

**Eradicating Unemployment through Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship
Development: A Case of National Youth Service Corps**

Mumini Kadir¹, Saheed Abiodun Tijani² & Hassan Kadir³

^{1&2}Department of Business Administration and Management, Federal
Polytechnic Ede, Osun State

³Department of Psychology, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

Corresponding Email: muminikadir@gmail.com

Abstract

The issues of skills acquisition and employment generation has been a major concern among academia. This study seeks to investigate the extent to which National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development (SAED) has impacted on employment generation in Ilorin Metropolis. Questionnaires were the main instrument used to collect information from the participant that was purposively selected for the study. Descriptive statistics and inferential technique were employed to analyze the data collected. The Findings show that entrepreneurship skill acquisition has impacted positively on employment generation in the study area. The study also revealed that the programme duration and funding are the major challenges confronting the participants of the skill acquisition training. The study, therefore, recommends that government should make funds available to the participants for smooth takeoff after the programme. Also, there should be an extension in the programme duration as this will afford the participants opportunity to acquire the needed skills require to be self-reliant.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Skills Acquisition, Unemployment

JEL Classification: L26, J24, E24

1. Introduction

Nations all over the world have come to realize the importance of entrepreneurship development in the efforts towards attaining economic growth and development through creation of wealth, technological innovations and employment generation. Equally, National youth service skills acquisition programs plays key roles in addressing various social economic challenges such as insecurity, poverty, unemployment and so forth (Barba-Sanchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018; Kidane & Harvey, 2009; Lawal & Williams, 2018).

Additionally, establishment of small and medium enterprises through various entrepreneurship programmes has helped in providing employment, generating income and improving standard of living. Also, this facilitates proper utilization of resources both human and material which promote fair distribution of resources (Adam & Alarifi, 2021; Danjuma, Ahmad & Sazali, 2021).

Like many other developing nations, Nigerian economy is characterized by high rate of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and low capacity building. This has led to various crimes such as insurgency, ritual killings, kidnappings, banditry, armed robbery and other social unrest. It has been argued that these problems could be solved through the development of entrepreneurship skills (Osolor, 2016; Neumann, 2021; Stanley & Ogochukwu, 2017; Matanmi & Awodun, 2005). However, governments at various levels have initiated different policies and programmes aimed at creating employment opportunities and alleviate poverty in the country. These policies and programmes includes the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP), Small and Medium Enterprise Development of Nigeria (SMEDAN), SURE-P, YOUWIN among others.

Despite these policies and programmes, the rate of unemployment continues to soar and this may not be unconnected to policies inconsistent and implementation problem or wrong approach at solving the problem of unemployment. Thus, study have shown that entrepreneurship skill acquisition is an antidote to persistent rise in unemployment and graduate employability to be self-sufficient and becomes employers of labour rather than job seekers (Akinyele & Jaiyeola, 2019).

However, little attention was paid to the recent Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) established to train youth corps members on skills programmes to be self-reliant and become employer of labour rather than job seekers. For instance, Onyeagahala and Okorie (2015) investigate the relationship between entrepreneurship education and employment generation. Olufemi, Akinsanya and Olusegun (2018) in their study examine the impact of entrepreneurship skills on creation of employment. Durowaju (2018) investigates the extent to which entrepreneurship education has helped to reduce unemployment in rate in Lagos State. Despite all these studies on entrepreneurship education, their efforts are not based on NYSC entrepreneurship skill acquisition tagged SAED which was established in 2012 primarily to equip youths with critical skills required to make them employable and create jobs simultaneously. This study, therefore, intends to close the gap in the literature by examining empirically the extent to which SAED skill acquisition programme has

impacted on employment generation. Most importantly, the study identified the major drawback to smooth performance of the programme. Against this background, answers were provided to the following questions.

- i. What is the impact of the NYSC skills acquisition programme on the participants?
- ii. What is the difference in income level of the participants before and after the skills acquisition programme?
- iii. What are the major challenges faced by NYSC participants during and after the skills acquisition programme?

2. Empirical Literature

Theoretical and empirical literature continues to grow regarding the relationship between skill acquisition and employment generation in Nigeria.

For instance, Onyeaghala and Okorie (2018) examined the connection between entrepreneurship skills and employment generation in Kano and Lagos State respectively. The study employed primary data to obtain information from the respondents. Findings show a positive and significant relationship between entrepreneurship skill acquisition and employment generation. They argued that skill acquisition is a powerful tool for graduate employment.

In another related study, Olufemi, Akinsanya and Olusegun (2015) examines the impact of entrepreneurship education on employment generation among university graduates in Nigeria. The study used primary data and the findings showed that entrepreneurship education has a significant impact on employment generation in the study area.

From Malaysia perspective, Nurfadhila and Norlaile (2017) examined the effect of entrepreneurship skill acquisition on employment creation among undergraduate students in Kelantan. The study used primary data and the findings revealed that entrepreneurship education has the potential to enhance job creation among the students and also enable them to realize their dreams of self-reliant.

Durowaju (2018) investigates the extent to which entrepreneurship education has helped in reducing unemployment rate in Lagos State. The study used primary data and the findings revealed that there is significant and positive relationship between entrepreneurial and employment creation. Perhaps, reducing unemployment in the study area could be achieved through adequate training and skills in entrepreneurial education. Using data generated through the administration of questionnaire, Iwuoha, Baba and Chinwe (2021) determine the entrepreneur skill acquisition on employment generation. The study found out that needed skills and education are necessary ingredients for to generate employment in Imo State, Nigeria.

Okoye, Nwakoby and Ezuce (2012) examined the effect of entrepreneurship education on employment generation in Anambra State. The study employed primary data and the findings revealed that bank credit and development of infrastructural has significant effects on reducing unemployment in the study area.

More recently, Ihejirka and Deekor (2021) investigates the influence of entrepreneurship education programme on socio-economic development of youths in Rivers State. The results revealed that seminar and workshop have a significant effect in enhancing job creation in Rivers. Mcryose and Obiajulu (2017) examines how innovative and entrepreneurship skill could enhance job creation. A sample of 441 principals and 4340 basic science teachers were selected for the study. It was observed that adequate skill development is a pre-requisite for job creation.

Akinyele, Akinyele and Jaiyeola (2019) assess the entrepreneurship skill development in soap making industry among small scale enterprise performance in Abeokuta. The result from 126 samples of SMEs revealed that there is positive and significant relationship between youth empowerment and economic development on one hand, and employment generation on the other hand. Godwin and Edmund (2021) reported that despite efforts aimed at reducing unemployment, the rate continues to soar and this may not be unconnected to neglect of rural areas in policy formulation and implementation.

3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study is anchored on Schumpeter (1934) theory. This theory supported skills acquisition as the major opportunity to enhance job creation. It is the general believe that opportunities are created by institutions or external environment for the entrepreneurs. However, their ability to identify and tap from this opportunity differs among them. Therefore, ability to access and readiness to use the available information is a prerequisite for the attainment of the require skills and opportunities.

This study used a cross-sectional set of data and structured questionnaire was employed to examine the extent to which national youth service skills acquisition scheme enhanced employment generation among the participants within the study area. A sample of 150 youth corps members who had participated in the training were purposively selected for the study. This method of selection technique became imperative due to its ability to allow the researchers to rely on their own judgement in choosing their own population to be included in the study. The variable used in the study were employment generation being the dependent variable while the dependent

variables are duration of training, access to financial support and level of education.

To analysis and estimate the parameters of the model, the trio of descriptive statistics, independent t-test technique and multiple linear regression models were employed to estimate the specific objectives of the study. Aside the descriptive statistics used in describing the demographic information of the respondents, the other test statistics were used to test for the differences in income level of the respondents and the multiple regression model was used to ascertain the employment generation capacity of the skills acquisition programme.

The employment generation model is specified below:

$$EG = f(DOT, EDU, Dummy) \dots \dots \dots 1$$

$$EG_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DOT_t + \beta_2 EDU_t + \beta_3 FS + \mu_t \dots \dots \dots 2$$

Where EG is the employment generation, DOT is the duration of the training, EDUC is the level of education and Dummy is the dummy variable. $\beta_0 - \beta_3$ are the estimated parameters for DOT, EDU and FS respectively. Meanwhile, μ is the error term.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Marital Distribution of the Respondents

		Marital Status			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	87	58.0	58.0	58.0
	Married	63	42.0	42.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors Computation, 2022

The table above revealed that, majority of the respondents are married as shown by the percentage (58.0) while the remaining 63 (42.0%) are single.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Religion

		Religion			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Islam	69	46.0	46.0	46.0
	Christian	63	42.0	42.0	88.0
	Others	18	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Computation, 2022

Table 2 also revealed that more that 60% of the respondents are Muslim, about 60% of them are Christian while the remaining 18% falls to other religions.

Table 3: Respondents Distribution by Race

		Race			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yoruba	52	34.7	34.7	34.7
	Igbo	31	20.7	20.7	55.3
	Hausa	48	32.0	32.0	87.3
	Others	19	12.7	12.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' Computation, 2022

Table 3 revealed that more than about 52 (34.7%) of the beneficiaries are Yoruba, 31(20.7%) are Igbo, 48(32%) are Hausa and the remaining 19(12.7%) belong to other categories of ethnicity. This is an indication that majority of the samples selected are Yoruba.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.623 ^a	.388	.371	.56560	.388	22.948	4	145	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), FinancialSup, DurationOfT, Training, LofEdu

Source: Author's Computation, 2022

Table 5: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	29.364	4	7.341	22.948	.000 ^b
	Residual	46.386	145	.320		
	Total	75.750	149			

a. Dependent Variable: EmplmntGen

b. Predictors: (Constant), FinancialSup, DurationOf Training, LofEdu

Source: Author's Computation, 2022

Table 6: Coefficients^a

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.280	.309		-.907	.366		
	Training	.246	.061	.265	4.054	.000	.991	1.009
	LofEdu	.216	.063	.232	3.443	.001	.933	1.072
	DurationOfT	.254	.060	.276	4.225	.000	.990	1.010
	FinancialSup	.351	.062	.377	5.618	.000	.937	1.068

a. Dependent Variable: EmplmntGen

Source: Author's Computation, 2022

The results of the multiple regression analysis are presented in table 6 above having all the models including the independent variables that are regressed on the dependent variable. The R-square value of .38 shows that all the independent variables jointly explained about 38% variation in the dependent variable while the remaining 62% were explained by other factors not captured in the model. This explained that a unit change in employment generation is explained by all the factors that cause employment creation. The result of F-statistics is also significant at 1% which indicates that the model is adequate and of good fit. The results further revealed that all the sets of independent variables are significant even at 1% which is an indication of their influence on the dependent variable. Not only that, the results of the variance inflation factor (VIF) revealed that all the variables used in the mode do not have any collinearity among themselves since the value are less than 4.

Table 7: Independent Sample Test

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Training	Equal variances assumed	1.355	.246	-2.874	148	.005	-.35111	.12216	-.59251	-.10971

Equal variances not assumed			-2.874	145.516	.005	-.35111	.12216	-.59254	-.10968
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Source: Author's Computation, 2022

The results of the t-test as shown above indicated that the test statistics is significant at 5%. The interpretation of this is that we reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the income level before and after the programme as the test results indicated a significant relationship.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The study examined the extent to which NYSC skill acquisition programme had generated employment opportunities among the youth service corp members selected within the study area. The results of the multiple regression as shown above indicated that majority of the participants agreed that indeed the high level of unemployment was reduced as a result of the necessary skills acquired in the course of the training. This is an indication that the NYSC skills acquisition is indeed a veritable platform to provide needed skills to graduate in order to prepared them for gainfully employment and employer of labour rather than job seekers. Also, the study revealed that funds and duration of the programme are some of the major challenges confronting a successful implementation of the programme. Additionally, it was also discovered that there is no significant difference in the level of income of the participants before and after the programme.

This means the programme has not significantly affected their income level. The findings are consistent with that of Olufemi, Akinsanya and Olusegun (2015); Nurfadhila and Norlaile (2017) and Onyeaghala and Okorie (2018), in their separate studies on the efficacy of entrepreneurship education on job.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Many prospective corps members have under estimated the rate of employment generation through NYSC skills acquisition programme. This study, therefore, examined the extent to which it has generated employment opportunities among the participants/beneficiaries. The study therefore concludes that despite identified challenges associated with the programme, entrepreneurship skill acquisition tagged SAED scheme has really impacted on employment generation in the study area. though with identified challenges such as the short duration of the programme and lack of access to start-up capital after the completion of the programme.

Based on the findings of this study, the study recommends as follows:

- i. That government should restructure the programme by extending the duration of the programme as some skill requires more time than others.
- ii. That government should make funds available to the participants in order to have a smooth take-off after the training.
- iii. That efforts be made to improve the beneficiary's income level through adequate training that can be of impact to their standard of living.

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