

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT A PANACEA FOR UNEMPLOYMENT IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

Dr. Cletus Usman Idoko*

Mr. Michael Ocheni Onoja**

Abstract

This study was designed to determine the effects of youth empowerment on youth unemployment in Kogi State. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Data for the study were collected from 2500 youths in 10 local government areas of the State using structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was pilot tested with split-half method and the result of 0.75 obtained shows the questionnaire was reliable. The three hypotheses stated were tested at 0.05 level of significance and were rejected. The first hypothesis stated shows that functional and quantitative education, lack of connection among the youths, economic crisis and wastage and selfishness among our leaders are the major cause of youth unemployment in the State. The second and the third hypotheses stated show that youth empowerment has great effect in reducing the crisis of unemployment in the State and that social media increases the zeal of criminal activities in the State. Based on this, recommendations such as Educational policy should be restructured to meet the needs of most employers in the state, the Federal Ministry of Education should embark on curriculum reform by involving education professionals and subject specialists for adequate and effective career guidance, and that Governmental and Non-Governmental organizations in the country should be actively involved in youth empowerment strategy in the country among others were made.

Key words: youth empowerment, youth unemployment, social media, criminal activities.

* **Department of Economics, Kogi State University, Anyigba**

** **Department of political science, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa**

Introduction

The most controversial problem confronting many nations of the world including Nigeria is the problem of youth unemployment. Youth Unemployment is defined as the situation where youths are living without paid jobs. It is also seen as unemployment of young people defined by the United Nations between 14-28 years old. World Bank (2008) defined youth unemployment as the numbers of the active population who are without work but are available for and are seeking for job. It is also referred to as the situation where the youths are not able or likely to get a paid employment because they lack relevant qualifications or skills for the job (Abati, 2009 and Chukwuma, 2013).

Youth unemployment is a global issue in developed, developing, and underdeveloped nations of the world (Akintoye 2003). This is because chronic unemployment as in the case of youth unemployment in Nigeria retards the growth and development of the economy. In other words; youth unemployment is the state of youths being jobless due to constraints and injustices within the society. It is associated with uneven distribution of people in paid jobs which includes the Labour Force concept. The labour force concept according to Adebayo (1999) exists in three mutually exclusive categories. That is those in employment, those unemployed and those outside the labour force. It is important to note that these categories are defined in such a way that unemployment is narrowed as much as possible by broadening the other two categories. In other words, there is a hierarchical ordering with priority given to assigning people to the first category of employment (World Bank, 2008). This is not the case in Nigeria where most of the youths are left out of employment or paid jobs. This indicates that most of the youths are not in employment due to lack of opportunities, qualifications and productive skills.

Youth unemployment, could be described as the conglomeration of youths with diverse background, willing and able to work, but cannot find any (Adejemi 2013). Given that there is lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector, young people have no alternative than to engage in casual work and other unorthodox livelihood sources of employment if such exist, thus leading to underemployment (Akintoye 2003, Gbosi 2006 and Onah, 2001). Underemployment on the other hand exists where people are employed but not in their area of specialization. In this case therefore, the youth that constitute a greater percentage of the country's population are either underemployed or are faced with the challenge of unemployment (Asaju, Arome and Anyo 2014). A lot of studies have revealed that apart from infrastructural development and electricity, youth unemployment has destabilized many families and debased the educational system in the country (Gbosi 2006). Many families are frustrated and dehumanized when they see their children and wards roaming about the street. Many young ones at school are not serious with their studies because it is believed that many who graduated from school are there without a job. This situation makes youth unemployment a problematic one. Following this scenario therefore, Emeh, Nwanguma and Abaroh, (2012) identified major cause of youth unemployment to include the quality of relevance of education obtained by the youths, Economic crisis, Lack of vocational, business and employable training institutions, and lack of credits to empower the youths. In view of this therefore, the study intends to find which possible way or ways can be employed to remedy youth unemployment in the country and Kogi State in particular.

Literature review

Since the attainment of political independence in 1960, Nigeria economy has undergone some structural changes which resulted to structural shifts, but have not brought about any significant sustainable economic growth and development that

can lead to adequate employment opportunity for her youths. Many empirical research with available data shows that Nigerian economy grew relatively with respect to oil boom in 1970s which led to extreme profits but the profits resulted to wasteful expenditures in the public sector leading to the displacement of employment factors and also distorted the revenue bases for the purpose of planning (Olaleye 2010). This according to Emeh, Nwanguma and Abaroh, (2012) resulted in the introduction of the structural adjustment programme (SAP) in 1986 and various economic reforms in recent years.

The core objective of the economic structural reform is a total restructuring of the Nigerian economy in the face of population explosion (Emeh, Nwanguma and Abaroh (2012) . Consequently, these economic and financial reforms put in place did not yield any significant results instead there has been an alarming increase in the rate of youth unemployment and its associated social and economic problems in so many areas of the country (Idoko, 2013).. Usually, unemployment is one of the developmental problems that face every developing country (Adedokun 2014), and Nigeria is not exempted. Its impact has been felt greatly by the Nigerian youths from all loops and corners of the country who rush to majors urban cities in search of white-collar jobs, This is because many youths believed that major urban cities have more (job) opportunities than other part of the country. As an alternative to youth employment, Nigerian government over the years has made a great stride in providing access to education to many able and qualified youths, but has not matched this with equal access to employment. However, one possible ways through which Government of Nigeria is pursuing its youth unemployment programme is through youth empowerment. Youth empowerment entails enticing youth to different trade in live to be self sustaining and self enterprising in all aspect in live. It is the way of making the youths to be self dependent and self reliance. Youth empowerment according to Nworgu and Akmlabi (2013) is a

gateway to intergenerational equity, civic engagement and democracy building. Youth empowerment is seen as an altitudinal structure and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their lives and lives of others (Okafor 2011).

Emeh, Nwanguma and Abaroh, (2012) also pointed out that the best way youths in the country can be empowered is through functional and quantitative education which can be achieved through formal and informal education. This according to him will spore the youths into skill acquisition and training which the bedrock of self sustenance economy is. Likewise, Unegbu (2011) opines that youth empowerment can result to conducive environment if the training and skill acquisition are backed up with money empowerment. Money empowerment is the way of proving the youths the enablement to fulfill the dream of what has been acquired through credits inform of soft loan. However, many Governmental and Non-Profit based organizations in the country have provided programmes centered on youth empowerment but their initial reaction was to draft the youths to public programmes such as operation feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Directorate of Food, Road, and Rural infrastructure (DIFFRI) National Directorate of Employment, which provided immediate employments to youths that were interested in agriculture and other trades in the economy. But in recent years, other youth empowerment programmes were instituted. Such youths empowerment programmes according to Oviave (2010), include:- Youth employment in Agricultural Programme (YEAP), Youth initiative for sustainable Agriculture (YISA), Federal ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), National Urban Youth Employment and Empowerment (NUYEEMP), to mention but a few but these youth empowerment programmes were constrained with so many problems among which are inadequate funding, population explosion among the young graduates from various tertiary institutions, late release of funds from the

federation account among others problems inhibited the effectiveness of the Directorate Fanimu and Okereke (2009). These problems have increased youth unemployment in the country to alarming rate. This according to Adedokun (2014) has greatly affected the plight of Nigerian youths and influential in them with wrong attitude about the country they belong. The question therefore is, in which demission will the youths be empowered to reduce this crisis of unemployment in Nigeria and Kogi State in particular to advocate for better tomorrow among the youths?

Research Questions

The following Research Hypotheses Guided the study

1. What are the causes of unemployment among the youths in the State?
2. How can youths in the States be empowered to reduce crisis of unemployment?
3. In which way does youth empowerment contribute to the development of their communities?
4. Is there any relationship between social media and criminal activities among the youths in the State?

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this research work is to find out in the ways through which the youths in Kogi State can be empowered to reduce the crisis of unemployment and advocate for better tomorrow. Specially, the study intends:

1. To find out the causes of unemployment among the youths in the State.
2. To ascertain different ways through which the youth in the State can be empowered to reduce the crisis of unemployment.
3. To determine the contribution of youth empowerment to the development of communities in Kogi State.

4. To establish the relationship between social media and criminal activities among the youths in the state.

Research Hypothesis

The following Research hypotheses guided the study

1. There are no significant causes of unemployment among the youths in Kogi State.
2. Youth empowerment has no significant effect on unemployment among the youths in the in Kogi State
3. Youth empowerment contributes nothing to the development of communities in the State.
4. Social media has no effect on criminal activities among the youths in Kogi State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research of survey type. The population of the study consists of selected young graduates in the State.

Sample and Sampling Size

2500 young graduates selected through the use of stratified random sampling from 10 Local Government Areas of Kogi State. Namely, Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Igalamela/Odolu, Ofu, Olamaboro , Omalla and Ajakuta were used for the study. This shows that 250 youths each were randomly selected from each local government area.

Instrument

16 items structured questionnaire titles challenges of unemployment among the youths in Kogi State were used to collect data for the study.

The questionnaire was subjected to series of validation by experts in measurement and evaluation, and Economics. All the submissions and correction were upheld by the authors. Also reliability test was conducted using half-split method and the result of obtained of .075 shows that the instrument was reliable.

Results

Result question 1. What are the causes of unemployment among the youths in Kogi State?

TABLE 1

Causes of youth unemployment

Decision rule 2.5

| S/N | ITEMS | SA | A | D | SD | M | DECISION |
|-----|--|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------|----------|
| 1 | Youths are those between the age of 15-36 | 1500 60% | 600 24% | 300 12% | 100 4% | 3.32 | accepted |
| 2 | Access to functional and quantitative education is the major cause of youth unemployment | 1200 48% | 500 20% | 100 4% | 300 12% | 2.7 | accepted |
| 3 | Lack of connection among the youth in present dispensation makes them unemployed | 1400 56% | 600 24% | 300 12% | 200 8% | 2.92 | accepted |
| 4 | Economic crisis in the country is the major cause of youth unemployment | 1400 56% | 600 24% | 200 8% | 300 12% | 3.24 | accepted |
| 5 | Wastage and self aggrandizement among the leaders also causes youth unemployment | 1800 72% | 400 16% | 200 8% | 100 4% | 3.56 | accepted |

Table 1 above revealed that access to functional and quantitative education is one of the major causes of youth unemployment in Kogi State. 1500 respondents representing 48% Strongly Agreed, 600 respondents representing 24% Agreed, and 300 respondents representing 12% disagreed while 100 respondents representing 4% strongly disagreed. Also, in item 2, 1200 respondents representing 48% strongly agreed, 600 respondents representing 20% agreed while 300 respondents representing 12% strongly disagreed. Likewise, from the analysis it could be observed that the mean values of all the items are greater than the mean of the decision rule of 2.5 which mean that lack of connection among the youths, economic crisis and wastage and self aggrandizement among our leaders are the major cause of youth unemployment in the State.

Research Question2 How can youths in the States be empowered to reduce crisis of unemployment

Table 2

The Impact of Youth Empowerment

Decision rule 2.5

| S/N | ITEMS | SA | A | D | SD | M | DECISION |
|-----|--|-------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------|----------|
| 1 | Youths are the valuable and viable people in any society | 1900 76% | 500 20% | 100 4% | --- | 3.72 | Accepted |
| 2 | The reform in curriculum to match with needs of the employers make youths employable | 2000 80% | 300 12% | 100 4% | 100 4% | 3.56 | Accepted |
| 3 | Capacity building tailored toward self-reliance make youths employable | 1800 72% | 500 20% | 100 4% | 100 4% | 3.6 | Accepted |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------------|------------|------------|------------|-----|----------|
| 4 | The involvement of credit and money in youth empowerment will enable them to be self reliant and job creator | 1500 60% | 500 20% | 200 8% | 300 12% | 3.3 | Accepted |
| 5 | Youth empowerment must make the youths to be innovative and creative | 1400 56% | 600 24% | 300 12% | 200 8% | 3.3 | Accepted |
| 6 | Youth empowerment involves making youths to be conducive in any environment | 1600 64% | 500 20% | 400 16% | --- | 3.5 | Accepted |

Table 2 above shows that 2000 respondents representing 80% strongly agreed that reform of curriculum to match with needs of the employers can make youths employable in any establishment, 300 respondents representing 12% agreed while 100 respondents representing 4% each disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. 72% also agreed that capacity building tailored towards self reliance, reduces youth unemployment. Also, 60% strongly agreed that credit inform of loans will empower the youths to be self reliant. The mean scores of items 1-6 which is greater than mean of the decision rule of 2.5 shows that the items were accepted as means of empowering the youths to reduce crisis of unemployment in the State.

Research Question3: Is there any relationship between social media and criminal activities among the youths in the State?

Table 3

Social Media and Criminal Activities

Decision rule 2.5

| S/N | ITEMS | SA | A | D | SD | M | DECISION |
|-----|---|-------------|------------|------------|-----------|------|----------|
| 1 | Unemployed youths access social media more frequent than any other people | 1300 52% | 500 20% | 100 4% | 100 4% | 2.8 | Accepted |
| 2 | Violent and dangerous films viewing is one of the major causes of criminal activities among the youths | 1400 56% | 600 24% | 300 12% | 200 8% | 3.28 | Accepted |
| 3 | Frequent viewing of violent films in social media may entice the youths to embrace dubious behaviour for quick money making | 1300 52% | 700 28% | 300 12% | 200 8% | 3.24 | Accepted |
| 4 | Idleness and bad friends among the youths may lead them to criminal activities. | 1500 60% | 700 28% | 200 8% | 100 4% | 3.56 | Accepted |
| 5 | Social life and peer group influence may cause the youths to indulge in deviance behaviour | 1700 68% | 600 24% | 200 8% | 100 4% | 2.64 | Accepted |

From the analysis above, 1300 respondents representing 52% strongly agreed that frequent watching of social media by the youths contributes positively to criminal activities among the youths, 1400 respondents representing 56% agreed

on viewing of violent and dangerous films. While 1500 and 1700 respondents representing 60% and 68% respectively agreed that idleness and peer group influence are the advocate of criminal activities among the youths.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There are no significant causes of unemployment among the youths in Kogi State.

Table 4 the cause of unemployment among the youths in Kogi State.

| Causes of unemployment in Kogi State. | N | Mean | Std | df | t | Sig. |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-------|-----|------|-------|--------|
| | 250 | 31.48 | 5.6 | 2495 | 30.75 | < .005 |

The 4 indicate that functional and quantitative education and other variables had significant effect on unemployment facing the youths in Kogi State. This is so because from the result of the analysis shows the mean of 31.48 and standard deviation of 5.6, hence, t-calculated of 30.75 is greater than t-critical of 1.9: $p < .005$ level of significant. So, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative.

Hypothesis 2: How can youths in the States be empowered to reduce crisis of unemployment

Table 5. Youth empowerment in Kogi State

| Youth empowerment | N | Mean | Std | df | t | Sig. |
|-------------------|-----|-------|-----|------|-------|-------|
| | 250 | 34.96 | 5.9 | 2494 | 50.84 | <.005 |

From the result of the analysis on table 5 has a mean of 34.96 and standard deviation of 5.9. The result also shows that t-calculated of 50.84 at $p < .005$ level of significant is greater than t-critical of 1.96 which indicate that youth empowerment has great effect in reducing the crisis of unemployment in the State. This result negates the tested hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3 Social media has no effect on criminal activities among the youths in Kogi State.

Table 6. The relationship between social media and criminal activities in the State

| criminality | N | Mean | Std | df | t | Sig. |
|-------------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-------|
| | 250 | 31.1 | 5.5 | 2495 | 18.47 | <.005 |

Table 6 above revealed that social media has significant positive relationship with criminal activities among the youths in Kogi State (mean=31.1, standard deviation=5.5, t-calculated of 18.47, $df = 2495$, $p < .005$). This result shows that t-calculated of 18.47 is greater than t-critical of 1.96. This implies that social media increases the zeal of criminal activities in the State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

The study discovered that youth in Kogi State are faced with a lot of problems depriving them from being employed. It was discovered that functional and quantitative education among others are the major cause of youth unemployment and restlessness in the State. Also, from the result, it was discovered that youth empowerment if properly coordinated through soft loan can reduce crisis of youth unemployment in the State. Likewise, criminal activities among the youths are found to be associated with social media. Idleness and joblessness make the unemployed youth to be indulged in so many social vices which are copied from

frequent use of social media in attempt to make two ends meet. From the study, null hypothesis 1. Was stated to find out whether there was significant difference between the causes of unemployment in the State. The result of the findings, made the researchers to reject the null hypothesis as stated.

The finding agreed with the response of the respondents on items identified as the causes of unemployment in Kogi State as presented on table 4. Research question 2 and 3 were also formulated to find out whether Youth empowerment contributes to the development of communities and the effect of criminal activities among the youths in the State. The study among other things discovered that youth empowerment if properly coordinated contributes positively to economic development in the State. It was also discovered that social media has great effect on criminal activities among the youths in the State. From tables 5 and 6, the result showed that, null hypotheses were rejected. Based on these, there alternative hypotheses were accepted. This means that the findings agreed with the responses of the respondents on tables 5 and 6

Implication of findings

Most public policies in the country often do not solve the problems in which they are meant for. This makes the policy inconsistent since they are not able to achieve the desire economic objectives. The policy and programmes of youth empowerment is expected by now to tackle the problems of youth unemployment but to utmost surprise, the crisis of youth unemployment continue to linger over the years. Hence, the crisis of youth unemployment in the State is a thing of great concern. Following this assertion therefore, the following policy implications are important. The first policy implication is derived from the structural educational foundation of the youths in the state. Poor implementation of most education policies in the country is sometimes the major cause of our problem. This is

because most educational policies in the country often do not achieve its desired objectives. In view of this therefore, proper educational policy that will meet the needs of the employers in the country need to be addressed. This should be harnessed into formal and informal education capable of producing young enterprising and cable youths that can stand the odds of time.

Secondly, Governmental and Non –Governmental organization need to be involved in training and restoration of the unemployed youths to be employable by enticing them with skills and soft loans to spur them into creative ventures that makes them to be job creators instead of job seekers. Also, the establishment of internship training centers in all the local government areas of the country to easy the involvement of the youth who want to participate in the training programmes is necessary. However, after training, each youth is expected to be empowered economically through soft loan to make them economical viable in the establishment and maintenance of their own business ventures. Likewise, at infancy stage, all the engaged youths in this programme are expected to be monitored at interval to disabuse their minds from diverting such loan to other use.

Finally, the involvement of some unemployed youths in criminal activates can be reduce or totally eradicated if the census of the unemployed youths are properly gazetted and stored. Such information if properly stored will help to trace the root of any criminal activity in the state.

Recommendation

Following the result of the findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. Educational policy should be restructured to meet the needs of most employers in the state. This should encompass both formal and informal education where training and apprentices are used as a mean of job creation instead of job seekers. This is very important because theoretical

aspect of education invoke is no more the bases for employment in the country and Kogi State in particular. The Federal Ministry of Education should also, embark on curriculum reform by involving education professionals and subject specialists for adequate career guidance that can reposition the youths to be self reliance and self dependent in the economy.

2. Governmental and Non- Governmental organizations in the country should be actively involved in youth empowerment strategy. This is because the Government alone with mass graduation of youth from tertiary institutions in the country may not be able to solve the problem of unemployment. Therefore, active participation of NGOS will help to drastically reduce the problem Also, the propose plans of the Federal Government for youth empowerment should be religiously followed and monitored to disallow diversion of resource meant for this programme to other areas. .
3. Social media activity should be checkmated by the Government to make sure that service providers do not post destructive films to their systems or devices that will corruptly enrich the youths to social vices in the country.. Also, the clergy and all religious practioners should help in disabusing the hearts of their followers in this direction so as to reduce these social vices in the economy. The census of the unemployed youth should be electronically stored and gazetted and be used to checkmate criminal activities in the country. This if properly implemented will help to reducing the act of criminal activity among the youths in our society.

References

- Abati, R. (2009). Nigeria's unemployment Crisis. <http://nigeriavillagesquare.com>
- Adebayo, A. (1999). Youth unemployment and National Directorate of Employment self employment programmes. *Nigerian Journal of Economics and Social Studies*. 41(1). 81-102
- Adedokun, M. O. (2014). An overview of the challenges facing the youths in Nigeria Society. *International Journal of Humanities and social sciences* 4(6) 154-161.
- Adeyemi, O. (2013). Experts say Nigerian Education curriculum is Responsible for unemployment. <http://www.ngscholars.com>. 8-13
- Adebisi .S. S.(2010) Youth development remains our top priority – Lagos State Government. <http://www.lagosindicatoronline.com>
- Akintoye, I.R. (2003). Reducing Unemployment through the Informal Sector: A Case Study of Nigeria. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences* ISSN 1450-2275 Issue 11.
- Asaju, K.S, Arome R, and Anyo, S.(2014). The rising rate of unemployment in Nigeria, the socio-economic and political implications. *Global Business and Economic Research Journal* 3(2). 12-33.
- Chukwuma, O. (2013). Youth, Unemployment and National Security in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*.3 (21)258-268
- Emeh, I.E. Nwanguma, E.O and Abaroh,. J.J (2012). Engaging youth unemployment in Nigeria with youth Development and empowerment programmes; The Lagos State Focus. *Interdisciplinary Journal of contemporary Research in Business*.4(5)1125-1141.

- Fanimo,D. and Okereke, R. (2009). Nigerians Business Rate of unemployment seeks action. *The guidance Tuesday* 2012.
- Gbosi, A.N. (2006) Modern Labour Economics and Policy Analysis. Abakaliki, Pack Publishers *National Bureau of Statistics* (2010). LABOUR FORCE SURVEY MARCH, 2009. ISSN 0794-1954. NO.476 13th May
- Idoko, I.F, (2013). The Paradox of Youths Unemployment in An Oil Producing Country. The Lesson from the Nigerian Experience . *International Journal of Business and Management Invention* ISSN (Online): 2319 – 8028, ISSN (Print): 2319 – 801X www.ijbmi.org Volume 2 Issue 4 || April. 2013|| PP.74-79
- Nworgu, S. and Akirilabi, O.(2013). Human Capital Development 11 increase in Organizational growth. May 8 *punch*. Pp.40.
- Olaleye ,B.A. (2010) Youth Unemployment. <http://www.lagosstate.gov.ng/index>
- Okafor E.E (2011) Youth Unemployment and Implications for Stability of Democracy in Nigeria. *JSDA*, Vol.13, No. 1.
- Onah, F.O. (2001) Urban Unemployment Situation in Nigeria. In E.O. Ezeani and N.N. Elekwa (Eds.), *Issues in Urbanization and Urban Administration in Nigeria* (pp. 154-167). Enugu: Jamo Enterprises.
- Oviawe, J.O. (2010) “Repositioning Nigerian Youths for Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship Education”, *European Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp.113-118..
- Oviawe,J.I.(2010).Repositioning Nigerian Youths for Economic Empowerment through entrepreneurship Education. *European Journal of Educational Studies*. 2(2). 113-118.

Unegbu, O. (2011) Addressing youth unemployment in Nigeria.
<http://www.businesssdayoline.com>.

World Bank (2008): *Youth Employment in Africa*. Africa Development Indicators 2008/9. Washington, DC: World Bank

