

IMPACT OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SCHEME ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is one of the most endowed economies in African continent with natural and human resources that capable to empower and develop the youths to contribute meaningfully towards sustainable socio-economic and political development. Majority of the youth population of Nigeria are living below poverty line due to their disempowerment in the society. The study primarily examines the impact of Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) on poverty alleviation between the 2011 and 2015 in Kwara State, Nigeria. Primary data was majorly employed in the study and collected through questionnaire and interview. Eighty-five (85) respondents are chosen using simple random technique among the beneficiaries of the scheme. The data collected was analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study show that YES has statistically significant impact on the standard of living of the respondents and equally reduce their level of poverty. The findings equally show positive and strong correlation between poverty alleviation and YES, $r = .69$, $n = 85$, $p < .0005$. Majority of the respondents also satisfied with the performance of the YES in Kwara State. Recommendations are given based on the performance of YES and obstacles encountered by the beneficiaries in order to further enhance the living condition of the latter.

Key words: Kwara state, Nigeria, Poverty alleviation, Youth empowerment scheme

Introduction

Nigeria is being blessed with several resources such as crude oil, gas, mines, agricultural products, forestry and land, just to mention but few. She is most populous country in African continent being in the 1st position and 7th position in the world (World Bank, 2014), despite this large population it appears that the population is liability as opposed to asset due to the failure of the country to control and manage the growth of the population through meaningful policies (Abdussalam et al., 2013). Kaiz and Leonard (2012) claimed that poverty is getting worsening as the economy is gaining positive growth likewise the rich are getting better while the poor are getting worse (cited in Odeh & Okoye, 2014).

Poverty has been tremendous and continuous challenge facing many third world countries including Nigeria. The major national problems worried Nigerian economy, today are among others corruption, unemployment and poverty (Akpan, 2011). Persistent increase in the rate of these problems is generating much concern for the government. One of the economic characteristics of the poor and poverty is that they are characterized as young as opposed to old people (Todaro, 2009:170). Therefore, it is very crucial to empower the youth in any given economy particularly, Nigeria in order to reduce the level and rate of poverty in the society. It is noted that part of the challenges facing governments of many developing countries are to minimize income inequalities between the haves and have not or the high-income earners and low-income earners as well as alleviate poverty in their immediate societies although, Nigerian government had demonstrated many efforts in the past through various programmes and institutions purposively to address the problem of poverty in the society (Ahmed, n.d.).

Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) is one of the area targets in the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in tackling poverty incidence in Nigeria. Therefore, this research work intends to examine the extent of the impact of the YES in Kwara State, Nigeria. This is a grass root economic package aimed at developing Nigerian youth under the national programme of NAPEP. Some of the benefits and activities under the YES programme in Kwara State include provision of training skill, working tools, vocational job and micro-credits for self-reliance, self-actualization and employment opportunity.

Concept Of Empowerment And Poverty

According to the World Bank report (1975:3), empowerment is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people while disempowered includes the rural poor. The group of the poor include others as small-scale farmers, tenants and the landless. Meanwhile, Ekanem (2004:52) views empowerment as a means to extend the benefits of socio-economic and political development in the economy to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas (cited in Chukuma Duru, n.d.). More so,

empowerment is seen as a socio-economic or political act by the state or its agencies, private individuals or corporate organization aimed at transforming the socio-economic well-being of the disempowered. This group includes the rural

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urban poor, small-scale farmers, the landless and the unemployed, but whose remuneration cannot afford them the basic necessities of life. The group is equally involved the sick and the maimed who cannot have access to quality healthcare services, the illiterate, who have no access to educational facilities and the destitute who cannot afford decent meals and shelter (Chukuma Duru, n.d.).

For this study empowerment refers to the mean or way of enhancing the life condition of the powerless or less privileged ones (particularly, the youths) in the state. The youths are considered to be disempowered because they lack trainings, skills, experiences and credit facilities after their education and apprenticeship to demonstrate their potential and giftedness.

Whereas, poverty is defined as a severe deprivation of some basic human needs at the individual or household level inform of material and physical deprivation, this can be viewed as monetary term. In another view point is that poverty as the failure to attain basic capabilities such as being adequately nourished, living a healthy life, possession of skills to participate in economic and social-political life, permission to take part in community activities (Odeh & Okoye, 2014). Chukuma Duru (n.d.) views poverty as a situation of low income and/or low consumption. By World Bank (1990), poverty is inability to attain a minimum standard of living (cited in Chukuma Duru, n.d.). The concept of poverty is multidimensional and multi-facet in nature and the situation of poverty is depended on people to people, society to society, economy to economy and history to history. For more definition and concept of poverty, see Abdussalam 2014; Abdussalam & AbdulWahab 2014.

Fayemi's (2012) finding in his study carried out in Ogun state, Nigeria, shows that youth empowerment policy is the best for the alleviation of poverty among the youths in Ogun state. This indicates positive impact and relationship between the youth empowerment scheme and poverty alleviation. Similarly, in Ogun state, as the problem of poverty surfaces more youths are being empowered to tackle the problem although the finding revealed that the system is politically-influenced and biased.

Research Question

Is there a relationship between poverty alleviation and Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The following is the hypothesis of the study:

Ho: There is no relationship between poverty alleviation and Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES).

Ha: There is a relationship between poverty alleviation and Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES).

Study Area And Method Of Study

The study was carried out in Ilorin, Kwara State and was based on the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) as one of anti-poverty programme by the government. YES is one of the empowerment initiates under the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Nigeria. The data were garnered through the use of primary data i.e. questionnaire and supported with interview. The questionnaire was distributed to one hundred and twenty (120) beneficiaries of YES under the State government.

The researcher personally visited the office of the Senior Special Adviser (SSA) on Youth Empowerment in Kwara State Governor office to administer the questionnaire. This was supplemented with personal interview with two staff of the YES programme. The list of the beneficiaries was presented to the researcher in which the respondents were chosen using Simple Random Technique (SRT). From the list, the contact addresses of the beneficiaries were drawn and located in the town while the others were met and filled the questionnaire in the YES office with the support of the staff.

Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Percentages and frequencies were used to analyse the respondents' demographic characteristics and Pearson Product-moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to answer the research question and hypothesis of the study.

Results And Discussion

This section analyses the results of the study which includes demographic characteristics of the respondents and various categorical variables. Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) is only continuous variable in the study and the reliability test ran on its items. The result of the reliability test of the scale shows that it has good internal consistency with Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of .89 (see Hair et al., 2010 and Pallant, 2010:97).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Sex:		
Male	50	58.8
Female	35	41.2
Age:		
18-30 years	63	74.1

31-40 years	21	24.7
41-50 years	1	1.2
Marital status:		
Single	69	81.2
Married	16	18.8
Others	0	0.0
Household size:		
1-3	78	91.8
4-6	7	8.2
7-9	0	0.0
10 above	0	0.0
Education:		
Primary	2	2.4
Secondary	19	22.4
NCE/OND	42	49.4
First Degree/HND	22	25.9
Master	0	0.0
Others	0	0.0
Total	85	100.0

Table 1 shows that 58.8% of the respondents is male while the remaining 41.2% of the respondents is female. Majority of the respondents (74.1%) falls between the age range of 18-30 years while the minority of the respondents (25.9%) falls between the age range of 31 and above. Based on the marital status, most of the respondents (81.2%) are single and the the remaining of the respondents (18.8%) are married. This is not a surprise as the scheme is mainly established for the youth. Majority of the respondents (91.8%) have small family size below 4 while the remaining respondents (8.2%) have large family size above 4. This implies that majority of the respondents are just crossed to the status of economically active distribution of the population and new entrants to the labour market. In terms of education qualification of the respondents, 49.4% of the respondents hold N.C.E./OND certificates. This follows by 25.9%, 22.4% and 2.4% of the respondents who hold first degree/HND, secondary school certificate and primary school certificate respectively.

Table 2: Analysis of the Respondents with Duration, Vocational Training, Loans Received and their Primary Occupation

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Duration:		
Less than 1 year	7	8.2
1-2 years	24	28.2
2-3 years	30	35.3
3-4 years	20	23.5
4 years above	4	4.7
Vocational training:		
Yes	69	81.2
No	16	18.8
Loan received:		
Yes	70	82.4
No	15	17.6
Primary occupation:		
Farming	4	4.7
Carpentry	3	3.5
Hairdressing/barbering	11	12.9
Computer service	28	32.9
Tailoring	8	9.4
Microbusiness	15	17.6
Others	16	18.8
Total	85	100.0

Table 2 reveals that 61 respondents participated in YES between one and three years while the remaining 24 respondents participated in the YES between three years and above. Most of the respondents (81.2%) received vocational training while the remaining of the respondents (18.8%) did not receive vocational training in the YES. Similarly, majority of the respondents (82.4%) took loans while the remaining of the respondents (17.6%) did not take loans. Based on the primary occupation of the respondents, 32.9% of the respondents engaged in computer service. This follows by 17.6% and 12.9% of the respondents who engaged in microbusiness and hairdressing/barbering respectively. 9.4% and 4.7% of the respondents engaged in tailoring and farming respectively. 3.5% of the respondents engaged in carpentry while the remaining 18.8% of the respondents is others.

Table 3: Perception of the Respondents on Improvement in Standard of Living, Evaluation of YES, Assessment on Performance of YES and Problems Encountered in YES

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Improvement in Living Standard:		
Yes	66	77.6
No	19	22.4
Evaluation:		
Effective	65	76.5
Ineffective	20	23.5
Assessment on performance:		
Satisfactory	59	69.4
Non-satisfactory	14	16.5
No idea	12	14.1
Problems encountered:		
Lacking access to loan	12	14.1
Inadequate loan	24	28.2
Inadequate training and equipment	24	28.2
High interest rate	9	10.6
Guarantor	16	18.8
Total	85	100.0

Table 3 displays that the majority of the respondents (77.6%) have improvement in their standard of living as compared with those respondents (22.4%) who have no improvement in their standard of living despite their participation in the YES programme. More so, majority of the respondents (76.5%) evaluate YES as an effective scheme while the remaining respondents (23.5%) see it as not effective. Most of the respondents (69.4%) are satisfied with the performance of the scheme while the respondents (16.5%) are not satisfied with the performance of the scheme. With all these positive results, the respondents still encountered with one problem or another in the YES programme in Kwara State, Nigeria. The top problems among others are inadequate loan as well as inadequate training and equipment which 28.2% each of the respondents encountered in the scheme. This follows by the problems of provision of guarantor, lacking access to loan and high interest rate, with 18.8%, 14.1% and 10.6% of the respondents respectively.

Table 4: Results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) for the Hypothesis

(i)

Correlations

		poverty alleviation	total yes scale
poverty alleviation	Pearson Correlation	1	.685**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	85
total yes scale	Pearson Correlation	.685**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(ii)

Correlations

sex of respondents		poverty alleviation	total yes scale
male	Pearson Correlation	1	.652**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
total yes scale	Pearson Correlation	.652**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50
female	Pearson Correlation	1	.721**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	35	35
total yes scale	Pearson Correlation	.721**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	35	35

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) results between two variables of interest (i.e. Poverty Alleviation and /Youth Empowerment Scheme), giving the significance level and the number of cases. The relationship between poverty alleviation and YES was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. Output generated from the test revealed no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. From Table 4(i), the relationship between poverty alleviation and YES shows positive and strong correlation between the two variables, $r = .69$, $n = 85$, $p < .0005$. The results indicate that high level of poverty alleviation associated with high level of youth empowerment scheme. In other words, the youth who participated in YES programme in Kwara State, Nigeria experience reduction in their poverty level. Therefore, the null hypothesis of the study which states that “there is no relationship between poverty alleviation and Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)” can be rejected in favour of alternative hypothesis. Furthermore, Table 4(ii) shows the difference in the coefficients between the gender group (i.e. male and female). The value of the difference (Z) calculated for males and females is -0.30 , this falls within the specified limits or decision rule: $-1.96 < Z < 1.96$. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in the strength of the correlation between poverty alleviation and YES programme for males and females ($-1.96 < -0.30 < 1.96$). For detail on the decision rule (see Pallant, 2010:140-141).

Conclusion and recommendation

Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) programme is highly significant measure to alleviate poverty among the youth in Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings of the study showed statistically significantly positive and strong relationship between poverty alleviation and youth empowerment scheme. The study further showed that most participants of the YES were greatly benefited from various packages under the scheme which enable them to improve their standard of living. With the impressive performance of the YES in the State, however, the study noted some problems encountered by the participants such as shortage of loan, insufficient training and equipment, lacking access to loan, problem of provision of guarantor before loan can be approved or granted as well as unbearable interest rate on loan. For serious realization of impacts of YES by youth, this study recommends the following: government should increase provision of sufficient microcredit/loan with very low interest rate if not zero-interest rate, in order to make YES more meaningful to alleviate poverty among the youth. More so, adequate training and re-training should be provided with the justified equipment to make the beneficiaries successful in their personal business establishment. More important, there should be more creation of job and this is not limited to the public employment but also necessary, private one. There is a need for serious campaign to encourage private sector to participate in creating more job and empowering youth.

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