



Institutional Barriers and Stakeholder Perceptions in Agricultural Education: A Descriptive-Correlational Study of the BSA Program at Cebu Technological University–Barili Campus

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Abstract: The declining enrollment in agricultural degree programs among Filipino youth presents a critical challenge to long-term food security and agricultural sustainability. This study assessed the level of awareness, perceptions, and perceived barriers toward the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture program among Senior High School students, parents, and administrators in Barili, Cebu. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study analyzed quantitative data through weighted means and p-value significance tests. The findings revealed a "Low" overall level of awareness among all respondent groups (mean = 2.02), with students demonstrating the lowest familiarity regarding diverse career opportunities in the sector (mean = 1.88). While general perceptions toward the program were "Moderate" (mean = 2.75), the analysis identified significant relationships ($p < 0.05$) between respondent profiles—specifically student age, parental occupation, and family size—and their perceptions of the field. The most critical "Very Serious Barrier" to program enrollment was the lack of information and promotional campaigns (mean = 3.65), followed by negative perceptions of agriculture (mean = 3.42), and the belief that agriculture is not a financially viable career (mean = 3.31). These results underscore a pervasive informational gap that hinders the recruitment of the next generation of agricultural professionals. The study concludes that institutional interventions must prioritize strategic rebranding and modernized outreach to correct societal biases and showcase the technology-driven professional viability of the 21st-century agricultural industry.

Keywords: Agriculture education; BSA program; student perceptions; enrollment barriers; career choice

1. Introduction

Agriculture remains the backbone of the Philippine economy, yet it faces a critical demographic crisis as the average age of Filipino farmers continues to rise, currently estimated at 57-59 years [1]. Despite the sector's vital role in national food security, there is a marked decline in youth interest in farming, with many students viewing agricultural careers as labor-intensive, low-paying, and lacking social prestige [2-5]. This "status gap" is particularly evident in rural areas like Barili, Cebu, where the youth often perceive non-

agricultural degrees as the only viable pathway for upward social mobility [6, 7]. While the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture program is designed to professionalize the sector by integrating science and technology into traditional farming, enrollment remains stagnant due to persistent misconceptions held by students and their primary influencers—parents and school administrators [8]. Research suggests that parental discouragement, often rooted in the desire for children to escape manual labor, significantly steers students toward urban-centric professions [9, 10]. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the levels of awareness and perceptions toward the BSA program among key stakeholders in Barili, Cebu, providing a foundation for localized interventions and promotional strategies to revitalize interest in agricultural education [11, 12].

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design and Location of the Study

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to systematically describe current levels of awareness and perceptions of the BSA program, and to investigate relationships between respondent profiles and their attitudes toward the field. This design is appropriate for identifying patterns in stakeholder opinions and determining if demographic variables, such as age or parental occupation, significantly influence career-related perceptions [9] [3]. The study was conducted in the municipality of Barili, Cebu, a locality with a significant agricultural footprint. The respondents included Senior High School students, who represent the target demographic for BSA enrollment; parents, identified as the primary decision-influencers in the Filipino family structure; and school administrators, who are responsible for career guidance and the implementation of agricultural curricula at the secondary level [10-11, 13]. A total of 200 respondents participated in the study, comprising 120 Senior High School students, 60 parents, and 20 administrators, selected through purposive sampling. The overall response rate was 95%. The primary data collection tool was a researcher-developed, structured survey questionnaire divided into three parts: a respondent profile section, an awareness and perceptions section measured using a 4-point Likert Scale, and a section dedicated to identifying barriers to program implementation and enrollment [11].

2.2 Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process followed a systematic four-stage approach to ensure ethical compliance and data integrity. It began with preliminary coordination, during which formal letters of request were sent to the Department of Education district office and school principals in Barili, Cebu, to secure permission for student and staff involvement. Following approval, an orientation was conducted for all participants to explain the study's objectives, and informed consent was obtained, emphasizing that participation was voluntary and that all personal information would remain confidential under the Data Privacy Act. The survey administration was then carried out, with questionnaires distributed to students and administrators during scheduled school visits, while parents received their surveys through their children or during parent-teacher association meetings. Finally, the researchers conducted a data retrieval and quality check, reviewing all completed forms for accuracy and completeness to ensure that only fully accomplished surveys were included in the final data set for statistical analysis.

2.3 Data Analysis

The gathered data were encoded and analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical tools to answer the research questions. The weighted mean was calculated to determine the average levels of awareness and perceptions, as well as the severity of perceived barriers, using a scale ranging from "Very Low/Not a Barrier" to "Very High/Very Serious Barrier." To investigate the significant relationship between respondents' demographic profiles—such as age, parental occupation, and family size, and their perceptions toward the BSA program, the researchers employed Pearson's Square (χ^2) tests for categorical variables (gender, parental occupation, family size) and Pearson Correlation (r) for continuous or ordinal variables (age) where data distribution was confirmed as approximately normal. A p-value threshold of less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) was used to determine statistical significance, and effect sizes were calculated using Cramér's V for Chi-Square tests and r for Pearson Correlation, aligning with established methodologies in agricultural education research. The researcher-developed questionnaire was subjected to content validation

by three subject matter experts and pilot-tested with 30 respondents not included in the main study. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each Likert-scale section to confirm internal consistency reliability (awareness: $\alpha = 0.82$; perceptions: $\alpha = 0.79$; barriers: $\alpha = 0.85$) [3]. Furthermore, a ranking system was used to identify the most critical challenges and barriers reported by stakeholders, enabling clear prioritization of the factors hindering enrollment in the BSA program [1].

3. Results and Discussion

The overall mean score of 2.02 indicates a "Low Awareness" among students, particularly regarding career opportunities (1.88). This critical informational gap aligns with findings that the Filipino youth's intention to enroll in agricultural programs is heavily influenced by limited exposure to modern practices [3], [14]. Research suggests that agriculture remains undervalued in the national curriculum, where it is often categorized as a vocational "laborer" track rather than a scientific profession [2]. Consequently, students fail to recognize the transition toward a technology-driven agribusiness sector [15]. This lack of knowledge about the "Nature and Scope" (2.15) of the program perpetuates the cycle of low enrollment as students dismiss the field based on incomplete information [8].

Table 1. Level of Awareness of Senior High School Students Toward the BSA Program in Terms of Its Nature and Scope

Indicator	Mean Score	Verbal Interpretation
Nature and Scope of the BSA Program	2.15	Low Awareness
Career Opportunities in Agriculture	1.88	Low Awareness
Overall Mean	2.02	Low Awareness

Legend: Awareness was measured on a 4-point scale where 1.00-1.75 = Very Low, 1.76-2.50 = Low, 2.51-3.25 = Moderate, 3.26-4.00 = High.

3.1 Level of Awareness of Parents and Administrators towards the BSA Program

The low awareness among parents (2.12) and administrators (2.45) is significant because these groups are the primary influencers in a student's career decision-making process [15]. Studies in the Philippines highlight a concerning trend in which farmers themselves notice that their children lack interest and often encourage them to pursue non-agricultural degrees for perceived greater stability [16]. Furthermore, in many households, fathers act as the dominant decision-makers, and their perception of agriculture as a "low-status" vocation can actively steer students away from the BSA program [9]. Improving awareness among these adult influencers is essential to correct misconceptions about the modern viability of the agricultural profession [2].

Table 2. Level of Awareness of Parents and Administrators towards the BSA Program

Respondent Group	Mean Score	Verbal Interpretation
Parents	2.12	Low Awareness
Administrators	2.45	Low Awareness
Overall Mean	2.28	Low Awareness

Legend: Awareness was measured on a 4-point scale where 1.00-1.75 = Very Low, 1.76-2.50 = Low, 2.51-3.25 = Moderate, 3.26-4.00 = High

3.2 Level of Perceptions of Senior High School Students, Parents, and Administrators towards the BSA Program

The moderate perception (2.75) across all groups indicates that while the field is not viewed entirely negatively, it still lacks the prestige associated with other degrees. This "status gap" is a common challenge in the ASEAN region, where agriculture is perceived as riskier and more difficult to achieve than other sectors [11, 17, 18]. Even when students are initially interested, the absence of a modern curriculum that emphasizes "Agricultural Entrepreneurship," combining cultivation mastery with managerial skills, makes the degree less appealing to those seeking innovation-driven careers [9, 12, 19]. Rebranding is necessary to shift the view of traditional labor from a traditional labor to a professionalized industry [9].

Table 3. Level of Perceptions of Senior High School Students, Parents, and Administrators towards the BSA Program

Respondent Group	Mean Score	Verbal Interpretation
Students	2.55	Moderate Perception
Parents	2.68	Moderate Perception
Administrators	3.01	Moderate Perception
Overall Mean	2.75	Moderate Perception

3.3 Relationship between the Profile of the Respondents and their Perceptions toward the BSA Program

The significant relationship between parental occupation/family size and perception ($p < 0.05$) reflects economic pragmatism; parents often discourage agriculture if they perceive it cannot provide financial security for a large household [10]. For students, the significance of age ($p < 0.05$) suggests that as they approach graduation, they become more pragmatic about employability [3]. These findings are supported by longitudinal studies in the Philippines, where personal and economic perceptions were found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in determining a youth's intention to enroll in agricultural programs [3, 8].

Table 4. Relationship between the Profile of the Respondents and their Perceptions toward the BSA Program

Respondent Group	Demographic Profile Variable	p-value	Decision	Verbal Interpretation
Administrators	Age, Gender, Length of Service	> 0.05	Not Significant	No significant relationship.
Parents	Age, Gender, Educational Attainment	> 0.05	Not Significant	No significant relationship.
	Occupation, Number of Family Members	< 0.05	Significant	A significant relationship exists.
Students	Gender, Socio-economic Status	> 0.05	Not Significant	No significant relationship.
	Age	< 0.05	Significant	A significant relationship exists.

Legend: A p-value less than 0.05 indicates a statistically significant relationship.

3.4 Challenges and Barriers to the Implementation of the BSA Program

The ranking of "Lack of information and promotional campaigns" (3.65) as a very serious barrier confirms that disinterest in agriculture stems from insufficient knowledge rather than personal preference [1, 20]. Addressing this requires a shift from traditional lectures to social-media-driven marketing that showcases success stories to inspire the younger generation [12, 21]. Furthermore, the serious barrier of "lack of facilities" (3.19) mirrors regional findings that many agricultural schools lack classrooms for specific purposes and the necessary smart-farming infrastructure, such as IoT tools, to attract tech-savvy students [15], [22, 23].

Table 5. Challenges and Barriers to the Implementation of the BSA Program

Rank	Challenges and Barriers	Mean Score	Verbal Interpretation
1	Lack of information and promotional campaigns	3.65	Very Serious Barrier
2	Negative perceptions of agriculture	3.42	Very Serious Barrier
3	Belief that agriculture is not a lucrative career	3.31	Very Serious Barrier
4	Absence of clear career opportunities after graduation	3.19	Serious Barrier
5	Lack of government support for agriculture education	2.98	Serious Barrier

Legend: The barrier level was measured on a 4-point scale where 1.00-1.75 = Not a Barrier, 1.76-2.50 = Less Serious, 2.51-3.25 = Serious, 3.26-4.00 = Very Serious.

4. Conclusion

The study confirms that the primary barrier to the successful implementation and promotion of the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA) program at Cebu Technological University-Barili Campus is a

widespread lack of awareness and information among public Senior High School students, parents, and administrators. The findings revealed that all three groups have low levels of awareness, a direct consequence of inadequate promotional campaigns and the institution's lack of outreach. This informational gap, coupled with persistent negative perceptions of agriculture as a low-paying and labor-intensive profession, actively discourages potential students from pursuing the program. The study's results are critical for informing strategic interventions. The solution lies not just in providing more information but in actively rebranding agriculture as a modern, technology-driven, and financially viable career path. Future efforts should focus on designing and implementing targeted campaigns that address parents' specific concerns about economic stability and showcase the diverse career opportunities available to BSA graduates. By bridging the informational divide and challenging negative social biases, educational institutions can help secure the future of agriculture by attracting the next generation of professionals to the field.

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