

Youth Empowerment Programmes and Unemployment Reduction in Ebonyi State: A Study of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Abakaliki.

Ndukwe, Chinyere

Department of Public Administration, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki Nigeria.

Email: ndukwechinyere@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined “Youth Empowerment Programmes and Unemployment Reduction in Ebonyi State: A Study of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Abakaliki”. The Social Contract theory propounded by Jean Jacques Rousseau in 1762 was adopted for the study. The survey design was used with questionnaire as instrument for data collection. A sample size of 443 was used. Findings show that sponsorship of community based youth clubs by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports has not led to increased discovery and assistance of talented youths, Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports entrepreneurial skills acquisition and programme has not significantly empowered Ebonyi Youths on Metal works and fabrication and that financial support given by Ebonyi State Ministry of youth and Sports has not significantly promoted tailoring/fashion design among youths. Based on the findings, it was recommended that more efforts should be made by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports in the sponsorship of community based youth clubs so as to increase discovery and assistance of talented youths to adequately tackle unemployment in Ebonyi State; that Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports should grant tax holiday or reduce tax charged of youth entrepreneurs in the State and that financial support in the form of loan and grants given by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports given to Tailors/Fashion Designer should be increased.

Keywords: Youth, Empowerment, Programmes, Unemployment, Sports.

INTRODUCTION

Youth refers to young men and women within the age brackets of 15-24 [1]. Presently they constitute over 80 million of Nigerian Population [2]. They constitute the major productive sector of Nigeria and the enormous strength and energy that can transform the economic backwardness of Nigeria into an international competitive one if they are fully empowered to harness the enormous social and economic activities and natural resources available in the country. However, the major social problem plaguing Nigerian society today is youth Unemployment. Youth unemployment according to [3] is a situation where young person between the ages of 15-24 with diverse background, willing and able to work, cannot find any.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics [4], as of 2011, unemployed youths were numbered to be about 37 million out of the entire Nigerian population of about 167 million. In early 2018, about 50% of over 90million Nigerian youths were estimated to be unemployed. This ugly situation prevailed despite numerous youth empowerment programmes of both Federal and state governments in Nigeria.

Youth empowerment programmes is defined as set of government plans with specific projects targeted at equipping the youth to be productive in economic activities [5]. One of the medium through which government fights youth unemployment is implementation of youth sports activities and initiation of skill acquisition programmes and financial empowerment of the successful ones. Youth sports programme is coordinated by the federal government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the National Institute of Sports (NIS), a sports development and training institute, and the National Sports Associations. Sports administration is decentralized in the country's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The states also facilitate the sports development initiatives. At the secondary school level, sport competitions are organized by the Nigerian School Sports Federation (NSSF) in collaboration with the

Ministries of Education in the states, the State Sports Councils (SSCs) and the National Sports Commission (NSC). The NSSF festival has not been held recently due to financial and organizational problems.

Furthermore at the tertiary institution levels, both recreational and competitive sports are organized. As of 2017, there were over 70 Federal and State Universities, forty colleges of Education and thirty polytechnics in Nigeria [6]. Among the Universities, sport is organized by the Nigerian Universities' Games Association (NUGA). Also, Ministry of Youth and Sports engage in entrepreneurial development skills and acquisition programs in the area of soap making, cosmetics, agro allied business, metal works and fabrics, tailoring/ design, among others.

In Ebonyi State, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has equally taken measures to tackle youth unemployment with its mission to develop a friendly approach to youth development through active sport innovation, creativity and ingenuity. Some of the programmes of the Ministry amongst others include the following: census of unemployed youths, organization of state ministerial sports, organization of various football competitions, community based youth clubs, leadership training for school (Ebonyi State Ministry of Sports and Youths Development, 2019). The Ministry also partnered with National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in the area of youth empowerment. The NDE in the recent past has trained and empowered more than 2000 Ebonyi youths on entrepreneurship and trades. The youths were trained in: electrical works, welding, agricultural and agro allied services, hair dressing, tailoring/fashion design, metal works and fabrication, soap and pomade making. At the end of the training the youth were given equipment and materials to start on their own.

In November, 2012, the Ministry sponsored 10 youths on a 5- day National Training Workshop on Skills Development, Leadership/citizenship and value re- orientation for youth entrepreneurs in Sapele, Delta state (Ebonyi State Ministry of Sports and Youths Development, 2019). Thereafter, each of the 10 participants was given ₦200,000 as grant for their individual farm projects. In July 2014, the Ministry of Youth and Sports sponsored 5 Ebonyi youths randomly selected from 5 LGAs on trade and Entrepreneurship training for out of school youths for period of one month. The participants were equipped after the training to start their individual businesses courtesy of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council. The Ministry also sponsored 12 Ebonyi youths from 6 Youth Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative Societies spread across the 3 senatorial zones to a national capacity building workshop in diversified agricultural production, processing, and marketing held at NYSC camp, Nkwere in Imo State in 2017. After training, each of the cooperative societies got ₦40,000 as start-up capital and as well as materials for the take- off [7].

However, despite these measures, youth unemployment still prevails in the state. According to [8], out of over 700,000 youths in Ebonyi State, over 650, 000 were unemployed making it the state with the highest number of youth unemployment in the South-Eastern Nigeria and 15th across the country. In the face of this unfortunate situation it becomes imperative to examine how the aforementioned Youth Empowerment programmes of Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports have contributed to youth unemployment reduction.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the Study was to examine youth empowerment programmes and unemployment reduction using Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports as the case. The specific objectives of the study included:

1. To examine the extent to which the sponsorship of community based youth clubs by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports has led to discovery and assistance of talented youths.
2. To find out the extent to which Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports entrepreneurial skills acquisition programme helped in empowering Ebonyi Youths on Metal works and fabrication.
3. To examine the extent to which financial support by Ebonyi State Ministry of youth and Sports promoted tailoring/fashion design among youths.

Research Hypotheses

The study is guided by the following hypotheses:

1. H_{01} : Sponsorship of community based youth clubs by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports has not led to the discovery and assistance of talented youth.

2. **H₀₂:** Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports entrepreneurial skills acquisition programme has not helped in empowering Ebonyi Youths on metal works and fabrication.
3. **H₀₃:** financial support by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports has not promoted tailoring/fashion designing among youths.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory adopted in the study is the Social Contract propounded by Jean Jacques Rousseau in the Social Contract (1762). The theory is meant to respond to the sorry state of affairs and to remedy the social and moral ills that have been produced by the development of society. The distinction between history and justification, between the factual situation of mankind and how it ought to live together, is of the utmost importance to Rousseau. While we ought not to ignore history, nor ignore the causes of the problems we face, we must resolve those problems through our capacity to choose how we ought to live. The Social Contract begins with the most often-quoted line from Rousseau: "Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains". This claim is the conceptual bridge between the descriptive work of the second discourse, and the prescriptive work that is to come.

According to the theory, humans are essentially free, and were free in the State of Nature, but the 'progress' of civilization has substituted subservience to others for that freedom, through dependence, economic and social inequalities, and the extent to which we judge ourselves through comparisons with others. Since a return to the State of Nature is neither feasible nor desirable, the purpose of politics is to restore freedom to us, thereby reconciling who we truly and essentially are with how we live together. So, this is the fundamental philosophical problem that the Social Contract seeks to address: how can we be free and live together? Or, put another way, how can we live together without succumbing to the force and coercion of others? We can do so, Rousseau maintains, by submitting our individual, particular wills to the collective or general will, created through agreement with other free and equal persons [9]. Like Hobbes and Locke before him, and in contrast to the ancient philosophers, all men are made by nature to be equals, therefore no one has a natural right to govern others, and therefore the only justified authority is the authority that is generated out of agreements or covenants.

The most basic covenant, the social pact, is the agreement to come together and form a people, a collectivity, which by definition is more than and different from a mere aggregation of individual interests and wills. This act, where individual persons become a people is "the real foundation of society". Through the collective renunciation of the individual rights and freedom that one has in the State of Nature, and the transfer of these rights to the collective body, a new 'person', as it were, is formed. The sovereign is thus formed when free and equal persons come together and agree to create themselves anew as a single body, directed to the good of all considered together. So, just as individual wills are directed towards individual interests, the general will, once formed, is directed towards the common good, understood and agreed to collectively [10]. Included in this version of the social contract is the idea of reciprocated duties: the sovereign is committed to the good of the individuals who constitute it, and each individual is likewise committed to the good of the whole. Given this, individuals cannot be given liberty to decide whether it is in their own interests to fulfill their duties to the sovereign, while at the same time being allowed to reap the benefits of citizenship. They must be made to conform themselves to the general will, they must be "forced to be free".

This theory is relevant to the study in the sense that it sees the youth and the government in a kind of contract arrangement. While the youth give their consent to government during elections by participating in the electoral process, obedience to rules and regulation as enunciated in the theory, the government on the other hand assist the youth by providing youth empowerment schemes to help in making them self reliant and contribute to socio-economic development in the society.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment is defined as the activity of teaching, educating, training, imparting knowledge and skills to the youths both within the formal and informal education

system to enable them fully participate in the development of society. The empowerment examines their unemployment status and then takes action in order to improve their access to resources to become self-reliant. Empowerment according to [11] is a means of assisting people to overcome obstacles which might prevent them from achieving their potentials in life. He further asserts that the need to empower the people arises from the inability to actualize their dreams and reach their greatest potential due to artificial barriers created by either individuals or groups in the society. These barriers include being denied of employment through sale of job positions, inability to attend school because of high low cost among others. Therefore empowerment is often made to tackle the aforementioned problems.

In a related development, [12], defines empowerment as a process of enhancing feelings of self -efficiency in communities through identification and removal of conditions that reinforce powerlessness. The authors further explain that empowerment has to do with the ability of people to take an effective control of their lives in terms of being well informed and equipped with regards to education and finance. For [13], youth empowerment is the process whereby young 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 achieve reputable economic status for themselves and also to make great impact in the society. It help the youth to identify, utilize and maximize their potentials, develop confidence and self-identity, encourage them to grow together in accountability and imbibe in youth the eagerness to create a change for their socio-economic well being. The benefits of empowerment also include reduction of the level of ignorance and crime among young people, serves as an opportunity for the youth to develop their skills and talents which they use to add economic value to the society [14]. Others are that it helps young people to be responsible, self reliant and to invest in their future

In his own contribution, [15], states that there is a general consensus that empowerment programmes will lead to increased capacity of people to have control over relevant skills, intellectual resources and ideology. It also help them obtain physical necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter , employment, equality, participation in government , political and economic independence, adequate education, sustainable development and peacekeeping [16]. In other words, youth empowerment programme in this study is an intervention that regularly involves young people as partners and participants in the decision making process that determine programme design, planning or implementation.

There are various forms of youth empowerment programmes that aim at creating opportunity for young people in their various fields of specialization as well as in the communities as a whole. [17] identified some of the forms of youth empowerment programmes functioning in harnessing the potentials and talents of young people to include: good education empowerment programmes, entrepreneurship training programme and advance technological development programmes. Others include financial youth empowerment programmes, skills acquisition and academic empowerment programme. These initiatives have all been implemented in Nigeria. Examples of these empowerment schemes in Nigeria include: National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Subsidy Reinvestment Scheme and N-Power Scheme [18].

National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was the brainchild of the Military Government of Ibrahim Babangida in 1983. The scheme train unemployed persons in skills and at the end of graduation empower them to start their own business. In 1999, the National Poverty Eradication Programme was introduced by Olesugun Obasanjo [19]. The scheme empowered indigent unemployed people with fund to engage in economic activities especially in Agriculture. In 2013, Government of Former President Goodluck Jonathan came up with Subsidy Reinvestment Scheme. The scheme facilitated the employment of unemployed person in various sectors such as health, education, agriculture and as well as the promotion of skill acquisition among youth. Presently, there is the N-Power scheme of the government of Muhammed Buhari through which unemployed youths are employed to work as teachers in school, tax collectors, health assistant and as farmers [20]. These among others are government initiatives at empowering youth towards unemployment reduction in Nigeria. The examination of the

concept of unemployment and how the aforementioned empowerment has helped in its reduction is the next focus of the study.

The Concept of Unemployment

There is no universal acceptable definition of unemployment among countries. Various countries adopt definitions to suit their local priorities. However, all countries use the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition, or a variant of it to compute unemployment. The ILO defines unemployment as a situation whereby persons aged 15-64 who are willing to and actively for work, were unable to find any [21]. The Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, like most countries in the world, uses a variant of the ILO definition and has noted that unemployment is the proportion of those in the labour force (not in the entire economic active population, nor the entire Nigerian population) who were actively looking for work but could not find work [22]. Accordingly, one is unemployed if he/she did absolutely nothing at all or did something but for less than 20 hours during the reference week.

According to [23], youth unemployment measures the number or proportion of young person in a given country who are capable and willing to work, but unable to find job. This definition established youth unemployment as a specific type of unemployment among people with academic degree from higher institutions working zero hour and earning zero income. Viewed almost in the same context, [24], described youth unemployment to encompass inability of young women and men who are fit and ready to work, but could not find a job or discriminated by experience. In these categories of people are fresh and young tertiary institution graduates, retrenched graduates seeking re-engagement and those who are underemployed or on disguised employment.

There are different types of unemployment as frictional, residual, structural, cyclical and technological employment. Frictional unemployment is caused by industrial friction. In this situation, there are jobs but people cannot fill them because they do not have the skills or are unaware of the existence of the jobs. This occurs due to ignorance, immobility of labour, shortage of raw materials, and breakdown in machinery. Residual unemployment is the type of joblessness caused by old age, physical or mental disability, irresponsible attitude towards the job and inadequate training [25]. Structural unemployment is caused by the shift in the country's economy causing a mismatch between the skills required by employers and the skills proposed by employees. Also, cyclical unemployment is as a result of a decrease in the demands for goods and services. It is often caused by the economic recession or situation that forces companies to terminate a number of workers in order to reduce the costs. Technological unemployment is caused by the constant technological changes that have increased mechanization of production. This results in less demand for man-power and displacement of human labour [26].

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the number of people within the labour force who are unemployed or underemployed in Nigeria stood at 27.11 million in 2016 but rose to 31.26 million 2017. This increase depicts an increasing trend in the rate of unemployment and underemployment. In 2018 unemployment came down to 20.9 million (NBS, 2016). This according to NBS was because of addition of new jobs and huge fund spent by politicians ahead of the 2019 general elections. [27], notes that unemployment tend to be higher among graduates as they often times depend on white collar jobs or make plans to travel outside the country rather than doing anything available. This is contrary to the situation in rural areas or among low skilled unemployed persons who are ready to do any work that is legal. He also states that unemployment and Underemployment rates also varied according the nature of economic activity predominant in the state. States with higher focus on seasonal agriculture tend to have higher rates of underemployment compared to unemployment and may swing from high fulltime employment during periods of planting and harvest when they are fully engaged on their farms to periods of underemployment and even unemployment at other periods in between [28]. These states tend to have higher proportion of their economically active population outside the labour force thereby reducing the number looking for work and hence the number that can be unemployed.

Causes of Youth Unemployment in Ebonyi State

Unemployment is a visible phenomenon in Ebonyi State. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2016), Ebonyi was ranked 15th State with unemployed person across the federation and the 1st in South-East States in 2018. The National body also noted that

unemployment rate in the states stood at 21.1%. This submission can easily be proven visible signs across the states. At Spera in Deo Junctions, Kpirikpiri opposite Abakaliki Township Stadium and Opposite Affia Ofu market among others, it is common to see jobless youth from the state clustering from morning to noon waiting for any opportunity to come. They are always ready for mixing sands and cement for block industry, to clear grasses or to do any other type of work that may come up. Often times, majority of them after long waiting end up not getting anything. They go home dejected not even having any money to care for themselves and their families. One of the major causes of unemployment in Ebonyi State is rapid growth of population including increasing number of graduates from the state [29]. There has been an increase in the growth of the labour forces along with the inadequate supply of jobs. This has increased the population in cities thereby raising the level of joblessness. He also averred that another key problem is poor leadership and high level of corruption in Nigeria. The failure of the government to perform their constitutional duties of job creation has resulted in the high level of unemployment. Also, corruption among politicians has resulted to the mismanagement of the funds and resources supposed to be used for the creation of job opportunities for the people.

[30] identifies lack of reasonable youth empowerment scheme in most states across the country as a major cause of unemployment. Ebonyi state is also affected. It is clear that since 2015 to date, there is no record of any specific youth empowerment programme to complement efforts of the Federal Government earlier stated. The state was only known with partnering federal empowerment schemes run through NDE but it only favours few persons who at the end, have no reasonable impact at reduction of unemployment rate in the state. The state and local government are involved in job creation in the country as stipulated by the amended 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria but it has been heard to hear specific empowerment programme from them [31].

Furthermore, [32] held that high level of unemployment in Ebonyi State today is due to absence of reputable firms and industries that employ people. He notes that the firms available only employ few persons and most of the firms are on contract with government. Once their contract ends, employment for the workers equally come to an end. In addition most firms cannot operate long because of harsh economic conditions in the state occasioned by low patronage, high and multiple taxes as well as epileptic power supply. He equally noted that most employment opportunities from government are hijacked by politicians who convert the position to their family members already working somewhere elsewhere. The same situation goes with federal appointments where Senators and senior executive members of the state hold sway at the expense of allowing qualified persons to vie for the available positions [33]. All these issues have continued to cause the increasing number of unemployed persons in the state who quickly seek for job in places when there is an announcement of vacancies.

Consequences of Youth Unemployment in Ebonyi State

Unemployment comes with its consequences such as armed robbery, kidnapping, abduction, and cyber-crimes among the unemployed and Ebonyi State have had its fair share of these problems [34] noted that there were 10 cases of armed robbery relate to unemployment between 2010-2017 in the states while at the same period there were 28 property theft whom the victims confessed to be unemployed. This finding is in line with the views of Mehta (2019) who notes that unemployed youths are more or less likely to rob or burgle the fully employed. He also affirms that the correlation between joblessness and property crime was greatest among the young. Other social evils like dishonesty, gambling and immorality etc. arise due to unemployment. These endangers law and order situation of the country, and causes social disruption in the society [35]. Today in Ebonyi Sports Betting is the common order among the old and young, male and female, most of who see it as their permanent job. This predisposes them to theft as has been reported by arrest made police [36].

Furthermore, the problems of unemployed in Ebonyi State cause the affected persons to be unable to put his/her skills to use. And in a situation where it goes on for too long the person may have to lose some of his/her skill. Under this situation he/she has no source of income thereby leading to poverty [37]. With the increase rates of unemployment and poverty other economy factors are significantly such as the income per person, health costs, quality of health-area and standard of living are affected. Many people in Ebonyi hardly offer the cost of medical care when the need arises but

seeks alternative which lands them at traditional medicine. All these affect not just the economy of Ebonyi State but the entire systems and the society in general [38].

In addition, being unemployed can lead to depression, low self-esteem, anxiety and other mental health issues, especially if an individual truly wants a job but cannot find employment. Most youths in attempt to escape unemployment situation in the country have gone to hulk in different major cities in Nigeria. According to National Agency for the Prohibition of trafficking in Person (NAPTIP,2017), over 70% of those who hawk in major cities in Lagos, Port harcourt, Onitsha among others were Ebonyians. These people are exposed to different harms such as murder, kidnapping, molestation and even rape. The Agency also noted that house help syndromes were equally common among Ebonyians and this negates protection of human rights.

From the foregoing, it is clear that unemployment has caused a lot of problems in Ebonyi state. It affected the finances of people, led to poverty, robbery, gambling and hawking.

Youth Empowerment Programmes Implemented by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sport Development

According to [39] some of the programmes of the Ministry include registration of new voluntary youth organizations, organization/election of National Youth Council of Nigeria Executives at the state and thirteen (13) Local Governments, organization of 2007 International Youth Week Activities, the programmes also include Millennium Development Goals Youth Intervention Programme, training of youth officers on HIV/AIDS and environmental issues. Others include the facilitation of Millennium Development Goals' Youth Empowerment programs in agriculture and skill acquisition, organization and maintenance of sports camps and centres, sports festivals and assistance in the National University Games (NUGA), monitoring sports activities at the grass roots. They also engage in supervision of primary, secondary and shell cup competitions, training and retraining of coaches and staff of the State Sports Council.

Furthermore, in order to promote youth development, the Ministry constructed an Abakaliki ultra-Modern stadium and sporting facilities in the 27 Pilot schools of the state, rehabilitation of dilapidated facilities at NYSC Orientation Camp, Afikpo and purchase of Sporting equipment for Girls Technical School Agba [40]. The Ministry also Painted and Decorated Fence Wall (Mural Art Work) of Abakaliki Township Stadium and environs including some streets of the capital city as well as procurement of a Hiace Bus for the Ministry.

[41] noted that as part of youth development initiative of the Ministry, it has a total of 1,500 Ebonyi youths participated in a 3 day seminar for Ebonyi youths on dangers of thuggery and electoral violence with the theme "overcoming the challenges of realizing free and fair elections in Nigeria" from 22nd - 24th March, 2011. Ten (10) Ebonyi youths participated in the presidential launch of the SURE-P at banquet hall, Aso Rock Villa Abuja in February, 2012. Also, one thousand two hundred Ebonyi youths participated in a 3- day seminar to educate and sensitize youths from Ebonyi state on the federal government YOUWIN Programme that is youth empowerment with innovation in Nigeria held from 8th - 10th may, 2012 at WDC Abakaliki. The programme was targeted at unemployed youths with sound business idea who are assessed by independent professionals. It is a programme of the federal Ministry of Youth Development in collaboration with Federal Ministry of Finance and Communications. Youth can win a grant of between N1m - N 10m to scale up existing business. Already 17 Ebonyi youths have been successful in that business [42].

In addition, [43] held that the Ministry also keyed into the federal government not (MDGs)youth in agriculture projects of Nigeria. Ten (10) LGAs have undergone week long training at Songahia centre Sapele, Delta state. More than 300 Ebonyi youths have been trained and equipped in different skills from 2007 till date in the area of confectionaries, tailoring, soap/ pomade making, bee keeping, tyre and dye, poultry and, crop production, fishery, snail and rice through Co-operative Societies. They also partnered with the National Directorate of Employment (NDE). The NDE in the recent past has trained and empowered more than 2000 Ebonyi youths on entrepreneurship and trades. The youths were trained in the following areas: electrical works, welding, agricultural and agro allied services, hair dressing, tailoring/fashion design, metal works and fabrication, soap and pomade making. At the end of that training the youth were given equipment and materials to start on their own.

As part of the Ministry's attempt at empowering the youth, some Ebonyi youths were sent to Songhai farms in Benin Republic for training in different fields of agriculture. On return, these youths were given some financial grants as start-up capital. The state government through the office of Economic Empowerment and Poverty Reduction in collaboration with the state chapter of the National Youth Council of Nigeria established fish farms in the 3 senatorial zones. Unfortunately, the fish farms have gone moribund. The Ministry of Youth and sports sponsored 12 Ebonyi youths from 6 youth farmers multipurpose cooperative societies spread across the 3 senatorial zones to a national capacity building workshop in diversified agricultural production, processing, and marketing held at NYSC camp, Nkwere in Imo State. After training, each of the cooperative societies got N40,000 as start-up capital and as well as materials for the take-off [44].

Following the petroleum products subsidy, an employment package known as Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment and Empowerment Programme (SURE - UP) was launched in 2012. The idea about SURE- UP is to create employment opportunities for up to 370,000 youths and young women in the 36 states and FCT i.e. 10,000 jobs per state and FCT. But how far the Programme has achieved the desired goal has remained a subject of debate.

METHODOLOGY

Survey design was adopted for this study primarily through questionnaire construction and collaborated through secondary materials while data collected were subject to statistical analysis in order to draw relevant inferences and conclusion.

The population of the study was 443. This figure comprised 52 staff of Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports and 391 beneficiaries of Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports empowerment scheme (Personnel Unit, Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2016).

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Table of Questionnaire Distributed

Questionnaire	No Distributed	Percentage
Returned	390	88.1%
Unreturned	53	11.9%
Total	443	100%

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2016

Data were gathered concerning major issues raised in this study. Some of them were hereunder presented:

Table 2: Sponsorship of sports competition (youth club) among secondary schools by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports has not produce good number of talented youths.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	112	28.8%
Agree	101	25.9%
Disagree	93	23.8%
Strongly disagree	84	21.5%
Total	390	100%

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2016

Information in table 2 showed that 112 respondents representing 28.8% strongly agreed that sponsorship of sports competition among secondary schools by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports has not produced good number of talented youths while 101 respondents representing 25.9% agreed that Sponsorship of sports competition among secondary schools by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports has not produced good number of talented youths. On the contrary, 93 respondents representing 23.8% disagreed that Sponsorship of sports competition among secondary schools by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports has produced good number of talented youths while 84 respondents 21.5% strongly disagreed that Sponsorship of sports competition among secondary schools by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports has produced good number of talented youths. The implication of the finding above is that greater number of the respondents believed that Sponsorship of sports

competition among secondary schools by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports has not produce good number of talented youths.

Table 3: Number of people trained and empowered on Metal works and fabrication by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports is not significant in reducing unemployment rate in Ebonyi State

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	128	32.8%
Agree	125	32%
Disagree	82	21%
Strongly disagree	55	14.2%
Total	390	100%

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2016

Data in table 3 above showed that 128 respondents representing 32.8% strongly agreed that Number of people trained and empowered on Metal works and fabrication by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports is not significant in reducing unemployment rate, 125 respondents representing 32% agreed that Number of people trained and empowered on Metal works and fabrication by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports is not significant in reducing unemployment rate. On the contrary, 82 respondents representing 21% disagreed that Number of people trained and empowered on Metal works and fabrication by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports is significant in reducing unemployment rate while 55 respondents representing 14.2% strongly disagreed number of people trained and empowered on Metal works and fabrication by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports is significant in reducing unemployment rate in Ebonyi State. This implies that greater number of the respondents believe that Number of people trained and empowered on Metal works and fabrication by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports is not significant in reducing unemployment rate.

Table 4: Inconsistency in organizing training on tailoring and designing by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports lead to low empowerment

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	135	34.6%
Agree	105	26.9%
Disagree	97	24.9%
Strongly disagree	53	13.6%
Total	390	100%

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2016

Information in table 4 showed that 135 respondents representing 34.6% strongly agreed that inconsistency in organizing training on tailoring and designing by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports leads to low empowerment, 105 respondents representing 26.9% agreed that inconsistency in organizing training on tailoring and designing by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports leads to low empowerment.. On the contrary , 97 respondents representing 24.9% disagreed that inconsistency in organizing training on tailoring and designing by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports leads to low empowerment while 53 respondents representing 13.6% strongly disagreed that inconsistency in organizing training on tailoring and designing by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports leads to low empowerment. The result shows that greater percentage of the respondents are of the view that inconsistency in organizing training on tailoring and designing by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports leads to low empowerment.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the first hypothesis shows that the greater number respondents agreed that sponsorship of sports competition among secondary schools by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports has not produce and empowered a good number of talented youths, that number of youths that received scholarship for excelling in youth sports competition is insignificant in reduction of unemployment rate in Ebonyi State. This findings is line with the view of [45], who stated that lack of reasonable youth empowerment scheme in most states across the country is a major cause of unemployment

The result of the second hypothesis also showed that the number of people trained and empowered on metal works and fabrication by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports

was not significant in unemployment reduction, multiple taxes charged by both state and local government suppress the viability of metal works and fabrication business thereby making it unable for those empowered to prosper in the business. Also, the result showed that time frame involved in organizing training on metal works and fabrication by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports make it difficult to have large number of youth empowered and the high interest on loan given to the youth to start their own business after training by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports often retard growth of their business. This view of the respondents is in line with that of [46] who stated that harsh business environment has made it impossible for youth empowerment and poverty alleviation programmes to solve unemployment problems in the country.

Result of the third hypothesis showed that inconsistency in organizing training on tailoring and designing by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports leads to low empowerment, poor funding of trained tailors by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports limit sustainability of the business. Other result include loan given by the Ministry to graduates after completing training is not enough to start their own businesses and lack of adequate funding of tailors empowered by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports makes it difficult for them to expand their businesses. The opinion of the respondents is in line with that of [47] who stated that poor funding of skill acquisition programme and youth empowerment scheme limits unemployment reduction efforts in Nigeria and Ebonyi state in particular.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that government of Ebonyi State has made efforts at fighting youth unemployment. However, findings in this study reveal that though government through its Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) make frantic effort at youth development, there are still other challenges to effective youth empowerment scheme that if left unchecked could mar the efforts of government. This study has shown these challenges to include: high tax rate, high interest loan given to beneficiaries to start the businesses, erratic power supply among others. This calls for proper attention from the government in order to ensure that youth empowerment remains sacrosanct in the fight against unemployment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. More efforts should be made by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports in the sponsorship of community based youth clubs so as to increase discovery and assistance of talented youths to adequately tackle unemployment in Ebonyi State. This can be promoted further by establishing State Football Team for both male and female as can be seen in other state such as Enyimba of Aba in Abia State, Heartland of Owerri for Imo State, and Enugu Rangers for Enugu State among others. Discovered talents should be grown into the new club to be established by the State Government where they can grow and stand the chance of being picked to join the National Team and can be scouted and signed by other States and International Clubs as has been the case with most talented sports youths raised by other states football teams in Nigeria.
2. That Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports should grant tax holiday or reduce tax charged from youth entrepreneurs in the State. Already this study has shown that high tax rate limit expansion and profits of private businesses in the state including those empowered by the government.
3. That financial support in the form of loan and grants given by Ebonyi State Ministry of Youth and Sports to Tailors/Fashion Designers should be increased. This will help increase their profits and expand their businesses and employ other unemployed persons in Ebonyi State.

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