



# YOUTH EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACTIVITIES IN NORTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper seeks to examine socio-economic benefits of participation in entrepreneurship activities among youth in North-western of Nigeria. Youth empowerment through entrepreneurship activities which is the focus of this paper is a mechanism through which Nigerian youths are able to increase self-reliance in order to promote their well-being as it is believe that entrepreneurial development is a field that saddles its recipients with employable skills. A sample of 282 youths involved in the entrepreneurship activities from the study area were selected from a study population of 800, through sample random from the seven states of North-West of Nigeria and a schedule was designed and administered among the respondents. The results revealed that learning new skills and material status have significant impact on youth who participate in entrepreneurship activities. Most of the respondents have either primary or secondary school education which directly informed their participation in the programmes. The study finds out that there is high rate of involvement of youth in entrepreneurship activities in the study area, hence most of the respondents emphasized positive changes in their socio-economic well-being. The paper therefore concludes that youth involvement in entrepreneurship activities is a mechanism for youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Its also concludes that entrepreneurial development is a field that saddles on how to be employable and to be useful to themselves and the society.*

**KEYWORDS:** Empowerment, Participation, Entrepreneurship, Socio-economic.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is a serious challenging task facing Nigeria today. Unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of Nigeria youth causing frustration, dejection and depending on family members (Lucas & Alaka 2014). The high rate of unemployment among youth in Nigeria has contributed to the high rate of poverty and insecurity in the country (Ajuto, 2013).

Youth have being known to play important functions to the development of any nation. As such, there is an emerging need to improve youth status which should start with social and economic empowerment through entrepreneurship activities and youth empowerment through participation in entrepreneurship activities. These would enable them to develop self-esteem, confidence, realize their potentials and enhance collective bargaining power and also improve their well being and self reliance. Thus, the increasing awareness and importance of youth participation in entrepreneurship activities and benefits drive calls for an in-depth study of youth involve in entrepreneurship activities in North-West of Nigeria.

The aim of this paper therefore, is to understand and describe the socio-economic benefits accrued to youth participating in entrepreneurship activities in the study area.

## 1.1 Empowerment - A Theoretical Postulation

Empowerment had two interrelated aspects that can be summarized as individual empowerment and collective empowerment. Each aspect has its own component (Mann, 2006). Individual empowerment relates to the way people think about themselves as well as the knowledge, capacities, skills and mastery they actually possess (Staples, 1999). A set of four components, including meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, were found in individual empowerment. The goal of individual empowerment is to achieve a state of liberation strong enough to impact one's power of life, community and society. Empowerment therefore develops from individual and a critical consciousness to collective action (Boehn & Staples, 2008). Individual empowerment develops when people attempt to develop the capabilities to overcome their psychological and intellectual obstacles and attain self-determination, self-sufficiency, self-confidence and decision making abilities (Becker & Korach 20004). While collective empowerment refers to the process by which individuals join together to break their solitude and silence, help one another, learn together, and develop skills for collective action (Boehm & Fatterson, 2004).

Empowerment process is therefore not a constant, but rather a continuing development that involves many changes and whereby an individual or group is able to strengthen and exercise the ability to act to gain control and mastery over life,



community and society. Empowerment thus is understood as a multi-dimensional process where people take control over their lives, gaining skills, building self-confidence and solving problems. Thus, youth empowerment especially through entrepreneurship activities would be able to develop self-esteem and confidence to improve their well being. Therefore, the involvement of youth in entrepreneurship activities can lead to empowerment where they can gain control over their lives because entrepreneurial development is a field that saddles its recipients with skills on how to be employable and useful to themselves and the society.

### 1.2 Aim Objectives of Study

The aim of this study was to examine the extent of youth empowerment through participation in entrepreneurship activities by youth from North-West of Nigeria.

#### The specific objective are to

- i. Determine empowerment benefits (Social and economic) through participation in entrepreneurship practices.
- ii. Identify the constraints militating against youth participation in entrepreneurship activities.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in North-West of Nigeria. The study is descriptive in nature as it has attempted to describe the socio-economic benefits derived through participation in entrepreneurship activities among youths in the study area. The sample size of this study came from a population of 800 youths who are involved in entrepreneurship activities from the study area.

The sample size of 282 was selected for the study. The research instrument for data collection for this study was

through questionnaire. The suggest items in measuring socio-economic empowerment were originally developed by past researchers and reported high rating in validity and reliability (Mann 2006, Kabeer, 2010). The volume of each response in these items as measured with four point likert scale (1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Agree 4. Strongly Agree). Data obtained from the respondents was coded, computed and analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 20).

## 3.0 RESULTS

While trying to examine the dynamics of youth participation in entrepreneurship activities in the study area, socio-economic benefits derived from the practice as well as challenges faced by the respondents were identified to be very important variables as the respondents of this study are youths that could explain better what they felt about entrepreneurial practices. This is shown in tables 1-3 below;

### 3.1 Economic Empowerment Derived through Entrepreneurial Practices

The main idea behind this section (Table I) was to measure the level of economic benefits derived by the respondent through participation in entrepreneurship activities.

The analysis showed that the overall score of youth economic empowerment was 2.74 and majority of the respondents are really privileged to enjoy many economic benefits. These include & increased in their purchasing power, improved living condition and increased in their income among others. The overall frequency thus indicated that youth who participates in entrepreneurship activities have moderate level of economic empowerment.

**Table 1: Items Analysis of Youth Economic Empowerment (n 282) mean 2.74**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Low (1-2)	Mod (2.1-3)	High (3.1-4)
1.	My purchasing power has increased	3.67	0.49	1.1%	30.9%	68.1%
2.	I am feeling better about my living condition now	3.58	0.53	1.4%	38.3%	60.3%
3.	The level of my income has increased	3.39	0.50	0.7%	40.1%	59.2%
4.	I learn new income generation skills	3.05	0.28	1.4%	91.5%	7.1%
5.	I learnt how to manage my financial resources now	2.98	0.23	2.8%	95.4%	1.8%
6.	I am able to save some money now	2.97	0.44	9.2%	83.3%	7.4%
7.	I can now solve my financial problems	2.90	0.35	10.3%	88.3%	1.4%
8.	I have gained employable skills from my participation in entrepreneurship activities	2.89	0.42	12.8%	84.0%	3.2%
9.	I am able to overcome my personal needs now	2.60	0.62	43.3%	51.1%	5.7%
10.	I now have access to assets	2.07	0.38	88.7%	11.3%	-
11.	I am able to teach others some income generation skills	2.04	0.54	84.0%	15.2%	0.7%
12.	I can now assist others financially	1.80	0.50	95.0%	5.0%	-
13.	I have access to credit facilities	1.73	0.57	96.1%	2.5%	1.4%

Source: Field work, 2019

### 3.2 Social Empowerment Derived through Entrepreneurship Activities

This section (Table 2) was used to measure respondents, level of social empowerment through their involvement in entrepreneurship practices. The analysis showed that the overall mean was 2.81 and that most of the respondents of this study who participated in entrepreneurship activities have got a lot of

social benefits. Based on the analysis in Table 2 below, respondents got social benefits such as improved quality life, having access to new skills and better decision making ability among others. Thus, the result showed that respondents who participated in entrepreneurship activities from this study area generally have moderate social empowerment.

**Table 2: Items of Analysis of Youth Social Empowerment (n 282) mean 2.81**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Low (1-2)	Mod (2.1-3)	High (3.1-4)
1.	The quality of my life has improved	3.62	0.50	1.1%	35.8%	63.1%
2.	I happily work together with others	3.58	0.51	1.1%	39.4%	59.6%
3.	I learnt new things from the people	3.04	0.33	3.2%	88.7%	8.2%
4.	I learnt many things through networking	3.03	0.43	7.8%	81.2%	11.0%
5.	I have access to new skills	3.01	0.27	2.5%	93.6%	3.9%



6.	I feel better making decision about myself	2.94	0.51	13.8%	77.0%	9.2%
7.	I can act on my own now	2.87	0.51	18.4%	74.8%	6.7%
8.	I have new friends now	2.81	0.51	23.8%	70.9%	5.3%
9.	I have access to education now	2.78	0.57	26.2%	67.4%	6.4%
10.	I have access to useful information now	2.52	0.69	46.5%	48.2%	5.3%
11.	I know more about the society	2.50	0.60	47.5%	49.6%	2.8%
12.	I feel better making decision about myself	2.02	0.30	86.2%	13.1%	0.7%
13.	I perform my social responsibilities now	1.86	0.46	96.1%	3.5%	0.4%

Source: Field work, 2019

### 3.3 Youths Constraints in Entrepreneurship Activities

The main idea behind this section (Table 3) was to measure youth obstacles in entrepreneurship activities. The analysis showed that majority of respondents of this study has faced

some challenges. Some of these challenges included: lack of enough initial capital, lack of financial support from the government and lack of enable environment.

Table 3: Items of Analysis of Youth Constraints (n 282) mean 1.90

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Low (1-2)	Mod (2.1-3)	High (3.1-4)
1.	I get assistance from the government	2.36	0.67	61.0%	34.4%	4.6%
2.	I have enough capital	1.31	0.58	86.5%	12.4%	1.1%
3.	I have support from others	2.31	0.63	65.5%	31.2%	3.2%
4.	I have access to tools	1.97	0.58	86.4%	12.5%	1.1%
5.	I have good market for any product	1.70	0.61	96.0%	2.5%	1.5%
6.	I have my parents support	1.90	0.60	88.0%	11.9%	1.1%
7.	I have access to a shop	1.70	0.61	96.0%	2.5%	1.5%
8.	Government provide good environment	1.59	0.60	97.0%	2.5%	0.50%
9.	I have access to bank loan	1.58	0.59	98.0%	1.0%	1.0%
10.	I receive salary from n-power	1.70	0.61	96.0%	2.5%	0.5%
11.	I have constant electricity	1.58	0.59	97.0%	2.5%	1.5%
12.	Customers have access to my shop	1.70	0.61	96.0%	2.5%	1.5%
13.	I spend more on generator	2.36	1.67	61.0	34.4%	3.2%

Source: Field work, 2019

## 4.0 DISCUSSION

The study was designed to understand the socio-economic impact of entrepreneurship activities on members. The result obtained from this study has shown the benefits and changes that respondents of this study have experienced in their lives as a result of their entrepreneurial practices. The outcome of this study showed that most of the respondents of this study have benefited considerable in terms of socio-economic empowerment. It is evident that economically, the respondents have opportunities through their participation in entrepreneurship activities to enjoy some economic benefits which include increased in their income. Most of them felt strong enough to meet unexpected financial challenges as a result of the increased in their purchasing power. Secondly, the outcome indicated that the respondents have got a lot of social benefits most of them felt that there is an improved life and

access to new skills of income generation. To this end, respondents are able to make good decisions about themselves. They are able to articulate own strategy for change.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies (Ajuta 2013 & Salami 2013) who observed that entrepreneurial practice has the potentials establishing capacity building and self-efficiency among youth in socio-economic development.

Although, the respondents of this study faced some challenges in this practice. This includes lack of initial capital, lack of government support and many others, but the respondents were able to record moderate successes. It can be concluded that poverty and unemployment are the compelling forces for the youth to participate in entrepreneurship activities and the practice has proved to be a good strategy to alleviate poverty and youth development. It is understood from this study



that entrepreneurship activities are playing a vital role in empowering Nigeria youth as most of the respondents have emphasized changes in their wellbeing.

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## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The outcome of this study indicated that youth in the area of study see entrepreneurial practice as a major means of livelihood and, therefore, put high expectation of returns on the practice. And as such, have benefitted considerably in terms of socio-economic development. The practice has clearly created impact upon the life pattern of Nigeria youth especially those from North-West of Nigeria.

## 6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends the following:

1. Federal government should come out with mass enlightenment programme through ministry of youth development on the need for active participation of youth in entrepreneurship activities irrespective of educational status or sex.
2. There is the need for the three tiers of government to give support to youth engaged in entrepreneurship activities.
3. Graduates of entrepreneurship skills acquisition programmes should be supported with micro credits to start own business.

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