



SOCIOECONOMIC INTERVENTIONS AND CRIME REDUCTION: THE IMPACT OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN NSUKKA

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Abstract: The Study Youth Empowerment and Crime Reduction in Nsukka local government of Enugu state was undertaken to examine the relationship between skills acquisition and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. The Adolescent Empowerment Cycle (AEC) model developed by Chinman and Linney (1998) was adopted to advance the understanding of the impact of empowerment schemes on adolescent development. A Descriptive and survey design was adopted to study the population of 5685 youths selected from three communities in Nsukka local government Area. The sample size of 374 was deduced using taro yameni formula. The findings of the study revealed that acquisition of skills and the Provision of funds for business to the youth by the government OF Enugu state helped in crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu The study recommended that the Government of Enugu State and Nsukka LGA should scale up their effort at the establishment of more programmes for skills acquisition to the youths. Government should further strengthen their effort in providing loans and other credit facilities to the youth who are willing to engage in various businesses so as to reduce crime perpetuated by the youths.

Key words: Youth Empowerment, Crime reduction, Enugu State

Introduction

Youths according to the United Nations Organization are those between the ages of 18-24 years (UN, 2015). Nigeria's National Youth Development Policy (2001), defines the youth as a person within the age bracket 18 years to 35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Globally, youth occupy a prominent place in the development of any given human society. They have in numerous ways contributed to sustenance and destruction of societal values and principles. Onyekpe (2017), held that their energies, inventiveness, character, and orientation defines the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their innovative skills and physical strength, nations across the globe have made giant strides in socio-political and economic development (Ukwayi and Okpa, 2017). The above assertion acknowledges the role of the youths not only in the economic development, but also in maintenance of peace, tranquility, and security of a nation. As the most active segment of any society, youth are the major determinants of peace and stability of a nation (Sulaiman, 2016).

Conversely, the degree of disorderliness and instability in any society is also determined in part by youth. A significant proportion of youths are involved in criminal activities (Ndifion, 2019). Crime is any act regarded as

illegal and threatens peace and unity of a given society (Oriola, 2019). According to National Bureau of Statistics (2020), over 50% of the crime committed between 2000-2019 in Nigeria was perpetrated by youths. In Enugu State, a total of 252 crime out of the 379-crime recorded between 2015-2019 were committed by those between the ages of 20 to 30 years (NBS, 2020). These crimes ranging from internet and other frauds, kidnapping, armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, terrorism, political thuggery, among others distort economic activities, peace in society and sap substantial government revenue in tackling the insecurity (Okoye, 2019). Acknowledging that youth criminality is triggered by unemployment and lack of skills, Nwokocha (2019) maintains that a sincere approach to crime control requires a pragmatic approach that will supports youth empowerment programmes that would make the poor, unemployed and underemployed to become self-reliant.

Youth empowerment according to Nkwocha (2019), is a deliberate government or private initiative aimed at training youths in skill acquisition and empowering them with funds and equipment's to start up what had been learnt. Youth empowerment provides youths not only income, but also the opportunity to be productive, to contribute, and become socially valued members of their communities, to develop networks of support, to build knowledge and self-esteem. For others, youth empowerment can also play the role of informal social control by preventing anti-social behaviour through the natural social conditions of the workplace.

In attempt to check the problem of crime in Nigeria, the Federal government at different times has introduced empowerment programmes meant to empower the youths. Some of these programmes include National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP), and Youth Enterprise with New Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN). Government through the Central Bank of Nigeria, (CBN) also initiated and supported Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDCs), introduced between 2006 and 2008 the NYSC sensitization, Venture Prize Competition, and NYSC Entrepreneurship Training Programmes, among others, to help empower the youths and diversify the economy (CBN, 2019). It has also indulged in some programs such as 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 NPower Empowerment Programme.

In Enugu State, several empowerment schemes have been launched to provide employment for the youths and subsequently curtail crime among the youths. In 2017, the State Government in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 8 of decent work and economic growth introduced a Skill Acquisition Programme. Grandaunts were given seed money to assist them to start-off their various businesses after they attended a one-year free vocational training in focal areas such as Tailoring, Hairdressing, Barbing and Aluminum works apprenticeship (Amoke, 2018). The trainees were chosen from the 17 Local Government Areas of the state including Nsukka LGA. In 2018, Enugu SME Centre also partnered with iCreate Africa to launch the Enugu Skill-Up Project, a technical and vocational skills training that will empower over 500 youths in the state. The Enugu Skill-Up Project focused on delivering, among other things, skilled training in welding, carpentry, tiling, plumbing, electrical installation, drywall and painting, solar inverter installation and maintenance, wallpaper installation, POP installation and wall screeding, and concrete construction work (Onusi, 2021).

The state government also established of Enugu Tech Hub and Youth Innovation Centres, at Enugu City and Obollo Afor, the Enugu State Government The hub targets to create more than 1,500 small scale tech businesses in the region; employing more than 10,000 youths within the short space of time. The services to be rendered at the Tech Hub centres for the benefit of the people of Enugu State, especially the youth, include computer training programmes, solar skills acquisition training, computer coding, web site designs, graphic designs, confectionaries

and hands-on technical skills training, among others (Ude, 2020). In July 2020, the government launched e-YES (Enugu Youth Empowerment Scheme) as an initiative of the Enugu SME Center, under the Enugu Human Capital Development Loan Programme, that will empower thousands of youths living in Enugu state with training in digital skills such as advertising, digital marketing, Web Design, Internet Promotion, SMS Marketing, Search Engine

Optimisation (SEO), PPC, Analytics, App Development/Marketing, Design, Internet Business, Adwords, Adsense, WordPress, mobile advertising, analytics, email marketing, SEO, PPC, WordPress, web design, etc. These high-income skills will enable them to thrive in today's digital-first world, become innovative entrepreneurs and strategic valuable assets to Enugu State and the international community at large (Obike, 2021). In April 2021, the state government partnered with World bank group to commence the training of eligible Women and Youth selected under the Project's Women and Youth Empowerment Programme (WYEP). The trainees are engaged in an intensive 14-day on-farm and hands-on training in aquaculture, crops and poultry value chains; master classes in economics, business management, agriculture, business etiquette and other essentials needed for a successful entrepreneur (Eze, 2020). The trainees are also sensitized on key issues including the core mandate of the WYEP programme, Guidelines on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and the Project's Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM). The two-week intensive residency training programme is designed to equip the beneficiaries with relevant skills along their value chains of choice, with the ultimate aim of increasing production, enhancing productivity and value addition in the targeted value chains, and to foster job creation and livelihood improvement.

Youth empowerment plays a crucial role in crime control. Apart from Enugu Metropolis, Nsukka LGA witnessed the highest rate of crime between 2015-2020 (Ude, 2021). The crime rate in the area is partly blamed on students of University of Nigeria Nsukka who are not necessary citizens of Nsukka LGA while others is believed to be committed by the indigenous people of the area (Okwe, 2021). However, it is observed that the crime rate in the area has been on the downward trend between 2015-2020 (Okafor, 2020). This may be attributed to youth empowerment schemes that have benefited the youths in the council area. This study therefore investigates the link between the numerous youth empowerment scheme of Enugu State government and crime reduction in Nsukka communities.

Statement of the Problem

Crime among the youths appears to be one of the most cancerous problems inhibiting sustainable economic growth and development in Nigeria. Crime rates seem to be high despite the numerous empowerment scheme introduced by both Federal and State government to make youth self-reliant and act as crime control measure. Crime Statistics on reported offences reflected that a total of 134,663 cases were reported in 2020. Offence against property has the highest number of cases reported with 68,579 of such cases reported. Offence against persons recorded 53,641 cases reported while offence against lawful authority recorded the least with 12,443 cases recorded respectively (NBS, 2020). The situation is not different in Enugu State in particular and Nsukka LGA as youth criminality is a common sight. Number of crimes reported at the same time is 2171 with 469 taking place at Nsukka LGA. Prominent among social vices are internet and other frauds, kidnapping, armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, terrorism, political thuggery, among others. (Okafor, 2020)

Oduwale, (2015), submitted that youth unemployment and poverty rate is the key factors predisposing the youths to crimes and other social vices. It is on record that over 60million youth capable to work were unable to find work in Nigeria in 2019. Often times, government initiate economic empowerment scheme but inconsistencies and embezzlement of the fund appears to often defeat the purpose of such schemes. To worsen the matter, most of the government empowerment schemes seem to have been sabotaged by politicians who use it as political

patronage to reward their loyalists at the expense of the general public that it meant to serve. In addition, frequent change of government has resulted to abandonment of key empowerment schemes that had good intention of lifting the youths out of poverty and making them self-employed (Okwe, 2021).

The resultant consequence of ineffective government empowerment scheme is tendency for the youths who are employed to devise negative means of earning a livelihood. This results to criminal activities. Crime disrupts community lives including economic activities and limits investors from opening their business. Crime makes people to abandon their means of livelihood while it increases the cost of security of lives and properties. Attempts to curtail crime in the society informs the government to implement empowerment schemes targeting the youth believed to be arrowhead of crime in the society. Hence, this study investigates the link between youth empowerment and crime reduction in selected communities in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.

This study is guided by the following research questions;

- (1) To what extent has skills acquisition reduced crime rate among youths in rural communities in Nsukka Communities of Enugu State?
- (2) What is the relationship between funding business for youth and crime control in rural communities in Nsukka Communities of Enugu State?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the relationship between youth empowerment and crime reduction in selected communities in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. The specific objective of the study include;

- (1) To examine the relationship between skills acquisition and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.
- (2) To establish the relationship between funding business for the youth and crime control in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.

Research Hypotheses

This study is guided by the following hypothetical statements;

1. H_0 : There is no significant relationship between skills acquisition and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.
 H_A : There is a significant relationship between skills acquisition and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.
2. H_0 : There is no significant relationship between funding business for youth and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.
 H_A : There is a significant relationship between funding business for youth and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.

Review of Related Literature

The Concept of Youth

There are many usages of youth; however, the concept of 'youth' is defined within the frame of differing sociological perspectives, which could also depend on cultural contexts. For instance, in some African cultures, one would remain a youth until one is married and/or has a paid job to meet personal and extended family responsibilities, or is able to move out of the family house (YIAGA Africa, 2019).

However, in terms of more formal institutional definitions, for the purposes of regional and national policy-making and planning, a more age-based definition has been considered, even though some are overlapping. For the United Nations, Youth are persons between the ages of 15 and 24 (UN, 2009). The UN also recognizes that this varies without prejudice to other age groups listed by member states such as 18–30. A useful distinction

within the UN itself can be made between teenagers (i.e. those between the ages of 13 and 17) and young adults (those between the ages of 18 and 32). While seeking to impose some uniformity on statistical approaches, the UN itself is aware of contradictions between approaches in its own statutes (Edike, 2016). Hence under the 15–24 definition (introduced in 1981) children are defined as those under the age of 14 while under the 1979 Convention on the Rights of the Child, those under the age of 18 are regarded as children. The UN also states they are aware that several definitions exist for youth within UN entities such as Youth Habitat 15–32 and African Youth Charter 15–35 (Abugu, 2019).

The intergovernmental Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development defined youth as those between 15 and 29 years of age (Abugu, 2019). Varying culturally, the gender constructions of youth in Latin America and Southeast Asia differ from those of sub-Saharan Africa. In Vietnam, widespread notions of youth are sociopolitical constructions for both sexes between the ages of 15 and 35. In Brazil, the term youth refer to people of both sexes from 15 to 29 years old. This age bracket reflects the influence on Brazilian law of international organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO). It is also shaped by the notion of adolescence that has entered everyday life in Brazil through a discourse on children's rights (Abugu, 2019).

In much of sub-Saharan Africa, the term "youth" is associated with young men from 15 to 30 or 35 years of age. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), says that youths are those within the ages of 15 and 35, as likewise recognized in the African Youth Charter (ECOWAS, 2018). Further to this, the notion of youth could also be inclusively or exclusively defined, particularly across national lines, with the inclusive outlook accounting for all residents within the delineated demography, whilst the exclusive definition considers only the citizens of a country. In this regard, it has been observed (YIAGA Africa, 2019) that Kenya and South Africa offer inclusive definitions of youth, whereas the youth mapping done by Nigeria and Sierra Leone relates essentially to citizens. In the noted regards, the South African youth policy sees the youth as young people falling within the age group of 14 to 3 years, and for Kenya, they are persons resident in Kenya in the age bracket of 15 to 30 years. In Nigeria, the National Youth Policy of 2009 defines the youth as those between the ages of 18 and 35 years. Youth in Nigeria includes all members of the Federal Republic of

Nigeria aged 18–35. The Nigerian government characterizes youth as ambitious, enthusiastic, energetic and promising. They are considered vulnerable in society because of the rapid pace of change they experience at this time in their lives Nigeria's Youth right from time are notable to be change agents and drivers of societal transformation (Dede, 2019).

Youths have constituted the most significant subcategory of growth in the Nigerian demography, since the early decades of the twentieth century. They have consistently accounted for over 40 per cent of the entire population, which points to one of the largest youth bulges in the world, in relation to other segments of the general population (Dede, 2019). These swelling numbers ought to be a source of huge demographic dividend, from the productivity capable of being unleashed by a greater youth population engaged in economic activities, growing the country's gross domestic product (GDP), and enhancing human development as a whole. Yet, conversely, the rise of unfortunate anti-social behaviours and adverse manifestations from the increasing activities of youths has shown that this demographic bulge could not necessarily be an essential asset to society (Omoju and Abraham, 2020).

Data on youth employment in Nigeria are scarce due to under resourced agencies responsible for their collection. In 2012, 11.1million¹ youths in Nigeria were believed to be unemployed. In a recent report by Bloomberg, it was revealed that as at March 2021, Nigeria Unemployment rate has increased to 33.3% making it the second highest on the global list of unemployed countries monitored by Bloomberg (Blomberg, 2021). The report also revealed that Nigeria employment rate has increased drastically over the last five years because the country has been through two different recessions and this has cast a shadow of gloom on the economic policies implemented by

the President Muhammadu Buhari administration. Due to some main identified problems such as; rural-urban migration, rapid population growth, low standard of education, the rapid expansion of the educational system, lack of steady and sustainable power supply and corruption. Nigeria youths constitute 64 percentages of unemployed Nigerians. There is high rate of unemployment which in turns caused insecurity or crime, rising poverty rate and persistent underdevelopment.

The foregoing reveal that youth is the time of life when one is young, and often means the time between childhood and adulthood (maturity). Youth is an experience that may shape an individual's level of dependency, which can be marked in various ways according to different cultural perspectives. For certain uses, such as employment statistics, the term also sometimes refers to individuals from the ages of 18 to 21. However, the term adolescence refers to a specific age range during a specific developmental period in a person's life, unlike youth which is a socially constructed category.

The Concept of Empowerment

According to Assa (2015), empowerment is defined as the activity of teaching, educating, training, imparting knowledge and skills to the youths both within the formal and informal education system to enable them fully participate in the development of society. He further held that when such empowerments target the youths it will give the young people the privilege to take charge of their lives. The empowerment examines their unemployment status and then takes action in order to improve their access to resources to become self-reliant. Empowerment according to Salami (2013), is a means of assisting people to overcome obstacles which might prevent them from achieving their potentials in life. He further asserts that the need to empower the people arises from the inability to actualize their dreams and reach their greatest potential due to artificial barriers created by either individuals or groups in the society. These barriers include being denied of employment through sale of job positions, inability to attend school because of high low cost among others. Therefore, empowerment is often made to tackle the aforementioned problems.

In a related development, Indabawa and Mpofu (2014), defines empowerment as a process of enhancing feelings of self – efficiency in communities through identification and removal of conditions that reinforce powerlessness. The authors further explain that empowerment has to do with the ability of people to take an effective control of their lives in terms of being well informed and equipped with regards to education and finance. For Okafor (2017), youth empowerment is the process whereby young people gain the ability and authority to make informed decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people. It is a means of encouraging youths to achieve reputable economic status for themselves and also to make great impact in their society. It helps the youth to identify, utilize and maximize their potentials, develop confidence and self-identity, encourage them to grow together in accountability and imbibe in youth the eagerness to create a change for their socio-economic well-being. The benefits of empowerment also include reduction of the level of ignorance and crime among young people, serves as an opportunity for the youth to develop their skills and talents which they use to add economic value to the society (Okafor, 2017). Others are that it helps young people to be responsible, self-reliant and to invest in their future.

In his own contribution, Curtin (2014), states that there is a general consensus that empowerment programmes will lead to increased capacity of people to have control over relevant skills, intellectual resources and ideology. It also helps them obtain physical necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter, employment, equality, participation in government, political and economic independence, adequate education, sustainable development and peacekeeping (Curtin, 2014). In other words, it is an intervention that regularly involves young people as partners and participants in the decision-making process that determine programme design, planning or

implementation. With the help of caring adults, youth empowerment programmes leadership as a characteristic of their involvement in safe, positive and structured activities.

There are various forms of youth empowerment programmes that aim at creating opportunity for young people in their various fields of specialization as well as in the communities as a whole. Uzochukwu (2013) identified some of the forms of youth empowerment programmes functioning in harnessing the potentials and talents of young people to include: good education empowerment programmes, entrepreneurship training programme and advance technological development programmes. Others include financial youth empowerment programmes, skills acquisition and academic empowerment programme. These initiatives have all been implemented in Nigeria.

Meaning of Crime reduction or control

A crime is an offence that merits community condemnation and punishment, usually by way of fine or imprisonment. This is different from a civil wrong (a tort), which is an action against an individual that requires compensation or restitution. According to Shinde (2017), crime refers to those social vices that are committed by people within or outside their area. The Author added that it is an act done by a person who is against the laws of a country or region which could be infractions, misdemeanors, and felonies. Each criminal offense is differentiated by the severity of the crime committed which determines its classification.

Onoge (2018), explains that Nigeria is home to a substantial network of organized crime, active especially in drug trafficking, shipping heroin from Asian countries to Europe and America; and cocaine from South America to Europe and South Africa. Various Nigerian confraternities or student "campus cults" are active in both organized crime and in political violence as well as providing a network of corruption within Nigeria (Ebigbo, 2013).

In lower levels of society, there are the "area boys", organized gangs mostly active in Lagos who specialize in mugging and small-scale drug dealing. Gang violence in Lagos resulted in 273 civilians and 84 policemen killed in the period of August 2000 to May 2001 (Ezedinma, 2018). There is some piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, with attacks directed at all types of vessels. Consistent with the rise of Nigeria as an increasingly dangerous hot spot, 28 of the 30 seafarers kidnapped globally between January and June 2013 were in Nigeria (Ogundipo, 2018).

Internationally, Nigeria is infamous for a form of bank fraud dubbed 419, a type of advance-fee scam (named after Section 419 of the Nigerian Penal Code) along with the "Nigerian scam", a form of confidence trick practiced by individuals and criminal syndicates (Nkem, 2018). These scams involve a complicit Nigerian bank (the laws being set up loosely to allow it) and a scammer who claims to have money he needs to obtain from that bank (Mabh, 2018). The victim is talked into exchanging bank account information on the premise that the money will be transferred to them and they will get to keep a cut. In reality, money is taken out instead, and/or large fees (which seem small in comparison with the imaginary wealth to be gained) are deducted. In 2003, the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission was created to combat this and other forms of organized financial crime, and in some cases, it has succeeded in bringing the crime bosses to justice and even managing to return the stolen money to victims (Ayinde, 2018).

In Enugu State, crime rate rose in 2009 as kidnapping and armed robbery rates increased in southeastern Nigeria specifically between September and December. The Enugu State government sought to check the high kidnapping rates by passing a bill in February 2009 that made kidnapping by the use of a weapon a capital offence; the bill was passed by the Enugu House of Assembly unanimously (Ekott, 2019). 1,088 arrests were made in the city between September and December 2009; 270 of these were in September, 303 were in October, 295 in November and 220 were in December. Over 477 of these detainees were accused of committing capital offences which included kidnapping. The motives of kidnappers in Enugu are primarily financial and some ransoms went into the millions of Naira. The Chief Press Secretary to the Governor of Enugu State, Dan Nwomeh, had his ransom

set as high as ₦500 million (3.3 million US Dollars As of 26 June 2010), dropping to ₦200 million and then ₦50 million before he was released without a ransom being paid because of the refusal of the government to negotiate with the kidnappers (Ogbodo, 2020). Much of the crime in Enugu and the rest of Nigeria has been attributed to unemployment.

Crime is a threat to the economic, political and social security of a nation and a major factor associated with underdevelopment; because it discourages both local and foreign investments, reduces the quality of life, destroys human and social capital, damages relationship between citizens and the states, thus undermining democracy, rule of law and the ability of the country to promote development. Furthermore, Ekott (2019) states that organized Armed Violence in Nigeria is mostly perpetrated by youths due to disenchantment and frustration caused by mass poverty and unemployment. Unemployment problem, which now seems beyond remedy, has produced army of idle hands and some of them have decided to punish the society that fails to provide them with means of livelihood and dignity by robbing its members of their property at gunpoint.

Okafor (2020), adds that unemployed youths are disproportionately more likely to be perpetrators, as well as victims of crime and violence. The growing gap between the rich and poor affects the society through increased violence. The self-employed are in quandary as scant infrastructure makes it impossible for them to ply their trade. This is exacerbated by political corruption, poverty, poor governance, increasing population, and lack of policy initiatives and implementation to some extent encouraged criminal groups to thrive across Nigeria.

Youth Empowerment Scheme in Enugu State

Several economic empowerment schemes have been launched by government of Enugu State to empower youths to become self-reliant and curtail the scourge of crime. In April, 2017, State Government in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 8 of Decent Work and Economic Growth, introduced a Skill Acquisition Programme, a one-year free vocational training in focal areas such as Tailoring, Hairdressing, Barbing and Aluminum works apprenticeship (Amoke, 2018). Graduates were given seed money to assist them to start-off their various businesses after they attended. Beneficiaries were selected from across all the 17 Local Government Areas of the State.

In July 2020, The government launched e-YES (Enugu Youth Empowerment Scheme) as an initiative of the Enugu SME Center, under the Enugu Human Capital Development Loan Programme, that will empower thousands of youths living in Enugu state with training in digital skills such as advertising, digital marketing, Web Design, Internet Promotion, SMS Marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), PPC, Analytics, App Development/Marketing, Design, Internet Business, Adwords, Adsense, WordPress, mobile advertising, analytics, email marketing, SEO, PPC, WordPress, web design, etc. These high-income skills will enable them to thrive in today's digital-first world, become innovative entrepreneurs and strategic valuable assets to Enugu State and the international community at large (Obike, 2021).

In April 2021, the state government partnered with World Bank group to commence the training of eligible Women and Youth selected under the Project's Women and Youth Empowerment Programme (WYEP). The trainees are engaged in an intensive 14-day on-farm and hands-on training in aquaculture, crops and poultry value chains; master classes in economics, business management, agriculture, business etiquette and other essentials needed for a successful entrepreneur (Eze, 2020). The trainees are also sensitized on key issues including the core mandate of the WYEP programme, Guidelines on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and the Project's Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM). The two-week intensive residency training programme is designed to equip the beneficiaries with relevant skills along their value chains of choice, with the ultimate aim of increasing production, enhancing productivity and value addition in the targeted value chains, and to foster job creation and livelihood improvement.

While commenting on the numerous empowerment scheme of Enugu State Government, Ukata (2021), opined that the various scheme will drastically reduce unemployment and crime rate. He however stated that this is possible if subsequent administration will sustain the scheme and if other challenges such as politicization, diversion of fund for the project and mismanagement did not set in. he therefore advised that government should put in place adequate mechanism and ensure institutional efficiency in order to actualize the targets of the scheme.

Skills Acquisition and Crime Reduction

Empowerment of youths especially the unemployed ones is expected to take off their mind from ideas that poses threat to the society. Skill acquisition is one such empowerment scheme. Skills acquisition schemes and programmes expose beneficiaries to technical known that is acquired through on the job training. This in turn prepares the ground for those who completed the skill learning to start similar ventures and even grow to empower others. In this way, more jobs are created and unemployed persons stand the chance of working.

Samuel (2019), reveals that perhaps in line with the numerous benefits of skill acquisition, the Enugu State Government made it compulsory to empower the youths through skill acquisition programme as measure to curtail crime rate in the State. He identified that the State Government through its Enugu SME Centre partnered with iCreate Africa launched the Enugu Skill-Up Project to train youths in welding, carpentry, tiling, plumbing, electrical installation, drywall and painting, solar inverter installation and maintenance, wallpaper installation, POP installation and wall screeding, and concrete construction work. The author however, explained that if the programme is not manipulated by government appointees, then the programme will promote employment generation.

Interestingly, we know that the point raised by the Author has been an enigma in the fight against unemployment and crime in Nigeria. It is clear that most government appointees allocate chances to themselves during employment process at the expense of giving all qualified candidates the free hand to vie for the positions. This situation wherever it exists defeats government intentions to uplift the living conditions of the youth and could subject the nonbeneficiaries to crimes.

Onusi (2021), revealed that the Enugu Tech Hub and Youth Innovation Centres, at Enugu City and Obollo Afor is veritable initiative that can transform the youths and reduce crime in the state if it subsequent administration keeps it. The hub targeted the creation of more than 1,500 small scale tech businesses and employment of more than 10,000 youths within the short space of time. The services to be rendered at the Tech Hub centres for the benefit of the people of Enugu State, especially the youth, include computer training programmes, solar skills acquisition training, computer coding, web site designs, graphic designs, confectionaries and hands-on technical skills training, among others. Some of these graduates travel abroad for more sophisticated skills acquisition.

Again, the point raised by the scholar is of utmost important in the management and achievement of the objectives of government skill acquisition programme in Nigeria. Continuity of government policies and programmes has always been a problem in Nigeria. For example, the SURE-P programme of Goodluck Jonathan was abandoned by the incumbent administration of Muhammed Buhari in place of N-power programmes among others initiatives. There are still other similar cases in the Federal and across State governments in Nigeria. This practice defeats good intention of some skill acquisition programmes and often plung youths back into abject poverty and subsequent involvement in social vices/crimes.

Uzodinma (2020), explained that there was sharp decrease in crime rate in Enugu State between 2015-2017. He added this might be connected to the initiative of the State at keeping the youth busy. This was done through different national and state youths and sports programmes such as the National Youth Games, NFF under-13 and under-15 football championships, National Mobil Track/Field Championships. Others are Zenith Bank Basketball Championship and Nestle Milo Basketball Championship as well as the Central Bank of Nigeria Table Tennis

Classics, 2017/2018 Gburugburu All Public Secondary Schools Football Championship, among others. In addition, in 2019, over 750 youths were trained for 12 months on various skills by the Enugu State Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) office. Within the same period, the ministry trained and retrained thousands of youths in various skills/trade in agriculture, soap making, cosmetology, digital technology, among others, by the office of the Special Assistant to the Governor on Youth Affairs (Uziodinma, 2020).

Though the point raised by the author above which linked crime reduction in Enugu State to Government skill programmes for youth, the missing linking in his point is the role of security agents in maintaining peace and order in the state. We know activities of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) alongside other security outfits might have added to improved security in the state and not only as a result of skill acquisition programme.

Business Funding for Youths and Crime Reduction in Enugu State

Provision of fund for Youth investment in economic ventures is another veritable means of youth empowerment in Nigeria. In line with, the Federal Government established several banks to assist the State governments in providing fund for their youths to start-up businesses. Bank of Industry (BOI), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) are among the financial institution that have partnered with states in Nigeria in the provision of funds for investment. Enugu State have utilized this opportunity as a means of providing fund for graduates of various government acquisition programmes to start their own businesses.

Adoyi (2019), reveal that in Enugu State, the government has been instrumental in providing fund youths to establish Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in order to make them self –reliant and take away their mind from crime. The Author noted that the state injected N220 billion low interest long term development finance for the benefits of SMEs. The fund was provided by the Bank of Agriculture. Indeed, this initiative is laudable only if it is not seized and shared by government officials at the expense of the targeted police. If the target is actualized, it will equally help in reducing number of jobless youths and crime rate in the state.

Amoke (2018), noted that in February 2018, Enugu State government launched an empowerment scheme for genuine traders in the state tagged: “The Enugu State Traders Empowerment Scheme”. The scheme, which was the first of its kind in the state, had an annual package of N60million that was won by 1,200 lucky traders through an open raffle draw conducted on a monthly basis among the then 37 registered markets. Consequently, 100 traders won N5 million every month at N50, 000 each and invested the money into their various businesses for socio-economic development of the state.

Basil (2019), added that following the success of the first phase of the Enugu State Traders Empowerment Scheme, Ugwuanyi’s administration re-launched the programme in 2020, with an annual bumper package of N120 million to be won by 2,400 traders, representing a double increase. In the repackaged scheme, 200 genuine traders will now win N10 million every month at N50,000 each while 17 other markets were added to the existing 37 to ensure that the empowerment scheme reached out to every nook and cranny of the state for more winners to benefit. The seed money was to assist the graduands start-off their various businesses after they attended a one-year free vocational training in focal areas such as Tailoring, Hairdressing, Barbing and Aluminum works apprenticeship.

While applauding Enugu State drive to curtail crime through youth empowerment scheme, Ugwu (2020), noted that Enugu State is gradually growing reputable economic hub in Nigeria. Ugwu was actually making reference to the establishment of Enugu Tech Hub and Youth Innovation Centres, at Enugu City and Obollo Afor. He added that the hub will not only groom youths, but also provide a ‘Tech Cluster’ (temporary office accommodation) for ‘Tech Start Ups’ for those who want to own businesses but may not have enough capital to rent offices and start up. It will create an enabling atmosphere for them to start businesses with ease.” They gradually pay the shop money as they business grow. Ugwu (2020) also maintained that since the initiatives target candidates for the

programmes are graduates of Universities, Polytechnic, among others, who want to make a career in professional ICT and technology related disciplines, non-graduates with some technical skills, entrepreneurs and prospective farmers and artisans, the Commissioner said the project will serve as an interface between Tech giants like Microsoft, IBM, HP, Alibaba, Google, Facebook etc. and Enugu Tech Start-ups.

Again, the initiative is good for growth of business and empowerment of youth seeking fund to engage in economic venture. However, if the scheme is to produce viable result, the fund must be carefully distributed and must get to the hand of the intended beneficiaries. Also, if subsequent administration maintains the programme, it will certainly boost youth employment and reduce crime rate in the State.

Scholarship Scheme and Crime Reduction among Youth

Scholarship programmes are granted to students at all levels of education in Nigeria. Both the Federal and State Governments in Nigeria have Scholarship Boards established to be in charge of Bursary, Scholarship and other educational related matters. In Enugu, the State Scholarship board was established in 2009 under the Sullivan administration with the objective, inter alia, of ensuring that many indigents but exceptionally brilliant students are given the opportunity to go to school. The intention is also to draw back student's mind to education as the bedrock of every life engagement. It was equally meant to avoid school drop which could lead to engagement in crime.

Okonkwo (2020), explained that since 2009, the Enugu State Scholarship Board has sponsored over 576 youths in foreign scholarships and 1209 local scholarships aids. The Author believed that this act is significant to carry along those who might have flare for education but might lack adequate fund carry along their intention. Undoubtedly, Local and Foreign Scholarships give indigenes the opportunity to qualify for educational and financial aids to study in Nigeria and oversea but this can be made more effective if incoming administration in the State can allow the initiative to run.

Aniago (2021), notes that the act of giving students and intending students' scholarship for local and foreign studies is a prerequisite for attaining a buoyant economy. He added that most youths have good initiatives to become self-reliant after education but often times lack the money to go to school. He specifically stated that in a situation whereby employers of labour demand education certificates for conditions for employment calls for government support for students' education. This may be true but if the government do not divert such intentions to their relatives or even children thereby neglecting the greater number of aspiring youths who already have good motives of transforming their education skill to practical job.

The foregoing show that scholarship programmes reduce school drop-outs who are mostly associated with crime in the society. The practice of awarding scholarship to students for local and oversea studies help youths to be employed either in the private or public sector. Those who established private investment even grow their businesses and become employers of labour in the society. In this way, they have not only escaped poverty trap and the urge for crime as means of getting rich but equally taking out other youths from same condition.

Theoretical Framework

The Adolescent Empowerment Cycle (AEC) is a model developed by Chinman and Linney (1998) to advance the understanding of the impact of empowerment schemes on adolescent development. The model is built on the premise that empowering adolescents can help to avert or mitigate some of the social hitches facing contemporary societies. According to the proponents of AEC, the empowerment scheme can function as a preventive intervention to a number of problematic behaviours unveiled by adolescents as a result of identity crisis and formation as well as role (Amoke, 2018). Furthermore, the AEC model is a derivative of developmental and social control theories. It postulates that the empowerment programme is a vital tool in the promotion of a positive, socially acceptable development process through adolescence and social bonding. This implies that engaging

adolescents in varying social, economic and political activities will reduce the extent to which they get involved in negative social vices.

The introduction of empowerment schemes in contemporary Nigerian society is stimulated by the dire need for a lasting solution to the problem of unemployment and its concomitant social vices. The manifestation of youth unemployment challenges in Enugu State, Nigeria led to the establishment of numerous schemes which are geared towards engaging unemployed youths in different socio-economic activities and roles (ranging from traffic management, fire service, solid waste management, information, and orientation). This is with a particular consciousness that when youths participate in these positive activities; the issue of identity crisis and formation, as well as the lack of meaningful roles that influence youth involvement in negative behaviours will be resolved (Onusi, 2021). More so, development experts strongly believed that engaging the youths in varying empowerment programmes and initiatives will enable them to learn new skills, ways and manners in which they can contribute meaningfully to the development process and social bond. It is in this direction that this study investigates youth empowerment initiative as a means to overcoming crime through the engagement of youths within their empowerment cycle.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive and survey design that employed the use of questionnaire in generating data from the study population.

The population of the study comprises youths in three communities in Nsukka Local

Government Area. The selected communities include Ede-oballa, Obukpa and Opi -Agu. According to the Ugwu (2021), the total number of youths from the selected communities is 5685.

The study used simple random sampling technique to sample a population of 5 youths. The sample size of 374 was determined using the Taro Yameni formular below,

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + \frac{N(e)}{374}}$$

Where n = sample size N = Total population

e = level of significant or degree of freedom 0.05 Solution

$$n = \frac{5685}{1 + \frac{5685(0.05)}{374}}$$

$$n = \frac{5685}{1 + 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{5685}{1.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{5685}{1.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{5685}{1.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{5685}{1.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{5685}{1.0025} = 374.142$$

Therefore, the sample size is 374.

The simple random sampling technique was employed to choose the respondents from the selected communities

Analysis of hypotheses

Test of Hypothesis One

H₀: There is no significant relationship between skills acquisition and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.

H_A: There is a significant relationship between skills acquisition and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State

The chi- square (X^2) method of analysis was used from the contingency table drawn from the percentage. The formular for chi- square is given as:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

Where:

X^2 = calculated chi-square value

$\sum$ = is summation

O_i = observed frequency

E_i = expected frequency

The error of acceptance is 0.05 (5%)

There is a significant relationship between skills acquisition and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka L.G.A of Enugu State

Option	Respondent	Percentage
Strongly agree	147	46%
Agree	121	39%
Neutral	17	5%
Disagree	10	3%
Strongly disagree	23	7%
Total	318	100%

Source: Field Work, 2022

$$\text{Expected Frequency (E)} = \frac{318}{5} = 63$$

Chi –square table;

O _i	E _i	O _i -e _i	(O _i -e _i) ²	(<u>O_i-e_i</u>) ²
147	63	84	7056	55.25
121	63	58	3481	21.16
17	63	-46	2116	33.56
10	63	-53	2809	44.58
23	63	-40	1600	25.39
Total				270.48

To compute the degree of freedom (df) or critical value (r-1) (c-1) Cell x row = (C-1) (R-1)

Where R = 5 C = 2

Therefore df= (5-1) (2-1)

= 4 x 1 df

Critical value of X^2 at 4 d.f is 9.488

Therefore, since the tabulated value of x (270.48) is greater than the critical value 9.488, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between skills acquisition and crime reduction among the

youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State is rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that provision of skills acquisition programmes has led to crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State

Test of Hypothesis Two

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between funding business for youth and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.

H_A : There is a significant relationship between funding business for youth and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State

The chi- square (X^2) method of analysis was used from the contingency table drawn from the percentage. The formular for chi- square is given as

$$X^2 = \sum (O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i$$

Where:

X^2 = calculated chi-square value

$\sum$ = is summation

O_i = observed frequency

E_i = expected frequency

The error of acceptance is 0.05 (5%)

There is a significant relationship between funding business for youth and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State

Option	Respondent	Percentage
Strongly agree	120	38%
Agree	96	30%
Neutral	27	9%
Disagree	42	13%
Strongly disagree	33	10%
Total	318	100%

Source: Field Work, 2022

$$\text{Expected Frequency (E)} = 318 \times \frac{63}{5}$$

Chi –square table;

O_i	E_i	$O_i - E_i$	$(O_i - E_i)^2$	$\frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$
120	63	57	3249	51.57
96	63	33	1089	17.28
27	63	-33	1089	17.28
42	63	-21	441	7
33	63	-30	900	14.28
Total				107.41

To compute the degree of freedom (df) or critical value $(r-1)(c-1)$ Cell x row = $(C-1)(R-1)$

Where $R = 5$ $C = 2$

Therefore $df = (5-1)(2-1)$

$= 4 \times 1$ df

Critical value of X^2 at 4d.f is 9.488

Therefore, since the tabulated value of x (107.41) is greater than the critical value 9.488, the null hypothesis which says that There is no significant relationship between funding business for youth and crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State is rejected while alternate hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it is concluded that provision of fund for business helped in crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.

Findings

The major findings of this study include;

- (1). Provision of skills acquisition led to crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. The engagement of the youths in various learning programmes drew many youths from roaming the street to acquire skills and technical knowhow that help them to be selfemployed upon graduation
- (2) Provision of fund for business helped in crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. The fund helps the previously unemployed youths to be engaged in economic ventures thereby taking away their mind from crime.
- (3) Scholarship scheme aided in crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. Students who would have rather dropped out school and perhaps engage in criminal activities were assisted to complete their education

Conclusion

This study has shown that empowerment scheme for youths be it in education or in businesses contributes immensely to crime reduction. It is a known fact that most youths who engage in criminal activities are either the jobless or drop out from school. Therefore, youth development programmes that target youth empowerment is considered as an antidote to criminal activities in our society. The findings is also a pointer that Nigeria government need to look towards empowerment of youths through skill acquisition programme, provision of fund for businesses and offering of scholarship scheme as significant approach to crime reduction in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- (1). Government of Enugu State and Nsukka LGA should scale up their effort at provision of skills acquisition to youth so as to reduce crime perpetuated by youths in Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.
- (2) Government of Enugu State and Nsukka LGA should sustain their efforts for provision of fund for business since it helps in crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.
- (3) Government of Enugu State and Nsukka LGA should continue to empower the youths through scholarship scheme as it has proven to aid in crime reduction among the youths of Nsukka LGA of Enugu State.

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