YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION: THE EXPERIENCE IN NIGERIA’S Ogun State

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Abstract
This study focused on Youth Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation in Ogun State. The outcome of this study would assist the government at all levels to effectively deal with unemployment among the youths. It will help the planners and the policy makers to determine the best methods to tackle poverty in order to alleviate youth employment. The study made use of descriptive research design for the investigation. All the local government in Ogun State constitutes the population for the study. Out of these, two local governments were purposefully selected for investigation. Stratified random sampling method was employed to select the two local governments. Questionnaire and personal interview were the instruments used for the collection of information. The data collected were analyzed using the percentage and chi-square statistical method and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result obtained were recorded which include youth empowerment policy is the best policy for alleviation of poverty among the youths. The outcome of this study reveals that youth empowerment policy will go along way to alleviate suffering of the youths. Based on this result, it was recommended that government should involve youths in the design and implementation of policies aimed at alleviating their poverty level.

Keywords: Poverty, alleviation, empowerment, youth

Introduction
The cause of Nigeria poverty problem is well known to all Nigerians and to some extent the rest of the enlightened world as well. Poverty is a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted problem. It goes beyond just income. It has political undertone in that it affects people’s right, power, relations and access to resources.

Nigeria as we know is the six largest oil producers in the world but these resources has not been used to benefit the poor. Unemployment is not new to Nigerians. They are used to reading about the general failure of the state called Nigeria. We have heard gory stories of “700,000 applicants jostle for 5,000 positions in the customs”, let alone the Nigeria police. When Comrade Adams Aliyu Oshiomole advertize for 10,000 job vacancies, over 100,000 jobless applicants turned in their applications. (Vanguard Dec. 7, 2011).

Statement of the problem
The causes of Nigerian’s poverty problem are well-known to all Nigerians and to some extent, the rest of the enlightened world as well. Ridiculously as this may sound, the scale of poverty in a country of more than 148 million people is such that the World Bank has said that “Africa will fail to meet the millennium development. Goals if Nigeria fails”. Though, the primary cause of poverty which has caused living standard below the National poverty level is failure to distribute the country’s vast oil revenues more equitably. But we are neglecting the fact that empowering the youth will be the major focus of poverty eradication strategies and policies. The purposes of this study are centred on:

✧ To access and evaluate the effectiveness of policy of poverty alleviation in Ogun State.
✧ To access and evaluate the responsiveness of the people to the policy, either positively or negatively.
✧ To access and evaluate the achievement and flaws of the policy since its inception in Ogun State.

Hypotheses
The following null hypothesis were generated to guide the study.
Ho₁: Youth empowerment policy is not the best for alleviating poverty
Ho₂: The system is not evenly distributed among the youths in Ogun State.
Ho₃: There is no direct relationship between poverty and youth empowerment.
Ho₄: The programme is not politically oriented.

Method
Survey method of research was employed in gathering relevant data for this study. This method was chosen putting into consideration its advantages over other research methods. The population for this study was limited to the youths that are residing in Ogun State and the staff of Ogun employment generation programme (OGEGE). Two local governments were purposively sampled among the local government in the state. They are Ijebu-North and Obafemi Owode local governments. Fifty youth were drawn for this study from the two local governments.

A well structured and constructed questionnaire was used in gathering necessary data for this study. Fifty closed-ended questionnaires were self-administered to the sampled respondents. The close-ended type was used in controlling the respondents’ tendency of preferring irrelevant or deviated responses.

The questionnaire consists of twenty (20) items. It was divided into sections A and B. section A demands for the demographic information about the subjects while B deals with the subject matter of inquiry.

The data were analyzed using the inferential statistics of chi-square to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The demographic data of the respondents were analyzed using descriptive frequency distribution and percentage count.

Data analysis and findings
The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using the percentage and chi-square statistical method.

Below are the tabulation and analysis of respondents’ demographic variables. Table 1-6

Table 1: Sex
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, it is vividly shown that 27 respondents representing 67.5% of the sample population were male while 13 respondents representing 32.5% were female. This indicates that both sexes were proportionately represented without bias.

Table 2: Marital Status
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, it could be deducted that 25 respondents representing 62.5% were single, 13 respondents representing 32.5% were married while the remaining 2 representing 5% were divorced.

Table 3: Age Group
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 – 25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 45</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above indicates that 30% were within the age of 15 – 25, 50% were within the age of 26 – 35 while 20% represents 36 – 45. This shows that the age grade were proportionately represented.

Table 4: Employment Status
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluating the employment status of respondents, table four shows that 20% were employed, 22.5% of respondents were self-employed, 37.5% were unemployed while 20% were still students of tertiary institutions in Ogun State.

Table 5: Educational Background
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSCE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above shows that 20% of the respondents have SSCE, 30% were OND/NCE holder while 50% represents respondents with HND/BSC certificate.

Table 6: Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, 37.5% of the respondents practices Islam, 50% practices Christianity while 12.5% of the respondents were traditional worshippers.

Hypotheses testing

The following null hypotheses were tested using chi-square statistical tools at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One

Ho1: Youth empowerment policy is not the best for alleviating poverty.

Hypothesis Two

Ho2: The system is not evenly distributed among the youths in Ogun State.

Hypothesis Three

Ho3: There is no direct relationship between poverty and youth empowerment.

Determination of critical value

Degree of freedom is given by 1.c – 1 at 5% level of significant

\[ X^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} \]

Decision Rule: Reject Ho if \( X^2 > X^2_C \)

Conclusion: Since \( X^2(13.3) \) is greater than \( X^2(3.841) \) and it falls between the rejected Ho. This implies that youth empowerment policy is the best for the alleviation of poverty among the youths of Ogun State.

Determination of critical value

Degree of freedom is given by K – 1 at 5% level of significant \( K - 1 = 2 - 1 \)

\[ X^2_C = X^2 0.05, \hspace{1cm} 1 = 3.841 \]

Decision Rule Ho if \( X^2 > X^2_C \)

Conclusion: Since \( X^2 (1.55) \) is less than \( X^2 (3.841) \) and it falls between the acceptance level, Ho is accepted and it was concluded that the system is not evenly distributed among the youth.

Determination of critical value

Degree of freedom is given by 1.c – 1 at 5% level of significant

\[ X^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} \]

Decision Rule: Reject Ho if \( X^2 > X^2_C \).

Conclusion: Since \( X^2 (33.8) \) is greater than \( X^2 (3.841) \) and it falls between the rejected Ho. This implies that there is no direct relationship between poverty and youth empowerment of Ogun State.
Conclusion: since $X^2 (33.8)$ is greater than $X^2 (3.841)$ Ho is rejected. Therefore, there is direct relationship between poverty and youth empowerment.

**Hypothesis Four**

$H_{04}$: The system is not politically oriented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>$F_o$</th>
<th>$F_e$</th>
<th>$(F_o - F_e)^2$</th>
<th>$(F_o - F_e)^2/fe$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 9.8$

**Determination of critical value**

Degree of freedom ($v$) is given by $k - 1 = 2 - 1 = 1$

$X^2 C = X^2 = 0.05, \quad 1 = 3.841$

Decision Rule: Reject Ho if $X^2 (9.8)$ is greater than $X^2 (3.841)$ Ho was rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that the system was politically oriented.

**Discussion of findings**

The result of data analysis is hereby discussed based on the stated hypotheses.

The research hypothesis one sought to find out whether youth empowerment policy is the best policy for poverty alleviation in Ogun State. Since $X^2 (13.3)$ is greater than $X^2 (3.841)$ and if fall between the rejected Ho. The null hypothesis which states that youth empowerment is not the best policy for poverty alleviation is rejected. This implies that youth empowerment policy is the best policy for poverty alleviation among the youths in Ogun State.

The research hypothesis two sought to find whether the system is evenly distributed among the youths in Ogun State. Since $X^2 (1.55)$ is less than $X^2 (3.841)$ and it fall between the acceptance level, Ho is accepted and it was concluded that the system is not evenly distributed among the youths.

The research hypothesis three sought to find out whether there is a direct relationship between poverty and youth empowerment. Since $X^2 (33.8)$ is greater than $X^2 (3.841)$. The null hypothesis, which state that, there is no direct relationship between poverty and youth empowerment is rejected. This implies that there is a direct relationship between poverty and youth empowerment.

The research hypothesis four sought to test whether the programme is politically oriented. Since $X^2 (9.8)$ is greater than $X^2 (3.841)$, the null hypothesis which state that the system is not politically oriented is rejected. This means that, the system is politically oriented.

However, the findings reveal that there have been many problems associated with youth, especially the graduates who are still searching for the government or white collar job instead of being self creative, motivated and employed. Though, it needs to be emphasized that most of these problems are generally phasing out because of the recently introduced programme of the immediate and current administration in Ogun State.

**Conclusion**

Youth should be the first to be reckoned with in any nation aspiring to be great. There is need to empower the youths by giving them functional educational, training and motivation. There is no gain saying that the road to meaningful empowerment is rough, energy sapping and tedious but that notwithstanding, an exemplary youths of today is tomorrow’s future leaders.

Successful, military intervention, political instability, corruption, poor policy design and implementation have in no small measure contributed to the escalation of poverty in Nigeria.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this work, the following recommendations are made:

- Creation of resources for the people of Ogun State that will provide investment and infrastructure for better quality of life.
- Providing vocational skills for array of unemployed, school leavers and graduate of tertiary institutions.
Institutionalizing suitable credit delivery system
Providing counseling and extension service on ‘start your business’ for the youth
There should be collaboration and empowerment among three tiers of government on youth empowerment.
Qualified personnel should only be allowed to anchor the programme
Youth should also contribute their quota to the national development.

References


OGESEP, (2009). Creating Wealth in Ogun State, the Obada farm institute experience. Published by Bureau of Employment generation, Ogun State.
