecified other reasons as their reasons for not being employed.

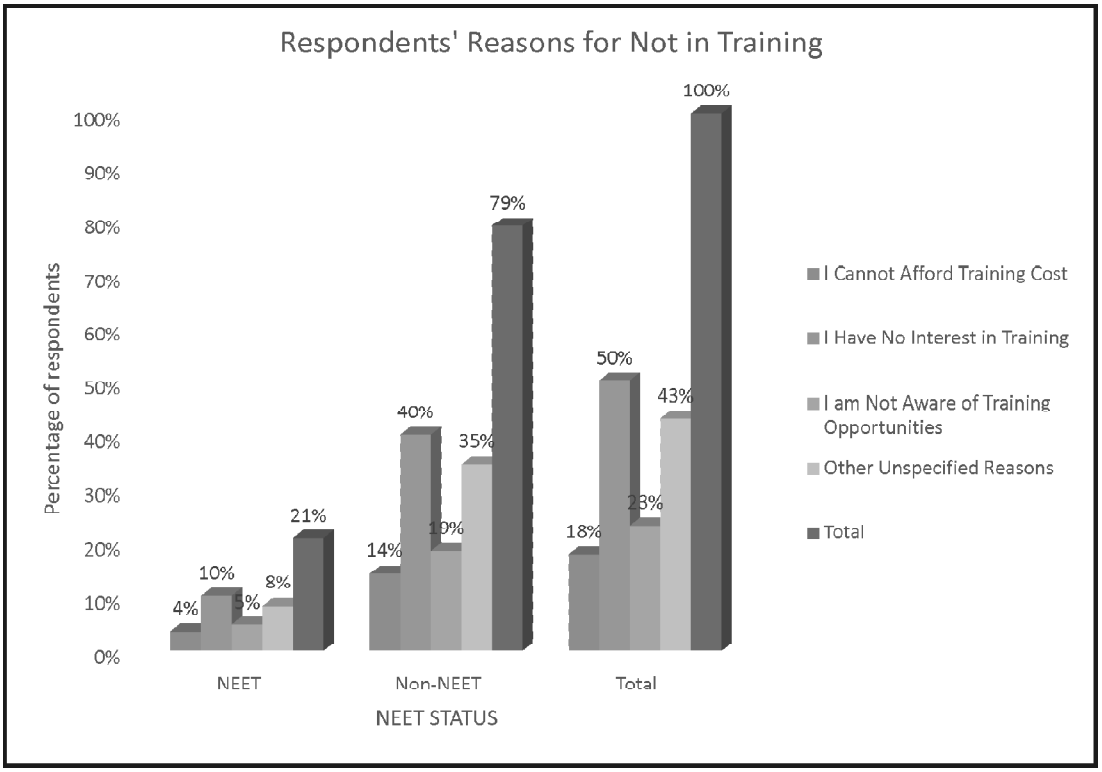

Figure 4: Reasons for not in training

The reasons for not in training is shown in Figure 4. Eighteen per cent of the respondents claimed that the cost of training in the study area is unaffordable to them. Halve of the respondents (50%) said they have no interest in training while 23% percent are not aware of training opportunities in the study areas. Also, 43% cited other unspecified reasons as to why they are not in any form of training. It is noteworthy that the percentage of young people with no interest in training among the non-NEET (40%) is four times those of NEET group (10%) in the study area. Given, the opportunity to participate in training, NEET group may show interest.

Econometric results

Presented in table 2 below is the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values of the independent variables included in the probit regression model. Six out of the nine independent variables included in the model are significant at various levels as shown in table 3. The significant variables are age, marital status, number of babies, receiving social grants, government funding to support agriculture and parent participation in farming while gender, baby and NEET variables are not significant.

Table 2
Description of the independent variables included in the probit model

Variables	*Description*	*Mean*	*S. Dev*	*Min*	*Max.*
Gender	Gender of the respondent	0.48	0.50	0	1
Age	Age of the respondent	21	2.06	16	25
Marital status	1 if married, 0 otherwise	0.04	0.20	0	1
Baby	1 if has baby/babies, 0 otherwise	0.36	0.48	0	1
Baby number	Number of babies	1.25	0.56	1	4
Receiving grant	1 if receiving social grant, 0 otherwise	0.19	0.38	0	1
Govt. funding	1 if willing to participate in agriculture if government provide funding, 0 otherwise	0.77	0.41	0	1
Parent farming	1 if parents involve in farming, 0 otherwise	0.54	0.49	0	1
NEET	1 if NEET, 0 otherwise	0.20	0.40	0	1

Source: Field survey, 2016

The estimated coefficient on the *age* of the respondent is significant at 10 per cent with positive value. This implies that the older the respondent the more the likelihood of participating in agricultural activities. The marginal effect for age variable also indicate that a unit increase in the age of the respondent will increase the likelihood of participating in agricultural activities by 12.6 per cent. This finding is similar to the result of a study conducted in Nigeria where the age of youth has positive influence on the decision to participate in agricultural activities or otherwise (Akpan *et al.*, 2015).

The *marital status* variable however has negative sign as anticipated *a priori* and significant at 10 per cent. This means that married respondents are less likely to participate in agricultural activities compared to their counterparts that are not married. This finding may be due to the marital responsibilities, which may hinder the married from participating in agricultural activities. The estimated marginal effect for the *marital status* shows that the married are less likely to participate in agriculture by 34 per cent compared to those that are not married.

There is high rate of early pregnancies among teenagers and young people in their early twenties in the study area. As reported in the descriptive result, 36 per cent of the respondents was affirmative when asked if they have baby or babies, we therefore, hypothesized that number of babies may have significant effect on participation in agriculture. The variable *number of babies* is negatively significant at 10 per cent. This implies that the more the number of babies the respondent has, the less the likelihood of participating in agricultural activities. This result can be interpreted in two ways, first, since all children born by poor and middle income, South Africans are paid monthly child support and or foster child grant, more children implies more grant (up to four children). Therefore, respondents with many babies may be receiving substantial grant, which may discourage participation in agriculture. The second interpretation is that more children come with more care and responsibilities particularly when they are young, hence, young people with children may not have the time to participate in agriculture. The marginal effect of the variable *number of babies* indicate that a unit increase in the number of babies will reduce likelihood of participation in agriculture by 43 per cent.

The coefficient of estimates for *receiving grant* is negative and significant at 5 per cent. The marginal effect of the receiving social grant indicate that the respondents that are currently receiving monthly social security support from government are 26 per cent less likely to participate in agriculture compared to those that are not receiving social grant. This finding indicate that receiving social grant may be a disincentive for young people to participate in agricultural activities in the Eastern Cape Province. However, the variable *provision of government funding for agriculture* has positive coefficient estimate with significant level of 5 per cent. The marginal effect of the variable *provision of government funding for agriculture* on participation in agriculture is 30 per cent. This implies that provision of government support in form of funding for young people in agriculture encourage at least 30 per cent of them to actively participate in agriculture. This is a substantial number considering the currently low level of participation in agriculture among South African youths.

The fact that majority (54%) of the parents or guardian of the young people interviewed in this study are actively engaged in agriculture (i.e. Farming) led credence to the fact that South African farmers are aging (Dube, 2013) and require injection of new crop farmers to ensure sustainability. The variable *parent farming* is positive and strongly significant at 1 percent. The marginal effect also shows that young people whose parents are actively farming are 22 per cent more likely to participate in agriculture than their counterparts whose parents are not involved in farming. Encouraging the young people parents and guardian to engage them in agricultural practices will therefore go a long way in youth participation in the study area. This finding corroborated similar result reported by Amegnaglo *et al.* (2014) on determinants of graduate students' participation in agricultural value chain where presence of parent in rural areas and possession of family lands had significant effect on participation in agricultural value chain.

Table 3
Result of probit regression analysis

Variables	*Coefficients*	*Std. Error*	*Marginal Effects*	*Std. Error*
Gender	-0.9997	0.6951	-0.3628	0.2618
Age	0.3483*	0.1997	0.1264*	0.0712
Marital status	-1.6468*	0.9228	-0.5976*	0.3405
Baby	-0.0347	0.8672	-0.0125	0.3147
Number of babies	-1.1970*	0.7427	-0.4344*	0.2582
Receiving grant	-1.6212**	0.7129	-0.5883**	0.2635
Govt. funding	1.7928**	0.8160	0.6506**	0.3034
Parent farming	2.7231***	0.6618	0.9882***	0.2266
NEET	-0.3372	0.6421	-0.1224	0.2356
Constant	-8.5635**	4.0981		
Observation	59			
Prob.>Chi^2	0.0000			
Log likelihood	-18.605389			
Pseudo R^2	0.54			

where *, **, *** indicate significance levels at 10%, 5% and 1% respectively

CONCLUSION

Results from the descriptive and econometric analysis employed in this study both showed that a substantial percentage of the respondents are NEET. Empirically, 21% of the young people are NEET and 77% of the NEET within the age bracket 20-24. Moreover, age of the respondents, provision of government funding to support youth participation in agriculture and active involvement of parent in agricultural enterprises increase the likelihood of young people's participation in agricultural activities whereas being married, number of babies and receiving social security support from government decrease likelihood of participation. Premised on the findings from this study, government, NGOs and other stakeholders that are involve in youth empowerment in rural areas should make concerted effort to subsidize cost of education and training, create more awareness about education and training opportunities to address the reasons given for the prevalence of NEET status among youth in the study area. We also canvass for agricultural interventions that will incorporate older youth in agricultural activities, provides funds that will specifically support youth participation in agriculture and emphasize focus on youth whose parents are already engaged in farming in the former homelands of the South Africa.

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