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### Awareness, access and utilization of migrant Labourers for agricultural activities among farming households in Kogi state, Nigeria

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#### Abstract

The study investigated awareness, access, and utilization of migrant labourers for agricultural activities among farming households in selected Local Government Areas of Kogi State, Nigeria. Primary data were obtained from respondents using an interview schedule. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed in sampling one hundred and fifty households in the study area. The principal results of the study show that use of migrant labour was pervasive with land clearing, ridging/mounding, weeding/hoeing and harvesting among the dominant activities they were employed to carry out. Findings indicate a high level of awareness and access to migrant labourers. The major constraints to migrant labour utilization were inadequate capital, wage rate and seasonal migration of the labourers. It is concluded that migrant labour utilization is pervasive among farming households and there is preference of use of migrant labour for land clearing, ridging/mounding, weeding/hoeing and harvesting with the major constraints to migrant labour utilization among farming households in the study area being inadequate capital, wage rate and seasonal migration of the labourers. Age ( $\chi^2 = 16.05$ ,  $P = 0.003$ ), Gender ( $\chi^2 = 30.325$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ), Educational status ( $\chi^2 = 15.345$ ,  $P = 0.012$ ) and farm size ( $\chi^2 = 13.143$ ,  $P = 0.0011$ ) were found to have a significant relationship with the constraints to migrant labour utilization. It is recommended that farming households embrace the use of migrant labourers given their availability and the perception that they are better skilled.

**Keywords:** Constraints, farming households, labour, laborer's, migrants, utilization

#### Introduction

Labour is a significant asset for smallholder households in the rural areas of Nigeria where agricultural production is majorly rain-fed and human labour-dependent. Olayide (2002) <sup>[16]</sup> asserted that about 90% of non-mechanized agricultural systems rely on human labour while in mechanized agricultural systems, an estimated 60% of farm duties is dependent on human effort. Hence, labour accessible to households in terms of capacity, education, expertise, and vigor make up the social capital that becomes the footing for the construction of household income and livelihood (Takane, 2008) <sup>[21]</sup>. Further, accessibility to labour influences timeliness of planting, effective weed and insect control, well-timed harvesting actions and general crop handling operations (Oluyole *et al.*, 2007) <sup>[17]</sup>. Farm tasks constitute a most important source of work for the rural population and while industrial change has been a key force causing modifications in occupations and productivity, these changes have not reached the resource-poor farmers who cannot afford, for example, farm machinery and therefore continue to rely on human labour. Ergo, inaccessibility of labour is a chief limitation in agricultural production in Nigeria (Gocowski & Oduwole, 2003) <sup>[8]</sup>.

The migration of humans is a significant component of population structure which can have substantial imports on both the source and destination. Migration has shaped the composition of receiving centres and places of origin. Ofuoku & Emerhi (2014) <sup>[13]</sup> and Afolabi (2007) <sup>[2]</sup> affirmed

that rural-urban drift has untoward impacts on agrarian productivity and household livelihood via loss of active people in rural populations. The process of rural-urban or rural-rural migration creates empty spaces i.e. a labour vacuum in the sending area while creating abundance in the receiving areas. The effect of these vacuum in agrarian economies cannot be exaggerated, specifically with respect to interference in rural incomes. Emigration leads to radically constricted labour force, which leads to reduced lands under cultivation with the final consequence being limited availability of food, amplified vulnerability, and food insecurity (FAO, 2017) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Conversely, urban-rural or rural-rural drift has largely upped farm outputs whereas the number of economically active people in agriculture has also increased (Majid, 2004) <sup>[10]</sup>. In the same vein, migrants may move to areas where their skills and abilities are needed and can be drivers of innovation making key impacts on the agricultural activities of such areas. The importance of a steady supply of human labour to Nigerian agriculture where smallholder stakeholders generate more than 85% of local production in Nigeria (Akanni & Dada, 2012) <sup>[3]</sup> cannot be overstressed and since hired labour contributes 88% of the total labour-use on farms (Okuneye, 2002) <sup>[15]</sup>, a study of migrant labour use among farm household is at the same time timely as it is expedient. In the light of this, the study therefore assessed utilization of migrant labour for agricultural activities among farming households as well as the constraints to its

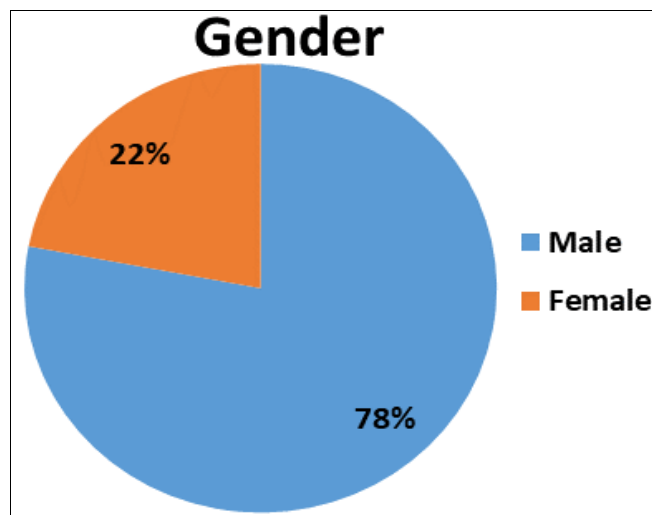
use among farming households.

**Materials and Methods**

The investigation was carried out in Kogi State. Specifically, it was carried out in Mopamuro, Yagba West and Yagba East Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state. The three local governments are a part of the 21 LGAs in Kogi state. Geopolitically, they constitute the Yagba Federal constituency. The study area was selected because of the great number of migrant settlements along the belt and consequently abundance of migrant labourers. A three-stage sampling procedure was used in selecting respondents. The first stage was a purposive selection of three LGAs due to the abundance of migrant labourers. The second stage involved a random selection of five communities each from the three local governments selected making a total of fifteen communities from a list of the communities. The final stage involved a random selection of ten farm household heads each from the fifteen (15) selected communities making a total of one hundred and fifty (150) farmers. Data was collected with the use of an interview schedule due to low level of education among respondents. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential analytical tools. Employing descriptive statistics entailed the use of frequency counts, bar charts, pie charts, means, ranks and percentages while Chi square was used in testing the hypothesis of the study.

**Results and Discussion**

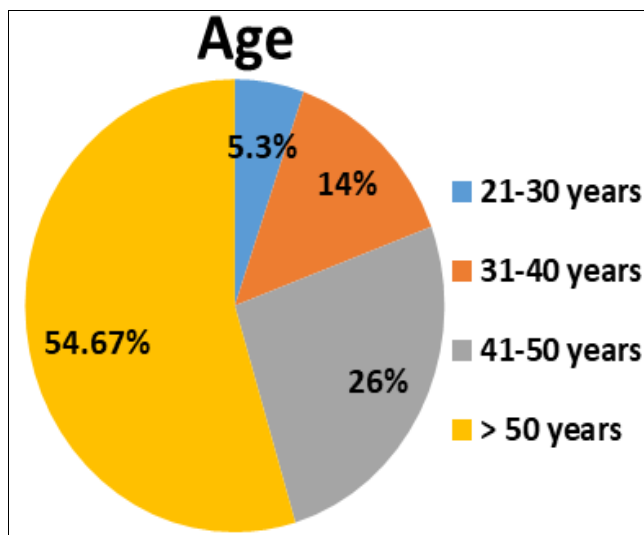
**Distribution of respondents based on socioeconomic characteristics**



Source: Field survey, 2021

Fig 1: Distribution of respondents according to gender

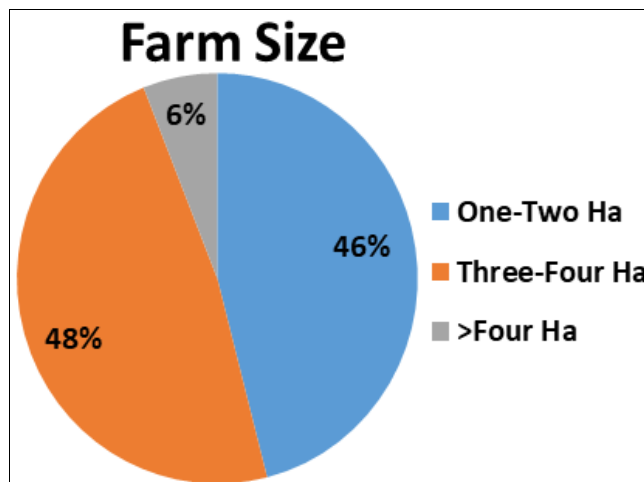
Results show that majority (78%) of the respondents were male while females constitute 22%. This could be attributed to the patriarchal nature of Nigerian societies. This finding corroborates that of Ibitoye, (2013) [9] who reported that more men were found in farming than women in Kogi state.



Source: Field survey, 2021

Fig 2: Distribution of respondents according to Age

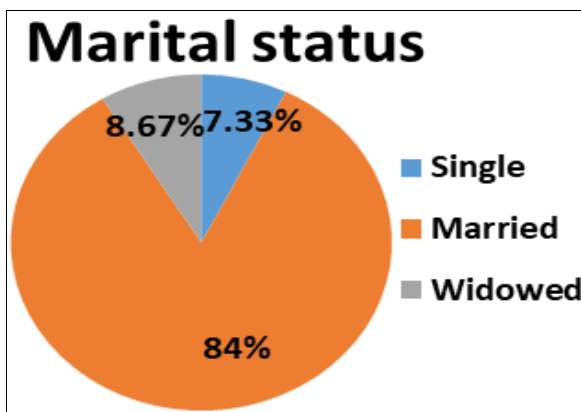
As indicated in the figure above, more than half (54.67%) of the respondents were above fifty years, 26% were between the age of 41-50 while only a total of 19.33% were between the age of 21-40. This result suggests that the study area is dominated by the aged which may necessitate the need for hired labour. This agrees with finding of Owojaiye *et al.* (2019) [20] that the majority of household heads are advanced in age.



Source: Field survey, 2021

Fig 3: Distribution of respondents according to farm size

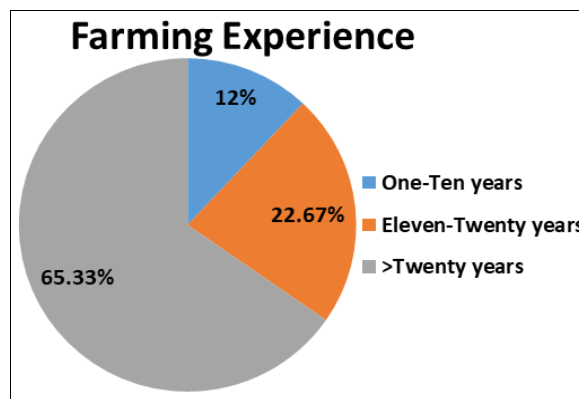
Findings reveal that 46% of the total respondents had farm size between 1-2 hectares with another 48% of respondents having between 3-4 hectares. This situation is typical of farming in sub-Sahara Africa which is characterized by small land holding (Giller *et al.*, 2021) [7]. Only a paltry 6% have more than four hectares of farmland. The smallholdings continue to ensure that farmers do not enjoy the economies of scale and limit their rise from poverty.



Source: Field survey, 2021

Fig 4: Distribution of respondents according to marital status

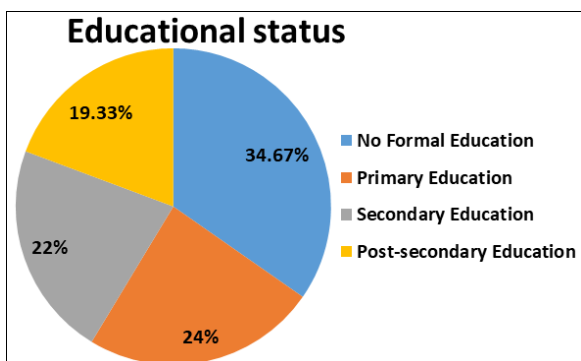
As shown in figure 4, 84% of the respondents were married while only 7.33% were single. The large percentage of married respondents suggests that marriage is highly valued in the study area and could lead to increased household sizes with possible consequences on the supply of labour for agricultural activities (Oluyole *et al.*, 2013) [18].



Source: Field survey, 2021

Fig 6: Distribution of respondents according to farming experience

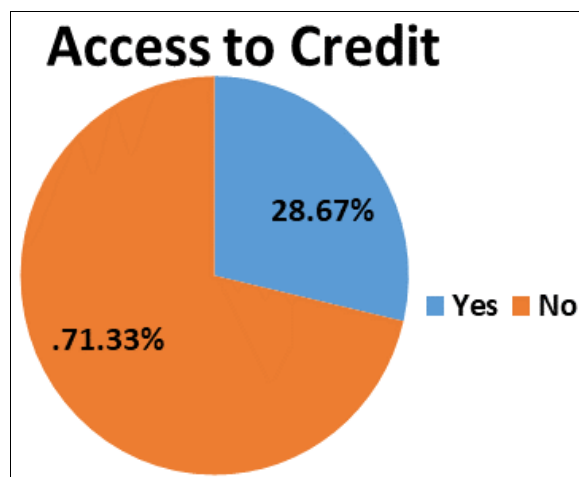
The findings indicate that 12% of respondents had less than ten years of farming experience, 22.67% have between 11 – 20 years, while 65.33% of them have more than 21 years farming experience. Farming experience contributes to labour management (Anyiro *et al.*, 2013) [4]. The result demonstrates that reasonable farming experience among household heads in the study area.



Source: Field survey, 2021

Fig 5: Distribution of respondents according to Educational Status

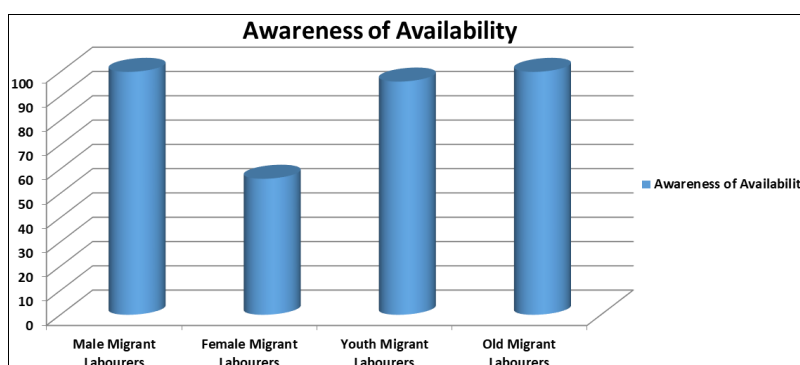
The distribution according to educational levels show that 34.67% had no formal education. About 24% of them had primary education, while about 22% others had received some form of secondary school education. About 19.33% had one form of post-secondary education or the other. The education index has consequences on farm decision-making in allocation of resources, supply of commodities and adoption of innovation (Ojoko, 2001) [14].



Source: Field survey, 2021

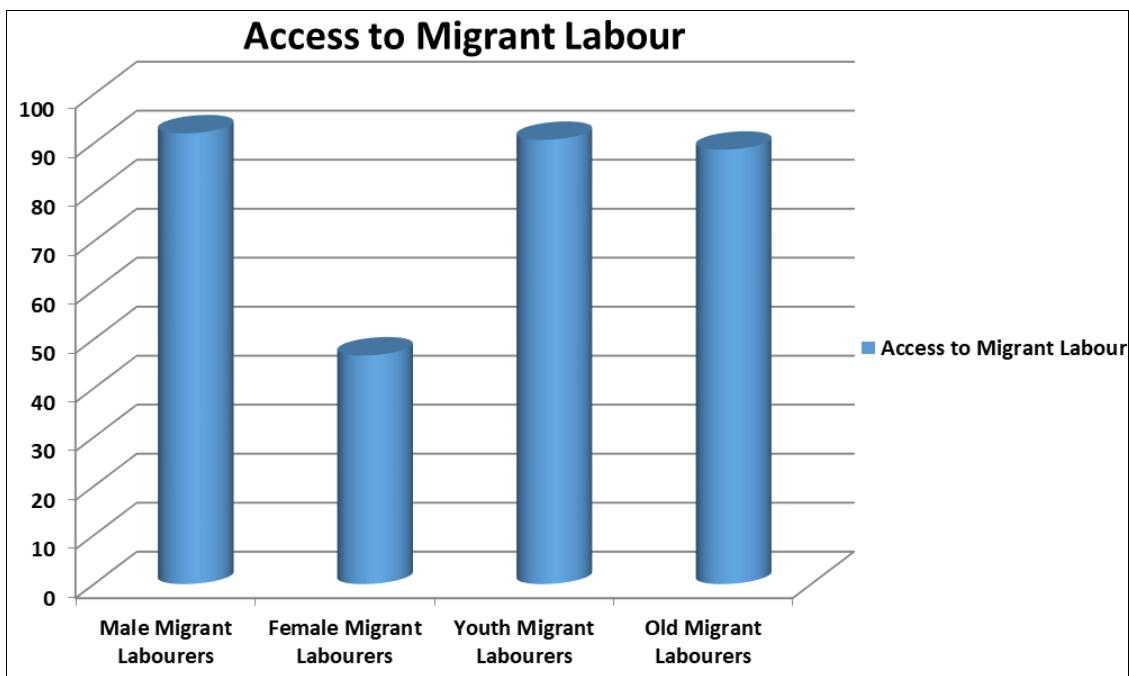
Fig 7: Distribution of respondents according to access to credit

Less than one-quarter of respondents (28.67%) had access to credit while majority (71.33%) of them did not have access to credit. This is in tandem with findings by Aderinoye-Abdulwahab, *et al.* (2015) [11] that access to credit constitutes a most important constraint for farmers.



Source: Field survey, 2021

Fig 8: Distribution of respondents according to awareness of availability of migrant labour



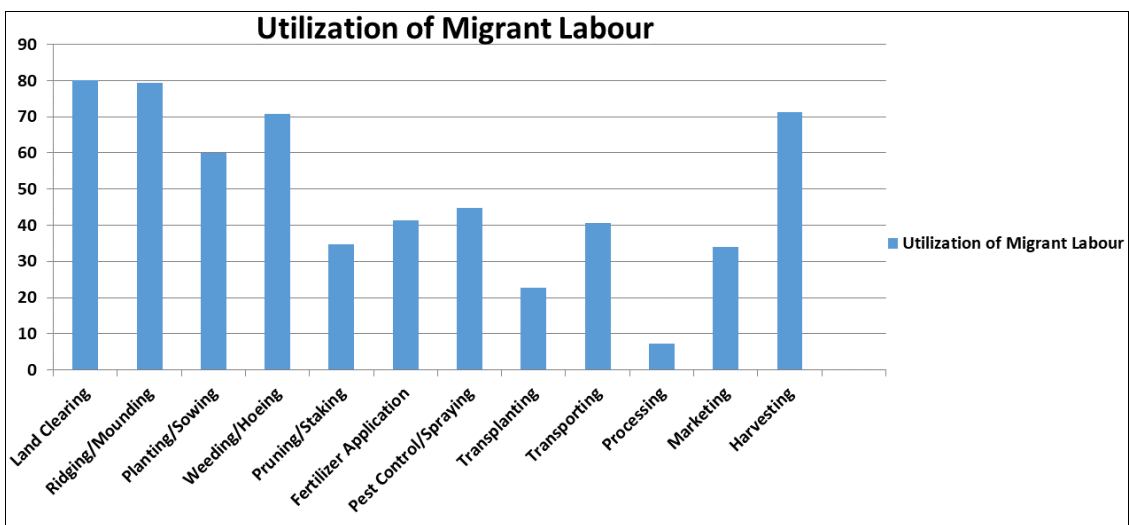
Source: Field survey, 2021

Fig 9: Distribution of respondents according to access to migrant labour

**Utilization for agricultural activities**

Results presented in the figure above shows that all (100.0%) of the respondents were aware of the availability of male migrant labourers while only a little more than half (56.0%) of the respondents were aware of the availability of female migrant labourers. 96.0% and 100% of the respondents were aware of the availability of youth migrant labourers and old migrant labourers respectively. This connotes a high level of awareness of availability of migrant labour among respondents. Aromolaran *et al.* (2017) [5] described awareness as the first stage in adoption process.

The figure above reveals that majority (92.0%) of respondents had access to the male migrant labourers while less than half (46.67%) of the respondents had access to female migrant labourers for use on their farms. This suggests that the male migrant labourers are more abundant than female migrant labourers. Also, 90.67% and 88.67% of the respondents had access to youth migrant labourers and older migrant labourers respectively. This is similar to the study by Akanni & Dada (2012) [3] which showed that among hired labourers, male labourers made up the majority of overall labour-use portfolio.



Source: Field survey, 2021

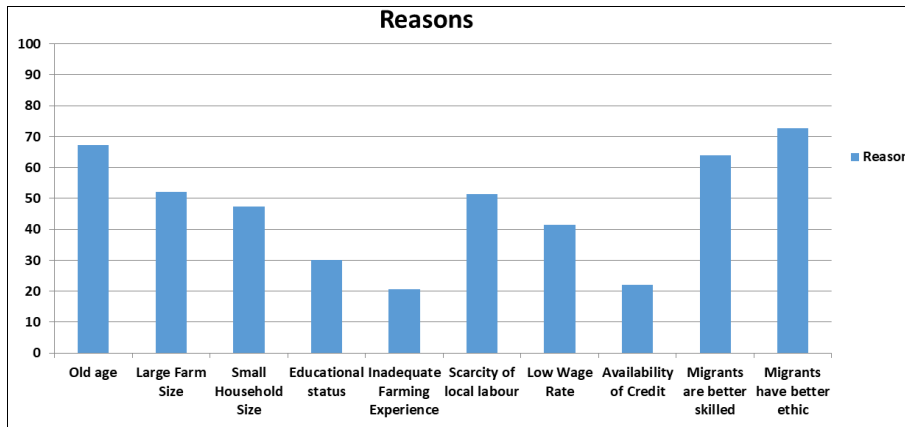
Fig 10: Distribution of respondents according to utilization of migrant labour

This finding shows that majority (80%) of respondents had used migrant labourers for land clearing while 79.33% used them for ridging/mounding, 70.67% for weeding/hoeing, 60% for planting/sowing and 71.33% for harvesting. There was however, a low usage of migrant labourers for

pruning/staking (34.67%), fertilizer application (41.33%), and pest control/spraying (44.67%). Others included transplanting (22.67%), processing (7.33%), marketing (34%) and transporting (40.67%). It implies that majority of the respondents had employed migrant labourers for one

agricultural operation or the other. The findings also substantiate those of Oluyole *et al.* (2013) [18] that hired labourers were majorly used for land clearing; seed planting/sowing weeding/hoeing and harvesting.

**Distribution of respondents according to their reasons behind migrant labour use**



Source: Field survey, 2021

Fig 11: Distribution according to their reasons behind migrant labour use

The figure above points out that better work ethic among migrant labourers (72.67%) is the major reason behind migrant labour utilization among respondents. Evidence shows that farming households were made up of ageing agriculturalists without dynamic youths with energy and vitality for farm work (Anyiro *et al.*, 2013) [4]. This absence

of young men and women in rural areas is not unconnected to meagre incomes, inadequate economic, health and social infrastructure. (Oluyole *et al.*, 2013) [18]. About 64% of respondents employ migrant labourers on their farms because they hold them to be better skilled.

Table 1: Constraints to migrant labour utilization

	Variable	VS	S	NS	WMS	MR
1.	Inadequate capital	101	33	16	2.57	1
2.	Wage rate	65	42	43	2.15	2
3.	Seasonal migration of migrant labourers	44	88	23	2.14	3
4.	Language barrier	46	61	43	2.02	4
5.	Inadequate information	48	45	57	1.94	5
6.	Problem of middlemen	44	51	55	1.93	6
7.	Scarcity of labourers	57	20	73	1.89	7
8.	Unavailability of migrant labourers	53	19	78	1.83	8
9.	Long distance to farm	35	17	98	1.72	9
10.	Distrust of labourers	38	32	80	1.58	10
11.	Lack of information	03	43	104	1.33	11

Source: Field survey, 2021, \* Very Severe (VS) = 3, Severe (S) = 2, Not Severe (NS) = 1, \* Weighted Mean Score = WMS \* Mean Rank = MR

Table 1 shows constraints to migrant labour utilization among respondents. Chief among the constraints are inadequate capital (ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), wage rate (ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>) and seasonal migration of migrant labourers (ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>). According to Nsikak-Abasi & Glory (2013) [12], smallholders are incapable of securing credit facilities from formal institutions because of stringent terms, prolonged processes and bottlenecks, along with exorbitant charges including interests and other associated charges. The barrier posed by language often necessitates a middleman and maybe a source of discouragement from taking on migrant labourers on season contracts. Annually, during the year-end festive period or during the Ramadan fast, many migrant labourers return to their local areas to stay with their people returning after such landmark events may have passed. Others include language (ranked 4th) and the problem of middlemen (ranked 6th). Those not considered to be major

constraints are unavailability of migrant labourers (ranked 8th) Long distance to farm (ranked 9th) and distrust of migrant labourers (ranked 10th). The findings are in similitude with Uwagboe *et al.* (2010) [22] and Musa, *et al.* (2013) [112] that inadequate capital and inadequate credit facility are the biggest problems of agricultural production.

**Test of Hypothesis**

As revealed in Table 2, among personal characteristics, age ( $\chi^2 = 16.05\%$ ,  $P = 0.003$ ), Educational status ( $\chi^2 = 15.345$ ,  $P=0.012$ ) and farm size ( $\chi^2 = 13.143$ ,  $P = 0.0011$ ) were found to be significantly related to constraints to migrant labour utilization. This implies that the aforementioned selected characteristics influence the intensity of the constraints to migrant labour use; the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. Age influences degree to which

constraints affect the farmers in that older farmers are more susceptible to the vagaries of life, this aligns with findings by Anyiro *et al.* (2013) <sup>[4]</sup> that increase in age might lead to reduction in labour use efficiency. Educational status is significant because the more educated farmers may have access to higher incomes, which might influence their ability to hire and utilize labour efficiently than the lesser

educated ones, which is in agreement with (Sofoluwe, *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[20]</sup> that education improves the aptitude of stakeholders to allocate their resources proficiently. The significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics and constraints suggests that farmers are still plagued with a lot of labour related challenges in their farming activities.

**Table 2:** Relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics and constraints to migrant labour utilization

Characteristics	Chi-Square Value	Degree of Freedom	P-Value	Remarks
Age	16.045	3	0.003	Significant
Educational status	15.345	3	0.012	Significant
Farm Size	13.143	2	0.011	Significant

$p < 0.05$ , Source: Field survey, 2021

## Conclusion

There is high level of awareness of availability and access to migrant labourers among farming households. Similarly, the use of migrant labourers for farming activities is pervasive with land clearing ridging/mounding, weeding, planting and harvesting being the major operations for which they are employed. The foremost reason for migrant labour utilization is perceived better work ethic while the major constraints to their utilization among farming households are inadequate capital, wage rate and seasonal migration of the labourers. Age, educational status, and farm size were found to be significantly related to constraints to migrant labour utilization. It is therefore recommended that farming households adopt the use of migrant labourers given their availability and the perception that they are better skilled. This will engender employment and increase food availability, a key pillar of food security.

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