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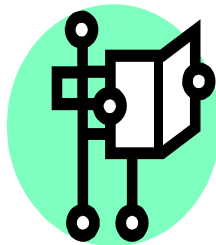
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BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JOURNAL

At the 7th Annual General Meeting of the International Research and Development Network of Children and Youth in Agriculture Programme (CYIAP-Network: visit our website www.cyiap_network.org for more information) held at Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria on the 28th November, 2006, it was resolved that a journal named *Annals of Child and Youth Studies (ACYS)* of the Network be established. Dr. Dixon Olutade Torimiro, an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria was unanimously appointed as the Editor-in-Chief and the Department was chosen as the Editorial Office of the Journal.

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Impact of Osun Youth Empowerment Scheme on the Socio-economic Status of its Beneficiaries

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Abstract

The study assessed the impact of Osun State Youth Empowerment Scheme (OYES) on the socio-economic status of its beneficiaries. It described demographic characteristics of its beneficiaries, identified why they participated, examined the level of participation of beneficiaries, and compared the socio-economic status of the youth before and after participation. A multi staged sampling technique was used to select 86 respondents for the study. Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency counts, percentages were used to summarize the data, while Analysis of Variance was used to determine the statistical difference between socio-economic statuses of OYES beneficiaries before and after their participation. The study revealed that mean age of OYES beneficiaries was 29.61 ± 13.92 and majority (72.1%) of them was female. Also, many (62.8%) lived with their parents/relatives. In addition, the beneficiaries participated to better their lot in life (67.4%), expectation of permanent job after OYES (54.7%) among others; many had moderate (38.4%) level of participation. Furthermore, the study revealed that there was significant difference ($F=65.59$, $P=0.000$) in socio-economic status of OYES beneficiaries before and after their participation. It was concluded that the scheme had positive impact on the socio economic status of its beneficiaries and it was recommended that programme that will train the beneficiaries on how to save and invest their income should be incorporated in order to sustain the impact of the scheme.

Keywords: Youth; Empowerment; Impact; Beneficiaries

INTRODUCTION

Development can be accelerated when the majority of the youth in any country are able to make significant contribution to its economic, social and political life in a way that lifts the country out of poverty, ensures greater stability and promote healthier society. Alternatively, peace, progress and prosperity are held back when countries are unable to meet the basic needs of their youth.

Global technological advancement and the spread of social networking offer new opportunities for youth to connect and become more active participants in the development, while at the same time

making their lives more complex and challenging.

In its 2007 world development report, the World Bank suggested that developing countries which invest in better education, health care, job training for their record numbers of young people aged 12 to 24 years could take advantage of their “demographic dividend” to accelerate economic growth and sharply reduce poverty (World Bank, 2007). Experiences at home and abroad shows that engaging youth in neighbourhood and national development yields an opportunity to harness their energy, enthusiasm, skills and innovative ideas to increase economic growth, foster social stability, improve civic participation, ensures healthier and

more educated and productive society (Ryan *et al*, 2001; Arowosegbe, 2009; Odoh and Eme, 2014).

The Bureau of Statistics according to Osun Defender (2012) reported that the overall national unemployment rate has been on the steady increase since 2005. For instance, it increased from 11.9 percent in 2005 to 21.1 percent in September, 2011 while unemployment rate in Osun State had doubled from 6.30 percent in 2007 to 12.6 percent in March, 2009. The determination to arrest this ugly trend necessitated the effort by the former Governor of Osun State, Mr. Rauf Adesoji Aregbesola on 17th Decemeber, 2010 to not only empower 20,000 youths in Community Development Programmes (CDP), but also embarked on developmental projects aimed at taking the State and citizenry out of poverty to socio-economic prosperity. OYES was introduced on 17th of December, 2010. The OYES volunteers were divided into different specialised cadres such as: Public sanitation, Public works brigade, Green gang, Osun sheriff corps, Traffic marshalls, Osun paramedics, Sanitation czars, and Teachers corps. They were thereafter deployed to productive services in these identified areas of socio-economic life. The empowerment scheme apart from being a deliberate programme designed to energize the State's comatose economy; is also a radical and innovative approach to tackling unemployment, youth restiveness and potential tendencies. The Osun State Youth Empowerment Scheme (OYES) remains the biggest grassroots youth empowerment initiative in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. The government has invested two hundred million naira (1,322,314.05 US Dollar at ₦151.25 to \$1) to the program (www.sunnewonline.com/oyes-legacy-human-capital-development/amp/#ampf). As such, the scheme has been commended by World Bank as an

admirable model for incorporating the work component into Western social security system. Nigeria, as well as, many other countries in the world is facing the worst burden of youth unemployment. Many Nigerian youths roam the streets in rural and urban towns/cities without gainful job and the danger of this situation has far reaching implications on the social wellbeing and security of the country because the idle hand is the devil's tool. This study described the demographic characteristics of OYES beneficiaries in the study area; examined the level of their participation in the scheme; determined variables associated with their participation; and compared their socio-economic status before and after participation.

Conceptual framework

This study finds its relevance in concept of empowerment. The term empowerment is multi-faceted, which has been in progress under various names, theories, and movements starting at least as far back as the social and political upheavals of the 1950s and 1960s era of civil rights in the United States and human rights, liberation, and independence movements around the globe. It was not until Barbara Solomon's 1976 book *Black Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Communities* that the term "empowerment" appeared in its current usage (Solomon, 1976). As a concept, empowerment refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. Empowerment refers both to the process of self-employment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and eventually to use their resources and chances (Solomon, 1976; Rapport, 1981; Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995).

In social work, empowerment forms a practical approach of resources-oriented intervention. In the field of citizenship education and democratic education, empowerment is seen as a tool to increase the responsibility of the citizen. Empowerment is a key concept in the discourse on promoting civic engagement. Empowerment as a concept, which is characterized by a move away from a deficit-oriented towards a more strength-oriented perception, can increasingly be found in management concepts, as well as in the areas of continuing education and self-help.

Adams (2008) pointed to the limitations of any single definitions of 'empowerment', and the danger that academic or specialist definitions might take away the word and the connected practices from the very people they are supposed to belong to. Still, he offers a minimal definition of the term: 'Empowerment: the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives. One definition for the term is "an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of resources gain greater access to and control over those resources". Rapport's (1981) definition includes: "Empowerment is viewed as a process: the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives."

Sociological empowerment often addresses members of groups that social discrimination processes have excluded from decision-making processes through – for example – discrimination based on

disability, race, ethnicity, religion, or gender. Empowerment as a methodology is also associated with feminism. Empowerment is the process of obtaining basic opportunities for marginalized people, either directly by those people, or through the help of non-marginalized others who share their own access to these opportunities. It also includes actively thwarting attempts to deny those opportunities. Empowerment also includes encouraging and developing the skills for self-sufficiency, with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in the individuals of the group (Cornel Empowerment Group, 1989). Thus, from the beginning, the concept of empowerment has been inherently political and ambiguous- its interpretation is in the eye of the beholder.

One empowerment strategy is to assist marginalized people to create their own non-profit organization, using the rationale that only the marginalized people themselves can know what their own people need most and that control of the organization by outsiders can actually help to further entrench marginalization. Charitable organizations lead from outside of the community; for example, can disempower the community by entrenching a dependence charity or welfare. A non-profit organization can target strategies that cause structural changes, reducing the need for ongoing dependence.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Osogbo the capital of Osun State. Osogbo seats the Headquarters of both Osogbo and Olorunda Local Government Areas (LGAs). A survey design was adopted for this research. Osogbo LGA was purposively selected out of the two LGAs because the Headquarters of OYES is located there. There are eight specialised cadres such as: Public sanitation, Public works brigade, Green gang, Osun sheriff corps, Traffic marshalls, Osun paramedics, Sanitation czars, and Teachers corps.

Eleven beneficiaries were selected from each of the cadres making eighty eight respondents, but eight six (representing 97.7 %) questionnaires were retrieved for analysis. This makes a total of eighty six (86) cadets or OYES beneficiaries interviewed for the study. The respondents were the cadets of the third set of the scheme, that is, the set of 2015-2016. The beneficiaries' participation in OYES was measured by asking them to rate their extent of participation in each of the divisions of OYES on a 4-point Likert type scale - Always (3), Sometimes (2), Rarely (1) and Never (0). The mean plus or minus one standard deviation was used to classify the participation scores into three levels: low, moderate and high, as used by Adeloye *et al.* (2021). Level of participation was classified as low when the total participation score fell below the difference between the mean score and one unit of standard deviation. Participation in exploitation was at the high level when score was above the sum of the mean score and one unit of standard deviation, while at the medium level, participation score fell in between the two extremes (plus or minus one unit of standard deviation). The impact of OYES on socioeconomic status of beneficiaries was measured by assessing the beneficiaries before and after their participation vis-à-vis income, asset, savings, investment, feeding, clothing and rendering financial assistance to others.

Results and discussion

Demographic Characteristics of OYES in the Socio- economic life of Participants

The result in Table 1 revealed that the mean age of the respondents was 20.61 ± 13.92 ; this implies that they were at their active and productive age which could be deployed to improve their socio-economic status. It was further revealed that majority (72.1%) were female. This is an indication that the

scheme is gender sensitive. More than half (55.8% and 65.1%) had Islam as religion and were married respectively with 3.2 ± 1.4 mean family size; this implies that their participation in the scheme might be connected with the desire to cater for their family responsibilities. In addition, many (62.8%) live with their parents/ relatives; this could serve as one of the coping strategies for the youth against economic hardship.

Reasons for Participation in OYES

The result in Table 2 revealed that bettering ones lot in life (76.4%) ranked first among the reasons the respondents participated in the scheme, followed by expectation of permanent job after the scheme (54.7%), lack of befitting job (33.7%), advice from others (30.2%), taking it as part time job (26.7%), among others. This implies that main reasons for youths' participation in OYES in the study area were to better lot in life, expectation of permanent job after the scheme and lack of befitting job. This finding is in tandem with that of Adeloye and Adisa (2020) that reported bettering one's lot in life was one of the main reasons rural dwellers participated in University-based rural development outreaches in Southwestern Nigeria.

Participation in OYES Activities

The result in Table 3 shows that teacher's corp (mean=2.13) ranked highest in participation among the OYES activities, followed by sanitation czars (mean= 2.00), sheriff guards (mean= 1.03), and green gang (mean=1.02) in that order. Teacher's corp ranked highest might be due to shortage of teachers in the public schools of Osun State. This finding corroborates that of Subair and Talabi (2015) that affirmed the shortage of teachers among secondary schools in Osun State.

Levels of Participation in OYES Activities

Results in Fig. 1 show the overall level of participation of beneficiaries in OYES activities. About 31.9 percent of the beneficiaries have low level of participation in the OYES activities, 38.4 percent moderately participate in the OYES activities, while 29.7 percent of the respondents have high participation level. This shows that at least 61.6 percent of the respondents were either moderately or highly involved in OYES activities. This finding suggested that beneficiaries participate at different levels of OYES activities in the study locations.

Socio-Economic Status before Participants' Involvement in OYES

The data in Table 4 presents the comparison of socio-economic status of participants before and after participating in OYES. To fulfill this objective, questions were structured in such a way that respondents could choose whether their status is high or low before and after participating in OYES. The table revealed that BEFORE participation in OYES, based on income, 29.1 percent had high level of income while 70.4 percent had low level of income. On asset, 32.6 percent had high assets while 67.4 percent had low assets. On savings, 34.9 percent had high savings while 65.1 percent had low savings. Based on investment, 31.4 percent had high investment while 68.6 percent had low investment. On rent, 41.9 percent had high rent while 50.8 percent had low rent. Based on feeding, 77.9 percent feed high while 22.1 percent feed low. On clothing, 77.9 percent had high clothing while 22.1 percent had low clothing. On rendering financial assistance to others, 47.7 percent said it was high before participating in OYES while 52.3 percent said it was low.

Finally, the table revealed that AFTER participation in OYES, based on income, 77.9 percent had high level of income

while 22.1 percent had low level of income. On asset, 58.1 percent had high assets while 41.9 percent had low assets. On savings, 82.6 percent had high savings while 17.4 percent had low savings. Based on investment, 58.1 percent had high investment while 41.9 percent had low investment. On rent, 53.5 percent had high rent while 46.5 percent had low rent. Based on feeding, 90.7 percent feed high while 9.3 percent feed low. On clothing, 82.6 percent had high clothing while 17.4 percent had low clothing. On rendering financial assistance to others, 47.7 percent said it was high after participating in OYES while 52.3 percent said it was low. Result in Table 5 indicated a significant difference in socioeconomic status of OYES beneficiaries before and after their participation. The F-value of 65.59 at the significance value of 0.000 was less than 0.05 level of significance ($F= 65.59, P= 0.000$). This implies that OYES had a positive impact on the socioeconomic status of the beneficiaries. This result is in agreement with that of Abefe-Balogun (2015) who reported that OYES instill sustainable development in the beneficiaries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that majority of OYES beneficiaries was female and many were living with their parents/ relatives; also, they participated to better their lot in life, expectation of permanent job after OYES and lack of befitting job. The beneficiaries had moderate participation in the scheme, apart from that; the scheme had positive impact on the socio economic status of its beneficiaries. It was recommended that programme that will train the beneficiaries on how to save and invest their income should be incorporated in order to sustain the impact of the scheme.

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