



Youth Perceptions and Economic Viability of Farming: Ethnicity and Gender Differences Among Farmers' Children

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Abstract—Agriculture remains the backbone of the rural economy in the Philippines, yet its sustainability is threatened by an aging farmer population and declining youth engagement. This study examined youth perceptions and the perceived economic viability of farming among farmers' children across ethnicity and gender, including its relationship with parents' income. A descriptive-comparative design was employed, involving 300 randomly selected senior high school students. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using percentage, mean, and Chi-square. Results revealed significant differences among ethnic groups, particularly in their willingness to engage in farming and its associated manual work, while no significant differences were found across gender. Despite generally positive perceptions, respondents expressed skepticism regarding the economic viability of farming. Moreover, parents' income was not significantly related to these economic perceptions, suggesting that shared rural conditions shape youth attitudes toward farming.

Index Terms— aspiration, economic viability, farming, ethnicity, gender, perception.

1. Introduction

Farming needs to be promoted among children to protect and sustain agricultural production, particularly in rural areas where it remains a primary source of livelihood. The future of agriculture largely depends on the younger generation, whose participation is essential in ensuring continuity of food production and rural development. As emphasized by Douglas (2017), young people are a vital resource for national development, especially in sustaining agricultural productivity. However, current trends indicate otherwise. Leavy and Smith (2010) reported that many young individuals are increasingly disinterested in pursuing agriculture-related livelihoods, particularly farming. This growing disengagement among rural youth reflects deeper structural and economic challenges within the sector.

Youth apathy toward agriculture is often associated with perceptions that farming is labor-intensive, low-paying, and socially undervalued. These perceptions are shaped by several constraints, including limited access to land, weak institutional support, inconsistent government policies, and the exclusion of

youth in agricultural planning and development (Ezebuoro et al., 2014). In the Philippine context, Asis (2020) noted that declining interest among young Filipinos is partly driven by the perception that farmers are underpaid and underappreciated. These realities position farming not only as a social or cultural activity but also as an economic decision influenced by expected income, financial stability, and livelihood opportunities.

From an economic standpoint, the decision of young people to engage in farming can be explained by their evaluation of its viability as a sustainable source of income compared to alternative occupations. Farming is often perceived as a high-risk, low-return livelihood, particularly among smallholder farmers who face income uncertainty and limited market access. This perception discourages youth from entering the agricultural sector, despite its importance to national food security. Consequently, the issue is not merely about awareness or attitude but also about the perceived economic returns and long-term viability of farming as a profession.

The study locale is predominantly agricultural, where farming serves as a way of life for many households. However, a critical concern remains: whether farming will be sustained across generations as younger family members evaluate its economic and social value. The aging population of farmers further intensifies this concern. In the Philippines, the average age of farmers ranges from 57 to 59 years old (Asis, 2020), highlighting the urgent need for generational replacement. This aging trend is not unique to the country but is also evident globally, particularly among smallholder farmers in Asia and other regions (Rigg et al., 2019; Saiyut et al., 2017; Johr, 2012; HelpAge International, 2014).

Previous studies have also shown a declining interest among youth in agriculture-related careers. Agumagu et al. (2017) reported a high level of unwillingness among agriculture students to pursue farming, while White (2020) confirmed that many young people do not consider farming a viable career option. These findings suggest that making agriculture more attractive to youth requires not only improving its image but also addressing its economic limitations. Enhancing income

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opportunities, reducing risks, and improving livelihood prospects are critical in encouraging youth participation in farming.

Given these concerns, this study examines the perceptions of farmers' children toward farming, with particular attention to differences based on ethnicity and gender. More importantly, it highlights how these perceptions are shaped not only by socio-cultural factors but also by economic considerations, particularly in terms of income potential, financial security, and the perceived viability of farming as a future livelihood.

The following research question guided this study:

- i. What is the demographic profile of the farmers' children?
- ii. What is the demographic profile of the parents of the farmers' children?
- iii. What is the perception of farmers' children towards farming when grouped according to ethnicity?
- iv. What is the perception of farmers' children towards farming when grouped according to gender?

The following hypothesis were formulated and tested at 5% level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the perception of farmers' children towards farming when grouped according to ethnicity.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the perception of farmers' children towards farming when grouped according to gender.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship correlation between the parent's monthly income and the perceived economic viability (perception on economic aspect) of farming among farmer's children.

2. Methodology

This study used descriptive-comparative design. It was conducted at Malita, Davao Occidental, Philippines. The locale is agricultural in nature and located in the southern tip of Mindanao. The target population for this study consisted of junior and senior high school students whose parents are into farming. The sample of 300 students was randomly selected from the population of 1556 students from six (6) secondary schools in DepEd Division of Davao Occidental. The choice of the schools was purposive in nature since only senior high schools were included in the study. The research instruments used were questionnaire which was validated by three experts. Pilot test was carried out on the instruments to determine its reliability. The research instrument was divided into three parts. Part 1 gathered the demographic profile of the farmers' children. Part 2 was focused on the profile of the parents. Part 3 was on the perceptions of the farmers' children towards farming which was further sub-divided into three indicators, namely: general perceptions on farming, aspirations and personal aspect, and economic aspect. The questions in Part 3 were constructed in Likert scale from 1 which means disagree to 5 which means highly agree. The researcher with the help of the research assistants administered the instruments and collected the data for analysis. Permission from the Division Superintendent, principals, students, and parents were secured

by the researcher before the conduct of the study. Data gathering was done in the respective schools of the respondents. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents before proceeding the distribution of the questionnaire. Data were analyzed using percentage and mean while the hypotheses were tested using Chi-square at 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results and Discussion

A. Farmers' Children Profile

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents of the study is shown in Table 1. The average age of the respondents were 18.15 years old. More than half of the respondents were female (64%), 31.67% were male, and very few were members of the LGBT (4.33%). The respondents were senior high school students of whom majority were Grade 11 (75.33%) and 24.67% were Grade 12.

As to number of siblings, 37.67% had 3-4 siblings, 25.58% had 5-6 siblings, 15.33% had 1-2 siblings, 9.27% had 7-8 siblings, and 6.67% had no siblings. This implies that most of the respondents have more or less five to six members of the family or household. The result is close to the study of Asis (2020) that the average household size was five and the average number of children was four.

In terms of religion, more than half of the respondents were Roman Catholic (58.33%). There were 30.67% who were Protestants. Very few were Islam (6%), Iglesia ni Cristo (3.33%), and Seventh Day Adventist (1.67%). Moreover, the respondents were of diverse ethnicity. Almost 75% of the respondents were members of the Indigenous communities of which thirty-five percent (35%) belonged to the Tagakaolo tribe, 29.33% were B'laans, and 10% were members of the Manobo tribe. Meanwhile, 20.67% of the respondents were Cebuanos and 5% were Muslims.

Table 1
Demographic profile of farmers' children

Particulars	f	%	Mean
Age			18.15 years old
Gender			
Female	192	64.00	
Male	95	31.67	
LGBT	13	4.33	
Grade Level			
Grade 11	226	75.33	
Grade 12	74	24.67	
Siblings			
0	20	6.67	
1-2	46	15.33	
3-4	113	37.67	
5-6	77	25.58	
7-8	28	9.27	
Religion			
Roman Catholic	175	58.33	
Protestants	92	30.67	
Islam	18	6.00	
Iglesia ni Cristo	10	3.33	
Seventh Day Adventist	5	1.67	
Ethnicity			
akaoloincome	105	35.00	
B'laan	88	29.33	
Cebuano	62	20.67	
Manobo	30	10.00	
Muslim	15	5.00	

B. Parents' Profile

Table 2
Profile of parents

Particulars	f	%	Mean
Monthly Income			
<3000	75	25.00	
P3001 – P6000	187	62.33	
P6001 – P9000	23	7.67	
>P9000	15	5.00	
Parents' age			
Mother			43.50 years old
Father			48.15 years old
Access to land			
Own	189	63.00	
Caretaker	72	24.00	
Lease	39	15.00	
Size of land owned (n=189)			
<1hec	65	34.39	
1 hec to 3 hec	68	35.98	
4 hec to 6 hec	36	19.05	
7 hec to 9 hec	11	5.82	
>9 hec	9	4.76	
Years engaged in farming			
1-3 years	24	8.00	
4-6 years	51	17.00	
7-9 years	24	8.00	
10-12 years	35	11.67	
13-15 years	38	12.67	
>15 years	128	42.67	
Type of farming			
Crop production	285	95.00	
Poultry production	241	80.33	
Livestock production	232	77.33	
Fish farming	25	8.33	

The profile of the parents of the farmers' children were divulged in Table 2. It was found that majority of the parents' income was between P3001-P6000 comprising 62.33%. One-fourth or 25% of the parents' income were below P3000, 7.67% had income of P6001-P9000, while 5% earned P9000 and above. It can be deduced that the respondents' family have meager income and can hardly sustain the needs of the family.

Further, the respondents' mothers had an average age of 43.50 years old while the respondents' fathers had an average age of 48.15 years old. These ages are quite younger than the description of Asis (2020) of Filipino farmers who are between 57 to 59 years old. Majority of the respondents' parents own the land they tilled (63%), whereas 24% were caretakers, and 15% leased or rented the land. This means that most have tenure of the land they tilled.

Moreover, of the 189 parents who owned the land they tilled, 35.98% owned less than 1 hectare, 34.29% owned 1 hectare to 3 hectares, and 19.05% owned 4 hectares to 6 hectares of land. Very few owned 7 hectares to 9 hectares of land (5.82%) whereas 4.76% owned more than 9 hectares of land. Based on the data, these farmers are categorized as marginal farmers in the countryside. The average farm size of Filipino farmers was 1.3 ha (range: 1.0–1.43 ha), according to Asis (2020).

Most of the parents were into farming for long years specifically for over 15 years (42.67%). There were 17% who were into farming for 4 to 6 years, 12.67% for 13 to 15 years, 11.67% for 10-12 years, while same percentage (8%) were into farming for 1 to 3 years and 7-9 years. In the study of Asis (2020), the average number of years that the farmers were

engaged in farming was 25 years (range: 22–30 years). Further, majority of the parents were engaged in crop production (95%) of whom most were into coconut, corn, and banana production which are the common crops grown in the municipality of Malita, Davao Occidental. Others were into poultry production (80.43%) and livestock production (77.33%).

C. Perception of Farmers' Children Towards Farming when Grouped According to Ethnicity

There are 110 indigenous groups in the Philippines, many of which reside on the islands of Mindanao. Mindanao are the home of the Lumads. "Lumad" is the generic term used to refer to the indigenous peoples of Mindanao. They are considered to comprise the largest number of indigenous peoples in the country. The 18 groups that compose the Lumad include the following: Subanen, B'laan, T'boli, Mandaya, Mansaka, Tiruray, Higaonon, Manobo, Bagobo, Bukidnon, Tagakaolo, Ubo, Banwaon, Kalagan, Dibabawon, Talaandig, Mamanwa and Manguangan (Biana *et al.* (2018). The current study, however, focused on the Tagakaolo, B'laan, Manobo, including the Cebuano and Muslim as other tribes in Davao Occidental.

It is revealed in Table 3 that the farmers' children or the respondents of the study were grouped according to their ethnicity, e.g. Tagakaolo, B'laan, Manobo, Cebuano, and Muslim. It was found that all except those Muslim children who highly agreed that agriculture or farming is important in food production, while the former only agreed which indicates highly favorable and favorable perception, respectively. All ethnic groups agreed that farmers are ageing, farming is a competitive as well a dignified profession, and that agriculture related course is a good profession and indicates a favorable perception.

Children in all ethnic groups agreed that they appreciated agriculture practical work (especially field works) and that farm life make them feel good which indicates favorable perception towards farming or agriculture. Moreover, Tagakaolo, Manobo and Cebuano children agreed that they liked farming and its accompanying works which indicates favorable perception but the B'laans and Muslims neither agreed/disagreed which indicates fairly favorable perception. On the other hand, Tagakaolo, B'laan, and Manobo children agreed that they aspired to follow the farming career of their parents as well as they aspired a career in agriculture which indicates favorable perception towards farming. However, Cebuano and Muslim children neither agreed/disagreed on these aspirations which indicates fairly favorable perception towards farming.

Meanwhile, children in all ethnicity agreed that they see business opportunity in farming, that farming is an economically competitive profession, and that there is money in farming which indicates favorable perception towards farming, except Muslim children who instead expressed high agreement which indicates highly favorable perception towards farming. Only Tagakaolo children agreed that agricultural income fulfills the needs of their family which indicates favorable perception towards farming but the rests doubted about it which means fairly favorable perception. Moreover,

only Muslim children agreed that farmers in the community are economically well-off which indicates favorable perception while the rests likewise doubted about it which indicates fairly favorable perception towards farming.

In the study of Dizon *et al.* (2012) among students in Ifugao, Benguet, the students have favorable perceptions of, and attitudes towards rice terrace farming, the very small number of students interested with agriculture may threaten the existence of the terraces. Widiyanti *et al.* (2018) in their study found that most youths had fairly good perceptions in terms of income, social status, and work convenience in the agricultural sector, but not in terms of career development and warranty of future life.

D. Test of Difference of the Perception of Farmers’ Children Towards Farming when Grouped According to Ethnicity

Of the indicators of perception towards farming, only one (1) specific indicator under aspirations and personal aspect was

found to have significant difference when the farmers’ children were grouped according to ethnicity which is likelihood to farming and its accompanying dirty works (e.g. field works), as shown in Table 4. It was previously discussed that the Tagakaolo, Manobo and Cebuano children agreed that they liked farming and its accompanying works but the B’laans and Muslims neither agreed/disagreed about it.

Furthermore, no significant differences were found in all other indicators of perception towards farming when farmers’ children were grouped according to ethnicity. This implies that perceptions of the children towards farming do not vary regardless of what ethnicity they belong. Their perceptions towards farming are most likely the same.

E. Perception Towards Farming among Farmers’ Children when Grouped According to Gender

Table 5 presents the perceptions of farmers’ children towards farming when grouped according to gender. Results revealed

Table 3
Perceptions of farmers’ children towards farming grouped according to ethnicity

Particulars	T	B	MAN	C	M
General perception on farming:					
1. Agriculture or farming sector is important in food production to feed the country’s population.	4.52	4.52	4.57	4.63	4.40
2. Farmers are aging and there is a need for the young generation to engage in farming.	4.03	3.94	4.33	4.06	3.93
3. Farming is a competitive profession.	3.97	3.84	4.23	3.81	4.27
4. I consider farming as a dignified profession.	3.84	3.97	4.07	3.92	4.13
5. Agriculture related courses is a good profession.	3.94	3.73	3.80	3.74	3.60
Aspiration and personal aspect:					
1. I appreciate agriculture practical work.	3.95	4.11	3.93	3.84	3.60
2. Farm life makes me feel good.	4.04	4.20	4.03	3.84	4.13
3. I like farming and its accompanying dirty works.	3.52	3.41	3.60	3.63	3.33
4. I aspire to follow the farming career of my parents.	3.60	3.63	3.83	3.32	3.53
5. I aspire a career in agriculture.	3.59	3.78	3.83	3.40	3.33
Economic aspect:					
1. I see business opportunity in farming.	4.13	3.99	4.20	3.81	3.73
2. Agricultural income fulfills the needs of our family.	3.62	3.50	3.40	3.18	3.40
3. There is money in farming/agriculture.	4.31	4.25	4.50	4.21	4.53
4. Farmers in the community are economically well-off	3.24	3.10	3.30	3.37	3.93
5. Farming is an economically competitive profession.	3.77	3.61	3.73	3.56	3.67

Legend: - neither agree/disagree, - agree, - strongly agree
T – Tagaolo, B – B’laan, MAN – Manobo, C – Cebuano, M – Muslim

Table 4
Result of Chi-Square testing differences on the perception of farmers’ children towards farming grouped according to ethnicity

Particulars	X ²	df	Sig.
General perception on farming:			
1. Agriculture or farming sector is important in food production to feed the country’s population.	7.248	16	.968
2. Farmers are aging and there is a need for the young generation to engage in farming.	18.401	16	.301
3. Farming is a competitive profession.	25.381	16	.063
4. I consider farming as a dignified profession.	16.146	16	.443
5. Agriculture related courses is a good profession.	26.603	16	.046
Aspiration and personal aspect:			
1. I appreciate agriculture practical work.	20.321	16	.206
2. Farm life makes me feel good.	22.671	16	.123
3. I like farming and its accompanying dirty works.	28.139*	16	.030
4. I aspire to follow the farming career of my parents.	14.511	16	.561
5. I aspire a career in agriculture.	20.054	16	.218
Economic aspect:			
1. I see business opportunity in farming.	17.189	16	.373
2. Agricultural income fulfills the needs of our family.	19.097	16	.264
3. There is money if farming/agriculture.	12.968	16	.675
4. Farmers in the community are economically well-off	22.649	16	.123
5. Farming is an economically competitive profession.	16.026	16	.453

that in terms of general perception about farming, the male, female, and LGBT children strongly agreed that agriculture or farming is important in food production to feed the country's population which indicates highly favorable perception towards farming. Moreover, they all agreed that farmers are ageing and there is a need for the young generation to engage in farming, farming is a competitive as well as a dignified profession, and that Agriculture related course is a good profession which indicates favorable perception. The results oppose the statement of Huijsmans (2021) that gender is a shaper of young people's dispositions towards farming. At a young age, boys and girls are aware of how possible future pathways into farming are differentiated by gender. This is apparent where custom prevents or limit daughters from participating in farm activities and even from inheriting land.

As to aspirations and personal aspect, all gender agreed to appreciate agriculture practical works, that farm life makes them feel good, and aspire a career in agriculture which indicates favorable perception. However, the female children were in doubt of their liking about farming and its accompanying dirty works which indicates fairly favorable

perception while both their male and LGBT counterparts agreed that they like farming which indicates favorable perception. Moreover, the LGBT children were in doubt of their aspirations to follow the farming career of their parents which indicates fairly favorable perception while the female and male children agreed on it which indicates favorable perception towards farming. Giuliani *et al.* (2017), in their study stated that more male youth expressed desire to stay engaged in agriculture compared to their female counterpart. The other most frequently expressed aspirations of young women include doing handicraft work such as dressmaking or sewing, living in or near an urban area offering different opportunities and services, or getting married and starting their own family.

All gender groups agreed to see business opportunity in farming, that there is money in farming, and farming is an economically competitive profession which indicates favorable perception towards farming. However, all gender groups also neither agree nor disagree that income from farming fulfills the needs of their family and that farmers in the community are economically well-off which indicates fairly favorable perception towards farming. In the study of Giuliani *et al.*

Table 5
Perception of farmers' children towards farming grouped according to gender

Particulars	Female	Male	LGBT
General perception on farming. Farming is...			
1. important in food production to feed the country's population	4.56	4.51	4.54
2. Farmers are aging and there is a need for the young generation to engage in farming.	4.03	4.02	4.23
3. a competitive profession	4.00	3.83	3.85
4. a dignified profession	3.96	3.88	3.77
5. Agriculture related courses is a good profession.	3.85	3.75	3.54
Aspiration and personal aspect:			
1. I appreciate agriculture practical work.	3.93	4.04	3.77
2. Farm life makes me feel good.	4.09	4.03	3.54
3. I like farming and its accompanying dirty works.	3.43	3.67	3.54
4. I aspire to follow the farming career of my parents.	3.62	3.52	3.23
5. I aspire a career in agriculture.	3.63	3.63	3.46
Economic aspect:			
1. I see business opportunity in farming.	3.80	3.64	3.62
2. Agricultural income fulfills the needs of our family.	4.09	3.83	4.15
3. There is money if farming/agriculture.	3.50	3.40	3.31
4. Farmers in the community are economically well-off	4.36	4.24	3.85
5. Farming is an economically competitive profession.	3.30	3.20	3.23
	3.75	3.54	3.54

Legend: -neither agree/disagree - agree - strongly agree

Table 6

Result of Chi-Square testing difference on the perception of farmers' children towards farming grouped according to gender

Particulars	X ²	df	Sig.
General perception on farming:			
1. Agriculture or farming sector is important in food production to feed the country's population.	11.671	8	.167
2. Farmers are aging and there is a need for the young generation to engage in farming.	4.751	8	.784
3. Farming is a competitive profession.	12.868	8	.116
4. I consider farming as a dignified profession.	10.525	8	.230
5. Agriculture related courses is a good profession.	6.621	8	.578
Aspiration and personal aspect:			
1. I appreciate agriculture practical work.	4.753	8	.784
2. Farm life makes me feel good.	5.252	8	.730
3. I like farming and its accompanying dirty works.	6.088	8	.637
4. I aspire to follow the farming career of my parents.	5.706	8	.680
5. I aspire a career in agriculture.	6.722	8	.567
Economic aspect:			
1. I see business opportunity in farming.	10.556	8	.228
2. Agricultural income fulfills the needs of our family.	3.405	8	.906
3. There is money if farming/agriculture.	8.759	8	.363
4. Farmers in the community are economically well-off	5.815	8	.668
5. Farming is an economically competitive profession.	7.946	8	.439

Table 7

Result of Chi-Square testing relationship between parents' monthly income and perception of farmers' children on economic viability of farming

Particulars	χ^2	df	Sig.
Parents' Income vs Farmers' children perception on economic aspect of farming	10.138	12	.203

(2017), they stated that the youth perceived that the financial return in agriculture is not financially viable. More young women perceived agriculture as not financially viable. Income of the farmers is just enough to cover basic needs for survival. Asis (2020) stated that the highest poverty incidence includes that of farmers, fisherman, and children from low-income families. In relation to poverty in rural areas, the service sector has more workers than in agriculture making it the largest sector in the Philippines.

F. Test of Difference of the Perception of Farmers' Children Towards Farming when Grouped According to Gender

The Chi-square test was run to find significant difference in the perceptions of the farmers' children grouped according to gender and results are presented in Table 6.

Results revealed that there were no significant differences found in all indicators of perception towards farming (general perception, aspiration and personal aspect, economic aspect) when farmers' children were grouped according to gender. This implies that perceptions of the children towards farming do not vary regardless of their gender orientation. Their perception towards farming were most likely the same, from among female, male, and LGBT farmers' children. It was previously discussed and data presented in Table VI, all gender types or orientations of the farmers' children mostly have positive perceptions towards farming. The results opposed the findings of Giuliani *et al.* (2017) who looked at the aspect of gender and found that fewer female youth mentioned positive arguments in favor of agriculture compared to their male peers.

G. Test of Relationship Between Parent's Monthly Income and the Perceived Economic Viability of Farming among Farmer's Children

The Chi-square analysis showed that there is no significant relationship between parents' monthly income and the perceived economic viability of farming among farmers' children ($\chi^2 = 10.138$, $df = 12$, $p = .203$). This indicates that perceptions regarding the economic prospects of farming are relatively consistent across income groups. The finding suggests that such perceptions may be shaped less by individual household income and more by shared community experiences and broader structural conditions in the agricultural sector.

In rural settings, where farming is the dominant livelihood, youth are often exposed to similar economic realities such as low and unstable income, limited market opportunities, and vulnerability to external risks. These shared experiences may lead to homogeneous perceptions regardless of income variation within farming households. This result aligns with the observations of Asis (2020), who noted that young Filipinos tend to view agriculture as economically unattractive due to low returns and persistent poverty among farmers. Similarly, Giuliani *et al.* (2017) found that youth perceptions of agriculture are strongly influenced by perceived financial limitations rather than household economic differences.

4. Conclusion

Positive perceptions toward farming were observed among farmers' children across all ethnicities and gender orientations. However, they remain generally skeptical about the economic returns of agriculture, expressing doubts about relying on farming as a future livelihood due to its perceived low financial benefits and limited opportunities. Notably, the analysis revealed that parents' income is not significantly related to these economic perceptions, indicating that such views are shared across income groups and are likely shaped by common community experiences and structural conditions in the agricultural sector.

This presents a critical concern, as these perceptions may influence the willingness of youth to engage in farming or pursue agriculture-related careers. Strengthening youth interest in agriculture may be more effective if they are exposed to successful and economically viable farming models within their communities. Moreover, parents, teachers, and community leaders should actively engage the youth through continuous education and awareness programs that emphasize the importance of farming in nation-building and rural development, while also highlighting its potential as a sustainable and profitable livelihood.

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