

## ABSTRACT

Globally, a dominant discourse on policy reforms for the higher education sector has called for universities to prioritize community outreach services so as to channel knowledge and innovations to end-users. However, there are concerns that outreach activities, especially those relying on students, might not be yielding the desired community-level learning. As such, this study used cross-sectional data from a purposive sample of 283 previous host farmers of the student-to-farmer outreach of Gulu University to examine the influence of psychosocial factors on farmer learning behaviour. Specifically, the study: 1) analyzed contextual factors that determine differences in the elements of farmer learning behavior; 2) assessed the influence of facilitating conditions on farmer learning behavior; 3) assessed the influence of motivational factors on farmer learning behaviour; and 4) assessed the social cognitive drivers of farmer learning behaviour. The study used Kruskal-Wallis test to analyze contextual determinants of differences in the elements of farmer learning behavior. It also used structural equation modelling to analyze facilitating conditions, motivational and social cognitive factors influencing farmer learning behavior in the student-to-farmer University outreach.

On contextual factors, Kruskal-Wallis results show significant differences among host farmers with respect to farmstead distance from the university for the elements of learning behaviour of knowledge sharing [ $\chi^2(2) = 8.5$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ] and giving feedback [ $\chi^2(2) = 7.6$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ]. Further, Friedman test results reveal preferential perceptions among host farmers for the student outreach program when compared with public extension, non-government organizations and farmer-to-farmer extension. In this regard, significant differences were observed in terms of information seeking [ $\chi^2(3) = 180.38$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ], knowledge sharing [ $\chi^2(3) = 170.91$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ], feedback seeking [ $\chi^2(3) = 186.62$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ] and giving feedback [ $\chi^2(3) = 190.68$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ]. In addition, structural equation modeling results show that the most important and positive facilitating condition for farmer learning behaviour was faculty supervision support to students ( $\beta = .182$ ;  $t = 2.081$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ). For motivational factors, satisfaction of relatedness learning needs ( $\beta = .228$ ;  $t = 1.979$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) and the formation of learning intentions ( $\beta = .233$ ;  $t = 3.193$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ) were the positive and significant predictors of farmer learning behaviour. Lastly, social cognitive factors that positively influenced farmer learning behaviour were perceived social outcome expectations ( $\beta = .372$ ;  $t = 4.448$ ;  $P < 0.01$ ) and social influence ( $\beta = .227$ ;  $t = 1.978$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ).

The study concludes that in the student outreach formats, farmstead distance from the university and farmer experience in university outreach are the main contextual factors that determine differences in farmer learning behaviour. Furthermore, faculty supervision support to students, satisfying relatedness learning needs, favourable social outcome expectations and social influence positively impact farmer learning behaviour. In addition, formation of learning intentions enhance farmer learning behaviour in the outreach program. For policy, the study recommends more logistical support to faculty staff for effective supervision of student outreach activities that generate grassroots learning. At practice level, the study suggests that universities always orient: 1) students on farmer learning needs; and 2) host communities on the objectives of the outreach program. This study contributes to existing knowledge by providing a deeper understanding of farmer learning behaviour in student outreach formats. It extends psychosocial theories of farmer learning behaviour with results on faculty supervision support to students, satisfying farmer learning needs and social outcome expectations. It also demonstrates that farmer learning behaviour in student outreach programs is dependent on a combination of psychosocial factors namely: 1) the quality of faculty supervision support to students, 2) stimulation of farm-level motivation, and 3) the psychosocial environment of host farmers.