

Employment and Income Generation Potentials of Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute's Youth Empowerment Scheme in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

In an attempt to contribute to unemployment reduction in the country, Agricultural Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI) implemented Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) over the years, the study therefore examined the employment and income generation potentials of ARMTI YES. A three-stage sampling procedure was employed to collect data for the study. The first stage was the stratification of the country into different geopolitical zones, the second stage was the purposive selection of two states from each zone, while the third and last stage involved the selection of beneficiaries based on probability proportion to the number of the beneficiaries from each zone. Descriptive Statistics and t-test were used to analyze the data. The result of socioeconomic characteristics showed that beneficiaries of the scheme were male dominated (67.9%), a higher proportion (75.3%) of respondents were married, with a mean age of 38.6 ± 8.2 and household size of 5 ± 4.4 . An average household head had 15 ± 1 years of formal education. Supports derived from the scheme included broiler starter pack (64.2%), layer starter pack (17.3%), fish starter pack (12.3%), BoA loan (6.2%), training (100%) stipends (100%) and advisory services (44.4). Some (77.8%) of the beneficiaries were found to have generated between one (1) to six (6) employments while 22.2% of them have not generated any. Beneficiaries were found to have generated income between 105, 000 to 960,000 in one production cycle with a statistically significant mean difference indicating a positive effect of the support of the scheme on the income of the scheme beneficiaries. The study concluded that YES supported the beneficiaries in the areas of broiler, layer and fish starter packs, BoA loans, training, stipend training as well as advisory services. The increase in the beneficiaries' income is attributed to the support derived from the scheme. It is therefore recommended that there is need to increase budgetary allocation to the scheme so as to accommodate more beneficiaries.

Keywords: Agripreneurship, Employment, Income Generation, Unemployment, Youth Empowerment Scheme

INTRODUCTION

The population of Nigerian is growing at an annual rate of 2.3%, this growth trend is expected to continue until at least 2050. Recently, 43% of the country's population were below 14 years of age while 33% falls in the range of 15 to 24 years, this has resulted into a large percentage of working age population entering the labour market (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2022). This scenario has presented Nigeria as undergoing a “youth bulge” being the largest and most populous nation in the continent of Africa. Price (2019) posited that not less than 66 million individuals are expected to join the Nigeria's labour market between 2010 and 2030. While the distinctiveness and scale of Africa's “demographic bulge” is seen as being overstated in some quarters in policy circles in Nigeria (Sumberg et al. 2021), a young workforce is seen in Nigeria context as an enormous resource that will facilitate regional growth (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning, 2021). Unfortunately, a sizeable number (35%) of Nigerian youth especially able-bodied men and women are unemployed (Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan [NIYEAP], 2021) and even those who are employed, mostly do not have the necessary skills and capacity to sustain themselves should they be out of work.

One of the key macroeconomic indicators that is determined by the level economic growth of a nation is unemployment (Abraham & Sasikumar, 2018; Afonso et al., 2018; Ademola & Badiru, 2016). This is a situation where individuals within the age range 15-64 are available and keenly seeking for job but are unable to secure one. Underemployment on the under hand, refers to a situation where people were engaged in jobs that undervalue their academic qualifications, time, and skills by working an average of less than 40 hours but more than 20 hours in a week (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). For the past two decades, Nigerians are experiencing worsened situation of unemployment, with the situation becoming more worsened since 2015 arising from economic downturn occasioned from decline in the price of the country's major export commodity (oil). Youth unemployment in line with Alanana (2003) refers to a situation where young individuals in the age bracket 18-35 cannot be guaranteed full employment.

Some of the consequences of youth unemployment in Nigeria are dejection, dependency on family members and friends in some cases as well as frustration (Ajufo, 2013). It has been known to present some adverse effect on the social, economic and political developments of the country, as one of the major causes of social vices—militancy, kidnapping, destitution, political thuggery, armed robbery, prostitution, restlessness, and political instability amongst several others (Ajufo, 2013; Adejumola & Tayo-Olajubulu, 2009; Fanimu & Olayinka, 2009).

The federal government of Nigeria as well as Non-Government Organization at different point in time or the other has implemented a number of programmes or initiatives aimed at enhancing job creation, poverty reduction, income generation both to individuals and government thereby diversifying the mono-economic dependent nature of the country's economy. Such programme or initiatives includes but not limited to Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN), Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria (YISA), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE-P), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Africa Youth Empowerment Nigeria (AYEN), Youth Entrepreneur Support Program (YES-P), and N-Power Empowerment Program, Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (YEDI), Diamond-Crest for Youth Education Foundation, Tony Elumelu Foundation for Entrepreneurship in Africa, New Era Foundation, Youth for Technology Foundation, among others. Despite all these programmes/initiatives, Nigeria still faces a lot of challenges toward creating sufficient job opportunities for her teeming unemployed youths (Omeje et al. 2020 and Virk et al. 2024).

Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI) in an attempt to contribute to unemployment reduction and increase the employability skills of youth in the country implemented Youth

Empowerment Scheme (YES) over the years. The scheme commenced in 2013 as an entrepreneurship youth development training that enables youths to make decisive enterprise selections (poultry, fishery and crop) after rigorous training to transform their mindset, belief, values and attitude toward the possibility of becoming self-reliant. This is premised on what you can do for the society rather than what the government can do for you. It is now a four-week training workshop titled “Agripreneurship Development for Youth”. It is an intervention aimed at encouraging the youth to take charge of their lives. The four-week training is complemented by another two weeks of attachment on the farm of their choice relevant to their enterprise. The YES helps to address the current situation of the nation and youth in particular, this will in no small measure help to improve the quality of life of the unemployed youth and their view on agripreneurship.

From the foregoing, the study seeks to examine employment and income generation potential of ARMTI YES by addressing the following research specific objectives:

- examine the supports derived from the scheme by the beneficiaries;
- determine the number of employments generated by the beneficiaries; and
- assess the effect of participation in the scheme on the income of the beneficiaries.

METHODOLOGY

The Study Area

This study was conducted in Nigeria. The country located in West Africa, is the most populous country on the African continent. With an estimated population of over 200 million people (National Bureau of Statistic [NBS] 2020), it is a diverse nation comprising various ethnic groups, languages and religions. Nigeria covers a vast land mass of approximately 923,768 square kilometers, offering diverse agro-ecological zones suitable for various agricultural activities. These zones range from the Sahel in the northern region, with its potential for livestock rearing and crops like millet and sorghum, to the rainforest belt in the southern region, suitable for tree crops, cocoa, and oil palm cultivation.

The country’s agricultural potential extends to the production of staple crops such as maize, rice, cassava and yam as well as cash crops including cotton, cocoa, rubber and oil palm. With its favourable climate and abundant natural resources, Nigeria is divided into six geopolitical zones, which serve as administrative divisions and play a significant role in the country’s political, economic and social dynamics.

Target Population

The Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) is targeted at unemployed youth in Nigerian, aged 18 to 35 years old who have limited opportunities for employment and income generation. The target population for this study are all beneficiaries of YES from 2013 to 2022. This includes individuals who have participated in the scheme’s training and received support services.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through a combination of primary and secondary sources which are either quantitative or qualitative. The qualitative method involved the use of In-depth interview and focus group discussion with selected beneficiaries.

The quantitative method employed the use of a structured questionnaire to gather primary data for this study, and it was administered to members of the YES beneficiaries’ using’s computer-assisted personal interviews on the Kobotoolbox App. The design of the questionnaire includes the introduction page and the consent page, where the enumerator must receive consent and apply a response to the appropriate field.

Secondary data were collected from relevant government reports, documents, publications and ARMTI reports.

Sampling Method

A three-stage sampling technique was employed for this study. The first stage was the stratification of the country into six geopolitical zones. The second stage involved a purposive selection of two states per geopolitical zone based on the state with the highest number of YES beneficiaries, making twelve states that were selected. The selected states were Bauchi, Taraba, Kano, Kaduna, Kwara, Kogi, Ebonyi, Imo, River, Delta, Osun and Oyo. In the third stage, the Yamane (1967) formula (using a 95% confidence level) was used to determine the number of beneficiaries selected. Following this, a total of 100 beneficiaries were selected. Finally, the number of beneficiaries per state was determined using the proportion allocation technique, while the random sampling technique was employed to select the beneficiaries as shown in Table 1. With all this process, the biasedness has been well taken care off.

The Yamane (1967) formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where n is the sample size i.e. the number of households required for this study, N is the population size of YES beneficiaries in Nigeria (335), and e is the level of precision at ±10% (e=0.01) and using 95% confidence level. A total of 100 beneficiaries were selected for the study, however, 81 respondents with useful information were used for the analysis.

TABLE 1 SAMPLE DESIGN OUTLAY for the STUDY

S/N	States	Sampling Frame	Sample Size
1	Bauchi	4	2
2	Taraba	4	2
3	Kano	6	3
4	Kaduna	3	1
5	Kwara	63	30
6	Kogi	30	14
7	Ebonyi	11	5
8	Imo	10	5
9	River	6	3
10	Delta	7	3
11	Oyo	37	17
12	Osun	32	15
	Total	213	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Method of Data Analyses

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the data collected. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics was used to test hypotheses and draw conclusions about the effect between programme participation on the income of the beneficiaries.

Examine the Support Derived from the Scheme by the Beneficiaries

Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to examine the support derived from the scheme by the beneficiaries. Beneficiaries were asked about the support they received from the scheme. The supports derived were starter pack (broiler, point of lay and juvenile), training, advisory services, Bank of Agriculture (BOA) loan and stipend which range from 1-5 in order of support. Furthermore, it was evident from the focus group discussion that most of those who attended were still practicing while some of them combined consultancy services with their farm.

Determine the Number of Employment Generated by the Beneficiaries of the Scheme

Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to determine the number of employments generated by the beneficiaries of the scheme. Beneficiaries were asked on how many employments have they generated.

Assess the Effect of Scheme Participation on Income of the Beneficiaries

Student's t-test was used to determine the effect of scheme participation of the income of the beneficiaries

The formula is given as:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{S_{X_1 X_2} \sqrt{\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}}} \dots\dots\dots 2$$

$$S_{X_1 X_2} = \sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1)S_{X_1}^2 + (n_2 - 1)S_{X_2}^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}} \dots\dots\dots 3$$

$S_{X_1 X_2}$ is an estimator of the common standard deviation of the income

Where n_1 = number of beneficiaries with a high level of income

n_2 = number of beneficiaries with a low level of income

\bar{X}_1 = mean of beneficiaries with a high level of income

\bar{X}_2 = mean of beneficiaries with a low level of income

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the study were presented and discussed in this section. These include the socioeconomics characteristics of the YES beneficiaries, support derived from the scheme by the beneficiaries, number of employments generated by beneficiaries as well as effect of scheme participation on the income of the beneficiaries.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of the YES Beneficiaries

This section presents and discusses the socioeconomic characteristics of the YES beneficiaries. The characteristics discussed were age, sex, marital status, household size and level of education. Details on the socioeconomic characteristics of the YES beneficiaries were presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Socioeconomic Characteristics of YES Beneficiaries

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean (SD)
Age	21-30	15	18.5	38.6(8.2)
	31-40	36	44.5	
	41-50	24	29.6	
	51-60	5	6.2	
	61-70	1	1.2	
Sex	Male	55	67.9	
	Female	26	32.1	
Marital status	Single	18	22.2	
	Married	61	75.3	
	Separated	2	2.5	
Household size	1-5	58	32.1	5(4.4)
	6-10	22	57.8	
	11-15	1	6.9	
Level of Education	Secondary	3	3.7	15(1)
	Tertiary	78	96.3	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

As shown in Table 2, the majority (74.1%) of the YES beneficiaries were between 31 and 50 years of age. The average age recorded among beneficiaries was 38.6 years. This shows that the majority of the beneficiaries are still within their active and productive age during which they can fully and efficiently engage in all forms of enterprise. This also means that they could be effectively trained and involved in more productive activities that can enhance their income. It is expected that if these positive attributes of productive age are well utilized, the productivity of the beneficiaries and by extension their income will be improved.

Table 2 revealed that 67.9% of the beneficiaries were male while 32.1% were female, implying that, males participated more in YES programme than their female counterparts. This implies that males are more into agribusiness than females. The result is in tandem with the findings of Musa et al. (2022) who reported 66.1% males and 33.9% females in their study on impact of youth empowerment scheme for self-reliance and poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

With respect to marital status, Table 2 showed that the majority (75.3%) of the beneficiaries were married,

22.3% were single while 2.5% of them were separated. This means that married people were more involved in YES and are likely to receive support/ assistance from their spouses in carrying out their enterprise activities.

As shown in Table 2, the result indicated that 33.0% of the YES beneficiaries had a household size between 1 and 5, 60.0% of them had a household size of between 6-10 members while 7% of them had a household size of between 11 and 15. The result further showed the mean household size of beneficiaries to be 5 people with a minimum household size of 3 people and a maximum of 11. This implies that there is availability of family labour as a form of assistance in carrying out enterprise activities.

Table 2 reveals that almost (96.3%) of the beneficiaries had tertiary education while 3.7% of them had secondary education with mean years of education being 16. The level of education of the beneficiaries will enhance their performance in their chosen enterprise. It is expected that higher education would enhance business ideas, skills, innovation and managerial ability for enterprise sustainability. This is in sharp contrast to the findings of Musa et al. 2022 who reported 14.3% as having tertiary education while 85.7% were having secondary education and below among YES beneficiaries in Nigeria.

Support Derived from the Scheme by the Beneficiaries

This section presents and discusses the support derived from the scheme by the beneficiaries. Details of the support derived from the scheme by beneficiaries were presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3 SUPPORT DERIVED from the SCHEME by the BENEFICIARIES

Supports	Frequency	Percentage
Broiler Starter pack	52	64.2
Layer Starter pack	14	17.3
Fish Starter pack	10	12.3
BoA Loan	5	6.2
Training	81	100
Stipends	81	100
Advisory Services	36	44.4

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Note: the fact that the percentage is more than 100 indicates multiple responses

As shown in Table 3, majority (64.2%) of the beneficiaries received broiler starter pack as their support from the scheme. Some (17.3%) of them received layer starter pack as their support from the scheme while 12.3% of them collected fish starter pack as their support. With regards to the Bank of Agriculture loan, only 6.2% of the beneficiaries secured loan from the Bank. Focus group discussion revealed that most of the applicants could not meet up the loan criteria and also there was inadequate loanable fund in the Bank. With respect to training and stipends, all of them attended the training and received stipends. An appreciable number (44.4%) of the beneficiaries benefited from advisory services. The fact that only 6.2% of the beneficiaries could secure loan from the Bank of Agriculture could be attributed to the inability of the beneficiaries to meet the loan conditions as well as the inadequacy of loanable funds on the part of the bank. Furthermore, it was evident from the focus group discussion that most of those who attended were still practicing while some of them combined consultancy services with their farm.

Employment Generated by the Beneficiaries of the Scheme

This section presents and discusses the number of employments generated by the beneficiaries. Details on the number of employments generated by the beneficiaries were presented in Table 5.

Table 4 NUMBER of EMPLOYMENT GENERATED by the BENEFICIARIES

Number of Employment generated	Frequency	Percentage
0	18	22.2
1-2	37	45.7
3-4	20	24.7
5-6	6	7.4

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Result of employment generated by the beneficiaries was presented in Table 4, as shown in the Table, 45.7% of the beneficiaries have generated between one and two employments, 24.7% of them have engaged three to four persons on their agriprenuer, 7.4% have engaged five to six workers, while 22.2% have not generated any employment. This implies that a good proportion (77.8%) of them have generated employment while those that have not engaged any labour could be as a result of their newness in the business.

Effect of the Level of Support on the Income of Beneficiaries

This section presents and discusses the effect of the level of support on the income of beneficiaries Details on the effect of the level of support on the income of beneficiaries were presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: INCOME DISTRIBUTION of BENEFICIARIES (‘000)

Income Range (N)	Frequency	Percentage
101-300	39	48.1
301-500	19	23.5
501-700	12	14.8
701-900	8	9.9
>900	3	3.7

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Result as shown in Table 5 revealed that the highest proportion (48.1%) of the beneficiaries generated an income between N101,000 and N300,000 per production cycle. Next to this were the beneficiaries who earned an income within the range of N301,000 – N500,000 per production cycle which constituted 23.5%, followed by this were the beneficiaries who earned an income within the range of N501,000 – N700,000 per production cycle which constituted 14.8%. Close to this were 9.9% of the beneficiaries who were found to have earned an income between N701,000 – N900,000 per production cycle, while the last and the least, (3.7%) of the beneficiaries were found to have earned an income greater than N900,000 per production cycle.

Table 6 EFFECT of the LEVEL of SUPPORT on INCOME of BENEFICIARIES

Outcome Variable	High level of Support	Low level of Support	Mean diff	t-value
Income	643292.9	224474	418818.9	13.3

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 6 presents the effect of the level of support on income among the beneficiaries. The table is in two categories: “High level of support” and “Low level of support.” The variable being measured is income. According to the result, the mean value for the income was 643292.9 for the beneficiaries who experienced high level of support. On the other hand, the mean value for the beneficiaries who experienced low level of support was 224474.

The “Mean diff” column indicates the difference in means between the two groups, which was calculated as 418818.9. The “t-value” column shows the statistical significance of this difference, which was reported as 13.3. Based on these results, it can be inferred that beneficiaries who received high level of support had a higher income compared to those who received low level of support. The statistical significance of the t-value suggests that this difference was unlikely to have occurred by chance or accident but as a result of the varying levels of support provided to the beneficiaries, which increases their income. This implies that the scheme has impact on the income generated by the beneficiaries.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that YES has supported the beneficiaries in the areas of broiler, layer and fish starter packs, BoA loan, training, stipend training as well as advisory services. A higher proportion of them enjoyed a high level of support. The programme has turned the beneficiaries into employers of labour instead of being job seekers. The increase in the beneficiaries’ income is attributed to the support derived from the programme.

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends that:

- The income of the beneficiaries has increased as a result of the intervention. Hence, budgetary allocation to YES should be increased to enable ARMTI increase the number of participants to be trained on an annual basis as this will go a long way to reduce poverty, youth unemployment and by extension youth restiveness.

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