

Support - Pillars for the Young and Vulnerable: Revisiting the Role of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) In Kogi State, Nigeria

Hassan Achimugu, Ph.D

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Prince Abubakar
Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria
hassanachimugu@gmail.com

Omega Godwin Okolo

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Prince Abubakar
Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria
omagaokolo@gmail.com

Abstract

With a youth population index towering above those of other countries in the African, sub-region, Nigeria faces significant challenges in youth unemployment and is aptly described as the youngest country in Africa, with 70% of its population (approximately 151 million) individuals, being youth and 60% under the age of 25. This demographic structure necessitates urgent and efficient strategies. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established as a cornerstone to address youth unemployment and foster economic stability. However, the landscape of youth employment remains predominantly informal and unstructured with a staggering 92.7% of young Nigerians engaged in informal work and 13.7% entirely unemployed. This article revisits the role of the NDE, examining its strategies, programs and impact on youth employment. It highlights the organizations effort at providing vocational training, entrepreneurial development, and job placement services. By analyzing the efficiency of these initiatives, the article aims to identify both successes and areas needing improvement through qualitative and quantitative data, including employment statistics and program outline, the study evaluates how effectively the NDE is bridging the gap between the growing youth population and sustainable employment opportunities. The findings suggests that while the NDE has made significant strides, there are substantial hurdles to overcome, particularly the scaling up successful programs and training widespread access to resources and training.

Keywords: Youth Empowerment, Unemployment, National Directorate of Employment, Kogi State.

Introduction

In most societies, the youths are widely recognized as vanguards of progress and development. They play critical roles in driving societal transformation and as such should be actively included in all national development policies, plans, and programs. This transitional period marks a key developmental stage when a person becomes an active and fully responsible member of society. Although there is no universal definition of youth, the United Nations recognized the power of youth in advancing global development in 1965 when they adopted the Declaration on the Promotion among the Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Freedom, Mutual Respect, and Understanding between Peoples. This declaration cemented the notion that the future of humanity is inexorably tied to the responsibility of the youth (Balogun 2021).

Most African countries have adopted the United Nations' definition of youth, which classifies them as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24. However, the British Commonwealth's definition of

youth extends the age range to 29 years. In Nigeria, the National Youth Policy of 2019 defines youth as individuals between the ages of 18 and 29, a widely accepted definition used by various government and non-governmental organizations (Etuk (2015)). The Nigerian youth population, which constitutes the most active segment of the nation's population, represents a key driving force for positive change and development. Their strength, ingenuity, character, and orientation define the pace of progress and security of the nation. As they represent the future of the country, they deserve to be accorded due recognition and a fair share of the national wealth. However, Nigerian youths are currently facing daunting challenges as millions of them are unemployed, forcing them to roam the streets of major cities within and outside Nigeria in search of job opportunities. The resulting frustration has led to a significant number of them engaging in criminal activities, including fraud, pickpocketing, hacking, and other nefarious activities. Women in this cohort have also resorted to disguised prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation as a means of survival. Currently, several youth empowerment programs are in progress worldwide, primarily driven by non-governmental organizations, although some are also supported by government institutions, schools, and private organizations. Throughout the world, there exist numerous empowerment programs that address a diverse range of issues. However, there has been a lack of comprehensive documentation or publication of unsuccessful youth empowerment programs in recent years (Todaro & Smith, 2015).

The United Nations (UN) has a range of development programs, including those focused on youth empowerment. As part of these programs, the UN provides support to national policy development initiatives aimed at promoting empowerment in the five regions. The UN recognizes the significance of youth empowerment in achieving sustainable development goals and aims to address the needs of young people by providing them with opportunities for education, employment, and civic engagement. Through its various programs, the UN seeks to empower young individuals to take charge of their lives and contribute to the growth and prosperity of their communities (Helpen & Walther (2012)).

The Federal Government of Nigeria has made several attempts to curb youth unemployment in various states of Nigeria including Kogi State. These attempts are mostly in terms of intervention programs such as the Subsidy Reinvestment Program (SURE-P) and Youth With innovation Program (You-Win). For example, the federal government has spent much on intervention programs like SURE-P, N3,831,699,088.75 spent in the year 2012, 2013 and 2014 but youth unemployment does not seem to be significantly reduced in Nigeria and especially in Kogi State.

Statement of the Problem

Mass unemployment is a critical social problem that has persisted in Nigeria for decades, posing a significant challenge to the country and its citizens. According to Ajayi (2014), the unemployment rate has continued to rise with a gradual increase over the years. The national unemployment rate, which stood at 8.5% in 1985, has risen to 9.9% in 2015, 14.2% in 2016, 18.8% in 2017, 23.1% in 2018, 28.4 in 2019, and further increased to 33.3% in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Between the first quarter of 2015 and the first quarter of 2016, Nigeria witnessed a sharp increase in the number of unemployed individuals, with the figure rising from 5.53 million to 9.49 million. This was accompanied by a corresponding rise in the unemployment rate, which surged from 7.5 percent to 12.1 percent over the same period (NBS, 2016). The severity of the unemployment crisis in Nigeria is underscored by Durotoye (2014), who notes that "over 100,000 youths sometimes jostle for 25 vacancies." This observation is further supported by a report from the National Bureau of Statistics, which reveals that in the first quarter of 2016, the unemployment rate among youths between the

ages of 15 and 24 in Nigeria stood at 21.5 percent, the highest rate among any age group (NBS, 2016).

The alarming scale of unemployment in Nigeria is also evident in the unprecedented number of applications received by the Police Service Commission (PSC) from job seekers during the recruitment exercise for the Nigeria Police Force. Within three weeks of the exercise, the PSC received 705,352 applications for just 10,000 vacancies, an indication of the fierce competition for employment opportunities in the country. Moreover, the online job portal of the Federal Government, www.npower.gov.ng, received 403,528 registrations from unemployed individuals within the first 36 hours of its launch, further highlighting the dire need for job creation and economic empowerment in Nigeria. In response to the rising rate of unemployment in Nigeria, the Federal Government established the National Directorate of Employment in 1986, and its programs were launched nationwide the following year (www.nde.org.ng). The National Directorate of Employment was mandated to empower unemployed individuals through various schemes and programs. Over the past thirty years, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) has leveraged various channels to equip Nigerian youths with vocational, agricultural, entrepreneurial, and public works skills.

The NDE's impact on the Nigerian labour market is substantial, and its programs have yielded positive results. The agency's efforts to foster partnerships with various stakeholders demonstrate a proactive approach to tackling the challenge of unemployment. By creating more job opportunities, the NDE is contributing to the country's economic growth and promoting social welfare. Despite the continued operation and financing of the National Directorate of Employment, the unemployment rate in Nigeria has continued to rise.

Based on the data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics, it is evident that the unemployment rate in Kogi State is commensurate with the national average. Specifically, in 2015, Kogi State recorded an unemployment rate of 11.4 per cent, which was followed by 12.4 percent in 2016. The rate surged significantly to 19.7 per cent in 2017 and slightly increased to 20.8 per cent in 2018. Based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), which indicates that 59.2 per cent of the national population falls within the age range of 6 to 30 years, it is reasonable to assert that the youth in Kogi State are disproportionately affected by the prevailing high unemployment rate in the state. To ameliorate this situation, the National Directorate of Employment has implemented various empowerment programs through its Lokoja office, aimed at providing training and skills acquisition opportunities for the youths of the state. These efforts have been ongoing over the years, and are intended to address the unemployment scourge in Kogi State.

According to available data, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) has implemented various schemes and programs including the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS), Small Scale Enterprise (SSE), and Special Public Works (SPW) aimed at providing empowerment and employment opportunities for youths in Kogi State. In 2016, there were 633 beneficiaries, in 2017, there were 1,294 beneficiaries. While in 2018, the beneficiaries were divided into two batches, the first batch which took place in March, had a total number of 56 beneficiaries, while in November, the total number of beneficiaries stood at 300, in 2019, 550 unemployed youths benefited from the NDE skill acquisition in tailoring, computer application, computer repairs, hair dressing, fashion/design, aluminum fabrication and welding, 450 others were trained on cosmetology (Idoko, 2013).

The NDE's empowerment programs in Kogi State have trained and empowered a significant number of individuals, with a focus on skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development. Despite the growing emphasis on skill development and vocational training to empower individuals and enhance socioeconomic growth, the state of infrastructure and equipment for training beneficiaries in Kogi State remains a significant concern. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) programs, designed to provide skill acquisition and vocational training opportunities, encounter various impediments in their implementation within the state.

Against the backdrop of the persistent problem of unemployment in Kogi State, this study seeks to critically assess and analyze the actual impact of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in reducing this societal challenge. Specifically, the study aims to evaluate the magnitude of the NDE's contribution towards alleviating the scourge of unemployment in the state through a rigorous and systematic analysis of relevant data and empirical evidence.

Research Questions

In light of the issues outlined and examined above, the following research questions have been formulated to guide the study:

- i. To what extent has NOAS, SSE and SPW programs of the NDE contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State?
- ii. How has the quality of infrastructure and equipment available for training beneficiaries impacted NDE programs?
- iii. What are the major impediments to the implementation of NDE programs in Kogi State?

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this research is to assess the impact of NDE on Youth Empowerment in Kogi State.

In addition to this overarching goal, the study has identified several specific objectives, including:

- i. Examine the extent to which NOAS, SSE and SPW programmes of the NDE contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State
- ii. Assess the quality of infrastructure and equipment available for training beneficiaries of NDE programs in Kogi State
- iii. To investigate the major impediments to the implementation of NDE programs in Kogi State.

Literature Review

The Concept of Youth Empowerment

In order to better understand the concept of youth empowerment, it is essential to first conceptualize the term. Empowerment is a construct that spans various disciplines, including community development, psychology, education, economics, and studies on social movements and organizations, among others. However, despite its widespread use, there is no clear and universally accepted definition of empowerment, and its interpretation varies depending on the context and perspective Nwosu & Ugwuera, (2014).

For the purpose of this study, youth empowerment programs refer to interventions that involve young people as partners and participants in the decision-making process, influencing the design, planning, and implementation of these programs. Such programs take various forms, all aiming to create

opportunities for young people in their respective fields of specialization and communities at large. According to Ekong (2016), youth empowerment programs are designed to harness the potential and talents of young people. These programs may include good education empowerment programs, entrepreneurship training programs, advanced technological development programs, financial youth empowerment programs, skills acquisition, and academic empowerment programs. In Nigeria, for example, there are several examples of youth empowerment schemes such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the Subsidy Reinvestment Scheme, and the N-Power Scheme Enyi (2016). These initiatives aim to empower young people, providing them with opportunities to contribute to their communities and society at large.

Youth empowerment refers to a multi-faceted process that enables young people to gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and effect change in their own lives and the lives of others around them. Effective approaches to youth empowerment involve engaging young people in work that challenges them to develop skills, gain critical awareness, and participate in opportunities that are necessary for the community. The different forms of youth empowerment can be classified into categories such as financial, academic/educational, moral, agricultural, and skill acquisition empowerment (Osolor, 2010).

Ofem and Ajayi (2008) characterize youth as a segment of society that is active, vibrant, daring, and useful for developmental activities. Furthermore, they make up the largest segment of the population (Jeffrey, 2012). As such, empowering youth is positively correlated with the development of their community and society as a whole. Recognizing the vital role that youth empowerment plays in development, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) asserts that youth are one of the greatest assets any nation can have and need to be empowered. Youth are not only legitimately regarded as future leaders but are also potentially the greatest investment for a country's development. The need to empower youth for enhanced development has gained global attention in recent years. Many countries are now investing heavily in education, health, skills development, and leadership education for youth. For example, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted an international strategy known as the World Programme of Action for the Youth from 1995 to the year 2000 and beyond. This world program focused on strengthening national capacity regarding youth and increasing the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for their full participation in society (Nnadi, 2012).

According to the Commonwealth Secretariat (2007), youth empowerment involves creating and supporting conditions that enable young people to act on their behalf and terms, rather than being directed by others. This process encompasses attitudinal, structural, and cultural dimensions, which equip individuals with the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and effect change in their lives (Tope, 2011). Through enhancing motivation to perform, youth empowerment creates an enabling environment for individuals to realize their potential (Akintayo & Adiat, 2013). It is achieved when young people become aware of their enhanced ability to control, influence, or cope with their socio-economic roles. Notably, youth empowerment is not limited to economic empowerment, but also encompasses social, ideological, educational, technological, and political empowerment. The three key dimensions of youth empowerment are the economic, social, and political dimensions, which form the foundation for youth development. Thus, youth empowerment is a crucial means of ensuring the success of young people in life, and it is a concept of great significance to both individuals and nations for securing future prosperity for themselves and future generations (Mike, 2014).

Youth empowerment is a program or idea designed to equip young people with the necessary skills, trades, or professions to become self-reliant and contribute to the development of their communities. Education is a key component of youth empowerment, as it enables young people to develop their intellectual capabilities, perception, and manipulative abilities, while emphasizing the effective development and utilization of lifelong skills. In Nigeria, youth empowerment has emerged as a response to the country's developmental challenges, with a focus on laying a solid foundation for sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation, and value reorientation.

The concept of youth empowerment gained traction in Nigeria as the country faced increasing levels of socio-economic and political decay, including issues such as oil bunkering, ritual killings, kidnapping, militancy, ballot box snatching, falsification of election results, thuggery, car snatching, child stealing, open day robbery, and corruption in high and low places. These challenges posed significant obstacles to the growth and development of the country (Chidera, 2021). The youth empowerment approach is aimed at tackling these challenges by providing young people with the skills, resources, and opportunities needed to become productive members of society. By investing in the education and training of young people, youth empowerment programs seek to create a pathway towards a brighter future for both individuals and society as a whole. Youth empowerment is an essential component of Nigeria's efforts towards sustainable development. It is a proactive response to the challenges faced by young people and seeks to provide them with the necessary tools and resources to succeed in life. As such, youth empowerment programs represent a critical investment in the future of the country.

The concept of youth empowerment addressed by this research is based on the idea that young individuals or young people as a collective should not take responsibility for this process, nor share this responsibility only with the community. Rather, we believe that public policies are largely responsible for the possibilities of empowerment that young people have at their disposal, because they largely depend on resources, services and programmes that can limit or enhance their abilities and, ultimately, their opportunities for empowerment. An extensive documentary analysis of youth empowerment has been carried out as part of the research Ofem, & Ayayi, (2008) and on the basis of this we have formulated our own definition and a pedagogical model for the places, times and processes involved in youth empowerment (Piketty, 2014).

Youth Empowerment and its Agencies in Nigeria

Empowerment is a powerful process that unlocks unlimited potential. It involves reducing vulnerability and dependency, taking action instead of being passive, and being at the center rather than on the periphery. According to Gough (2013), empowering women means expanding their choices, opinions, and alternatives so that they can shape their lives and destinies. Empowered individuals can also engage in crucial national issues and contribute to living together peacefully. When the youth are empowered, they can effectively interact, share, and participate in the same national issues, which could discourage them from engaging in violence-related activities. Therefore, massive and conscious empowerment of the youth is essential to create a more peaceful and productive society.

Over the years, the Nigerian Federal Government has established several youth programs to support the country's young people. Three of the most prominent initiatives include the National Youth Service Corps Scheme (NYSC), the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), and the National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP). These programs aim to provide opportunities for Nigerian youth to develop their skills, gain work experience, and improve their socio-economic status. The

NYSC, for instance, offers one-year service to the nation for Nigerian graduates, while the NDE provides vocational training, entrepreneurship development, and job creation programs. The NAPEP, on the other hand, focuses on poverty reduction through various intervention strategies. These initiatives are essential for promoting the welfare of Nigerian youth and empowering them to contribute meaningfully to national development.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)

In May 1973, the Federal Military Government of Nigeria introduced the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme through Decree 24. This innovative initiative was designed to achieve various objectives, as highlighted by Dereck (2015).

- i) To instill discipline, industry, patriotism, and loyalty in Nigerian youth by promoting a tradition of service to the nation and hard work in any situation.
 - ii) To elevate the moral standards of Nigerian youth by exposing them to higher ideals of national achievement, and social and cultural development.
 - iii) To cultivate in Nigerian youth a mindset that values shared experiences and suitable training to make them more responsive to a national mobilization.
 - iv) To foster unity among Nigerian youth and promote national integration through measures such as:
 - a. Assigning youths to work in states other than their state of origin, where possible.
 - b. Ensuring that each group of youths working together represents the diversity of the country.
 - c. Exposing youth to the different ways of life in various parts of Nigeria to eliminate prejudices, remove ignorance, and emphasize the similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups.
 - d. Encouraging NYSC members to seek employment opportunities across the country, thereby promoting the free movement of labour.
 - e. Encouraging employers based on their experience with corps members, to hire qualified Nigerians regardless of their state of origin.
 - f. Encouraging Nigerian youth to become self-reliant and develop an entrepreneurial mindset.
- Overall, the NYSC Scheme in Nigeria seeks to develop a sense of national consciousness, promote unity, and cultivate responsible citizenship among Nigerian youth.

The N-Power Programme

The N-power Programme was launched by President Mohammadu Buhari's administration in 2016 due to the past failures of most government policies and programmes in addressing poverty and unemployment among youths. It is part of the National Social Investment Programme and is an employability and enhancement programme aimed at instilling a culture of learn-work-entrepreneurship in youths between the ages of 18-35, as stated in the N-POWER Information Guide of 2017.

The N-Power Programme has the following objectives:

- i. The primary objective of the N-power programme is to intervene and improve the livelihood of a significant number of unemployed Nigerian youths.
- ii. Another goal of the programme is to develop a system for transferring employability, entrepreneurial, and technical skills to the youths.
- iii. The N-power programme also aims to create an ecosystem of solutions that can address the challenges facing public services and government diversification policies in Nigeria.

iv. Additionally, the programme aims to develop and enhance Nigeria's knowledge economy by equipping young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to compete effectively in the global market.

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE)

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) which is the case study of this research, was founded in 1986 by the Federal Government of Nigeria with the goal of tackling the high unemployment rate in the country. Its main objectives were to reactivate public works, promote direct labor, encourage self-employment, organize artisans into cooperatives, and foster a culture of maintenance and repairs.

Through various programs and initiatives, the NDE has been instrumental in promoting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), providing vocational training and skills acquisition opportunities, and creating job opportunities for Nigerians. Its efforts among other youth empowerment agencies have helped to empower individuals and communities, reduce poverty, and stimulate economic growth.

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established in Nigeria to address the issue of mass unemployment, and the objectives of the NDE are explicitly stated in CAP 250 of the laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (formerly Decree No.34 of 1989 in section 2).

According to this law, the NDE has the following mandates:

- i. To design and implement programmes to combat mass unemployment;
- ii. To articulate policies aimed at developing work programmes with labour-intensive potentials;
- iii. To obtain and maintain a data bank on employment and vacancies in the country, with a view to acting as a clearing house to link job seekers with vacancies in collaboration with other government agencies; and
- iv. To implement any other policies as may be laid down from time to time by the Board established under sections of the enabling Act.

The routine functions of the NDE are derived from this mandate, and the primary goal is to combat mass unemployment through the implementation of programs and schemes that focus on skills acquisition, self-employment, and labour-intensive work.

Unemployment is a significant challenge in Nigeria that affects individuals of all ages, genders, and social status. The magnitude of the problem is significant, given that the workforce in Nigeria constitutes approximately 51% of the entire population of over 140 million people (NDE, 2010).

Gap in Literature

The literature review has shed light on the current frontier of knowledge and contemporary concerns regarding the National Directorate of Employment. These studies offer numerous lessons and conclusions. However, they predominantly operate at national or regional levels, neglecting the perspective of local government. Moreover, many rely on secondary data, whose reliability, particularly in developing economies, remains questionable. Research on the National Directorate of Employment often fails to incorporate the opinions of the populace regarding fundamental issues in program implementation, particularly in Kogi State. Consequently, there is a pressing need for further comprehensive investigation to delve deeper into these key concepts. Additionally, some studies rely solely on descriptive and inferential statistics, indicating a gap that this current study

aims to address, thus contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the National Directorate of Employment.

Methodology

The study on Empowering Youth in Kogi State: The Role of The National Directorate of Employment adopted descriptive survey research design.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprise of staff, beneficiaries and master trainers of NDE in one local government each from the three senatorial districts in Kogi State. 530 Staff, Beneficiaries and Master trainers of NDE in Dekina, 479 in Okene and 475 Kaba/Bunu. The population of the study is 1848.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

This study adopted the stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table was used to determine the sample size of this population

Method of Data Collection

The study used both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The questionnaire formed the source and instrument of primary data collection. The questionnaire was designed using closed-ended style in both multiple-choice format and a five-point Likert scale in a nominal form.

Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

The researcher utilized the Chi-Square statistical tool to test the hypotheses in this study. To prepare the data for analysis, coding keys were developed to encode the research information. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the collected data, providing mean assessments for each scale item. Additionally, responses to questionnaire items were weighted on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). Regarding hypothesis testing, a significance probability level of less than 0.05 was considered significant, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. Conversely, if the significance probability level exceeded 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This decision rule was determined by comparing the calculated value with the critical value. Finally, the validity of the hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square method in the research.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have not significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	10	3.4	3.4	3.4
Disagree	26	9.0	9.0	12.4
Undecided	18	6.2	6.2	18.6
Agree	192	66.2	66.2	84.8
Strongly Agree	44	15.2	15.2	100.0
Total	290	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researchers' Computation Using SPSS 21.0 Version

The table above shows that out of 290 respondents, 10 representing (3.4%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have not significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State, 26 representing (9%) of the respondents disagreed, 18 respondents representing (6.2%) of the respondents were undecided, 192 representing (66.2%) of the

total respondents agreed while 44 representing (15.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have not significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State.

Formula for Expected Frequency:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(Fo - Fe)^2}{Fe}$$

Fe

Fo = Observed Frequency

Fe = Expected Frequency

\sum = Summation

Fo	Fe	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe) ²	(Fo - Fe) ² / Fe
10	58	-48	2,304	39.7
26	58	-32	1,024	19.7
18	58	-40	1,600	27.5
192	58	134	17,956	309.5
44	58	-14	196	3.37
290	290	0	23,080	399.77

Source: Researchers' Computation Using SPSS 25.0 Version

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(Fo - Fe)^2}{Fe}$$

Fe

$$X^2 = 399.77$$

Summation of Responses

Number of Categories

$$(c - 1)(r - 1)$$

$$(5 - 1)(2 - 1) = 4 \times 1 = 4$$

Significance at 0.05

$$df = 9.49$$

The calculated value, amounting to 399.77, surpasses the table value. According to the decision rule, if the calculated value exceeds the critical value, the null hypothesis which state that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have not significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis which state that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State was accepted.

Table 2: The quality of infrastructure and quipment have no significant impact on the training of beneficiaries of NDE programs in Kogi State

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	20	6.9	6.9	6.9
Disagree	30	10.3	10.3	17.2
Undecided	26	9.0	9.0	26.2
Agree	124	42.8	42.8	69.0
Strongly Agree	90	31.0	31.0	100.0
Total	290	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researchers' Computation Using SPSS 20.0 Version

The table above shows that out of 290 respondents, 20 representing (6.9%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have not significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State, 30 representing (10.3%) of the respondents disagreed, 26 respondents representing (9%) of the respondents were undecided, 124 representing (42.8%) of the

total respondents agreed while 90 representing (3.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have not significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State.

Formula for Expected Frequency:

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum (F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

F_o = Observed Frequency

F_e = Expected Frequency

Σ = Summation

F _o	F _e	F _o - F _e	(F _o - F _e) ²	(F _o - F _e) ² / F _e
20	58	-38	1444	24.89
30	58	-28	784	13.51
26	58	-32	1024	17.10
124	58	66	4356	75.10
90	58	32	1024	17.65
290	290	196	23,080	148.8

Source: Researchers' Computation Using SPSS 21.0 Version

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum (F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

$$X^2 = 148.8$$

Summation of Responses

Number of Categories

$$(c - 1)(r - 1)$$

$$(5 - 1)(2 - 1) = 4 \times 1 = 4$$

Significance at 0.05

$$df = 9.49$$

The calculated value, amounting to 148.8, surpasses the table value which is 9.49. Therefore, the calculated value is more than the critical value, the null hypothesis which state that the quality of infrastructure and equipment have no significant impact on the training of beneficiaries of NDE programs in Kogi State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis which state that the quality of infrastructure and equipment have significant impact on the training of beneficiaries of NDE programs in Kogi State.

Table 3: There are no challenges to NDE in the implementation of programs in Kogi State

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	15	5.2	5.2	5.2
Disagree	55	19.0	19.0	24.1
Undecided	34	11.7	11.7	35.9
Agree	180	62.1	62.1	97.9
Strongly Agree	6	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	290	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researchers' Computation Using SPSS 21.0 Version

The table above shows that out of 290 respondents, 15 representing (5.2%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have not significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State, 55 representing (19%) of the respondents disagreed, 34 respondents representing (11.7%) of the respondents were undecided, 180 representing (62.1%) of the total respondents agreed while 6 representing

(2.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have not significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State.

Formula for Expected Frequency:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

F_o = Observed Frequency

F_e = Expected Frequency

Σ = Summation

F _o	F _e	F _o - F _e	(F _o - F _e) ²	(F _o - F _e) ² / F _e
15	58	-43	1849	31.87
55	58	-3	9	0.15
34	58	-24	576	9.93
180	58	122	14884	256.62
6	58	-52	2704	46.62
290	290	0	0	345.19

Source: Researchers Computation Using SPSS 21.0 Version

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

$$X^2 = 345.19$$

Summation of Responses

Number of Categories

$$(c - 1)(r - 1)$$

$$(5 - 1)(2 - 1) = 4 \times 1 = 4$$

Significance at 0.05

$$df = 9.49$$

Discussion Rule

The calculated value, amounting to 345.19, surpasses the table value. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there are no challenges to NDE in the implementation of programs in Kogi State was rejected in favour of the alternate hypothesis which state that there are challenges to NDE in the implementation of programs in Kogi State.

Findings of the Study

The result of hypothesis two shows that the null hypothesis which stated that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have not significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis which stated that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State was accepted.

The result of the hypothesis two tested shows that the null hypothesis which stated that the quality of infrastructure and equipment have no significant impact on the training of beneficiaries of NDE programs in Kogi State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis which stated that the quality of infrastructure and equipment have significant impact on the training of beneficiaries of NDE programs in Kogi State was accepted.

The result of the hypothesis tested shows that the null hypothesis which stated that there are no challenges to NDE in the implementation of programs in Kogi State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis which state that there are challenges to NDE in the implementation of programs in Kogi State was accepted.

Discussion of Findings:

1. The result of hypothesis one tested shows that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State. This was confirmed by the fact that the calculated value of Ch-Square of 399.77 is greater than the table value 9.49. This suggests that the null hypothesis which stated that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have not significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis which stated that NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State was accepted. This conforms to the writings of Ekere (2008), that youth empowerment programs are designed to harness the potential and talents of young people. These programs may include good education empowerment programs, entrepreneurship training programs, advanced technological development programs, financial youth empowerment programs, skills acquisition, and academic empowerment programs. Youth empowerment refers to a multi-faceted process that enables young people to gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and effect change in their own lives and in the lives of others around them (Vavrus & Fletcher, 2006).

According to this theory, actions, activities, or structures can be empowering and lead to a sense of empowerment. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) is an agency that aims to achieve positive outcomes through various programs such as the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS), the Small-Scale Enterprise Programme (SSE), and the Special Public Works Programme (SPW). The NDE staff and hired master trainers who run the programs are part of the empowerment process. Rather than providing employment, the NDE focuses on creating jobs through skill acquisition programs. As a result, unemployed individuals who complete the training and receive assistance can become economically empowered by creating their own jobs. The nature of the processes and outcomes varies across contexts and individuals, making it challenging to define a single standard. To capture the diverse skills and needs of applicants, the NDE offers different programs. Non-graduates often opt for the NOAS and SPW, while graduates may choose the SSE program. Zimmerman (1995) emphasized that empowering processes involve gaining control, obtaining necessary resources, and critically understanding one's social environment to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills. Therefore, the NDE's NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs are empowering if they enable participants to become job providers rather than job seekers.

2. The result of hypothesis two tested shows that the quality of infrastructure and equipment have a significant impact on the training of beneficiaries of NDE programs in Kogi State. This was confirmed by the fact that the calculated value of Ch-Square of 148.8 is greater than the table value of 9.49. This suggests that the null hypothesis which states that the quality of infrastructure and equipment has no significant impact on the training of beneficiaries of NDE programs in Kogi State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis which states that the quality of infrastructure and equipment has a significant impact on the training of beneficiaries of NDE programs in Kogi State was accepted. This conforms to the assertion of Ofem and Ajayi (2008) who characterize youth as a segment of society that is active, vibrant, daring, and useful for developmental activities. Furthermore, they make up the largest segment of the population (Kolade 2014). As such, empowering youth is positively correlated with the development of their community and society as a whole. Recognizing the vital role that youth empowerment plays in development, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) asserts that youth are one of the greatest assets any nation can have and need to be empowered. Youth are

not only legitimately regarded as future leaders but are also potentially the greatest investment for a country's development. The need to empower youth for enhanced development has gained global attention in recent years. Many countries are now investing heavily in education, health, skills development, and leadership education for youth. For example, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted an international strategy known as the World Programme of Action for the Youth from 1995 to the year 2000 and beyond. This world program focused on strengthening national capacity regarding youth and increasing the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for their full participation in society (Nnadi, 2012). Empowerment theory is a process-oriented framework that aims to facilitate the transition from a state of powerlessness to a state of relative control over one's life, destiny, and environment. The relevance of empowerment theory to this study lies in its potential to empower the unemployed to become employed.

3. The result of hypothesis three tested shows that there are challenges to NDE in the implementation of programs in Kogi State. This was confirmed by the fact that the calculated value of Chi-Square of 345.19 is greater than the table value 9.49. This suggests that the null hypothesis which stated that there are no challenges to NDE in the implementation of programs in Kogi State was rejected and the alternate hypothesis which stated that there are challenges to NDE in the implementation of programs in Kogi State was accepted. This conforms to the assertion of Perkin & Zimmerman, (1995) that Empowerment is both a value orientation for community work and a theoretical model for understanding how efforts to exert control and influence over decisions affecting one's life, organizational functioning, and community life can lead to positive consequences (Perkin & Zimmerman, 1995). Empowerment theory posits that individuals, organizations, and communities can gain mastery over their lives through a process that involves developing a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them, as well as a relationship between their efforts and life outcomes. Therefore, empowerment theory is relevant to the study of the NDE, as the organization is primarily established to transiting people from a state of passive or unemployment to one of active or simple employment, through the process of empowerment. Empowerment, as defined by the (Cornell Empowerment Group in 1989), is a deliberate and continuous process that takes place within a specific community. This process entails several key elements, including mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and active participation by group members. At its core, the goal of empowerment is to address the unequal distribution of valuable resources that exist within a given society and to facilitate greater access to and control over those resources for individuals and groups who have historically been marginalized or excluded from them.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the test of hypothesis, the study concludes therefore that, NOAS, SSE, and SPW programs of NDE have significantly contributed to youth empowerment in Kogi State, that the quality of infrastructure and equipment have significant impact on the training of beneficiaries of NDE programs in Kogi State, and that there are challenges to NDE in the implementation of programs in Kogi State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The study recommends that the Kogi State Government, in collaboration with the Kogi State Ministry of Youth and Sport Development, should work closely with the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms aimed at tracking the progress of NDE programs in the state. This collaborative effort is crucial for ensuring accountability,

transparency, and the overall effectiveness of interventions targeting youth empowerment and unemployment reduction.

2. The Kogi State Government should collaborate with the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to provide substantial equipment and infrastructure that can significantly enhance the effectiveness and impact of NDE programs in the state. Investing in the necessary resources and facilities will not only complement the existing efforts of NDE but also contribute to the overall success of skill acquisition and empowerment initiatives aimed at addressing unemployment and fostering socioeconomic development.

3. The Kogi State government should embark on organizing seminars and workshops for beneficiaries, master trainers, stakeholders, and policymakers as a proactive step towards addressing the challenges facing the implementation of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) programs in Kogi State. Such events can serve as valuable platforms for fostering dialogue, sharing insights, and collectively brainstorming solutions to identified challenges. By bringing together key stakeholders from various sectors, including beneficiaries who have firsthand experience with NDE programs, master trainers who deliver the training, policymakers who shape the overarching policies, and other relevant stakeholders, these seminars and workshops can facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand. During these sessions, participants can openly discuss the challenges they have encountered, share best practices, and explore innovative approaches to overcoming obstacles in the implementation of NDE programs. Through collaborative problem-solving and knowledge exchange, actionable strategies and recommendations can be developed to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of NDE initiatives in Kogi State.

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