

# Dissecting Factors Causing Active Behaviors Associated with Continuity of Youth Participation in Agro-Preneurship: A Qualitative Study on Youth Farmers in Sarawak

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** Despite of an aggressive growth of agricultural sectors, the number of youth participating in the industry is low. Agriculture as one of the main income generator industry should be exposed to the community in order to raise and encourage the participating of the community and also for the development of the industry. Thus, this research is conducted using a qualitative study to understand and dissecting the youth behavior toward their activities in agro-preneurship.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Data from six in-depth interviews were analysed to explore the experience of youth agro-preneurs.

**Findings:** The result indicated that the two major groups of behaviors dictated the acceptances of youth toward agro-preneurship in Sarawak are psychological factors and economic factor.

**Practical implications:** The findings of this paper will help to boost the agro-preneurship activities among youth in Malaysia. In response to increase youth participation in agriculture is more important than ever, as the burgeoning global population and decreasing agriculture productivity mean the youth must play pivotal role in ensuring a food-secure future for themselves, and for future generations.

**Originality/value:** This paper managed to explore deeper insights on how the psychological and economic factor plays a pivotal role to sustain the involvement of youth farmers in agricultural industry. It also highlights on how to attract youth participation in agro-preneurship in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Agro-preneurship, Behaviors, Youths, Farmers, Sarawak

### **Introduction**

The agriculture sector comprises of large number of industries such as farming, plantation, animal-husbandry, fisheries, food processing, and many more (Silva et al., 2009). The many divisions of agricultural industry have indeed expected to promote many jobs opportunities. Upon realizing the economic benefits of the agricultural sector, it seems like this sector can be a thriving business with full and active government support for young entrepreneur (Silva et al., 2009). However, lower private investment as compared to other sectors and dwindling interest among younger workforce in the industry has become a major concern (Strategy Paper20: Driving Modernization in Agro-Food, 2015). As a result, many youngsters migrate to the city leaving behind the farm to the hand of aged farmers, which constitute the major farming population in Malaysia. Furthermore, this urges the farm's owner to employ foreign workers to work their field to keep the industry alive (Abdullah & Sulaiman, 2013). As many other sees agricultural sector as a non-profitable industry, some still believe that it can be the most sustainable income generating industry if it is operated in the right way (Man, 2007). This is due to the never-ended needs for human consumption of agricultural product. This becomes the indication where we required more innovative ideas to elevate the industry into one of the income generating industry and this can be achieved only by more participation of youth into the industry. In order to cultivate interest of youth into agricultural entrepreneurship, Malaysian government, through its development programs constantly incorporated the youth and provides capital, facilities, incentives and consultation through various agencies to ensure their successes. However, negative perceptions in agricultural sectors such as seeing it as tedious, dirty and 'no class' job as compared to other sectors cause poor participations and involvements toward this sector. Hence, the phenomenological study is conducted to understand the factors influencing youth toward their participation in agro-preneurship in Sarawak to dissect the perceptions, perspectives and understandings of youth towards their involvement in agro-preneurship.

### **Literature Reviews**

#### ***Definition of Agro-Preneurship***

An entrepreneur is a person who can take any ideas, whether it is a product or services and have the skill set, who are willing to take extreme risk to do whatever it takes to turn that concept into reality and marketable ideas that people needs and wants (Fernandes, 2016). This statement agreed by Drucker (1985), entrepreneur are individuals who are able to transform economic resources from less productive into higher productivity. However, agricultural entrepreneurs are those who classifies all activities that help farmers to adjust free market economy as entrepreneurial (Abdullah & Sulaiman, 2013). This make agro-preneurs consist of a diverse group with multiple farms activities.

#### ***Role of Youth toward Their Participation in Agricultural Business***

The participation of youth in agriculture has become a prominent topic as youth is considering as the main contributor to drive the economics of the nations. In the overall populations, the number of youth is increasing exponentially with times where, in America alone, this group has surpassed the number of 'baby boomers' as the nation's largest living generation. As such, the number of millennial, who is, aged between 18-34 year-old which is par with the new definition of 'youth' in