



Research Article

Evaluation of Entrepreneurship as a remedy to Youth Unemployment in Ondo State

Modupe Ebenezer Asabia and Racheal Olubunmi Akinola-Fajojuto
City University, Cambodia

Corresponding emails: ebenezerasabia@gmail.com;
Olubunmiakinola36@gmail.com

Abstract

Despite the abundance of mineral and natural resources in Ondo State and the various intervention policies of the government at state and federal levels, youth unemployment continues to rise exponentially. Available statistics shows that there is no motivation for entrepreneurial skills acquisition among the youth. This has hindered economic growth and job creations. This paper aims to evaluate the entrepreneurship as a remedy to the lingering menace of youth unemployment in Ondo State. To gather primary information for investigation, opinions of 260 respondents obtained by self-administered questionnaire were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The sample size comprised unemployed youths across the three (3) senatorial districts of the state, staff of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akure, political office holders and Ondo State government officials that were purposively selected for the quantitative exercise. The study revealed that youth unemployment rate is high in Ondo State and the causes of unemployment were attributed to poor industrialization drive, insecurity, defective education curricular, infrastructural deficit and inconsistent government policies on education among others. The study also revealed that the entrepreneurship programmes and skill acquisition trainings of the federal and state governments have no significant impact on job generation as a result of corrupt practices and poor funding of various job creation schemes among others. It is therefore recommended that government needs to collaborate with informal sectors to create employment and rejig its school curricular to incorporate entrepreneurial courses that can drive employment generation, provide adequate funds for entrepreneurship programmes and avail entrepreneurs the financial support to start up medium and small scale business ventures.

Keyword: Entrepreneurship, unemployment, youth, government, policy

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ISSN: 3043-6087. Science and Education Development Inst., Nigeria

Citation: Asabia, M.E. and Akinola-Fajoto, R.O. (2024). Evaluation of Entrepreneurship as a remedy to Youth Unemployment in Ondo State. *Continental J. Applied Science*, 19(3), 104-119. Doi: 10.5281/zenodo.14250783

Introduction

Background of the Study

Unemployment refers to a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment (Abubakar and Onyegbulem, 2022). Unemployment occurs when people who can work cannot find a suitable paid job for a tangible period of time. The population that falls within the gap are majorly the youth. (Abubakar and Onyegbulem, 2022). Ajufor (2013) defined unemployment as "the fact of a number of people not having a job; the number of people without a job; the state of not having a job". In Nigeria today, there are more than 80 million young people struggling with unemployment out of a total population of 15 million according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022). The Nigeria population was put at 223,804,632 in 2023 according to the Worldometers elaboration of the United Nations Data. Government of Nigeria in 2001, defined youth as an individual between the age of 18 years and 35 years. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 12.6% of youth in the global labour force are unemployed amounting to about 74.6 million youths. In Nigeria, about 53.4% of youths are unemployed according to youth unemployment rates released by the National Bureau of Statistics (2022).

National Youth Policy and Strategic Planning of the Federal posited that high level of youth unemployment will continued to put enormous burden on socio-development of the nation and security (Omoniyi, 2023). Armit, Ediom-Ubong and Dele-Adedeji (2023) stated that 35% of Nigerians youth between 15 and 34 years are unemployed, available for work and actively seeking work of working less than 20 hours a week, whereas 28% of the young people in the workforce are officially recognized as underemployed, working 20-39 hours a week. In Ondo state, there is an alarming rate of unemployment as a result of economic downturn, as its youthful population cannot be accommodated by the few vacant positions in government establishments and institutions, youth are seen roaming about the streets without jobs and once thriving industries like Ifon Ceramic Industry, Oluwa Glass at Igbokoda, Ile-Oluji Cocoa Processing Industry had gone into extinction. This unpleasant scenarios make youth vulnerable to social vices like cybercrimes which is commonly referred to as "Yahoo+", kidnapping, armed robbery, prostitution and other criminal activities in Nigeria.

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ISSN: 3043-6087. Science and Education Development Inst., Nigeria

According to Akpan (2010) and Ajufor (2023), the explosive population of Nigeria has made it impossible for available opportunities to accommodate the teeming unemployed youth. They asserted that unemployment occurs as a result of the insufficiency and it was estimated that a one million increase in population leads to a 0.37% increase in unemployment rate. In the same vein, the economic situation of the country has led to the collapse of industries or relocation of multinational companies to the neighboring countries and retrenchment of workers. Consequently, the bad shape of economy and the large size of the population had resulted into high unemployment rate in Nigeria. Corruption within the government circles has actually effectuated deleterious consequences on youth unemployment. The public funds which could have been utilized for the job creation and youth development are outright mismanaged.

Also, the pathetic state of infrastructure mostly electricity and roads has affected generation of employment or sustainability of the new ones. The incessant increases in fuel pump price as a result of full subsidy removal by the federal government have escalated operation costs for small and medium size businesses leading to closure of those enterprises or reduced productivity and profitability. Ineffective and outdated school curricular which neglected entrepreneurship education plays significant role in the spate of unemployment of youths. Nigerian students are not equipped with skills and technical know how to manage and/or set up small or medium scale business. Thousands of qualified graduates only seek sparsely available white collar jobs from the government (Omoniyi, 2023a). The pervading atmosphere of insecurity in Nigeria has hindered industrialization and local and foreign investments (Akpan, 2010). On the Global rating, Nigeria is one of the most unsafe countries in the world according to Global Terrorism Index (GTI) (2020). The activities of Fulani herdsmen which have been linked with kidnappings on the Nigerian roads, killings on farm settlements and terrorism have discouraged many youth into engaging in agricultural practices. (Omoniyi, 2023a).

Corruption of public office holders and top government officials in Nigeria has crippled the Nation's economy and escalated joblessness, poverty and development. Budgetary allocations that are meant to establish industries, fuel, youth empowerment schemes and sustain the existing government agencies have been misappropriated, embezzled and kept in local vaults of foreign banks by corrupts bureaucrats and administrators in the public enterprises and parastatals (Okafor, 2011). Lack of entrepreneurship skills among the young graduates also contribute to high rate of unemployment among them. According to Nuhu, Abddulraheem, Abubakar,

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ISSN: 3043-6087. Science and Education Development Inst., Nigeria

Abdurauf and Sulaiman (2021), entrepreneur skills are determinants to job opportunities. These skills are not being fully

taught in Nigerian schools and if taught, undergraduates do not fully concentrate on the acquisition of the skills with aims of securing white collar jobs after graduation. This often leads to inadequate competencies required by the employers for graduates according to Man (2008). The inability of the government to fully exploit the population of the youth and abundant resources in Nigeria for development and creation of jobs has precipitated a risky atmosphere of insecurity, crime and violence, low productivity of labour force, poverty, depression and brain drain across the nation (Salami, 2011).

Youth, when deprived of employment opportunity and means of livelihood, can easily become desperate victims of criminal gangs, warlords or illegal migration cartels (Omoniyi, 2023b). Entrepreneurship on the other hand, has been defined to mean many things from the time immemorial. According to Awogbede and Iwuamadi (2011), entrepreneurship is a process of bringing together creative and innovative idea so as to combine people, money and resources to meet people's need and create wealth. Entrepreneurship makes economic more competitive and innovative and it is crucial in achieving the objectives of the government generation of employment policies (Rotar, 2014). Entrepreneurship commercializes new ideas, improves growth and creates wealth according to Kume, Kume and Shahini (2013). According to Famous and Chinonye (2008), entrepreneurship is a powerful driver of economic growth and job creation. It creates new companies and jobs, opens up new markets and nurtures new skills and capabilities. Hannu (2000) defined entrepreneurship as the practice of starting new organization or revitalizing mature organization, particularly new businesses, generally in response to identified opportunities. The entrepreneurship is a route out of the prevailing unemployment, it plays important role in achieving economic development, young people can benefit from business knowledge and learn vital skills and attitudes such as innovative, risk taking, flexibility, networking, creativity, teamwork and tenacity through entrepreneurial training. (Salami, 2011)

Ojeipo (2012) further describes entrepreneurship as a process of persistent pursuit of opportunities to create wealth, through innovative creation of a products or services that meets a need of customers using scarce resources. However, the renewed interest in the development of entrepreneurship to take up new venture should emphasize on the integrated approach of combining all other factors of production to produce a product thereby enhancing job creation in the process of exploiting opportunity. Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in mitigating youth unemployment (Muogbom and John-Akimelu, 2018). Entrepreneurship of activities can be carried out in areas of

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music, artisanship, small business, social environment, sports, health, Government, fitness,

Continental J. Applied Sciences
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education, digital arts and entertainment industry, technology, agriculture, culture and emerging economies.

Young people often face many challenges in setting up a business for the first time because of lack of work experience, skills and financial resources (Welter and Smallbone, 2011). These initial difficulties in promoting entrepreneurship and sustainability of the businesses coupled with the ineffectiveness of the vocational and artisanal courses in the school curriculum to address youth unemployment led to creation of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in November 1986. It began operation fully in January 1987. This interventionist Agency was established based on the recommendation of the Chukwuma committee that was set up on the 26th March, 1986. This was in line with the Federal Government desire to give greater attention to acquisition of vocational skills and experience by the Nigerian youth. Other responsive measures enacted by federal government to boost entrepreneurial skills of young Nigerians and reduce their social vulnerability included: National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) created in 1973, Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) programmes (2015), National Economic Employment and Development Strategy which was introduced in March 2004, Subsidy Re-investment Programme (2012), National Social Investment Programme (2017), N-Power scheme (2016), Trader Moni Empowerment scheme (2016), Youth With Innovation (YOU-WIN). In the related development, Ondo State Government established pro-active measures in response to the lingering crises of youth unemployment and economic doldrums; These are: Ondo State Entrepreneurial Agency (ODLEA) in 2020; Ondo State Wealth Creation Agency (2009); Ondo State Development and Investment Promotion Agency (ONDIPA) in 2022 and Ondo State Bitumen Exploration and Exploitation Company (BEECON) in 2002. All these programmes have not achieved the desired results because trainings have not be complemented with grants or loans and not targeted appropriately according to Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER).

Nigeria possesses vast business and investment potentials due to the availability of abundant human, natural and mineral resources in different part of the country. Through entrepreneurship, young population with skills and technical know-how should be able to harness the opportunities by establishing and managing small and medium scale industries on their own. Tapping these resources will not only productively engage the youth of the study area but equally reduce the spate of social vices and crimes like cybercrime, kidnapping, robbery and human trafficking that are rampant across in Ondo State (Armit, Ediomu-Ubong and Dele-Adedeji, 2023).

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Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment is a serious issue that calls for quick and coordinated interventions of governments and stakeholders in order to ensure peace and productivity. Unemployment reared its ugly head shortly after Nigeria Independence and has never subsided. This global phenomenon has become more complex as a result of rural-urban drift and non-availability of white collar jobs. Youth unemployment, is therefore believed that developing entrepreneurial skills in youth will play a pivotal roles to boost availability of jobs (Hannu, 2006). According to the statistics available, the Nigeria labour market could barely absorb 10% of 3.8 million youth that are churned out by institutions of higher learning in Nigeria annually. In the past ten years, Ondo State has been in the bad light because of the reported cases of notorious activities of kidnappers, terrorism, human traffickers, cybercrimes, armed robbers and other violent crimes. According to Akpan (2010), these criminal activities are interrelated with youth joblessness and low utilization of their time and talents for productive enterprises. Various entrepreneurship skills which can be harnessed from Agriculture, mineral resources, wielding, hospitality, tourism and telecommunication, cinematography and engineering sectors within the state had been relegated to the background among the youth of Ondo State. This neglect has untoward consequences on the economy and security of the nation. Against this backdrop, the study evaluates the entrepreneurship as a remedy to unemployment among the youth of the Ondo State.

Significance of the Study

The study will contribute to the body of the knowledge while providing information that can be used by future researchers and at the same time assist the government and policy makers in policy formulation and implementation in providing remedies for youth unemployment in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the rate of youth unemployment in Ondo State
2. Assess the causes of youth unemployment in Ondo State
3. Evaluate the consequences of youth unemployment in Ondo State
4. Examine whether acquisition of entrepreneurial skills can reduce youth unemployment in Ondo State
5. Ascertain the barriers to youth entrepreneurship in Ondo State

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Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. What is the rate of youth unemployment in Ondo State?
2. What are the causes of youth unemployment in Ondo State?
3. What are the consequences of youth unemployment in Ondo State?
4. Can acquisition of entrepreneurial skills reduce youth unemployment in Ondo State?
5. What are the barriers to youth entrepreneurship in Ondo State?

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive research design making use of tables, frequency, histogram and percentages for data analysis. The opinions of Two hundred and Sixty (260) respondents were assessed through open-end questionnaire. Forty four (44) Questionnaire items were carefully drawn to reflect the objectives of the study and sent to collect factual information from the respondents which comprised unemployed youth, government officials from Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), and Selected political office holders. Their responses were obtained willingly and coded to ensure confidentiality.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and analyses the data accepted from the research. A total of two hundred and sixty five (265) questionnaire were distributed and two hundred and sixty (260) were returned and completed. The analysis was based on the answers from the questionnaire collected back representing 98.11%, 5(1.89%) were not returned or improperly filled. This could not affect the overall findings of the study.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
GENDER		
Male	167	64.2
Female	93	35.8
Transgender	0	0
TOTAL	260	100
AGE		
<20	11	4.23
21-30	107	41.15
31-40	67	25.78
41-50	32	12.31
>50	43	16.54
TOTAL	260	100
ACADEMIC LEVEL		
Primary school	36	13.85
Secondary school	73	28.08
Tertiary school	105	40.38
Others	46	17.69
TOTAL	260	100
EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
Employed	169	65
Unemployed	91	35
TOTAL	260	100

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 1 presented the analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The results showed that out of 260 respondents, there are 167 males representing 64.2% while there are 93 females representing 35.8%. It can therefore be inferred that majority of the respondents are males. It was also revealed from the results that the respondents who are 20 years and below are 11 representing 4.33%; those between 21-30 years are 107 representing 41.15%; 67 respondents (25.78%) fall within 31-40 years; 32 respondents (12.31%) fall within 41-50 years while 43 respondents representing 16.54% are above 50 years. It can therefore be inferred that majority of the respondents are within the age bracket of 21 to 30 years.

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Research Question 1: What is the rate of youth unemployment in Ondo State?

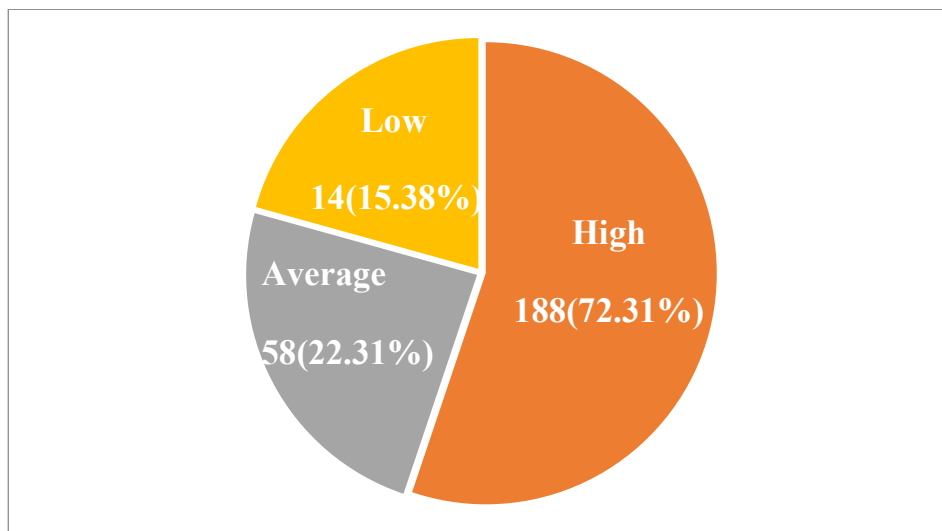


Fig 1 presented the analysis of Respondents' opinions on the rate of youth unemployment in Ondo State.

The results showed that out of 260 respondents, 188 respondents representing 72.31% opined that the rate of youth unemployment is high; 58 respondents representing 22.31% agreed that the rate is average while 14(15.38%) opined that there is low rate of youth unemployment in Ondo State. It can therefore, be inferred that majority of the respondents agreed that the rate of youth unemployment is high in the study area.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of unemployment in Ondo State?

Table 2: Respondents' opinions on the causes of unemployment in Ondo State.

SN	VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
1	Insecurity	12	4.62
2	Neglect of Agricultural sector	33	12.7
3	Rapid population growth	11	4.23
4	Lack of employable skills	16	6.15
5	Poor vocational and artisanal training	19	7.31
6	Corruption	31	11.92
7	Government defective education policies	68	26.15
8	Low rate of industrialization	26	10
9	Infrastructural decay	44	16.92
		31	11.92
Total		260	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 presented the analysis of the opinions of the respondents on the causes of unemployment in Ondo State. The findings revealed that out of 260 respondents, 12 respondents representing 4.62% chose insecurity as the cause of unemployment, 33(12.7%) chose neglect of Agricultural sector; 11(4.33%) chose Rapid population growth; 16(6.15%) chose lack of employable skills; 19(7.31%) chose poor vocational and artisanal training; 68(26.15%) chose corruption; 26(10%) chose government education policy; 44(16.92%) chose low rate of industrialization; while 31(11.92%) chose Infrastructural decay. It can therefore be inferred from the results that majority of the respondents opined that corruption is the major causes of unemployment in Ondo State.

Research Question 3: What are the socio-economic consequences of youth unemployment in Ondo State?

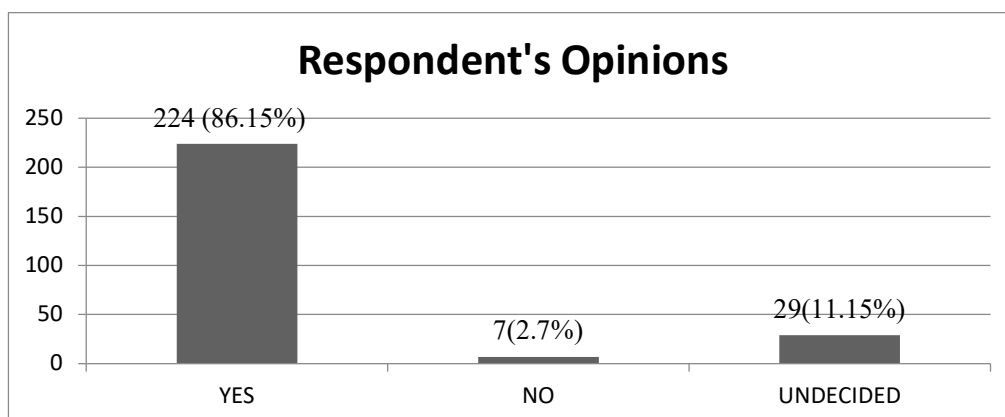
Table 3: Respondents' Opinions on the socio-economic consequences of youth unemployment in Ondo State.

SN	VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
1	Poverty	35	13.46
2	Crime	76	29.2
3	Depression	19	7.31
4	Low self-esteem	21	8.08
5	Low productivity	53	20.38
6	Underdevelopment	31	11.92
7	Economic Losses	25	9.62
Total		260	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 presents the respondents' opinions on the socio-economic consequences of youth unemployment in Ondo State. The findings revealed that, out of 260 respondents, 35 of them representing 13.46% agreed that poverty is the consequence of youth unemployment in the study area; 76(29.23%) agreed on insecurity, 19(7.31%) chose depression; 21(8.08%) chose low self-esteem, 53(20.38%) chose low productivity; 31(11.92%) chose underdevelopment while 25(9.62%) chose economic losses. It can therefore, be concluded that majority of the respondents agreed that crime is the major consequences of youth unemployment in the study area.

Research Question 4: Can acquisition of entrepreneurship skills reduce youth unemployment in Ondo State?



Source: Field Survey, 2023

Figure 2: Respondents' Opinions on whether acquisition of entrepreneurship skills can reduce youth unemployment in Ondo State.

Figure 2 presented the opinions' of the respondents on whether acquisition of entrepreneurship skills can reduce youth unemployment among youth of the study area. Out of 260 respondents, 224 respondents representing 86.15% agreed that entrepreneurship skills can reduce the menace, 7(2.70%) respondents disagreed while 29 respondents representing 11.15% are undecided. This shows that majority of the respondents agreed that the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills can reduce youth unemployment in the study area.

Research Question 5: What are the barriers affecting youth entrepreneurship in Ondo State?

Table 3: Respondents' Opinions on barriers affecting youth entrepreneurship in Ondo State.

S/N	VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE(%)
1	Infrastructural Decay	25	9.62
2	Culture	5	1.92
3	Political barriers	9	3.46
4	Limited funding opportunities	30	11.54
5	Corruption	71	27.31
6	Unfavourable Government Policies	56	21.54
7	Inadequate Experience/ Skills	42	16.15
8	Market Accessibility	22	8.46
Total		260	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

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ISSN: 3043-6087. Science and Education Development Inst., Nigeria

Table 3 above presented the analyses of the opinions of respondents on barriers affecting youth unemployment in Ondo State. Out of 260 respondents, the results showed that 25 of them representing 9.62% supported infrastructural deficiency as the barrier; 5(1.92%) supported culture; 9(3.46%) supported political barriers; 30(11.54%) supported limited funding opportunities; 71(27.31%) supported corruption; 56(21.54%) supported unfavourable government policies; 42(16.15%) supported experience/skills while 22 (8.46%) supported market accessibility. It can therefore, be inferred that majority of the respondents supported corruption as the major barrier to youth entrepreneurship in the study area.

Discussion of the Results

The study is aimed to assess the entrepreneurship skills as a remedy to youth unemployment in Ondo State. The results of the findings revealed that majority of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 21 years and 30 years. This complies with ILO publication in 2005 that youth is between 18-35 years. In the same vein, the results revealed a high rate of unemployment in Ondo State which was also attributed to corruption that pervades every segment of the society. Funds to provide social and infrastructural amenities are being diverted to individual pockets of corrupt politicians and civil servants collaborators. This contrasted sharply with the findings of Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2011) that attributed root causes of youth unemployment to economic recession and low investments. Similarly, the study also revealed that criminal activities like kidnappings, armed robbery, internet fraud, identity theft, ritual killings, car snatching among other violent crimes were identified as major consequences of youth unemployment in the study area. This was corroborated by Omoniyi (2023a) in his research work on "Evaluation of Transborder Crimes in Nigeria" and research findings of Okafor (2012) on Youth Unemployment and Implications for Security and Stability of Democracy in Nigeria.

It was also revealed by this study that acquisition of entrepreneurship skills and trainings can reduce the high level of youth unemployment in Ondo State. Muogbo and John-Akamelu, (2018) and Awogbede and Iwuamadi (2011) also posited this in their research work on impact of Entrepreneurial skills in reducing youth unemployment in Nigeria. These authors opined that effective entrepreneurship development can reduce unemployment progressively. This study also identified corruption of government officials and political office holders as major barriers to youth entrepreneurship. Funds that are meant to provide trainings for youths by various job creation Agencies have been embezzled of misappropriated which include constituency allowances that should have

provided employment for the youth are not yielding positive impacts. This was at variance with the findings of Rotar, (2014) that stated that inability of the specific target group to access the self-employment subsidy of Slovene government poses impediment to labour market policy interventions.

Conclusion

The study aims to assess entrepreneurship as a remedy to youth unemployment in Ondo State. It was concluded from the findings of the study that there is high rate of unemployment particularly among the youth within the age bracket of 21-30 years which has precipitated many criminal activities within Ondo State. In a related development, corruption practices among the government officials and public office holders topped the list of causes of youth unemployment. Similarly, the study concluded that the funds that could have assisted in provision of jobs and empower the youth are not judiciously utilized by the agencies created to provide job opportunities for the unemployed youths.

Flowing from the above, the conclusion of the study also indicated that acquisition of entrepreneurship skills and trainings by the youth will go a long way in ameliorating the menace of youth unemployment in the society.

Recommendations

The following recommendations if properly implemented will stimulate entrepreneurship activities and attendant employment opportunities for the youth in Ondo State.

- 1) The Nigerian Government at different levels should simplify the administrative process of business registration and establishment. The present procedures create unnecessary bureaucratic bottlenecks for interested entrepreneurs
- 2) The school curriculum should be rejigged to incorporate artisanal and vocational trainings for students at secondary and tertiary levels.
- 3) Provision of financial support to interested young entrepreneurs for business startups
- 4) Provision of information and advice during and after business setting up
- 5) Some of the intervention policies should be properly coordinated to reflect and confront the present challenges. Business Development support schemes should be provided for the unemployed youth
- 6) Proper funding of Ministries, Departments and Agencies that were created to promote youth entrepreneurship and self-empowerment

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ISSN: 3043-6087. Science and Education Development Inst., Nigeria

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