

The Role of Skills Acquisition in Mitigating Youth Unemployment in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study focused on the role of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design guided the study. The population comprised 51 Industrial Technology PhD Students in Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt and 38 Industrial Technology PhD Students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. No sampling was done as the population was manageable. Three research questions were answered and three hypotheses tested at .05 level of significance. A questionnaire titled "Skills Acquisition in Mitigating Youth Unemployment Questionnaire" was developed to elicit responses from the respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha Reliability coefficient. The reliability coefficient achieved was 0.82. Statistical Mean was used to answer the research questions while standard deviation was used to determine the homogeneity in the responses of the respondent and z-test was used to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The study found that low standard of education, rapid population growth, rapid expansion of the educational system, corruption, mass poverty, illiteracy among the youth; among others are some of the causes of unemployment in Rivers State. The study also showed that skill acquisition plays the vital role in creating employment opportunities, and also helping to groom youths to be self-reliant. It was recommended among others that Government should establish well-equipped acquisition centres in all Local Government Areas of Rivers State for the training of youths.

Keywords: Skill Acquisition, Mitigating, Unemployment & Youth

I. INTRODUCTION

Youth is one of the concepts that do not have a general definition. Different countries have their own perception of who should be described as a youth. Basically, the Nigerian National Youth Policy (2009) in Oduwale (2015) described youths as those between the ages of 18 - 35 years. In Nigeria, the population of people within this age bracket is estimated to be 67 million (Matawal, 2017 in Ochogba, Johnwest, Isiodu & Igwe, 2018). The National Population Commission (2013) and Ojo, Abayomi and Odozi (2014) are of the view that sixty four (64) million of Nigerian youths are unemployed.

It is common knowledge that about 80% of graduates in most Nigerian universities find it hard to get employment every year (Florence & Ekpungu, 2015). Unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of youths and graduates causing frustration, depression, dejection and dependency on family members and friends. The high level of unemployment among youths in Nigeria has contributed to the high rate of insecurity, violence in elections and poverty

(Ajufo, 2003 & Simkovic 2012). Similarly, Chijioke (2016) opined that there is 40% unemployment rate among urban youths aged 20-24 and 31% among those aged 15-19 years thus leading to high rate of rural-urban migration occasioned by social vices such as youth restiveness, hooliganism, thuggery, rape, armed robbery just to mention but a few. Furthermore, Niyi (cited in Ochogba and Amaechi, 2018) opined that the factors responsible for the high rate of insecurity in Nigeria includes; unemployment of youths and corruption among leaders.

Meanwhile several factors have been described as reasons for unemployment in Nigeria. Some are classified as individual factors while others are attributed to bad leadership and dysfunctional education that is characterized by poor infrastructure. Attesting to this, Nnodim and Ochogba (2018) stated that the current situation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme, which is skill oriented, is insufficient learning facilities which result in improper skills acquisition after graduation. Similarly, Ongbali, Afolalu and Udo (2019) stated that one of the factors responsible for unemployment is the issue of lack of employable skills.

Ogundele (2013) described skill as that which enables someone to do something well, usually gained through training. The act of getting this skill and knowledge could be described as acquisition (Ogundele, 2013). These skills can be acquired either through teaching, training, retraining, practical experience and on-the-job training (Uzoka & Bayode, 2010). Through teaching and training, several skills are acquired, such as; technical, vocational, managerial, entrepreneurial, communication, accounting, information and communication technology and many more (Ochogba & Amaechi, 2018).

However, the importance of skills acquisition cannot be over emphasized as many authors have highlighted. Okwelle and Amaechi (2017) found that acquisition of technical skills, such as; furniture making, pipe fitting, machining, phone repairs, masonry, electrical installation, boat building, foundry, automobile, scaffolding, welding and electronics, among others will help in empowering youths in Rivers State. Also, Ochogba and Amaechi (2018) opined that there are several ways by which skills acquisition can empower youths, such as encouraging self employment, provision of diverse job opportunities, among others. Furthermore, Umunnadi in Ogide, Uka and Ogide (2019) pointed out that through skill acquisition an individual could be empowered to develop

capabilities and values for the benefits of the individual and that of the society.

From the foregoing, skill acquisition has a role to play in mitigating unemployment. In line with this, Okoye and Okwelle (2014) posits that if youths are provided with adequate skills while in school and aided with entrepreneurial skills, youth unemployment would be a thing of the past. Thus, having knowledge of the role skills acquisition could play in mitigating unemployment is necessary especially in a country where there is high level of unemployed youths. Based on this, the researchers deemed it fit to investigate the role of skills acquisition in mitigating unemployment in Rivers State.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to examine the role of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers state. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the factor that causes youth unemployment in Rivers State.
2. Determine the acquired skills for mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers state.
3. Determine the role of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed for the study:

1. What are the causes of youth unemployment in Rivers State?
2. What are the acquired skills for mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State?
3. What are the roles of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Industrial and Technology Education (ITE) PhD Students in Ignatius Ajuru University and those in Rivers State University on the causes of youth unemployment in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Industrial and Technology Education

(ITE) PhD Students in Ignatius Ajuru University and those in Rivers State University on the acquired skills for mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State.

3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Industrial and Technology Education (ITE) PhD Students in Ignatius Ajuru University and those in Rivers State University on the role of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State.

III. METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised all the Industrial/ Technology Education PhD students in the two tertiary technical institutions in Rivers State. This included Rivers State University, and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State. The sample size of the study was 38 ITE Students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and 51 VTE Students of Rivers State University Port Harcourt selected through purposive sampling method. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled "Skills Acquisition in Mitigating Youth Unemployment Questionnaire" (SAMYUQ) structured in the pattern of Likert 5 point rating scale of agreement. The instrument was face validated by three experts in the Department of Vocational and technology Education, Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient method for measuring of internal consistency of the instrument. A total of 20 respondents who were not part of the sample were used in testing the reliability of this study. The reliability coefficient of .82 was obtained. Copies of the instrument were administered and retrieved by the researchers at the spot. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses. Mean values less than 3.50 were rejected while mean values equal or greater than 3.50 were accepted. Decision rule for the test of hypotheses was accepted if the calculated value of z is less than the critical z, and if the calculated value of z is greater than z critical, the null hypotheses was rejected.

IV. RESULTS

Research Question 1

What are the causes of youth unemployment in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Responses on the Causes of Youth Unemployment.

S/N	Causes of Youth Unemployment	RSU Students (n ₁ =51)		IAUE Students (n ₂ =38)		Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
1	Low standard of education	3.90	1.41	3.81	1.30	Agree
2	Mass poverty	3.82	1.47	3.94	.80	Agree
3	Neptotism	3.77	1.44	3.53	1.39	Agree

4	Illiteracy among youths	3.93	1.33	Agree	3.59	1.25	Agree
5	Rapid expansion of institutions	3.79	1.52	Agree	3.88	1.41	Agree
6	Ignorance position	3.83	1.48	Agree	4.28	1.02	Agree
7	Drug abuse	3.84	1.49	Agree	3.69	1.42	Agree
8	Bad leadership	3.84	1.50	Agree	3.91	1.09	Agree
9	Parental upbringing	3.80	1.52	Agree	3.69	.89	Agree
10	Corruption	3.81	1.50	Agree	4.28	1.02	Agree
11	Lack of employable skills	3.92	1.39	Agree	3.50	1.08	Agree
12	Rapid population growth	3.79	1.49	Agree	3.66	1.34	Agree
	Grand \bar{X} & SD	3.84	1.46		3.81	1.17	

Source: field survey, 2019

Table 1 on the causes of youth unemployment in Rivers State shows that RSU and IAUE students agreed that all the variables highlighted are the causes of youth unemployment in Rivers State. This is based on the grand mean scores of 3.84 and 3.81 respectively, which is greater than 3.50 which is the acceptable mean value. Also, the closeness in the Standard Deviation for the two groups which is 1.46 and 1.17 shows homogeneity in their responses. This is in line with Ongbali,

Afolalu and Udo (2019) that stated that one of the factors responsible for unemployment is the issue of lack of employable skills.

Research Question 2

What are the acquired skills for mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean Responses on the acquired skills for mitigating youth unemployment?

		RSU Students (n ₁ =51)		IAUE Students (n ₂ =38)			
S/N	Acquired skills for mitigating youth unemployment	\bar{X}	SD	Decision	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Digital marketing skills	3.84	1.46	Agree	3.88	1.73	Agree
2	Auto servicing skills	3.88	1.48	Agree	3.66	1.46	Agree
3	Manufacturing skills	3.76	1.54	Agree	3.91	1.09	Agree
4	Construction service skills	3.71	1.56	Agree	3.69	.89	Agree
5	Tailoring and fashion designing skills	3.79	1.51	Agree	3.97	1.58	Agree
6	Photography skills	3.87	1.39	Agree	3.57	1.38	Agree
7	Carpentry skills	3.77	1.50	Agree	3.66	1.34	Agree
8	Installation skills	3.82	1.48	Agree	3.59	1.44	Agree
9	Painting	3.77	1.44	Agree	3.54	1.44	Agree
10	Information technology skills	3.84	1.49	Agree	3.81	1.57	Agree
11	Media skills	3.79	1.51	Agree	3.68	1.43	Agree
12	Video editing	3.96	1.32	Agree	4.28	1.02	Agree
13	Sound editing	3.81	1.50	Agree	3.81	1.57	Agree
14	Graphic design	3.82	1.48	Agree	4.28	1.02	Agree
15	Cable installer	3.79	1.49	Agree	3.53	1.39	Agree
16	Data base management	3.83	1.39	Agree	3.63	1.29	Agree
17	Software development	3.72	1.47	Agree	3.50	1.08	Agree
18	Web design	3.87	1.39	Agree	4.22	1.12	Agree
19	Web application development	3.82	1.47	Agree	4.28	1.04	Agree
	Grand \bar{X} & SD	3.81	1.47		3.82	1.31	

Table 2 on acquired skills for mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State show that RSU and IAUE students agreed that

all the variables highlighted are acquired skills for mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State. This is based on the

grand mean scores of 3.82 and 3.82 respectively, which is greater than 3.50 which is the acceptable mean value. Also, the closeness in the Standard Deviation for the two groups which is 1.47 and 1.31 shows homogeneity in their responses. This is in consonance with Ochogba and Amaechi (2018) that asserted that through teaching and training, several skills are acquired, such as; technical, vocational, managerial,

entrepreneurial, communication, accounting, information and communication technology and many more.

Research Question 3:

What are the roles of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean Responses on the Role of Skills Acquisition in Mitigating Youth Unemployment

		RSU Students (n ₁ =51)		IAUE Students (n ₂ =38)			
S/N	Role of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment	\bar{X}	SD	Decision	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	It builds confidence in establishing a business	3.81	1.50	Agree	3.69	.89	Agree
2	It provides diverse job opportunities	3.84	1.49	Agree	3.81	1.57	Agree
3	It ensures right attitude for employment	3.81	1.50	Agree	3.81	1.30	Agree
4	It makes it easier for government intervention in terms of grant	3.87	1.39	Agree	3.91	1.09	Agree
5	When youths who acquire skills are established, they absorb others who are unemployed	3.66	1.54	Agree	3.97	1.58	Agree
6	Achievement of youths who acquired skills motivate others who are unemployed to acquire skills	3.86	1.38	Agree	3.78	1.65	Agree
Grand \bar{X} & SD		3.81	1.47		3.83	1.35	

Table 3 on the roles of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State shows that RSU and IAUE students agreed that all the variables highlighted are roles of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State. This is based on the grand mean scores of 3.83 and 3.83 respectively, which is greater than 3.50 which is the acceptable mean value. Also, the closeness in the Standard Deviation for the two groups which is 1.47 and 1.35 shows homogeneity in their responses. This is in agreement with Ochogba and Amaechi (2018) that opined that there are several ways by which skills acquisition can empower youths, such as encouraging self employment, provision of diverse job opportunities, among others

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Industrial and Technology Education (ITE) PhD Students in Ignatius Ajuru University and those in Rivers State University on the causes of youth unemployment in Rivers State.

Table 4: z-test Analysis on the Causes of Youth Unemployment in Rivers State

Category	N	M	SD	df	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
RSU Students	51	3.84	1.46				
				87	.11	1.98	Not Significant
IAUE Students	38	3.81	1.17				

The result in Table 4 shows that at 87 degree of freedom, the z-cal was .11 while z-crit was 1.98 at .05 level of significance. This result shows that z-cal (.11) was less than z-crit (1.98)

which means that the null hypothesis was accepted hence, there was no significant difference in the mean responses of Industrial and Technology Education (ITE) PhD Students in Ignatius Ajuru University and those in Rivers State University on the causes of youth unemployment in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Industrial and Technology Education (ITE) PhD Students in Ignatius Ajuru University and those in Rivers State University on the acquired skills for mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State

Table 5: z-test Analysis on the Acquired Skills for Mitigating Youth Unemployment in Rivers State

Category	N	M	SD	df	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
RSU Students	51	3.81	1.47				
				87	.03	1.98	Not Significant
IAUE Students	38	3.82	1.31				

The result in Table 5 shows that at 87 degree of freedom, the z-cal was .03 while z-crit was 1.98 at .05 level of significance. This result shows that z-cal (.03) was less than z-crit (1.98) which means that the null hypothesis was accepted hence, there was no significant difference in the mean responses of Industrial and Technology Education (ITE) PhD Students in Ignatius Ajuru University and those in Rivers State University on the acquired skills for mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Industrial and Technology Education (ITE) PhD Students in Ignatius Ajuru University and those in Rivers State University on the role of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State

Table 6: z-test Analysis on the Role of Skills Acquisition in Mitigating Youth Unemployment in Rivers State

Category	N	M	SD	df	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
RSU Students	51	3.81	1.47				
				87	.07	1.98	Not Significant
IAUE Students	38	3.83	1.35				

The result in Table 6 shows that at 87 degree of freedom, the z-cal was .07 while z-crit was 1.98 at .05 level of significance. This result shows that z-cal (.07) was less than z-crit (1.98) which means that the null hypothesis was accepted hence, there was no significant difference in the mean responses of Industrial and Technology Education (ITE) PhD Students in Ignatius Ajuru University and those in Rivers State University on the role of skills acquisition in mitigating youth unemployment in Rivers State.

V. CONCLUSION

There has been great concern over the means of reducing unemployment in Rivers State. Based on the findings it was deduced that among others, rapid expansion of the educational system, rapid population growth, illiteracy among the youths, low standard of education, corruption, bad leadership, Parental upbringing, ignorance position, nepotism, dreams about white-collar job, mass poverty are some of the causes of unemployment. It was also revealed that acquisition of skills can play a role in mitigating unemployment since it create employment opportunities and also helps to groom future self-reliant youths with skills such as installation skills, food services, digital marketing skills, hair styling, automobile repairs, tailoring and fashion designing, photography skills, carpentry skills, barbing, and flexibility for sustainability, leads to the much desired human capital development in the economy and serve as vehicles upon which the skills of workforce are built.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Government should establish well-equipped skill acquisition centres in each Local Government Area of Rivers State for the training of youths.
2. There should be regular orientation program in all the Local Government Areas in Rivers State to inform the unemployed youths on the importance of skills

acquisition programmes and the benefits of being self-reliant.

3. Every youth on completion of the training programme should be established by Rivers State Government.

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