

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUTH MUST WORK PROGRAMME IN IMO STATE NIGERIA, 2011-2015

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the youth unemployment with a specific focus on implementation of youth must work programme in Imo State, Nigeria, 2011-2015. The study drew on survey data from a sample of 174 respondents within the study areas. Using the Normalization Process Theory (NPT) the paper is of the view that the implementation of youth must work programme and youth unemployment in Imo State is an intervention programme initiated by the Government of Imo State to reduce the high rate of youth unemployment in the State. A five point Likert scale were used in analysis. The chi-square at the appropriate level of confidence (0.05) were used for the research hypotheses. Data for the study were gathered through primary and secondary sources. The findings revealed among others that youth must work programme have failed to make adequate provision for engaging the youth and therefore unable to resolve the development disaster facing the state. Also the implementation of the programme made minimal impact in the living condition, standard of life of the people that in spite of the effort and financial input by the state government, youth unemployment is still on the increase. The paper recommended among others that government should try and monitor all allocation meant for the programme to avoid, making it insufficient for the targeted beneficiaries.

Key words: Youth, Youth Must Work, Employment Generation Policy, Imo State, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Creation of job for adequate employment was recognized early by Nigerian government as a necessary process of aligning economic growth with the development needs of the Nigeria. This was captured in her First National Development Plan (FNDP) (1962-68) had, as one of its main objectives, the development of employment opportunities which would be accessible to all her citizens. The creation of job was furthermore, included in her subsequently Development Plan (SNDP). According to Ibe (1994) between 1973 and 1981, employment expanded in the public sectors, the private sector and the services sector.

However, the persistence decline in crude oil price since 1982 and the accompanying reduction in foreign exchange earnings had resulted to shrinkage in government revenues, shortage of raw materials and spare parts for the import dependent manufacturing sector and a depression in the business of firms retailing and servicing imported goods (Mbah and Agu, 2013). The responses of public and private sectors to this fortunes was the adoption of a strategy of retrenchment of it staff strength. Thus, this led to a considerable contraction in employment opportunities in Nigeria. The persistent rise in unemployment engaged the attention of the three tiers of government to initiate programmes and policies targeted at the curbing the high rate of unemployment in the country. Prominent among these programmes are the

establishment of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1986 by the Babangida led administration and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) by the Obasanjo led administration. The Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), and Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN), by the Goodluck Jonathan led administration, are some of the various intervention mechanisms aimed at ensuring economic growth that is rich with job creation opportunities (Mbah and Agu, 2013).

The Nigeria government in 2008 acknowledged that about 80 percent of her youth are unemployed and 10 percent underemployed (Daily Trust, 2008). In 2011, the Minister of Youth Development, Bolaji Abdullahi reported that 42.2 per cent of Nigeria's youth population is out of job. Depo Oyedokun, the Chairman of the House Committee on Youth and Social Development reinstated that of the over 40 million unemployed youths in the country, 23 million are unemployable and therefore susceptible to crime, hence the need to articulate what could be done to salvage the situation. From this figure, there is no doubt that the economy of Nigeria is a youth economy (Oviawe, 2010).

Youths in Imo State are said to be confronted with the issue of unemployment. As a result of this unemployment challenges, young people in Imo State face a future of low-wage employment, unemployment and underemployment in the informal sector with little security and prospects. However, in a bid to tackle the high rate of unemployment in Imo State, Governor Rochas Okorocha has launched the Youth Must Work programme aimed at engaging and empowering all unemployed youths in the State. The programme which was launched at the Heroes Square in Owerri, the Imo State capital, South East Nigeria in 2013 brought together over 10,000 unemployed graduates from all the 27 local government areas in the state. The programme is aimed at bringing all unemployed youths in the state together, identifying their different areas of specialisation and empowering them with the necessary tools which will get them fully engaged before they are gainfully employed in their desired jobs. This programme is the first of its kind by any state in the country. While decrying the high rate of unemployment in the country, according to Okeke (2013:1) the Governor said:

corruption, selfishness and primitive accumulation of wealth by political leaders had been the major cause of unemployment in the country. He added that as part of the action plan mapped out for the Youth Must Work programme, the state government had set aside an interest-free loan of N5 billion for thrift arrangement which will aid the youths to set up integrated farming in their communities.

The Governor further stated that one of the cardinal objectives of the Youth Must Work programme is to develop the economy of the state through agriculture for which the state government had provided one hectare of land in each of the 560 communities in the state. Examining the lacuna in job creation for youths in Imo state, Nigeria forms the main thrust of this paper.

1.2 The Problem

The problem of this study revolved around the high rate of youth unemployment in Imo State. The present situation seems to give an impression of economic insecurity among the active population. The disturbing observed issue was the youth unemployment rising higher than 21 percent, far above the conventional accepted rate of four to five percent (Ekanem and Emanghe, 2014). Thus, presenting a paradox of increasing growth (seven per cent) and unemployment incidence of thrice the rate of growth of the economy. Majority of Nigerian youth are idle and some are involved in various vices due to unemployment. Consequently, they cannot raise their socioeconomic standard and therefore cannot contribute to nation building. The joblessness of the Nigerian youth today has further aggravated the youth negative behaviour in the society as most antisocial acts including thuggery, arm robbery, militancy, restiveness, ethnic-political clashes and other social vices in Nigeria could be traced to the high rate of unemployment (Okafor, 2011). Most streets in Imo State nowadays are littered with robust and energetic youths, often primary schools, secondary schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities graduates, engaged in motorcycle transport and street hawking.

Youth unemployment in Imo State is particularly disturbing as over 500,000 Imo youths are estimated to be unemployed (Chukwueke, 2015). Okeke, (2013,p.1) noted that "Imo Youth Must Work Programme" will bring about zero idleness that engenders unwholesome devilish thoughts. Furthermore, the state government equally approved N500 Million for the clothing allowances and N20,000 monthly stipend to enable the youths discharge their duties effectively.

From all indications, the employed youths are graduates of tertiary institutions. Although the Imo State Government established the youth must work programme with a view of reducing unemployment, the rate of unemployed youth keeps increasing daily. Chukwueke (2015) in his evaluation of the Imo youth must work programme observed that, several problems militated against the success of the programme. The youth must work programme faced challenges such as problems of funding, poor remuneration, lack of State Government commitment, credibility and sustainability of the youth must work programme as the State Government is yet to fulfill its promise of converting the engagement of the registered youth into a permanent and pensionable status after more than three years of the implementation of the programme. In brief, the employment trends in Nigeria indicate that, without a concerted effort to tackle the problems of

youth unemployment and underemployment the situation could get worse (Osolor,2014:18). The impacts will be felt at the individual, familial, national and global levels if not addressed, and this is a prescription for disaster.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study has both broad objective and specific objectives. The broad objective of the study was to investigate the youth unemployment with specific focus on the implementation of youth must work programme in Imo State from 2011 to 2015 .The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. examine the contribution of youth must work Programme in reducing youth unemployment in Imo State.
2. find out if the implementation of youth must work programme in reducing youth unemployment in Imo State is effective.
3. identify the problems of implementation of youth must work programme in Imo State, Nigeria.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were investigated in the study:

1. The youth must work programme did not create adequate employment for the youths in Imo State, Nigeria.
2. The implementation of youth must work programme in reducing youth unemployment in Imo State is effective in paying stipends.
3. Irregularities in the release of fund negatively affected the implementation of youth must work programme in Imo State, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review and Methodology

2.1The Youth and Youth Unemployment

The variables that represent the term “youth” is devoid of unanimous definition among social scholars and the public. In this direction, various conceptualizations according to socio-economic and philosophical prepositions abound, leading to fundamental incongruence in its definitions. Biologically, youth is the quality of being young, youthfulness and juvenility. It is that stage of one’s existence that succeeds the child hood stage but precedes the adult age. Apart, from the biological point of view, other allusions to the youth concept borders commonly on agreed aspects as rate of dependency on parents, physical development, behavioural tendencies and age categorizations.

For this study, we are adopting the age categorization to distinguish the concept of a youth, as a result of the fact that, this age is more visibly accepted across the globe. In line with this point of definition, the United Nations (2002) indicates that, in some countries, the lowest age limit for a youth is 10 years (Haiti) while in Costa Rica it is 14 years.

In countries like Honduras and New Caledonia respectively, the maximum age limit for a youth is 29 years, while most European and North American countries peg their maximum age limit for a youth at 25 years. However, the maximum age limit for a youth in Nigeria is pegged at the age of 30 years, as reflected in the National Youth Service Scheme. In Nigeria’s cultural parlance, the concept of youth is devoid of chronological age limits. On the other hand, the Nigerian Constitution defines youths as people between the ages of 18 and 30 years. It explains the fact that at 18 years, one can contest or vote for or vie for an elective position or office in governance. By this is meant that the 18 years bracket by the constitution is the age of maturity, reasoning, ability to take independent decisions or by one self. In the field or areas of interaction, the World Football Body, Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) defines youths as people between the ages of 17 and 20 years (Ekpo, 2011, FIFA, 1985; Nigeria Constitution, 1999). The Ibibio Ethnic Nationality sees youth as young people between 5 and 25 years (Mfon, 2012; Nkenta, 2012; Idiongomfonabasi, 2012, Katz, 2003, cited by Akpan, 2015). People in this bracket are regarded as the Nigerian youth irrespective of their chronological age.

In terms of the implication of the age limit on youth unemployment phenomenon, it is instructive to emphasize that it affects the comparability of youth unemployment statistics across countries. This wide variety in youth unemployment estimation also bears consequences on the kind of strategies for tackling youth unemployment in the development programmes of countries.

Table 1: Nigeria's Unemployment rate by Age

Age Group	Unemployment Rate (%)
15 – 24	41.6
25 – 44	17
45 – 59	11.3
60 – 64	16.7

Source: *National Bureau of Statistics (2011).*

Unemployment refers to a situation in which those who are able and willing to work cannot find employment. Meaning that such persons are involuntarily unemployed (Ekpo, 2011). Udo (2012) sees unemployment as the number of jobless people roaming the streets of Nigeria each day with their curriculum vitae from one office to another in search of "white collar jobs". Though Udo sees it purely as those who have acquired formal education and considered office job as the only alternative of securing employment, it is more than just acquiring certificate in a formal school setting and preparing for employment. The International Labour Organization conceptualise unemployment thus: "when people are without jobs, and they have actively sought work within the past four years" (ILO, 2012). Indeed, unemployment addresses a situation where individuals actively seeking jobs remain unhired (Hussain, 2004).

An operational definition of unemployment for this work will include the underemployed, hence unemployment occurs when people who are able and willing to work are without jobs, or cannot find work that is effective and productive to do. Underemployment is unemployment in disguise. Harold (2009) described underemployment as when people are employed only on part time or at work that is ineffective or unproductive, with a correspondingly low income that is insufficient to meet their needs. This implies that the underemployed are individuals who are working outside their areas of specialisation due to lack of jobs and so, could not be paid commensurately to their qualifications or expertise. If the factors of production are not being used to the full capacity, there is underemployment (Anyanwuocha, 2010).

2.2 Theoretical Discourse

In analyzing and examining the implementation of *youth must work* programme geared towards reducing youth unemployment in Imo State, Normalization Process Theory (NPT) has been adopted as the theoretical framework of analysis. Normalization process theory was propounded by May and Finch (2009). This is a sociological theory of the implementation, embedding, and integration of new activities, technologies and organizational innovations. The theory is built upon the Normalization Process Model to explain the social processes that lead to the routine embedding of innovation to better or improve the living condition of man.

Normalization Process Theory focuses attention on agentic contributions – the things that individuals and groups (government) do to operationalize new or modified modes of practice as they interact with dynamic elements of their environments. It defines the implementation, embedding, and integration as a process that occurs when participants deliberately initiate and seek to sustain a sequence of events that bring it into operation. Implementation is recognized as a distinct stage in the policy process, unique for representing the transformation of a policy idea or expectation to action aimed at remedying social problems (Lester & Goggin, 1998).

As Parsons (1995) suggests, "A study of implementation is a study of change: how change occurs, possibly how it may be induced" (1995:461). The dynamics of implementation processes are complex, but Normalization Process Theory facilitates understanding by focusing attention on the mechanisms through which participants invest and contribute to them. The Normalisation Process Theory (NPT) addresses the factors needed for successful implementation and integration of interventions into routine work (normalisation).

However efficacious intervention is shown to be in an experimental environment, its long-term impact depends both on its effectiveness in the "real world" and on how widely it is implemented. The government need to consider implementation issues during the initial intervention development, including considering the context where it will be deployed and how any changes may affect the effectiveness of the planned intervention. Questions to address include defining the groups affected by the intervention, considering their main current and foreseeable future concerns, and

determining whether the proposed intervention programme such as the youth unemployment programme will fit with these concerns. The Normalization Process Theory (NPT) is based on the following assumptions:

- Coherence : The new innovation should make sense to those involved in the implementation work.
- Cognitive Participation : The should be key stakeholders for the implementation of the programme
- Collective Action : A project should be initiated for implementation to occur.
- Reflexive Monitoring : The implementation work must be evaluated by those involved.

In our application of the theory to the study therefore, normalization means a situation where everything is normal. The Normalization Process Theory (NPT) focuses on the work that individuals and groups do to enable an intervention to become normalized. The *youth must work* programme is an intervention programme initiated by the Government of Imo State to reduce the high rate of youth unemployment in the State. The theory is therefore fits well with the study oriented approach to investigate the implementation of the programme. NPT aims to explain and understand the processes by which innovations or interventions become routine (or not) in people’s daily activities. It focuses on the work that has to take place to implement innovation in day-to-day activities. The study is of the view that the implementation and sustainability of interventions can be considered from the very beginning of their development and evaluation by using Normalization Process Theory (NPT).

2.3 Methodology

Research Design

The study was a descriptive survey which sought to examine the responses of the youth in three selected Local Government Areas of Imo State on the implementation of youth must work programme in Imo State during the period under consideration.

Area of Study

The study was conducted in Imo State. The state is made up of twenty-seven Local Government Areas. Imo State lies between latitude 5°12’ and 5°56’ North of the Equator and between longitudes 6°38’ and 7°25’ east of the Greenwich meridian. It is bordered by Abia State on the east, by the River Niger on the West, by Anambra State to the north and River State to the south. The location of Imo State in the Southeastern zone makes it a strategic commercial centre. The people are known for their traditional hospitality, revered as the cradle of peaceful co-existence and famed for their cultural affinity. Education is the biggest industry in the State (IMSG, 2001). Imo State occupies a land mass of about 5,530 km² with a total population of approximately 5,275,703 persons in 2012, projected from 2006 census figure (NPC, 2006).

Sample and Sampling Technique

Stratified sampling technique was adopted. Imo State was stratified according to the senatorial districts, (South, Central and North). The following local governments were purposively selected from the senatorial districts: Ehime Mbano for Okigwe senatorial district(South), Oru West for Orlu senatorial district(Central) and Ahiazu for Owerri senatorial district(North). A purposive sampling technique was employed to select One hundred and seventy four (174) registered respondents under the auspices of youth must work programme in Imo State.

Techniques for Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages while the hypotheses were analyzed using chi-square at the appropriate level of confidence (0.05). The data was analyzed by using five-point Likert type as follows. SA-Strongly agreed (5 points),A-Agreed (4points), U- Undecided(3points),D-Disagreed (2 points),SD-Strongly Disagreed (1 point). The various scores are summed up for each of the respondents. Simple percentage was used to determine the direction of their perception and belief concerning the subject under review. Chi-square (χ^2) was used to determine the measures of dispersal and to strengthen the decision arrived at. The mean responses of 3.0 and above as upper limit on the 5 point scale were considered positive while the mean responses below 3.0 (lower limit) were considered negative.

Table 2: Questionnaire distribution by senatorial district in Imo State

S/No	Senatorial District	Local Govt. Selected	No. of Questionnaire distributed	No. of Questionnaire Retrieved
1.	Okigwe	Ehime Mbano	62	58
2.	Orlu	Oru West	62	56
3.	Owerri	Ahiazu	62	60
Total			186	174

Source: Field Survey (2015)

4. Results

The data generated from the questionnaires in respect of the implementation of youth must work Programme in Imo State, 2011 – 2015 were summarized and analyzed as presented in the tables below:

Table 3: Summary of responses and mean scores to ascertain if the youth must work programme did not create adequate employment for the youths in Imo State.

S/No						No. of Subjects	Total scores	Mean score	Decision
	SA	A	UD	D	SD				
	5	4	3	2	1	N	FX	X	
1. The implementation of youth must work programme has improved the socio-economic condition of the youth.	36	27	7	74	30	174	487	2.8	Disagreed
2. Have you benefited from the interest-free loan mapped out for the youth must work programme?	24	31	9	63	47	174	444	2.6	Disagreed
3. Youth must work programme is seen as a temporary job for economic stimulus.	71	43	11	22	27	174	631	3.6	Agreed
4. Has the youth must work programme meet the hopes and aspirations of unemployed youths in Imo State?	33	25	16	63	37	174	476	2.8	Disagreed

Source: Field Survey (2015)

From the analysis made on table 3 above, item 1 and 2 scored 2.8 (lower limit) which is below the decision point of 3.0. This show that respondents agreed the implementation of youth must work programme has not improved the socio-economic condition of the youth and have not benefited from the interest free loan mapped out for the programme. Item 3 indicates that majority of the sampled population agreed that youth must work programme is seen as temporary job for economic stimulus. While in item 4, the decision score is 2.8 showing that the respondents disagreed that the youth must work programme has not meet the hopes and aspirations of the unemployed youth in Imo State. Based on this, one may likely say that youth must work programme did not create employment satisfaction for the youth in Imo State.

Table 4: Summary of responses and mean scores to ascertain if the implementation of youth must work programme in Imo State is effective in paying stipends.

S/No						No. of Subjects	Total scores	Mean score	Decision
	SA	A	UD	D	SD				
	5	4	3	2	1	N	FX	X	
5. Are there participative approach in designing the youth must work programme in Imo State?	31	29	13	71	30	174	482	2.7	Disagreed
6. The participation of people in this programme has been politicized and selective, for political loyalists only?	63	55	7	22	27	174	627	3.6	Agreed
7. Low government commitment has affected the youth must work programme.	59	41	6	35	33	174	580	3.3	Agreed
8. The monthly stipend of N20,000 for the registered youth in this programme is equitable with our current cost of living.	27	21	11	75	40	174	442	2.6	Disagreed

Source: Field Survey (2015)

Results in table 4 shows that our mean score of 2.7 on item 5, indicates that there was no participative approach in designing the youth must work programme. The respondents equally agreed respectively that participation of the people in this programme has been politicized coupled with low government commitment has affected the programme (see item 6 & 7). Also, our mean score of 2.6 on item 8 indicates that the monthly stipend of N20,000 for the registered youth is not equitable with our current cost of living. Therefore using payment of N 20,000 as stipends was not effective to encourage the target beneficiaries.

Table 5: Summary of responses to ascertain if irregularities in the release of fund negatively affected the implementation of youth must work programme.

S/No						No. of Subjects	Total scores	Mean score	Decision
	SA	A	UD	D	SD				
	5	4	3	2	1	N	FX	X	
9. Lack of prompt payment of salaries is a big setback to the implementation of youth must work programme.	55	43	7	35	34	174	572	3.2	Agreed
10. Youth must work programme is not a real solution to our youth unemployment problem in Imo State?	64	31	9	42	28	174	583	3.3	Agreed
11. Political and policy interference have undermined the institutional credibility and effectiveness of the programme.	58	43	7	38	28	174	587	3.3	Agreed
12. Youth must work programme yielded much impact in view of the human and material resources deployed for the programme.	33	27	4	77	33	174	472	2.7	Disagreed

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The responses from our sampled population in table 5, show that our mean score on items 9, 10 & 11 were above the upper limit (positive responses). This shows that lack of prompt payments of salaries, political and policy interference and the programme being seen as not a real solution to our youth unemployment undermined the institutional credibility and effectiveness of the programme. The mean score of 2.7 on item 12 indicates that the respondents disagreed that the youth must work programme yielded much impact in view of the human and material resources deployed for the programme.

Testing of Hypotheses

Table 6: Hypothesis 1: The youth must work programme did not create adequate employment for the youths in Imo State.

Responses	Observed freq.(fo)	Expected freq.(fe)	Fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
Strongly agree	40	34.8	5.2	27.04	0.7
Agree	39	34.8	4.2	17.64	0.5
Undecided	32	34.8	-2.8	7.84	0.2
Disagree	39	34.8	4.2	17.64	0.5
Strongly Agree	24	34.8	-10.8	116.64	3.3
Total	174				X²=6.9

Calculated (x²) = $\sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} = 6.9$

Degree of freedom “d.o.f” = n – 1

Where n = number of rows

Therefore, d.o.f = 5 – 1 = 4

Tabulated (x²) = At 0.05% level of significance, the tabulated value of x² for 4 degrees of freedom is 9.48

Decision: Since the calculated value of x² at 6.9 is less than the tabulated x² at 9.48, we accept the hypothesis which says that youth must work programme did not create adequate employment for the youths in Imo State.

Table 7: Hypothesis 2: The implementation of youth must work programme in reducing youth unemployment in Imo State is effective in paying stipends.

Responses	Observed freq.(fo)	Expected freq. (fe)	Fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
Strongly agree	61	34.8	26.2	676.44	19.7
Agree	30	34.8	-4.8	23.04	0.6
Undecided	7	34.8	-27.8	772.84	22.2
Disagree	44	34.8	9.2	84.64	2.4
Strongly Agree	32	34.8	-2.8	7.84	0.2
Total	174				X²=45.1

Calculated $(x^2) = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} = 45.1$.

Degree of freedom “d.o.f” = n – 1

Where n = number of rows

Therefore, d.o.f = 5 – 1 = 4

Tabulated (x^2) = At 0.05% level of significance, the tabulated value of x^2 for 4 degrees of freedom is 9.48

Decision: Since the computed value of x^2 at 45.1 is greater than tabulated value of x at 9.48. We reject the hypothesis which says that the implementation of youth must work programme in reducing youth unemployment in Imo State is effective in paying stipends.

Table 8: Hypothesis 3: Irregularities in the release of fund negatively affected the implementation of youth must work programme in Imo State, Nigeria.

Responses	Observed freq.(fo)	Expected freq. (fe)	Fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
Strongly agree	40	34.8	5.2	27.04	0.7
Agree	41	34.8	6.2	38.44	1.1
Undecided	30	34.8	-4.8	23.04	0.6
Disagree	39	34.8	4.2	17.64	0.5
Strongly Agree	24	34.8	-10.8	116.64	3.3
Total	174				X²=6.2

Calculated $(x^2) = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} = 6.2$.

Degree of freedom “d.o.f” = n – 1

Where n = number of rows

Therefore, d.o.f = 5 – 1 = 4

Tabulated (x^2) = At 0.05% level of significance, the tabulated value of x^2 for 4 degrees of freedom is 9.48

Decision: Since the calculated value of x^2 at 6.2 is less than the tabulated x^2 at 9.48, we accept the hypothesis which says that irregularities in the release of fund negatively affected the implementation of *youth must work programme* in Imo State, Nigeria.

4. Discussion

The section is centered on the discussions of data collected from the field in the course of the research exercise. From the findings, it was revealed that the youth must work programme has not reduced youth unemployment in Imo State.

The first hypothesis tested, stated that youth must work programme did not create adequate employment for the youth. The summary of our responses gathered on the contributions of youth *must work* programme on employment showed that its implementation has not improved the socio-economic condition of the youth. In the tested hypothesis, the calculated value is 6.9 which is lesser than the computed value of 9.48 at 0.05 level of significance, as result of that we accept the hypothesis. One important findings of this study is that job creation did not contribute significantly to total

employment. This is because policy implementation in Imo State and Nigeria at large suffers a series of set back on account of lack of commitment and self-will, corruption and ineptitude among others. The performance of youth must work programme in Imo State is abysmally low. The finding further indicated that the policy attainment of major thrust of Imo State Government on youth employment policy fell short of expectation. This weakness is perhaps very evident in some of the youth unemployment reduction strategies in the Nigeria. From the responses gathered, it is appropriate to state here that the youth must work programme embarked on have not actually helped in the reduction of youth employment of the beneficiaries in Imo State as there has been no positive change in the direction of their standard of living.

The second hypothesis stated that the implementation of youth must work programme in reducing youth unemployment in Imo State is effective in paying stipends. The process where N20,000 are paid to the beneficiaries is not justifiable. However, from our survey, the apparent lack of adequate strategies for the programme objective of reducing the youth unemployment in the State is a major factor affecting the effectiveness of the scheme. The Government of Imo State in charge of the scheme failed to carry out feasibility studies before the implementation of the programme. For example, 34.5% of the respondents specifically agreed that there was no participatory approach in designing the youth must work programme in Imo State. However, the participation of the people in this programme has been politicized and selective for political loyalists. From our causal observation, some respondents believed that, right from the stage of conception of the youth must work programme, it was not intended to benefit the youth who are the real target. The programme was rather drawn and implemented in line with selfish interests of the State government. The lack of an effective monitoring and supervisory mechanism equally have limited the effectiveness of the youth must work programme. An employment programme like the youth must work programme needs a constant monitoring activity to ascertain the progress being made, the challenges faced and the way forward. Low government commitment equally affected the effectiveness of the programme. From our summary of responses, the scores indicates that the youth must work programme has been ineffective in the reduction of unemployment in Imo State. This tallies with the views earlier expressed by the targeted beneficiaries to the programme. Nwachukwu (2000) corroborated this stance by saying that the youth unemployment reduction programmes are mere policy pronouncements of our governments. The youth unemployment programmes just like many other government programme that have been initiated in the past, are always brilliant in conception but their implementation are not anything but ineffective thereby vitiating the objectives.

The last hypothesis tested if irregularities in the release of fund negatively affected the implementation of youth must work programme in Imo State, Nigeria. The outcome of the test inadvertently shows that a significant number of employees regularly discuss how unhappy they are with the funding of the programme. Funding was another issues in the implementation stage of the programme. The programme, suffered greatly from the challenge of inconsistency in funding. When respondents were asked whether lack of prompt payment of salaries is a big setback to the implementation of the youth must work programme. The result of the decision indicates that 3.6 which is above the decision agreed to this view. This indicated that key stakeholders of the scheme believed that the programme was poorly funded by the state government as there were being owed eleven (11) months stipends as at the time of conducting this study. According Nkwopara (2015) the youths engaged by Imo State government, under its Youths Must Work scheme in 2013, have cried out to the Government of Imo State to clear their Eleven (11) months arrears of stipends. The aggrieved citizens also asked the state government to fulfil his 2014 promise of converting their engagement into a permanent and pensionable status. In sum, the various challenges faced by the scheme such as inadequate funding, irregularities, lack of government commitment, ineffective monitoring and supervisory mechanism have made the attainment of the objectives of the scheme unrealizable. The study showed that, 54.7 % of the registered youth for the programme strongly agreed and agreed respectively when asked if the scheme is not a real solution to our youth unemployment problem in Imo State and lack the necessary ingredients needed to reduce youth unemployment in the State. In evaluating the impact of the scheme in the view of human and material resources deployed for the programme, the responses were below the decision point (see table, 5). This indicates that the programme did not yield much impact in term of human and material resources deployed. The result further revealed that the scheme has not evidently reduced youth unemployment significantly. In addition, key stakeholders of the scheme do not see the programme being operational in the future as a result of the challenges it is currently facing, as political and policy interferences have undermined the institutional credibility and effectiveness of the programme. Besides, stakeholders respectively do not see the scheme sustainability.

5.Recommendations

Against the backdrop of the outcome of our survey, the following are recommended:

1. Imo State government should constitute a board that will adequately monitor the progress report of the scheme to achieve its set goals and objectives.

2. Government should try and monitor all allocation meant for the youth must work programme to avoid diversion because when government allocate funds, the people in power tend to keep the funds for their self interest, making it insufficient for the people.
3. On the whole, the youth must work programme would require a holistic review in terms of the implementation template, structure and funding strategies with the government needing to consider the modern day developmental approach of Public Private Partnership (PPP).

6. Conclusion

The implementation of effective youth unemployment programme cannot be fulfilled without adequate funding. This research was principally aimed at investigating the implementation of youth must work programme as a strategy for reducing youth unemployment in Imo State from 2011 to 2015. From our survey, the youth must work programme and its activities have not contributed much in meeting the hopes and aspiration of the youth in Imo State. Among the major problems that had contributed to the backdrop performances of youth must work programme in the state include inconsistency funding, share politicization of the programmes that had led to official corruption and wrong targeting. More still, this phenomenon is indeed, compounded by policy interference of the programmes in the state with its negative effects on the activities of the programme. Besides, the competition for the available resources for funding of the programmes in the state has stifled the financial valve of youth must work programme. As a result of these setbacks, the programme is yet to achieve its objective of reducing unemployment in the State.

Declaration of interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts regarding the paper.

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