

CONSTRAINTS TO PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SCHEME OF OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The study ascertained the constraints to participation in the Youth Empowerment Scheme of Oyo State. Data for the study were obtained from ninety youth participants in the Scheme using multi-stage sampling procedure. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and ranks. Results indicate that the average age of participants in the Scheme was 29 years and 56% of the respondents were females; 51% of them were married; and 91.6% were functionally literate. Findings also show that the most common benefits from the Youth Empowerment Scheme were: instilling honour and integrity in the participants, improving the participants' literacy rate, reducing participants' economic dependency and enhancing participants' abilities to support others financially. Received monthly stipend lower being lower than Government-approved amount, transportation problems and insufficient information on the Scheme's objectives were the main constraints to youth participation in the Scheme. The relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies in Oyo State should endeavor to provide timely and relevant information on the Scheme to enhance increased participation of youth in the Scheme. Also, monthly stipends given to participants of the Scheme should be increased to attract more youth to the Scheme.*

KEYWORDS: Constraints, Participation, Youth, Scheme, Oyo State

INTRODUCTION

The development of a community is a dynamic process involving all segments of the locality, including the often overlooked youth population. Udensi, Daasi, Emah and Zukbee (2013) posited that youth represent a vast and untapped resource for immediate and long term development efforts. Also, Nitzberg (2005) posited that youth must be fully engaged and involved in change efforts if they are to learn to function as effective members of the society. In view of these, the Oyo State Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES-O) was initiated in 2011 by the Oyo State Government. The Scheme (YES-O) consists of three basic phases namely: (i) Online Registration and Selection followed by Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP) where youth are engaged in different jobs and are paid a monthly stipend of ₦10,000 (about 27.50 United States Dollar), (ii) Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) where youth are trained on different skills, and (iii) Micro-Credit Programme (MCP) which involves the empowering of youth to stand on their own financially as well as absorbing some of them into the State's Civil Service.

Youth Empowerment Programmes, such as YES-O, are generally aimed at helping the youth realize their creative and productive energies to achieve sustainable growth and improvements in their socio-economic conditions (Kuti, 2006). The programmes are also expected to initiate

behavioural changes in youth through guidance and counseling aimed at putting them in proper physiological frame of aimed at putting them in proper psychological frame of mind to handle future challenges of life (Etuk, 2015). However, significant obstacles often exist that inhibit and discourage youth participation in empowerment programmes (Brennan, Rosemary and Eboni, 2007). Ayodeji, Paul and Adeniyi (2014) specifically reported that the Youth Empowerment Scheme, Oyo (YES-O) face certain problems which militated against the Scheme achieving its objectives. This study aimed at ascertaining the constraints to participation in the Scheme. The specific objectives of this study were to:

- (i) Describe the personal characteristics of youth participating in the Youth Empowerment Scheme – Oyo,
- (ii) Determine the benefits participants derive from YES-O, and
- (iii) Ascertain the constraints to participation in YES-O faced by youth in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area: The study was conducted in Oyo State, located in the South West region of Nigeria between latitude 7⁰02'N and 9⁰10' and longitude 2⁰04'E and 4⁰30'E. Oyo State is bounded in the North by Kwara State; and in the East by Osun State; in the South by Ogun State; and in the West partly by Ogun State and partly by the Republic of Benin. The State has a population of 5,591,589 consisting of 2,809,840 males and 2,781,749 females (National Population Census, 2006) and is mainly inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group who are primarily agrarian as is typical of many rural areas in the Sub-Saharan African. The climate of Oyo State is equatorial with distinct wet (rainy) and dry seasons; and a relatively high humidity. The dry season lasts from November to March while the wet season starts from April and ends in October; the mean annual rainfall is 1480mm with a mean monthly temperature range of 18-24⁰C during the rainy season and 30-35⁰C during the dry season.

Population of the Study: The population of the study included all youth participating in the Youth Empowerment Scheme in Oyo State (YES-O).

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size: A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample for the study. The first stage involved the random selection of three Agricultural Development Program (ADP) zones out of the four ADP zones in the State. The selected zones were Oyo Zone, Ogbomosho Zone and Ibadan-Ibarapa Zone. At the second stage, one Local Government Area from each of the three zones (Afijio, Ogbomosho South and Ibarapa Central respectively) were also randomly selected. The third stage of the sampling procedure involved the random selection of thirty participants in the Youth Empowerment Scheme from each of the three Local Government Areas thereby resulting in a sample size of 90.

Data Analysis: Frequency counts, percentages, means and ranks were used to analyze the personal characteristics of the respondents, the benefits they derive from participating in YES-O as well as the constraints to participation faced by youth in the study area. To determine the benefits derived, a list of items elicited from Focus Group Discussion and literature review, were presented to the respondents to indicate which of the items are regarded as benefits. Items regarded as benefits each attracted a nominal score of 1 while those not regarded as benefits each attracted a nominal score of 0. The mean score of the items were used to rank the benefits. To ascertain the constraints to participation in YES-O faced by youth in the study area, eleven (11) possible constraints from literature were identified and the respondents were asked to indicate the level of severity of these constraints. Scores were assigned to the points indicating levels of severity as follows: major constraint = 3, minor constraint = 2, not a constraint = 1. The mean scores of the items in the Constraints Scale were then used to rank the constraints.

Results and Discussion

Personal characteristics of youth: Table 1 shows the personal characteristics of youth in Oyo State, Nigeria. The Table reveals that the respondent's mean age was 29 years and the modal age was 30 years. This reveals that most of the respondents were still in their reproductive ages. Over forty-six percent (46.1%) of the respondents were males and 51.7% were married. The high percentage of married respondents suggests that marriage is a highly cherished social value in the study area. Ayinde and Oyesola (2015) reported that marriage enhances the status of both men and women in South West Nigeria as it has a direct bearing on how people are related to in the society. Majority of the respondents (97.2%) were functionally literate indicating a high level of literacy among youth in the study area. This is in consonance with Adigun, Bamiro and Oyetoki (2017) who asserted that attendance of formal schools and high level of literacy is prevalent among youth in Oyo State. About 63.3% of the respondents were Christians, with average household size comprising of four persons. Table 1 also shows that 42.8% of the respondents had no children which could be attributed to their relative young average age as shown in the Table.

Table 1: Personal characteristics of youth participating in YES-O

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Sex	Male	83	46.1	
	Female	97	53.9	
Age	18-22 years	16	63.3	29
	23-27 years	46	33.3	
	28-32 years	80	2.8	
	33-37 years	38	0.6	
Religion	Christianity	114	63.3	
	Islam	60	33.3	
	Traditional	6	3.4	
Marital status	Single	81	45.0	
	Married	93	51.7	
	Divorced	4	2.2	
	Separated	1	0.6	
	Widowed	1	0.6	
Educational status	No formal education	5	2.8	
	Primary education	10	5.6	
	Secondary education	34	18.9	
	Tertiary education	131	72.8	
Household size	1-3 person(s)	62	34.4	4
	4-6 persons	102	56.7	
	7-9 persons	16	8.9	
Number of children	None	77	42.0	2
	1-2	65	36.1	
	3-4	32	17.8	
	5-6	6	3.3	

Benefits derived from YES-O by the respondents: Table 2 shows the benefits derived from the Youth Empowerment Scheme in Oyo State. The benefits were ranked from most common benefit to the least common benefit using mean scores. The Table reveals that instilling honour

and integrity in the participations ($\bar{x} = 0.88$), improving the literacy rate of the participants ($\bar{x} = 0.87$), reducing participants' economic dependency ($\bar{x} = 0.86$) and enhancing participants' abilities to support others financially ($\bar{x} = 0.86$) were the most common benefits derived from the Scheme. Ayodeju, Paul and Adeniyi (2014) also reported that increase in social and business connections of participants of YES-O is a major benefit derived from the Scheme. On the other hand, Table 2 shows that the least common benefits the participants of YES-O derived from the Scheme are provision of adequate business start-up cash ($\bar{x} = 0.37$), learning vocational/technical skills ($\bar{x} = 0.51$) and acquisition of basic inputs for business start-up ($\bar{x} = 0.74$).

Table 2: Benefits respondents derived from YES-O

Benefits	Mean	Rank*
1. Reducing of dependency on others	0.86	3.5
2. Ability to support others financially	0.86	3.5
3. Learning vocational/technical skills	0.51	12
4. Facilitates acquisition of basic inputs for business start-ups	0.74	11
5. Attitudinal re-orientation	0.77	9.5
6. Preparing participants for global competitiveness economically	0.80	7
7. Improving literacy of participants	0.87	2
8. Instilling honour and integrity in participants	0.88	1
9. Instilling the spirit of team work	0.83	5.5
10. Provision of adequate business start-up cash	0.37	13
11. Enhancing food security of participants	0.77	9.5
12. Stimulating entrepreneurial development	0.78	8
13. Enhancing livelihood capabilities	0.83	5.5

Note: * = Rank 1 is considered the most common benefit derived from YES-O while rank B is the least common benefit.

Constraints to participation in YES-O faced by youth: Table 3 reveals that the most severe constraints to participation in YES-O faced by youth in Oyo State were: received monthly stipend lower than Government-approved amount ($\bar{x} = 2.21$), transportation challenges to the venues of the programmes of the Scheme ($\bar{x} = 2.13$) and insufficient information on the Scheme's objectives ($\bar{x} = 2.09$). The results are synonymous with the findings of Scales and

Leffert (1999) who identified lack of adequate knowledge about programmes and transportation challenges as major barriers that prevent youth from participating in programmes/projects aimed at improving their welfare. The respondents actually opined that the monthly official stipend per participant of YES-O is not only too meagre, but that it is usually paid late and often not in full. The late payment as well as incomplete payment of this monthly stipend seriously discourages youth in the study area from participating in the Scheme. The negative opinion of the respondents towards the monthly stipend agrees with the findings of Omang, Wang, Eneji and Makundi (2011) about a similar Scheme in Cross River State of Nigeria - where funding and corruption were observed as the major problems militating against the success of the Youth Empowerment Scheme in Cross River State. On the other hand, the least severe constraints to participation of youth in YES-O were: community conflicts/clashes ($\bar{x} = 1.67$) and discouragement from parents ($\bar{x} = 1.61$). Community conflict/clashes in Oyo State are reduced to barest minimum by the Government of Oyo State hence they did not affect youth participation in the Scheme; and, parents of youth in the study had no reason to discourage the youth from participating in the Scheme since the activities of the Scheme did not conflict with the socio-cultural beliefs or practices of people in the study area.

Table 3: Constraints to youth participation in YES-O

Constraints	Mean	Rank
1. Discouragement from parents	1.61	9
2. Insufficient information on the Scheme's objectives	2.09	3
3. Transportation challenges to the venues of the programmes of the Scheme	2.13	2
4. Community conflicts/clashes	1.67	8
5. Non-recognition of inputs of participants in policy formulation	1.98	6
6. Time constraint	1.74	7
7. Cumbersome enrolment requirements	2.02	4
8. Received monthly stipend lower than Government-approved amount	2.21	1
9. Unfriendly attitude of community members	1.99	5

Note: Rank 1 is considered the most severe constraint while rank 9 is the least severe constraint.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study ascertained the constraints to participation in the Youth Empowerment Scheme of Oyo State. The study reveals that even though YES-O had lots of benefits to youth of Oyo

State, certain constraints to participation in the Scheme such as insufficient monthly stipends, insufficient information on the Scheme's objectives and difficulty in transporting oneself to the venues of the programmes of the Scheme were faced by youth in the study area. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Oyo State Government should endeavour to provide timely and relevant information on the Scheme to the public since insufficient information on the Scheme's objectives was one of the most severe constraints to youth participating in the Scheme.
- ii. The monthly stipends given to participants of the Scheme should be increased as well as paid to the participants when due, and
- iii. Governmental and Non-governmental agencies in the State should subsidize the cost of transportation to venues where participants of the Scheme meet in order to ameliorate transportation problems faced by participants of the Scheme.

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