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Socio-Economic Profile and Problems Encountered by Agriculture Students: Recommendations for Enhancement of University Student Programs and Services

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Abstract

In developing countries, students' educational challenges are often linked to their socio-economic status. Arising educational problems and the socio-economic profile of students may be useful information that could be used by academic institutions to improve their programs and services for students in need. This study aims to describe the socio-economic profile of Agriculture students in a state university and use the findings to enhance student programs and services. Data were collected from 349 Bachelor of Science in Agriculture students during the second semester of the academic year 2018–2019 using a descriptive-survey research design. Findings revealed that most of the respondents belonged to low-income families, though their parents generally owned land and lived in permanent houses with access to electricity for lighting and owned basic home appliances. They relied on community water systems or hand pumps, and motorcycles were the common vehicle used for mobility. Financial difficulties were the most common challenge, particularly a lack of funds for daily expenses and limited internet access. Students also faced difficulty of the subject and lessons, many assignments, long travel distances, and insufficient campus photocopying services. Based on these findings, recommendations were made to enhance the university's programs and services to better support student needs.

Introduction

The development of any country, like the Philippines, is dependent on the quality of education it provides for its citizens. When the human resource is excellently developed, true development happens. According to Hulme, (2015), education plays a major part in global and national development and in helping poor people improve their lives; but issues of quality and higher education must be addressed for it to successfully play a key role in sustainable national development. However, quality education is oftentimes not attained because of many factors; in particular, the students' socio-economic status.

The American Psychological Association (2009) describes that socioeconomic status (SES) encompasses not just income but also educational attainment, financial security and perception of social status. To analyze a family's SES, there is a

need to examine the household income, earner's education, and occupation. Combined income may also be measured (Islam, 2015).

The Aklan State University (ASU) is among the higher education institutions in Western Visayas. It holds the banner of the National University of Agriculture for Region VI and was awarded as the Center of Development in Agriculture Education in the region. It offers the program Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA) under the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Environmental Sciences (CAFES). Its mission is to produce globally competitive graduates who will eventually become professional leaders, entrepreneurs, citizen farmers, teachers, and technologists in the region, as well as in the whole country.

For many decades, ASU–CAFES has produced thousands of competitive BSA graduates joining the labor market in the economy (Sumanga, 2009; Hilario, 2000). This indicates that the university has played a role in helping its graduates improve their economic and social conditions.

Although the institution provides many opportunities for students and graduates, many are still struggling to successfully perform well in their academics because of factors such as their socio-economic status. Gobena (2018) reports that socioeconomic-related problems affect university students' performance in school, and that related policies must be formed to assist low economic status students in accessing equally excellent quality of education. This is also true to the BSA students of the Aklan State University.

In this regard, establishing data on the socio-economic profile of BSA students would be a potential opportunity to determine their current economic status and social conditions. Consequently, this information may help the university enhance its student services and programs in order to support the academic endeavors of the students. In return, this may help the graduates become more successful in their future employment and contribute to the development of the country.

This study aimed to describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the students of Aklan State University enrolled in the BSA program in the academic year 2018–2019. Specifically, this study sought to: (1) identify the demographic profile of the students, (2) explore their socioeconomic background, (3) determine the educational problems met by the students, and (4) discuss the implications of the findings in the university's programs and services for the students and on the country's educational efforts in general. The reported findings of this paper will establish a research-based information that will provide educators, school administrators, students and future researchers quantified information about the socioeconomic status of the students and how this relates to the problems they encounter in their academic journey.

Methodology

Following the specified objectives, the paper employed a descriptive research design. In particular, a quantitative survey design was utilized. This is one of the more common types of quantitative research which seeks to provide a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by assessing a sample taken from the same population (Creswell, 2009). The socioeconomic status of the students enrolled in the program Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA) in Aklan State University was assessed in this paper. Additionally, this paper reports the demographic profile of the students and the educational problems that the students met in the course of their academic journey. A total enumeration of 349 BSA students enrolled in Aklan State University were the participants in the study. These students were enrolled in the BSA program during the second semester of the academic year 2018–2019 and were coming from the first-year to the fourth-year curriculum levels. Table 1 presents the distribution of the participants in terms of their curriculum level.

Table 1

Distribution of Participants by Curriculum Level

Curriculum Level	f	Percent
First Year	105	*30.09*
Second Year	54	*15.47*
Third Year	57	*16.33*
Fourth Year	133	*38.11*
Total	**349**	**100**

The research procedure included the following steps: developing and validating the survey questionnaire, securing permission from the Dean of the College, administering the survey questionnaire to the participants (assisted by other faculty members), analyzing and interpreting data collected, and generating conclusions and recommendations.

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was used to collect the data. It consisted of four parts: Part I – demographic profile; Part II – social profile; Part III – economic profile; and Part IV – educational problems met by the students. Table 2 presents the parts and their corresponding sub-categories. The survey questionnaire underwent validity and reliability testing through expert validation procedures and pilot testing. Modifications following the procedure were implemented.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools namely: total, frequency count, percentage, median, mean and ranks.

Results and Discussion

To reiterate, good quality education must be one of the main foci of any government body because of its important role in national development producing a competent and productive human capital (National Economic Development Authority, 2018). Thom-Otuya and Into–Tariah (2016) assert that education being an instrument of national development is an established truth. However, accessing quality education is oftentimes a challenge especially when one considers the unfavorable socioeconomic situation of students. This paper focused on establishing the socioeconomic profile of BSA students enrolled in Aklan State University during the second semester of the academic year 2018–2019 to open opportunities for improvement in the university's programs and services for students' benefit.

Demographic Profile of the Participants

Sex

Three hundred and forty-nine (349) BSA students participated in this study. In terms of sex, 51% (n=178) of the participants were females and 49% (n=171) were males (Table 3).

In the case of Aklan State University, the result shows that a male dominated profession is now the choice of female individuals. This is to realize that gender equality and female empowerment is very important in agriculture sector. Briones (2017) and the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2013) both highlight the male dominance in agriculture, forestry, and natural resources (AFNR) courses

Table 3

Demographic Profile of Participants in Terms of Sex

Sex	f	Percent
Male	171	49.0
Female	178	51.0
Total	**349**	**100**

Table 2

Survey Questionnaire Parts and Corresponding Sub-categories

Part	Title	Sub-categories
I	Demographic profile	Sex, age , civil status
II	Social Profile	Parent's educational attainment, organization affiliations , aspirations
III	Economic Profile	Parents' occupation, family income, land ownership, type of house, water supply source (cooking and drinking use), lighting source, appliances, and vehicles owned
IV	Educational problems met by the students	Overwork, physical problems, financial difficulties, school condition, and resource problems

and industries. PIDS (2013) found that more males enroll in AFNR-related courses compared to females, with a slight majority of 52.35% of total enrollees. Similarly, Briones (2017) emphasized that both the agriculture and industry sectors are predominantly male. While the data confirm gender disparity, the difference remains relatively small.

Age

Table 4 presents the distribution of participants when grouped according to age group. A higher percentage of the participants, 61.03% (n=213) belonged to the age group of 18–20 years old. The age group 21–23 years old comprised 31.81% of the participants (n=111). The remaining participants were distributed as follows: 4.59% (n=16) – 24–26 years old; 2.0 % (n=7) – 27–29 years old; and 0.57% (n=2) – 30 years old and above. Since the distribution of data was skewed, median age of 20.11 years old was computed among the participants. This data implies that the majority of the students enrolled in the program were in their emerging (or early) adulthood stage—18 to 25 years old (Lazzara, n.d.). In this stage of lifespan development, an individual focuses on what's going to happen in the future and puts a lot of effort into making choices that will help him/her establish a full adult image in the eyes of those around him/her. Emerging adulthood is the age of identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibilities (Munsey, 2006). It is then expected that individuals (i.e. students) in this stage might experience a complex set of ideas, aspirations, thoughts, and opinions about almost everything that happens around them.

It could be also noted that there are some BSA students whose age beyond the age range of college students (27 – 30 and above). These group of students were second courser and dropped outs before.

Table 4

Demographic Profile of Participants in Terms of Age Group

Age Group	f	Percent
18-20	213	*61.03*
21-23	111	*31.81*
24-26	16	*4.59*
27-29	7	*2.00*
30 and above	2	*0.57*
Total	**349**	**100**

**Notes:* in years, median=20.11 years*

Civil Status

Among the 349 participants, 99.14% (n=346) are single, while only 0.86% (n=3) are married (Table 5). This suggests that the majority of college students prioritize their academic and career development. With a strong focus on coursework, exams, and long-term career planning, many students may feel that maintaining a romantic relationship could detract from these personal goals. As a result, they often choose to remain single, recognizing that the time and emotional energy required for a relationship might interfere with their academic responsibilities and future aspirations.

Abrina et al. (2013), reported similar findings—i.e. majority of in-school students are single—explaining that most students ideally do not get into marriage while schooling, or even right after graduation. Most individuals would get married several years after graduating from college or university. Filipinos would normally get married at the age of 27, females, and 29 for males (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2019).

Socio-Economic Profile of the Participants

The social profile of the participants in this study was evaluated in terms of their parents' educational attainment, parents' occupations, organizational affiliations, and participants' aspirations. On the other hand, the participants' economic background was assessed in terms of parents' occupation, family income, land ownership, type of house, water supply source for cooking and drinking use, lighting source, and appliances and vehicles owned by participants' family.

Table 5

Demographic Profile of Participants in Terms of Civil Status

Civil Status	f	Percent
Single	346	99.14
Married	3	0.86
Total	**349**	**100**

Parents' Educational Attainment

Gerhard et al. (2021) emphasize the role of education in knowledge society because it paves the way for individuals to acquire higher-paying jobs, enhance social mobility and well-being. Table 6 presents data about the educational attainment of the parents of the participants of this study.

Around 45.56% (n=159) of the participants' mothers attained college level of education, and only 0.57% (n=2) had no schooling at all. The remaining percentages are distributed according to educational attainment as follows: 5.73% (n=20) – primary level; 11.18% (n=39) – elementary level; and 36.96% (n=129) – secondary level. On the other hand, 36.39% of the participants' fathers (n=127) had attained college-level education, and only 0.57% (n=2) had no schooling at all. Furthermore, the remaining percentage is distributed as follows: 13.47% (n=47) – primary level; 23.21% (n=81) – secondary level; and 26.36% (n=92) – secondary level. These findings demonstrate that the majority of the participants' parents (either mother or father) have high educational attainments. Nelson (2009) concluded that the educational attainment of one's parent/s directly influences the support that their child/ren will receive to attain or complete a similar academic goal. Correspondingly, in a rapid literature review conducted by the Penn State University (2020), and Dubow et al. (2009) note that the educational level of one's parents positively influences their children's educational and vocational outcomes and/or achievements. In addition, parents' education is closely related to an individual's educational attainments (Ermisch, 2012; Usaini & Abubakar, 2015; Memon et al., 2010).

Organizational Affiliations

Any human being is biologically and psychologically equipped to live and be in groups in our society (Hossain & Ali, 2014). Individuals have to conform to society's norms, hold statuses in the society, and become members of group/s. In this study, the kinds of in-school and external organizations of the participants were evaluated.

With regards to in-school organizations, the participants (45.98%) were both members of the University Student Council and the Future Leaders of the Philippines (Table 7). This result is expected, as membership in these organizations is mandatory for all students upon official enrollment at the University.

Additionally, the in-school organizational affiliations of the students in various percentages are as follows: 3.69 % of the participants (n=28) joined the 4-H Club; 1.45% (n=11) of the participants are affiliated with the Red Cross Youth Council; 0.79% (n=6) of the participants were members of the EAMIGAS Editorial Staff; 0.79% (n=6) of the participants were affiliated with spiritual organizations; 0.53% (n=4) joined the Drum and Lyre Corps; 0.26% (n=2) of the participants each joined the Glee Club, Manduyog Dance Troop and Citizen Crime Watch Task Force, respectively. The data shows that BSA students are actively engaged with different in-school organizations where they could be trained to become active leaders (Aklan State University,

Table 6

Social Profile of the Participants in Terms of Parents' Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Mother		Father	
	f	Percent	f	Percent
No schooling at all	2	0.57	2	0.57
Primary level	20	5.73	47	13.47
Elementary level	39	11.18	81	23.21
Secondary Level	129	36.96	92	26.36
College Level	159	45.56	127	36.39
Total	**349**	**100**	**349**	**100**

Notes: Legend: primaru level=grade 1 to 4; Elementary level=grade 5to 6; Secondary level=first to fourth year in high school; College level= first to fourth year college

n.d.), and where they could enhance their social relationships and skills by interacting with other group or organization members. Through their active involvement in on-campus organizations, BSA students are not only preparing themselves to be competent professionals but also well-rounded individuals capable of thriving in dynamic and collaborative environments. These experiences equip them with the tools to lead with confidence, build meaningful connections, and ultimately succeed in their future careers, both as individuals and as part of a team.

Students who engage in leadership or membership in organizational or social activities develop leadership skills (Ferdiansyah & Meutia, 2017).

For external organizations, there were 91 claimed memberships or affiliations with organizations outside the university (Table 8). The participants had joined the following external organizations: youth barangay organization/s (13.75%, n=48), basketball/volleyball team/s (10.03%, n=35), religious group/s (1.72%, n=6), and brotherhood/sisterhood organization/s (0.57%, n=2).

In general, the data on the participants' organizational affiliations (i.e. in-school and external) imply the active participation of BSA students in leadership opportunities and social groups.

Participants' Aspirations

Students have goals in life that they would like to achieve in the future. A strong desire would motivate them to study and work hard to attain it. In this study, the aspirations of the participants were measured in terms of their plans after graduation from college and after five years of engaging in work. The results (Table 9) show evidence that all the participants (33.40%, n=349) prioritize the Agriculturist Licensure Examination. Furthermore, the results found that: 20.86% (n=218) seek to be employed in government agencies as technicians/technologist or an extension worker; 15.12% (n=158) want to establish their own farms; 13.88% (n=145) plan to find employment abroad; 7.66% (n=80) plans to establish or engage in agri-related business. These findings imply that students primarily aim to become licensed agriculturists who will hopefully lead the government agriculture-related agencies and manage local and international agricultural farms.

When the participants were assessed in terms of their plans after five years of working, they foresee a future working in stable jobs related or not related to their academic preparations (54.15%, n=189), operating a successful agri-related business/es or farm/s (18.05%, n=63), and working abroad related to agriculture (16.04%, n=56).

This data represents the general educational and career aspirations of the participants. The top aspirations of the participants were becoming a licensed agriculturist and securing a stable job. Among many other factors, the career aspirations of students are influenced by academic

Table 7

In-school Organizational Affiliation of the Participants

Organization*	f	Percent
University of Student Council	349	45.98
Future Leaders of the Philippines	349	45.98
4-H Club	28	3.69
Red Cross Youth Councill	11	1.45
EAMIGAS Editorial Staff	6	0.79
Spiritual Organization/s	6	0.79
Drum and Lyre Corps	4	0.53
Citizen Crime Watch Task Force	2	0.26
Manduyog Dance Troop	2	0.26
Glee Club	2	0.26

Notes multiple responses; % of responses=number of responses of the answer choice divided by the number of total responses and multiplied by 100*

Table 8

External Organizational Affiliation of the Participants

Organization*	f	Percent
Youth barangay organization/s	48	13.75
Basketball/ volleyball team/s	35	10.03
Religious organization/s	6	1.72
Brotherhood and sisterhood organization/s	2	0.57
No external affiliations	258	73.93
Total	349	100

Notes multiple responses*

Table 9

Aspirations of the Participants

	Aspirations*	f	Percent	Rank
Perceived plan after graduation	To take and pass the agriculturist licensure examination	349	33.40	1
	To be employed in government agencies as techinic/ technologist or extension worker	218	20.86	2
	To establish own farm/s	158	15.12	3
	To seek employment abroad	145	13.88	4
	To establish or engage in agri-business	80	7.66	5
	To take advanced courses for professional growth	67	6.41	6
	To be employed in private firms	27	2.58	7
	To train and become a military officer	1	0.10	8
Perceived plans after five (5) years of engaging in work*	To have a stable job related or not to their academic preparations	189	54.16	1
	To operate a successful ag-related business/ farm	63	18.05	2
	To work abroad related to agriculture	56	16.05	3
	To hold a key position in governmetn or private offices	22	6.30	4
	To earn a master's degree	12	3.44	5
	To be well-known in the community	5	1.43	6
	To become a policeman	1	0.29	7.5
	To earn more than 100,000 Php monthly	1	0.29	7.5

Notes multiple responses*

performance, parental influence, socioeconomic status, and gender (Mukisu & Kiptala, 2022). Furthermore, these aspirations are also shaped by an individual's desire to attain higher qualifications, parental and community influences (Gemici et al., 2014) and attaining positive results in public examinations (Kwok-Tung et al., 2019).

Occupation of Participants' Mothers

Table 10 presents the occupations of the participants' mothers. Results show that the highest percentage (25.22%, n=88) of the participants' mothers were engaged in farming. Furthermore, the results reveal the following: 24.36% (n=85) – housekeepers, 19.77% (n=69) – business women, 17.19% (n=60) – professional workers in private and government agencies. In general, the majority of the mothers of the participants were engaged in occupations related to farming and agriculture or economic ventures. Considering in earlier findings that majority of them attained college level, yet they preferred to participate to the work of their husbands in managing the farm to earn a living than to have an employer.

Occupation of Participants' Fathers

Table 11 shows that nearly half of the participants (46.13%, n=161) claimed that their fathers were agricultural and/or fishery workers. Additionally, 20.06% (n=70) of participants declared that their fathers were construction workers. It could also be noted that 13.75% (n=48) of the participants' fathers were service workers.

Results of the survey revealed that the majority of the participants' fathers were inclined to work on farms or fishing-related work. Similarly, in earlier findings that majority of them had

Table 10

Occupation of Participants' Mothers

Occupation	f	Percent
Agricultural Worker	88	25.22
Housekeeper	85	24.36
Businesswoman	69	19.77
Professional worker	60	17.19
Service worker	42	12.03
None*	5	1.43
Total	349	100

Notes Parent maybe deceased*

Table 11

Occupation of Participants' Fathers

Occupation	f	Percent
Agricultural and/or fishery Worker	161	*46.13*
Construction Worker	70	*20.06*
Service Worker	48	*13.75*
Professional Worker	29	*8.31*
Businessman	26	*7.45*
None*	15	*4.30*
Total	349	*100*

Notes Parent maybe deceased*

attained college level, however, they established themselves in a farm or agri-fishery projects. Likewise, this information might also be a factor that influenced the participants' preference for an agriculture-related degree or program in college/ university.

Looking into the occupation of the participants in general, it may be inferred that the majority of the parents were doing agriculture-related jobs. In particular, 161 out of the 349 participants' fathers, 161 (46.13%) were working either as a farmer or a fisherfolk. These findings coincide with the report on Characterization of Agricultural Workers in the Philippines (PSA, 2015) which reveals that the distribution of agricultural workers in terms of sex has been stable over time—males dominate these sectors over females.

Family Income

Table 12 presents the data regarding the average monthly family income of the participants. The majority of the participants (58.45%, n=204) belonged to families with an average income of Php5,000 and below. Families having an average income of Php15,001.00 to 20,000.00 comprised only 4.01% (n=14) of the total. The median family income was Php5,768.65, with an average income of Php6,467.05. These figures fall below the National Poverty Threshold of Php10,481 per month, as reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority (2018). This classification is based on the PSA's poverty category, highlighting the economic challenges faced by families earning below the threshold. These figures demonstrate that BSA students were coming from poor families.

Land Ownership

Out of 349 participants, 70.49% (n=246) of them came from families who owned a piece of land utilized for residential purposes (Table 13). Moreover, 25.79% (n=90) owned land used solely for residential purposes, 22.35% (n=78) owned land utilized for residential and/or agricultural purposes, 21.49% (n=75) owned land used solely for agriculture, and only three participants disclosed that their land was used for commercial purposes. Finally, 29.51% of the participants (n=103) disclosed that their families had no ownership of the land they occupied; that is, they were either sharing the land use with other families, renting the land, or they were tenants in residential buildings.

Type of house

Results show that nearly half of the participants (48.14%, n=168) were residing in permanent houses (Table 14). These are houses made of solid, durable materials and foundations and cannot be shifted from one place to another. In addition, 31.23% (n=109) were living in semi-permanent dwellings where houses are made of combination of durable and less durable materials and 20.63% (n=72) were residing in temporary houses which is made of lightweight, movable materials that are easy to assemble and disassemble. This data shows that a large percentage of the participants (and/or their families) own either a permanent or semi-permanent house. This may imply that the

Table 12

Family Income of Participants

Average monthly income	f	Percent
1,0000 to 5,000	204	58.45
5,001 to 10,000	92	26.36
10,000 to 15,000	24	6.88
15,001 to 20,000	14	4.01
20,001 and above	15	4.30
Total	349	100

Notes: in Philippine pesos (PHP); Median=5,276.96 PHP; Mean=6,467.05 PHP*

participants' parents, in general, prioritized the acquisition of houses for their families to live in.

Water Supply Source

In Table 15, data shows that participants utilize diverse sources of water supply for drinking and cooking purposes. It was noted that many of the participants claimed that they took their water supply from the community water line systems (29.73%, n=110), as well as from hand pumps or jetmatic pumps (28.92%, n=107).

Source of Lighting

Lighting source. Almost all of the participants (99.43%, n=348) use electricity for lighting, and only 0.29% (n=1) used solar energy (Table 16).

Table 14

Type of House of the Participants' Family

Type of House	f	Percent
Permanent	168	48.14
Semi-permanent	109	31.23
Temporary	72	20.63
Total	349	100

Table 15

Water Supply Source of the Participants' Family

Source*	f	Percent
Community water line system	110	29.73
Hand pumps/ jetmatic pumps	107	28.92
Spring water (*tuburan*)	75	20.27
Deep-well	36	9.73
Electric-operated pumps	36	9.73
Water refilling source	3	0.81
Rainwater	3	0.81

Note: multiple responses*

Table 13

Land Ownership of the Participants' Family

Land ownership type	f	Percent	Type/ sub-category	f	Percent
Owned	246	70.49	Residential	90	25.79
			Residential/ agricultural	78	22.35
			Agricutlural	75	21.49
			Commercial	3	0.86
Not owned	103	29.51	Tenant	57	16.33
			Shared with others	31	8.88
			Rented	15	4.30
Total	349	100		349	100

Appliances Owned by the Participants' Family

Many of the participants (20.44%, n=310) disclosed that their family owns television sets. In addition, 19.18% (n=291) claimed that they own electric fans. Out of all the participants, only 0.13% (n=2) own AM/FM radio in their homes. These findings imply that many participants prioritized acquiring television sets and electric fans. This is consistent with the Philippine Statistics Authority (2010) report that reveals that seven out of 10 Filipino families own a television set. It further reports that television is the most common appliance owned by the bottom 30% income stratum (Table 17).

Vehicles Owned by the Participants' Family

A higher percentage of the participants (40.12%, n=140) claimed that their family had a motorcycle used for mobility (Table 18). Some participants (13.18%, n=46) owned tricycles, while 6.59% (n=23) of the participants had reported that their families owned cars. The National Statistics Office reports that in 2014, there were 208,031 vehicles registered in the Philippines. The data shows that many of the participants' families chose motorcycles as their transportation facility. Starkey (2016) reveals that motorcycles have become common in rural areas, and that preference for this vehicular type is rapidly increasing.

Table 16

Source of Lighting of the Participants' Family

Source	f	Percent
Electricity	348	99.71
Solar Energy	1	0.29
Total	349	100

Table 17

Appliances Owned by Participants' Family

Appliance owned*	f	Percent
Television set	310	20.44
Electic Fan	291	19.18
Electric flat iron	203	13.38
Rice cooker	185	12.20
Refrigerator	159	10.48
Washing machine	131	8.64
Blender	77	5.08
Gas stove	74	4.88
Computer set	52	3.42
Telephone	33	2.18
Radio	2	0.13

Note: multiple responses*

Vehicles Owned by Participants' Family and Household Income Level. A majority of participants with household incomes ranging from Php5,001 to 10,000 (n=80) reported that their families owned motorcycles for mobility. Similarly, participants with household incomes between Php1,000 and 5,000 (n=44) also owned motorcycles (Table 19). Tricycles were commonly owned by participants with household incomes of Php 5,001 to 10,000 (n=12) and Php 10,001 to 15,000 (n=30). Meanwhile, families with higher household incomes—Php15,001 to 20,000 (n=10) and Php20,001 and above (n=13) were more likely to own cars. These findings suggest that vehicle ownership among participants' families is likely influenced by both household income and the nature of their work. It could be noted that most of the participants' parents were agricultural workers. In other cases, motorcycles are preferred because of their flexibility when it comes to converting them into public transport vehicles (Guillen & Ishida, 2014).

Problems Encountered by the Agriculture Students in Their Studies

This part of this study delineates the difficulties met by the participants while they were in school during the second semester of the academic year 2018–2019. The problems encountered were grouped into four categories: overwork, school

Table 18

Vehicles Owned by the Participants' Family

Vehicle owned	f	Percent
Motorcycle	140	40.12
Tricycle	46	13.18
Family	23	6.59
Did not owned	140	40.12
Total	349	100

Table 19

Vehicles Owned by Participants' Family and Household Income Level

Household Income (PHP)	Vehicles Owned			Total
	Motorcyle	Tricycle	Car	
1,000-5,000	44	0	0	44
5,000-10,000	80	12	0	92
10,001-15,000	14	30	0	44
15,001-20,000	2	2	10	14
20,001 and above	0	2	13	15
Total	**140**	**46**	**23**	**209**

condition and resource problems, financial difficulty, and physical and facility problems (Table 20).

Lack of financial assistance was the most common problem. Although students benefited from the privilege of free tuition at the tertiary level, the participants were constrained by their daily personal allowances intended for their food, transportation, and personal needs. Moreover, the limited access to internet connection for students ranked second. The level of difficulty of the subject matter and the workload of assignments and school tasks was also a common problem, ranking third and fourth. The distance of the school to the participants' homes ranked fifth. The least common problem encountered by the participants is the limited hands-on in agricultural activities. These responses were specifically written by some participants.

These findings regarding financial difficulties and the long distance between students' homes and the school are consistent with the research of Payba (2014) and Elaurza (2014), which highlighted that many BSA student participants face significant challenges due to limited financial support from their families, often compounded by the considerable distance between their homes and the university.

Implications of the Findings in the University's Programs and Services

The data highlights that a significant number of students come from low-income backgrounds, yet their living conditions remain relatively stable. While their basic needs are met, financial constraints pose significant challenges, particularly in covering daily expenses and internet access. To address these concerns, the university can enhance its financial assistance programs by expanding scholarship grants, student work opportunities, and financial aid initiatives. Additionally, ensuring subsidized internet access through free Wi-Fi zones, device lending programs, or partnerships with telecom providers can alleviate connectivity issues.

Implementing flexible learning approaches, such as blended or modular learning, can help students manage financial and mobility challenges more effectively. Strengthening academic support services, including tutoring programs, peer mentoring, and faculty consultations, will also assist students in overcoming academic difficulties. Furthermore, improving campus facilities, such as increasing access to affordable photocopying and printing services, can provide essential resources for students with limited financial means.

These strategic interventions will contribute to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, ensuring that students can focus on their education without being hindered by financial constraints.

Implications of the Findings in the Country's Educational Efforts

On a national level, these findings underscore systemic challenges in the country's education sector, particularly regarding accessibility and affordability. The financial struggles of students

highlight the need for expanded government-backed financial aid, grants, and student loan programs to reduce economic barriers to education. Additionally, the limited internet access points to a persistent digital divide, emphasizing the necessity of expanding internet infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, to ensure equitable access to online learning resources.

The reliance on motorcycles and long travel distances further suggests the need for improved public transportation systems or the provision of dormitory options to enhance school accessibility. Moreover, the academic difficulties faced by students call for a review of curricula to balance academic rigor with student well-being, ensuring that workloads remain manageable. Strengthening partnerships between universities, local governments, and private sectors can also foster improved financial aid programs, academic support initiatives, and infrastructure development, ultimately creating a more inclusive and supportive educational system.

Conclusions

The students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA) program were mostly single females in their emerging or early adulthood stage. The majority of the participants' parents attained college-level education and were agricultural workers. The participants were also actively involved in social groups in school and externally. Generally, they aspire to become licensed agriculturists. The common aspirations of the participants were to secure stable employment, establish agri-businesses, and become economically stable.

Most participants belonged to low-income families. Despite that, most families owned a piece of land and lived in permanent houses. When it comes to living necessities, most participants used the community water line system and hand pumps or jetmatic pumps. Almost all of them had access to electricity and mainly used it for

Table 20

Type of Problems Encountered by the Agriculture Students in Their Studies

Type of Problem	Problems*	f	Percent	Rank
Financial difficulty, school condition and resource problems	Lack of financial resources	275	15.77	1
	No internet connection available for students	224	12.84	2
Overwork	Too many lesson/assignments to comply	179	10.26	3
	Subject matter/lessons too difficult	170	9.75	4
Physical & facility problems	Far distance of residence from school	158	9.06	5
Financial difficulty	High transportation cost	146	8.37	6
School condition and resource problems	Insufficient photocopy and printing services within the campus	117	6.71	7
Financial difficulty	High cost of foods	98	5.62	8
School condition and resource problems	Delayed allowance from scholarships	93	5.33	9
	Insufficient availability of school supplies in the area	63	3.61	10
Physical and facility problems	Low mental capability	60	3.44	11
Financial difficulty	High boarding house rental	62	3.56	12
Physical and facility problems	Classroom not conducive to learning	50	2.87	13
Financial difficulty	High cost of school supplies	45	2.58	14
School condition and resource problems	Limited hands-on in agricultural activities	4	0.23	15

*Notes.*multiple answers*

lighting purposes. Furthermore, the participants mostly owned television sets and electric fans at home. Motorcycles were the common vehicle used for mobility.

The most common problem encountered by the students was financial difficulty. In particular, the students lack financial support for their daily personal allowances and limited internet connection access. Moreover, the students also revealed that the level of difficulty of the subject and lessons, the workload of assignments, the distance of school from home, and the availability of photocopying/printing services inside the campus were some problems that they encountered.

Recommendations

These findings from a database of information regarding the socioeconomic profile of students and the problems they encountered in school. These problems may be resolved or lessened if student programs and services offered by the university are reviewed and enhanced. Specifically, the following are recommended: adding linkages to both public and private agencies for scholarship and study grant opportunities, a more accessible student loan program for projects, thesis and start-up purposes, expansion and improvement of internet connection in the campus, plans on the establishment of residential halls and dormitories for students residing relatively far from the campus, and addition and improvement of photocopy and print services inside and even outside the campus. It is also recommended for future researchers to conduct studies that are more in-depth and have a wider scope to make a more solid database of information regarding students' socio-economic background. The influence of socioeconomic status on students' performance in school and motivations may also be looked into.

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