

Youths Sensitization and Empowerment: Challenges, Effects and Solutions

¹Abdullahi Abdulfatai Oluwashina, ²Salima Joshua, ³Ojo Oluwasesan Adebusuyi, ⁴Aji Abdulmumini, & ⁵Jude Oko-oboh

Economics Department; ²Social Studies Department; ³Computer Science Department; ⁴Centre for Human Resources Development; ⁵Accounting Department, Umar Ibn Ibrahim College of Education, Science and Technology Bama, Borno State

Article DOI: 10.48028/iiprds/rjhlsid.v6.i1.15

Abstract

The relevance of youth in any society can never be overemphasized as the youths form the driving force for successful growth and development of nations across the globe. Therefore, it becomes important to evaluate youth's sensitization and empowerment in Nigeria. Basically, the study was conducted to achieve two major objectives viz: to evaluate the challenges of youth's sensitization and empowerment, to examine the effects of effective youth's sensitization and empowerment on the individuals, community and the national at large. To achieve the objectives of the study, survey research design was adopted and 170 respondents were drawn out of the study population using simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire was utilized for data collection. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using simple percentage, mean and standard deviation. It was discovered from the findings of the study that some of the challenges of youth's sensitization and empowerments were technology barriers, lack of social amenities, high illiteracy level, poverty, and bad governance, amongst others. However, the resultant effects of effective youth's sensitization and empowerments are increase in problem solving skills, drastic reduction in poverty rates, and crime rates reduction amongst others. Therefore, the study concludes and recommends that the government and other non-governmental organizations should ensure that the youths are well sensitized and empowered. This in no small measure will facilitates increase in the gross domestic product (GDP) of the nation as well as people no longer be afraid of terrorist activities such as kidnapping, herdsmen invasion, internet fraud, arm robbery amongst others.

Keywords: *Youths, Sensitization, Empowerment*

Corresponding Author: Abdullahi Abdulfatai Oluwashina

Background to the Study

Nigeria, being termed as the “giant of Africa” according to Ojenike, Shodiya and Jolaoso (2016), is the most populous nation in Africa. Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources spread throughout the country. Despite the fact that the nations are endowed with these resources, Nigeria is still struggling to be developed and be a power to be reckoned with in the community of nations as a result of lack of effective and efficient youth sensitization and empowerments (Ojenik, et al., 2016). Globally, the youths have been viewed as agent of changed based on the kind of settings they are found. This is due to the fact that the youths consisted the largest part of the Nigeria population and remained vibrant. Additionally, the youths remained the major force that facilitates general growth and development of both developed and developing nations. However, the impacts of youths cannot be felts when they are not well sensitized and empowered. This is evident from the findings of Abubakar (2021), where it was stated that Nigerian youths constitute the most active segment of the entire population of over 140 million people (2006 census figure). They are the social engineers and a veritable channel or catalyst for positive changes in the rural community, in school or in urban setting. Their energy, vigour, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of any society (Abubakar, 2021).

Unfortunately, Nigerian youths had been exported to the most trying time imaginable. Millions of them have been left wallowing in poverty as they roam the streets of major cities in search of non-existent jobs and opportunities. Several graduates of tertiary institutions have been forced into crimes and criminality, and those of them who are not very physically daring have taken to frauds and all sorts of shady pre-occupation (Ojenike, et al, 2016). Furthermore, Jedge, Irewolede and Dada (2019) opined that achieving sustainable development in Nigeria would remain a mere wish that may never be achieved if youths are neglected as they are needed to play a major role in development process towards achieving the goals of sustainable development (UNDP, 2014).

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the youth's sensitization and empowerment: The challenges, effects and solutions. However, other objectives include:

1. To evaluate the various challenges of youth's sensitization and empowerments in Nigeria
2. To examine the resultant effects of Effective Youths Sensitization and Empowerments in Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions will be answered in the course of the Study:

1. What are the Challenges of Youths Sensitization and Empowerments in Nigeria?
2. What are the resultant effects of effective youths' sensitization and empowerment in Nigeria?

Literature Review

The Concepts of Youths Sensitization and Empowerment

The concept of sensitization has been defined in various ways by many scholars. However, for the purpose of the current study sensitization is simply the process of making someone, group of people or individuals to become aware of a particular issue, especially a problem or challenges (Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary, 2006). Furthermore, it can be said that sensitization is the act of making someone “sensitive” about a problem. This simply means that sensitization helps people to become aware of specific situations and make them take required actions to achieve positive results.

Therefore, youth sensitization can be viewed as the process of making the youths more aware of the situation especially empowerment programmes and help them take the needed steps towards achieving a better result by prompting them to make wise decisions. There is no way that youths can be empowered when they are not well sensitized. Sensitization remained a pivotal element that must be utilized to get the youths empowered.

According to Olusola (2019), Youth empowerment can be defined as a process where people gain the ability and authority to make informed decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people. It is a means of encouraging youths to do great things for themselves and also to make great impact in their society. Furthermore, he was of the opinion that the youths, are at the center of absolute strength that think big, hope for the best and envision a better tomorrow, therefore making continuous efforts to turn dreams into reality. According to the global organization (UN) reports in Olusola (2019), Nigerian youth migrants in Europe and America are three times more than migrants from other west -African country. This report also added that the migration rate of the youth was 32 per cent in 1999, compared to less than 15 percent for the non-youth population. It was estimated that by the end of 2012, over 50 percent of the youths in Nigeria will be residing in foreign countries where job opportunities are easier to come by. This is excluding the massive migration rate of Nigerians to Canada and other foreign countries since 2017, if not more (Olusola, 2019).

Besides, Philippe and Mulyungi (2018), viewed Youth empowerment as that which encompasses attitudes, structures, and cultural process where the youth obtain abilities, authorities, as well as the avenue to independently make and implement choices that affect self as well as other people lives (Sazama and Young, 2006). Africa has a demographic boom of young people who not only need to be economically empowered but also to participate in the community development as World Bank (2010) report that about 50 percent of the developing world population is youths estimated at about 1.2 billion of age between 15 and 24 years. These statistics indicate that youths constitute a serious development opportunity as well as a challenge particularly in developing countries. The imperative of youth participation in community development programs considering their numerical strength is an unlimited window in which a larger and younger workforce who can drive economic development faster and play a significant role in national security, leadership and social development of their communities can be enhanced (Philippe & Mulyungi, 2018).

Similarly, Murtala and Ibrahim (2022) citing Mechanic (1991) defined empowerment may be perceived as “a process where individuals lean to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a means of how to achieve them, and a relationship between their efforts and life outcomes. It is on this basis, that they opined that empowerment is commonly used to refer to a widely participatory process of directed social change in a society, intended to bring about social and material advancement including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities-for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment. Therefore, empowerment means the granting of political, social or economic power to an individual or group (Murtala & Ibrahim, 2022).

Youth empowerment can be said to involve all the processes undertaken to make the young adults take responsibilities of their lives. This is better achieved by making available all required facilities for the betterment of the individuals and to enjoy maximum contributions to the societies they belong. Consequently, the youth may find it difficult to contribute their quotas to the growth and development of the society they belong without youth sensitization and empowerment. Additionally, maximum or desired results can never be obtained when there exist challenges that militate against youth sensitization and empowerment in Nigeria. According to Ojenike, et al., (2016). the various forms of terrorism confronting people in Nigeria, especially the Northern and Eastern part may be linked to the issue of youths not being effectively and efficiently sensitized and empowered (Nnachi, Nwigwe, & Ukoma, 2013). This is because the youths believed that the nation has failed to meet up with their expectation and therefore, terrorism such as kidnapping, bombing, herdsmen problems amongst others are some of the measure they can use to revenge. Unfortunately, most of our tertiary institutions turn out graduates on yearly basis without a corresponding job creation to take care of them (Nnachi, Nwigwe, & Ukoma, 2013 in Ojenike, 2015).

Youth empowerment aims to improve quality of life. Youth empowerment is achieved through participation in youth empowerment programs. However, scholars argue that children's rights implementation should go beyond learning about formal rights and procedures to give birth to a concrete experience of rights (Golay & Malatesta, 2014).

According to Ojenike et al., (2019), youths' sensitization and empowerment is an approach to stop all sorts of marginalization and negligence against the youths and to give them equal opportunity and access to education, financial control, political participation, leadership etc regardless of gender or educational level. Economic empowerment enables the youths to take critical decision on how to fix their life long experience and self-development by it.

Challenges of Youths Sensitization and Empowerments

According to Abubakar (2021), the challenges of youth's sensitization and empowerments Lack of commensurate opportunities is clearly a major factor in youth alienation and violence. Indeed, the issue of unemployment poses a major problem for youths and requires both public sector and private sector participation to address it if we are to curtail youth marginalization. It should be noted that there appears to be a close link among poverty, poor dietary habits and crimes in any human society. Poverty could be a result of a lack of creative ideas, initiatives,

and an income so low that it limits opportunities for self-actualization. There is no doubt that an enlightened and effectively mobilized youth is a critical factor for good governance, economic stability, as well as growth and development.

1. Government Policies: Some of the government policies especially in developing nations not excluding Nigeria are not formulated to facilitate the effective, efficient and regular youths sensitization and empowerment programmes.
2. Limited access of training and technical support: According to Nnadi.et.al, (2012) in Barundi (2019), the opportunity aimed rural youth economic empowerment is the improvement of the quality of education there should be a policy that will lead to the improvement in the quality of education in the rural areas. It is not just be the number of schools built but also the quality of teachers, the resources even better structure of the school as far as buildings is concerned. There have to be changes in the curriculum, teaching learning materials and the teaching strategy, a total revamping of the educational sector and changes in the attitude and the mind set of every member of the community: the learners, the educated, parents and society at large (Barundi, 2019).
3. Limited access of training and technical support

The opportunity aimed rural youth economic empowerment is the improvement of the quality of education there should be a policy that will lead to the improvement in the quality of education in the rural areas. It is not just be the number of schools built but also the quality of teachers, the resources even better structure of the school as far as buildings is concerned. There have to be changes in the curriculum, teaching learning materials and the teaching strategy, a total revamping of the educational sector and changes in the attitude and the mind set of every member of the community: the learners, the educated, parents and society at large (Barundi, 2019 in Nnadi, et al, 2012).

According to Kumar (2021), youth sensitization and empowerment can potentially lift most of the problems the youth face, its success rate is proving to be low due to numerous factors. These include the lack of necessary infrastructure, lack of strong youth empowerment policies, limited youth empowerment activities, poor involvement of youth in the decision-making processes of each youth empowerment programme, and poor participation in the programmes.

However, the following are the key challenges posed by youth towards their self-empowerment (Kumar, 2021):

1. Lack of proper skills: Youth today are unwilling to update or enhance their skills. The main reason is that our education doesn't entertain this. Also the youth are not exploring the opportunities provided by government such as apprenticeship programs (Kumar, 2021).
2. Lack of awareness of opportunities: Youth today are not aware of the opportunities which will help them to be successful. There is no proper guidance or mentoring also leads to lack of awareness. Due to this they are unable to upgrade their skills (Kumar, 2021)
3. Social challenges: Economic disparities, gender discrimination, caste discrimination,

and technological barriers affect the youth's all development. This puts them at a disadvantage which eventually affects their community as well. This will have a larger impact of affecting the social and economic development (Kumar, 2021).

4. **Become anti-social element:** Today's youth was not empowered morally, academically as well as financially. This is due to the fact that we are facing unemployment crisis, economic crisis, lack of proper infrastructure to support the youth with employment and lack of necessary skills in our youth. Facing this crisis, the youth can be easily brain washed to do the anti-social as well as criminal activities (Kumar, 2021).

Effects of Youths Sensitization and Empowerment

According to Lanre (2019), the following are the effects of youth's sensitization and empowerment:

1. **Poverty Eradication:** Poverty reduction is basically as a result of youth's empowerment. Youth empowerment can curb the rate of poverty to a large level. This is because various skills developments are embedded in effective youth sensitization and empowerments. However, it is pertinent to state that when youths have the essentials skills, it will become an easy for them to become employable and this will invariable contributes to the economic development of the nation as this act remain a contributing element to increasing the GDP of the nation.
2. **Improved Standard of Education:** Lanre (2019) asserts that youth sensitization and empowerment can help youths to understand the importance of education that leads to social improvement of the country. The empowered youths can donate educational facilities to primary, secondary and even to tertiary institutions. Empowering the youths academically accelerates the spirit of patriotism in the education sector. The empowered youths know the importance of education. This is why many individuals issue scholarships to the students because they understand the value of education due to the empowerment, which was given to them academically. Education exposes people to know what they did not know before.
3. **Good Governance:** One of the basic factors of good governance is youth's sensitization and empowerment. This enables the youths to be aware of the happenings in the political settings thereby guiding their political decision making. Furthermore, it will enable the youths to get involve in electoral process. Imperatively, we can say that when the youths are empowered, they empower the masses, thereby paving path for a better future. To build a better tomorrow, we need to nurture the youths of today.
4. **Reduction in Crime Rates and Effective National Security:** It is no longer a rumor that majority of the people involved in crimes are the youths. Therefore, when these youths are empowered with the necessary knowledge and skills, they become useful to themselves, the family, the societies and the nation they belong. Consequently, there will be massive reduction in crime rates specially terrorism related issues. To support this fact, Lanre (2019), posits that empowerment ensures that youth have the necessary skill to sustain a livelihood, preventing him to adopt the path of crime.
5. **Employment Creation:** Another effect of youth's sensitization and empowerment is high rate of employments. This is because the empowered youths now possess the

required skills to become employed either as self-employed individuals (entrepreneurship) or by other corporate organizations. A youth empowered society will not seriously suffer from the problem of unemployment that many nations are battling with in the current time. A skillful youth is a job creator (Lanre, 2019).

6. **Increase in Problem Solving Skills:** Youths sensitization and empowerments enables the youths to develop problems solving skills. Besides, challenges cannot be solved by mere complaints but through taking the requirement steps towards solution provision. Therefore, it becomes necessary to state that it takes someone that have the required knowledge and skills to solve problems when they manifest. However, youth's sensitization and empowerments help the individuals learn how to effectively as well as efficiently identify and solve problems as to have total control over their lives.

Solutions to the Challenges of Youths Sensitization and Empowerments

Some of the measures that can be taken by both government and non-governmental organizations to combat the challenges of youth's sensitization and empowerments in Nigeria include:

Provision of Social Amenities: Social amenities such as good roads to aid easy movements of the youths to sensitization and empowerments programme should be made available. This is because youths get discouraged when the roads are not conducive for “free flow of movements.” In addition to good roads, there should be provision of electricity. This enable the youths to become more aware of empowerment and sensitization programmes via the broadcasting medium such as television, radio, newspapers and even the internet.

Regular Youths Sensitization and Empowerment Programmes: The sensitization and empowerment programme for the youths should be regular. This is because consistency in the programmes helps to boost youths' interest to become participants of such programmes.

Provision of Aids and Grants: The government and other non-governmental organizations involve in youth's sensitization and empowerment programmes should make aids and grants available. This will in no small measure increase the number of participants to such programmes.

Summarily, according to Abubakar (2021), the way the youths are mobilized for national development will determine the growth of any nation. The government should inculcate in the youths a sense of discipline towards making them socially responsible and accountable, capturing the spirit, essence, purpose of a new national youth agenda.

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study encompasses the youths across all regions and states in Nigeria. However, one hundred and seventy (170) youths were drawn out of the population through a purposive and random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection is the Questionnaire. The instrument was subjected to face. Content and construct validity and the test re-test method were used to

determine the reliability of the instrument. The various data collected through questionnaire administration were subject to analysis using frequency table, mean and standard deviation. While the decision rule was determined based on this formula:

$$\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$$

The cut-off mean value for decision taken is 2.50. Therefore, any value that was 2.5 and above was accepted, while any value that was below 2.50 was rejected.

Result and Findings

Research Question 1: What are the challenges of Youths Sensitization and Empowerments in Nigeria?

Table 1: Challenges of Youths Sensitization and Empowerments in Nigeria

| S/N | ITEMS | SA 4 | A 3 | D 2 | SD 1 | Mean | Std. Deviation | Decision |
|-----|--|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------|-------------------|----------|
| 1. | Lack of Social Amenities such as Electricity and Infrastructure limits the effectiveness of Youths Sensitization and Empowerment | 72 (42.4%) | 51 (30.0%) | 13 (7.6%) | 14 (8.2%) | 2.95 | .905 | Accepted |
| 2 | One of the problems of effective youths' sensitization and empowerment is high rate of illiteracy and technology barriers among the youth's populace | 86 (50.6%) | 41 (24.1%) | 20 (11.8%) | 23 (13.5%) | 2.87 | .914 | Accepted |
| 3 | Bad governance is another challenge of Effective Youths Sensitization and Empowerment | 58 (34.1%) | 55 (32.4%) | 51 (30.0%) | 6 (3.5%) | 2.95 | .876 | Accepted |
| 4 | Insecurity across the nations is a contributing factor that hinders effective youths' sensitization and empowerment | 101 (59.4%) | 2 (1.2%) | 67 (39.4%) | - | 3.38 | .511 | Accepted |
| 5 | Unavailability of Trained Personnel for Youths Sensitization and Empowerments militates against its effectiveness | 116 (68.2%) | 15 (8.8%) | 36 (21.2%) | 3 (1.8%) | 3.02 | .765 | Accepted |

N = 170

The findings above revealed that majority of the respondents believed that Lack of Social Amenities such as Electricity and Infrastructure limits the effectiveness of Youths Sensitization and Empowerment. This is because the statement was accepted with the mean value 2.95 is greater than the decision value of 2.50.

Also, it was discovered that another challenges of youths sensitization and awareness is high rate of illiteracy and technology barriers among the youths populace with the mean value 2.87 which is above 2.50 (the mean decision value). This implies that another challenge of youth's sensitization and empowerment is high level of illiteracy among the youths. The study also revealed that Bad governance is another challenges of Effective Youths Sensitization and Empowerment as the mean value (2.95) is greater than (2.50). This simply indicates that bad governance is one of the problems that grossly affect youth's sensitization and empowerment in Nigeria.

It was also discovered from the findings of the study that Insecurity across the nations is a contributing factor that hinders effective youths' sensitization and empowerment. This was confirmed by the majority of the respondents with the mean value of 3.38. Finally, Unavailability of Trained Personnel for Youths Sensitization and Empowerments militates against its effectiveness is found as one of the major challenges with the mean value of 3.03.

Research Questions 2: What are the Effects of the Effective Youths Sensitization and Empowerment?

Table 2: Effects of Effective Youths Sensitization and Empowerment

| S/N | Items | SA 4 | A 3 | D 2 | SD 1 | Mean | Std. Dev. | Decision |
|-----|----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|------|--------------|----------|
| 1. | Poverty Reduction | 60 (35.3%) | 110 (64.7%) | - | - | 3.35 | .485 | Accepted |
| 2. | Effective Problem solving skills | 90 (52.9%) | 80 (47.1%) | 10 (5.8%) | - | 2.56 | .860 | Accepted |
| 3. | Creation of Employment | 25 (14.7%) | 70 (41.2%) | 60 (35.3%) | 3 (5.8%) | 3.29 | .629 | Accepted |
| 4. | Crime rates reduction | 65 (38.2%) | 90 (52.9%) | 15 (8.8%) | - | 3.21 | .687 | Accepted |
| 5. | Giving of Grants | 55 (32.4%) | 100 (58.8%) | 10 (5.8%) | 5 (2.9%) | 1.79 | .687 | Rejected |

From the analysis above, it was discovered that poverty rate among the youth can be brought to minimal with the aid of youth's sensitization and empowerment as the statement was accepted with the mean value of (3.35 > 2.5) and S.D value of (.485). This implies that when effective and efficient youth's sensitization and empowerment programmes are available, it will lead to drastic reduction in the poverty level in the Nigeria. It was discovered that youths can develop effective problem-solving skills through youth's sensitization and empowerment programmes. Additionally, when the youths are well sensitized and empowered, one of the resultant effects is employment. This is because these processes will enable the required skills and knowledge to become employable. However, it was discovered that grants given to the youths by the government and other non-governmental organizations cannot be attributed to youth's sensitization and awareness as the statement was rejected with the mean value less than 2.50 (that is 1.79).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study critically examined youth's sensitization and empowerment with the view to look at the challenges, effects and solutions. Some factors were discovered to be part of the challenges of effective youths' sensitization and empowerment in Nigeria which include lack of social amenities, bad governance, high illiteracy rates amongst others. However, the resultant effects of effective youths' sensitization and empowerment includes: increase in problem solving skills, drastic reduction in poverty rates, crime rates reduction amongst others. Therefore, the study concludes that the government and other non-governmental organizations should ensure that the youths are well sensitized and empowered. This in no small measure will facilitates increase in the gross domestic product (GDP) of the nation as well as people no longer be afraid of terrorist activities such as kidnapping, herdsmen invasion, arm robbery as well as internet fraud popularly referred to as (yahoo-yahoo) in Nigeria amongst others.

References

- Anam J., Mohammed, A., Sajid, M., Muhammad, Y., Khan, Z. M., Duaa, S. & Syed, S. W. (2022). *Factors affecting youth empowerment and entrepreneurial initiatives: Social implications and way forward.*
- Barundi, A. (2019). Challenges and prospects of rural youth economic empowerment. The Case of Dire Teyara of Harari Regional State, Ethiopia, *International Journal*, 5, retrieved from: <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JPID/article/download/12053/12390>
- Charles, T. J., Oluwasefunmi, E. I. & Dolapo, O. D. (2019). Youth empowerment as catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria, *Revista CIMEXUS*. XIV (1),
- Fasola, B. (2019). *Problems with youth empowerment*” <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/01/we-have-trained-artisans-but-haventcreated-an-economy-for-them-fashola/> (Accessed May 2023)
- Federal Ministry of Youth Development (2009). *Second national youth policy*, Federal republic of Nigeria.
- Garduño, F. Sawyer, R. & Sawyer, I. (2013). *Empowering young people as promoters (RR)*, retrieved from [cid:op.mhtml.1442368607408.e1110f64507ce325@192.168.43.136](http://cid.op.mhtml.1442368607408.e1110f64507ce325@192.168.43.136).
- Kolade, T. T., Towobola, W. L., Oresanya, T. O., Ayeni, J. O., & Omodewu, O. S. (2014), Youth empowerment for sustainable development: The role of entrepreneurship education for out-of-school youth, *Journal of Poverty, Investment and Development - An Open Access*
- NCWD (2012). *Helping youth build work skills for job success: Tips for parents and families.*
- Nejati, M., Pourezat, A. A., & Gholipour, A. (2013). Poverty eradication: The role of youth participation as a catalyst for social change, *Society and Economy*, 35(3), 411–425.

- Nnachi, A. N. (2012). Youth employment: Abane to the actualization of the Nigerian government 7-point agenda, *Journal of Arts and Social Nigeria Government*, 1(2), 263 – 267.
- Ntihinyurwa, P. & Patrick, M. (2018). Effects of youth empowerment on community development in Rwanda - A case study of Nyamasheke district, *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* ISSN: 2319-7064 ResearchGate Impact Factor, 0.28 | SJIF 7.426
- Ojenike, J. O., Shodiya, O. A. & Jolaosho, S. O. (2016). Youth empowerment and security: A panacea for national development, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 18(4), ISSN: 1520-5509
- Okoli, D. I. (2013). Youth Empowerment through entrepreneurial development in Nigeria, *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 3(9), 147-153.
- Shamsu, A. (2021). Youth empowerment as a tool for socio-economic changes in Nigeria (A Case study of Katsina youth craft village), *Int. J. Youth Eco.* 5(1), 19-27,
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), (2014), *Youth strategy 2014-2017: empowered youth, sustainable future*, retrieved from <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/youthstrategy.html>