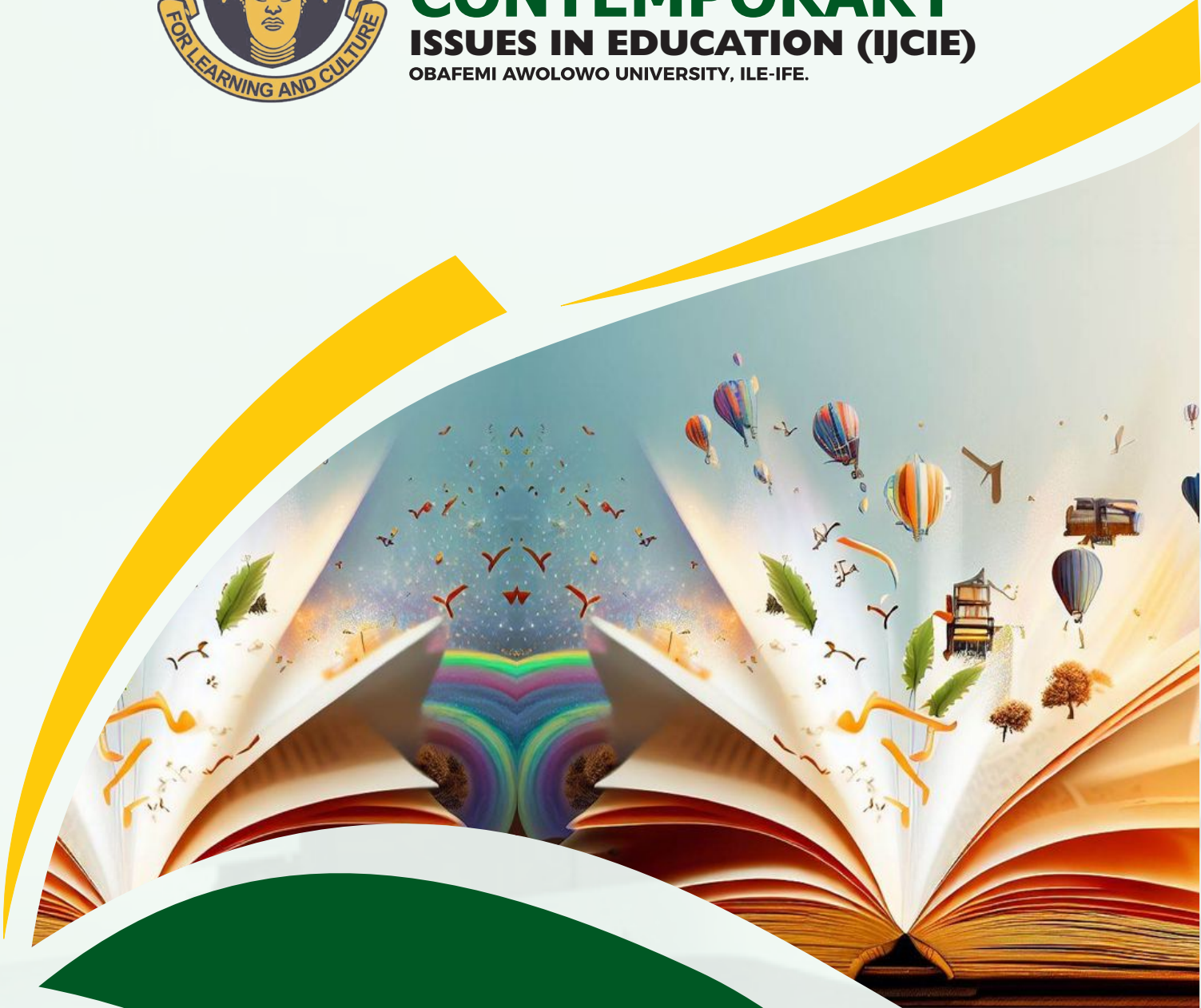




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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of insecurity on the functionality of school farms and the development of entrepreneurial skills among secondary school students in Ife Central Local Government Area, Osun State. The study adopted a descriptive survey, research design. The population comprised all secondary school students in the study area, with 200 students purposively selected among the secondary schools. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed through frequency counts, mean, standard deviations and simple percentages. The results showed that students were engaged in school farm activities of cash crops, food crops production and sale of farm produce within the school premises. It further showed that environmental, social and economic insecurities hinder the effective utilization of school farms for the development of entrepreneurial skills of the students to promote self-reliance and reduce youth unemployment in the nation. The study therefore recommended that, targeted interventions such as increased funding, enhanced security measures, curriculum integration, teacher training, community engagement, student involvement and marketing support in school farm activities should be implemented so as to enhance students' development of entrepreneurial skills through agriculture, promote food security and zero hunger as stated in Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: School farms, Entrepreneurial Skills, Economic insecurity, Social Insecurity, Economic insecurity

Introduction

In the contemporary educational landscape, there is an increasing emphasis on practical, hands-on learning experiences that prepare students for real-world challenges. School farms have emerged as vital educational tools, serving as agricultural laboratories where theoretical knowledge transforms into practical skills (Mukembo *et al.*, 2020). This is also in line with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT, 1984) which posited that individuals learn best through direct, hands-on experiences. With the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014), Agricultural Science is taught alongside Home Economics in junior secondary schools, while it serves as an elective in senior secondary schools. This approach enables interested students to acquire practical agricultural skills, fostering self-reliance and boosting Nigeria's food productivity, which is crucial for addressing hunger and ensuring food security as stated in sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2015).

As the emphasis on entrepreneurial skills in secondary education grows, school farms are increasingly seen as vital for developing these competencies (Smith *et al.*, 2022). These skills enhance business productivity and profitability while fostering individual prosperity. Engaging in school farm activities allows students to develop business plans, manage finances, and market products-key components of entrepreneurial development (Nguyen *et al.*, 2022). School farms, which originated in developed nations during the 19th century, have become fundamental to agricultural education worldwide. They provide practical experiences

that enable students to apply classroom knowledge under teacher supervision, featuring areas for crop production, forestry, aquaculture and livestock management.

School farms enhance students' agricultural knowledge and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset, essential for future careers in agriculture. Through practical work in crop production and animal husbandry, these farms bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world application, fostering skills that benefit both individuals and society. However, pervasive insecurity and poverty in Nigeria significantly impede educational development, particularly in basic and secondary education, undermining efforts to meet global sustainable development goals.

Uduakobong (2016) highlighted that insecurity of school farm could be viewed from three perspectives; the environmental, social and economic insecurity. Schreinemachers *et al.* (2019) in their study on school gardens/farms proclaimed that environmental insecurity arises from poor soil management practices, bush burning, and deforestation, leading to land degradation and nutrient loss. These actions expose soil to sunlight, increasing evaporation and leaching, while excessive use of chemicals raises soil acidity, adversely affecting crops. Additionally, the absence of protective fencing leaves farms vulnerable to trespassers and predators. Social insecurity leads to conflicts over school farmland and lack of interest in effective management. Without supportive and protective policies, poor attitudes towards farm operations undermines educational goals when teachers and students lack commitment towards farm activities.

Economic insecurity stems from insufficient funding and inadequate marketing, with schools often failing to prioritize budgeting for farm projects. Even when funds are available, accessing them can be a challenge, limiting opportunities for students to develop practical skills and diminishing overall farm productivity (Uduakobong, 2016). This prevents many families from affording proper schooling, while insecurity of lives and properties disrupts schooling, making it difficult for students to focus on their education or participate school farms activities.

The effective utilization of school farms enhances skill development and encourages knowledge sharing, allowing students from farming backgrounds to learn modern techniques. The Nigerian government has integrated agricultural science as a pre-vocational subject in primary and junior secondary schools and as a vocational subject in senior secondary schools, demonstrating its commitment to agricultural education (NPE, 2014; Adeyemo & Odeunmi, 2021). Given these backgrounds, ensuring the security of school farms is essential. The rising insecurity of these farms poses significant challenges to educational effectiveness. The study therefore investigated how functional school farms can enhance entrepreneurial skills among secondary school students in Ife Central Local Government Area, Osun State, Nigeria, while exploring the impact of insecurity on these vital educational resource.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the extent to which insecurity affected school farms and their influence on entrepreneurial skill development among secondary school students in Ife Central Local Government Area, Ile-Ife. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- i. ascertain whether the selected secondary schools students engage in school farm activities in the study area;
- ii. identify the environmental insecurity issues that undermines the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills in Ife Central Local Government area,
- iii. investigate the social insecurity issues that undermines the utilization of school farms in the developing students' entrepreneurial skills in Ife Central Local Government area and;
- iv. determine the economic insecurity issues that undermines the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills in Ife Central Local Government area.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey, employing descriptive research design. The population

comprised all Agricultural Science students in public and private secondary schools in Ife Central Area. Two hundred (200) students were randomly selected from five public and five private secondary schools known to have school farms. From each school, twenty (20) students each were randomly selected to participate in the survey, totaling 200 participants. A self-developed and structured questionnaire titled "School Farm and Entrepreneurial Skills" (SFES), was used for data collection. Section A is to gather information on the presence of functional school farm based on three (3) likert scale of Often (O), Sometimes (S) and Never (N) and measured on a criterion of 0.90. Section B, C and D were sub-sectioned based on research objectives. Responses were measured on four likert rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD), respectively. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using mean statistic

and standard deviation to answer the research question.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. What activities show that the school engages the students in school farm activities?
- ii. What are the environmental insecurity issues that undermine the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills?
- iii. What are the social insecurity issues that undermine the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills?
- iv. What are the economic insecurity issues that undermine the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills?

Results

Research Question 1: What activities show that the school engages the students in school farm activities?

Table 1: Responses to items on School Farm Engagement

S/N	Items	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (SD)
1	Does the school engage students in cash crop production	21(10.5%)	62(31.0)	117(58.5)	1.25	0.44
2	Do students participate in cultivating food crops	95(47.5%)	94(47%)	11(5.5%)	1.42	0.60
3	Do student participate in the sale of farm produce from the school farm within the school premises	52(26%)	82(41%)	66(33%)	0.93	0.77
4	Does the school engage the students in selling the farm produce to the surrounding community or market	15(7.5%)	75(37.5%)	110(55%)	0.52	0.63
5	Does the school engage students in animal/livestock production	54(27%)	31(15.5%)	115(57.5%)	0.70	0.87
6	Does the school farm engage in agro processing	36(18%)	85(42.5%)	79(39.5%)	0.79	0.73
Mean (\bar{x})					5.61	4.04
Overall Total		Gross Arithmetic Mean (GAM)			0.94	0.67

Source: Field survey, 2024

Note: The decision rule for the mean score is 0.90 (items at 0.90 and above were accepted while those that fall below 0.90 were rejected)

The result from Table 1 showed that engagement of students in school farm. Likert scale was used to analyze the items of school farm in the study area by calculating the average mean of the respondents' and the gross arithmetic mean. This was used to determine the acceptability and rejection of the secondary school students' responses. The decision rule for the mean was guided using mean score of 0.90 as the cut-off point. This implies that, items with mean score of 0.90 and above was accepted as "accept" while those that fall below 1.00 was regarded as "disagreed".

Majority ($x= 1.42$) of the respondents agreed that

they practice food crop production, this indicated that larger percentages of the secondary schools farm cultivate food crops. There is moderate ($x= 1.25$) responses on engagement of students in cash crops. There is moderate responses ($x=0.93$) from the sales of school farm produce within schools, while a similar moderate responses ($x =0.79$) that students involvement in agro-processing. Table 1 also showed that most ($x =0.70$) of the schools in the study area do not focus on animal/livestock production as part of the school farm activities and they do not ($x=0.52$) sell produce outside the school indicating a low rate of external sales.

Research Question 2: What are the environmental insecurity issues that undermine the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills?

Table 2. Mean responses for environmental insecurity of school farm

S/N	Items	Mean (x)	Standard Deviation (SD)
1.	Absence of security guards in the school farm	2.95	0.90
2.	Absence of perimeter fencing allows intruders into the school farm	3.09	1.60
3.	Trespassers steal school farm products	3.42	0.10
4.	Nature of land due undulating which causes erosion	3.00	1.80
5.	Due to climate change, outbreaks of pests and diseases affect the school farm	2.97	1.80
6.	Problems of wild predators destroy the farm products	2.74	1.60
Mean and Standard deviation		3.03	1.30

Source: Field survey, 2024

Note: The decision rule for the mean score is 2.50 (items at 2.50 and above were accepted while those that fall below 2.50 were rejected)

The result from Table 2 shows that students perceive theft ($x= 3.42$) as a serious threat to the farm's productivity and their entrepreneurial activities. The absence of perimeter fencing ($x= 3.09$) reflects a notable concern about intruders accessing the school farm. The issue of land erosion due to undulating terrain ($x= 3.00$) indicates that students recognize the impact of environmental conditions on farming

sustainability. There is a moderate level of concern among respondents regarding climate change effects, particularly pest and disease outbreaks ($x= 2.97$). The absence of security guards on the school farm ($x = 2.95$) highlights a moderate concern about safety and protection. Lastly, the issue of wild predators ($x= 2.74$) indicates a lower mean yet still present concern.

Research Question 3: What are the social insecurity issues that undermine the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills?

Table 3. Mean responses for social insecurity issues of school farm

S/N	Items of social insecurity issues undermining the utilization of school farm for acquiring entrepreneurial skills.	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (SD)
1	Students are not interested in developing entrepreneurial skills through school farm activities	2.41	1.09
2.	Parents complain when students engage in school farm activities	2.31	1.11
3.	Government does not allow the students to engage in marketing of school farm produce	2.08	1.15
4.	Agricultural teachers lack interest in school farm operations	3.49	1.60
5.	Students lack interest in school farm practical work	3.82	1.40
6.	Agriculture teachers do not properly supervise school farm operation in the school	3.99	0.90
7.	Staff lack co-operation in school farm activities	2.75	1.00
8.	Lack of good level of discipline discourages school farm management in my school	2.62	1.20
Grand Mean and Standard deviation		2.93	1.18

Source: Field survey, 2024

Note: The decision rule for the mean score is 2.50 (items at 2.50 and above were accepted while those that fall below 2.50 were rejected)

Table 3, showed that almost all the items listed on social security issues are undermining the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills with inadequate supervision of school farm operations by agriculture teachers, students' lack of interest in practical work on the school farm, lack of interest by agricultural teachers in school farm operations, staff cooperation in school farm

activities and indiscipline within the school ($x = 3.99$, $x = 3.82$, $x = 3.49$, $x = 2.75$ and $x = 2.62$), respectively. Conversely, students lack interest in school farm activities and parents complaints ($x = 2.41$ and $x = 2.31$) are social insecurity issues that are not undermining the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills.

Research Question 4: What are the economic insecurity issues that undermine the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills?

Table 4. Mean responses for economic insecurity issues of school farm

S/N	Items of economic insecurity issues undermining the utilization of school farm in developing entrepreneurial skills.	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (SD)
1	Tools necessary for school farm are inadequate	1.54	0.80
2.	There is inadequate funding for school farm	2.64	1.16
3.	The time to develop entrepreneurial skills in students through school farm activities is limited	2.30	1.16
4.	Inadequate storage facilities	2.40	1.10
5.	Loss school farm produce due to difficult marketing	2.24	0.90

S/N	Items of economic insecurity issues undermining the utilization of school farm in developing entrepreneurial skills.	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (SD)
6.	Inadequate labor to handle difficult farm operations	3.05	0.80
7.	Unplanned production principles	2.75	1.50
Grand Mean and Standard deviation		2.42	1.06

Source: Field survey, 2024

Note: The decision rule for the mean score is 2.50 (items at 2.50 and above were accepted while those that fall below 2.50 were rejected)

Table 4, showed that inadequate labor, unplanned production principle and inadequate funding are the major economic insecurity issues undermining the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills in the study area (\bar{x} = 3.05, \bar{x} = 2.75 and \bar{x} = 2.64). Conversely, inadequate storage facilities, time for entrepreneurial, loss of school farm produce, and inadequate tools are less significant economic insecurity issues undermining the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills (\bar{x} = 2.40, \bar{x} = 2.30, \bar{x} = 2.24 and \bar{x} = 1.54) respectively.

Discussion

The result from Table 1 showed that the schools engage the students in cash, food crop production and sale of farm produce within the school premises (\bar{x} = 1.25, \bar{x} = 1.42 and \bar{x} = 0.93), respectively. This is suggesting foundational efforts toward entrepreneurial skill development among students in secondary schools. This supports the assertion of National Policy on Education (2014) and Smith *et al* (2022) that engagement of students in school farm operations is vital towards the development of entrepreneurial skills among students.

The findings, summarized in Table 2, revealed environmental insecurity issues that has significant concerns that undermine the effective utilization of these school farms as an educational resources. A primary concern is the incidence of theft, with a mean score of 3.42 indicating that students are highly aware of the risk of trespassers stealing farm products. This not only depletes resources needed for educational purposes but also negatively impacts student motivation and

engagement in farm activities. The absence of perimeter fencing around the school farm, reflected by a mean score of 3.09, allows intruders easy access. This vulnerability not only leads to theft but may also discourage students from participating in agricultural activities due to concerns about potential losses. Land erosion due to undulating terrain (mean score of 3.00) poses a significant threat. Erosion can undermine the sustainability of farming practices and negatively affect soil quality and crop yields, which, in turn, can diminish student involvement in farming initiatives. The impact of climate change, particularly through pest and disease outbreaks (mean score of 2.97), presents serious challenges. These environmental factors can lead to crop failures, which affect the educational objectives of the farm and limit students' opportunities to learn about effective agricultural practices. The absence of security guards on the school farm (mean score of 2.95) further intensifies this issue, highlighting the need for improved safety measures. Lastly, the issue of wild predators (mean score of 2.74) endangering both crops and the safety of students working on the farm. The results indicate that these environmental insecurity issues significantly affect student involvement in school farming activities. This aligns with previous research by Uduakobong (2016) and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (2018), which highlight that threats like theft and vandalism can reduce farm productivity and discourage active participation.

Table 3 revealed the significant social insecurity issues undermining the utilization of

school farms are inadequate supervision of school farm operations by agriculture teachers, students' lack of interest in practical work on the school farm, lack of interest by agricultural teachers in school farm operations, staff cooperation in school farm activities and indiscipline within the school ($x=3.99, x=3.82, x=3.49, x=2.75$ and $x=2.62$), respectively. These scores clearly indicate major concerns affecting the development of students' entrepreneurial skills. The result agreed with Ikehi, *et al.*, (2024) that social insecurity can undermine the educational of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills.

Table 4 indicated that inadequate labor, unplanned production principle and inadequate funding are the critical economic insecurity issues undermining the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills in the study area ($x = 3.05, x = 2.75$ and $x = 2.64$). This results is in resonance with the assertion of Adeyemo & Odebunmi, (2021) that insufficient and inaccessibility of funds, farm labour and low production scale constitute economic insecurity in any area.

Conclusion

Based on the findings this study concluded that, students engage in school farm activities to develop entrepreneurial skills and that there are environmental, social and economic insecurities which affects the utilization of school farms in developing students' entrepreneurial skills in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended that there should be targeted interventions such as increased funding, enhanced security measures, curriculum integration, teacher training, community engagement, student involvement and marketing support in school farm activities should be implemented so as to enhance students' development of entrepreneurial skills.

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