

# Youth Empowerment and Employment Generation in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

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**Abstract:** *This study examined youth empowerment and employment generation in Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration. The study adopted a mixed research approach. A sample of five hundred SMEs owner participated in this study, but only three hundred and fifty returned questionnaires were found useful for analysis. The study findings revealed that there are three existing youth empowerment programmes been pursued under Dr. Fayemi Administration in Ekiti State namely YESSO, YCAD and AGSMEIS, identify seven different categories of SMEs designed for youth empowerment by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration, discover that youth Empowerment Programme under Dr. Fayemi Administration is effective in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State, identify three institutions supporting Ekiti State Government vision of creating employment through youth empowerment namely World Bank, Central Bank of Nigeria and National Directorate of Employment and recommend on actionable measures for eradicating youth unemployment in Ekiti State.*

**Keywords:** Youth, Youth Empowerment, Youth Employment, Employment Generation, Ekiti State

## Introduction

Youth in any society are perceived as the leaders of tomorrow. They play a crucial role in the prospect for development and should be included in all national development policies plans and programmes. The power of the youth to drive global development was recognized in 1965 by member states of the United Nations (UN) when they endorsed the declaration on the promotion among youth of the ideals of peace, mutual respect and understanding between peoples (United Nations, 2007).

The pan-African Youth Chatter (2006) defines youth or young people as “every human being between the ages of 15 and 30 years”. This corresponds with the English convention which classifies the period of youth as falling within the ages of 15 to 30 years (Wokocha, 2002). The peculiarity of the Nigeria situation has led to the invention of social and economic definitions, which treat youth as a thing of the mind and so admits people up to the age of 40 years and beyond. However, the World Health Organization has a different age bracket for a youth. The organization sees a youth as any member of the society that falls between the ages of 15 and 34 years. Note that, Nigeria belongs to the above mentioned organizations and can therefore describe her youths within the age bracket of those organizations. Youth for the purpose of this study and the peculiarity of Nigeria society falls between 15 and 50 years.

Eze (2007) defined youth empowerment as a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is the capacity to implement) in people for use in their own lives, their communities, and their societies, by acting on issues that they define as important. Dr. Fayemi on assumption of governance 2018 in Ekiti State promise creation of job employment through youth empowerment initiatives. In fulfillment of his promise the Governor implemented Youth Empowerment and Social Support Operation, (YESSO) in Ekiti State. This paper is aimed at examining youth empowerment and employment generation in Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration.

## Statement of Problem

High rate of unemployment and underemployment among the youth in Nigeria has hindered their participation in the economic and social sectors of nation building. Nigeria has about 190 millions. About 70 to 80 per cent of this population is made up of youth and more than 80 percent are unemployed (Ibrahim, 2008). Ekiti State coordinating director of Ekiti youths agenda affirmed that the youth represent a larger percentage of the state population. It is worrisome that Ekiti State is ranked among the states recorded with high unemployment rate in Nigeria. Labour market find it difficult to engage our youth with any meaningful employment because of skill gap between industry requirement and youth proficiency on the job. The foregoing suggests that in order to achieve employment generation in Nigeria, the youth must be properly equipped and empowered to sustain all aspects of programmes and initiatives that targets youth development. Therefore, this study investigates youth empowerment and employment generation in Ekiti State.

### Objectives of the Study

This study is aimed at investigating youth empowerment and employment generation in Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration. Other objectives are as follows;

- Find out the youth empowerment programmes initiated by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration.
- Identify the different categories of SMEs designed for youth empowerment by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration.
- Ascertain whether the youth empowerment programmes under Dr. Fayemi Administration is effective in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State.
- Discover the different institutions supporting the youth empowerment programmes initiated by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration.
- Recommend on how Dr. Fayemi Administration can leverage on youth empowerment to eradicate unemployment in Ekiti State.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to address the problems of the study.

1. How many youth empowerment programmes has been initiated by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration?
2. What is the level of effectiveness of the youth employment programmes in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State?
3. Is the youth empowerment programmes under Dr. Fayemi Administration effective in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State?
4. What are the different institutions supporting the youth empowerment programmes initiated by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration?
5. What are the ways by which Dr. Fayemi Administration can leverage on youth empowerment to eradicate unemployment in Ekiti State?

### Review of Theories and Literature

This study would examine three theories on youth empowerment namely positive youth development theory, social system theory and psychological theory.

#### 2.1 Positive youth development theory

This theory contrasts those that have focused on problems experienced by youth as they grow up. It looks at the capabilities, developmental potentials, and an increasing thriving behaviours of youth rather than on their deficiencies (Damon, 2004; Peterson, 2004; Peteru, 2008). By enforcing these traits, an individual's assets are built thus protecting him or her from health compromising behaviours, enhancing the opportunity for positive developmental outcomes, and building his or her resiliency in an effort to counter problems that may affect them (Benson, 2002:125; Peteru, 2008:28).

The positive youth development theory is based on the five P's identified by Villaruel et al. (2003:353) and highlighted below as follows:

- **Possibilities and preparations** - what opportunities are available for youths in the communities? This refers to creation of opportunities that will develop young people in every aspect of their lives e.g. physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually, socially, and emotionally (Merton & Payne, 2000:9). Pittman (1993:22) asserts that programs should provide opportunities for youth to develop in variety of ways and help them to avoid risk factors that interfere with good outcomes.
- **Participation** - do we know how youth are spending their out of school time? This approach aims to understand, educate and engage youth (Damon, 2004:15). It is essential that young people not only identify, but that they should accept their responsibilities as individuals, citizens, and group members. Youth participation gives a voice to young people by shaping the course of their development through encouraging them to take part in influencing processes, involved in collective decisions and outcomes in order to achieve justice, influencing outcomes, exposing abuses of power and realising their rights (South African Youth Workers Association, 2001:12; United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, 1989 as cited in Peteru, 2008:25).
- **People** - who are the people interacting with youth daily? Who is in charge of youth programmes? Merton and Payne (2000:8) identified youth workers to be in charge of youth programmes. On the other hand, Benson and Pittman (2001:4) highlighted investment and involvement of public and private sectors and the wider community as crucial for youth development (Benson, 2002:139). By defining youth development as what parents do for their children in a good day, the

President of the National Urban League highlighted the importance of family in daily interaction with young people and the need to sustain these relationships (Benson & Pittman, 2001:94).

- **Places and pluralism** - what resources are available for young people? How can they be accessed? This involves evaluating the resources which young people can use to meet their needs and maximise their potential (Merton & Payne, 2000:10). This will entail, checking availability of opportunities, resources and support systems necessary for the development of young people (Benson & Pittman, 2001:94). The service providers in the youth development sector have a role to play in mobilising resources for the youth.
- **Partnership** - are youth included as partners in the planning and implementation processes of programmes that affect them? This view argues for involvement of young people in decision making structures which affect their own and other young people's lives. A sense of ownership could be fostered by engaging youth to become proactive in their development and also to involve them in decision-making processes (Benson, 2002:140).

## 2.2 Social systems theory

The social systems theory is a holistic theory which is based on the basic assumption that “*the whole is more than the sum of its parts*” (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). It was developed largely in response to the need for different disciplines to analyse the complex interactive situations in which various system consists of smaller elements or subsystems and larger suprasystems, impinge upon the life of an individual (Shaffer & Kipp, 2009). How these systems interact must be understood. The social systems theory also takes into consideration the fact that young people are part of various systems that are dynamically connected to the environment of which they are part (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). They impact these systems and they are also impacted by them (Davies, 2004).

## 2.3 Psychosocial theory

The Psychosocial theory asserts that, human life is produced by unique interaction and modification of the three major systems: the biological system, the psychological system, and the societal system (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001b; Coulshed & Orme, 2006; Erikson, 1963 as cited in Shaffer & Kipp, 2009). According to these authors, **biological system** includes all processes necessary for physical functioning of an organism (e.g. sensory capacities, motor responses and circulatory processes), **psychological system** includes mental processes central to the person's ability to make meaning of experiences and take action (perception and memory, emotion, problem solving ability and cognitive maturity), and **societal system** includes processes through which a person becomes integrated into society (shift in social roles of adolescence, rituals, social expectations and family organisation).

## Research Methodology

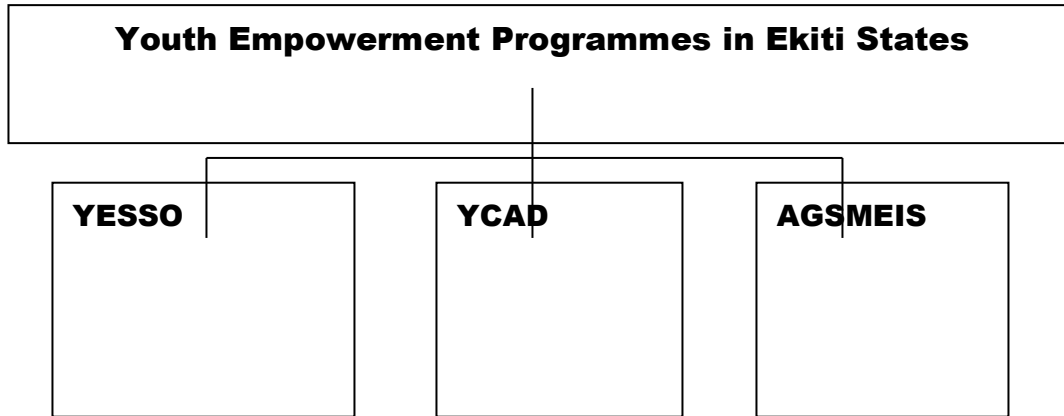
This study is a mixed research approach. It involves both primary sources and secondary sources of data. This study adopted a descriptive survey design for the quantitative data. The descriptive survey research design is considered suitable for gathering information sources for the primary data. This study was carried out in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The population for this study consists of the entire SMEs owners in local communities in Ekiti State. Five-hundred participants among SMEs owners in Ekiti State were sampled through stratified sampling technique. A Structured close-ended questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument (questionnaire) for this study was subjected to face validity by three research experts from Department of economics, Federal University of Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The data collected for this study from the respondents was analyzed using frequency and simple percentage presented in tables and figures. Specifically, the mean and standard deviation was used to analyze each item in the questionnaire for the purpose of answering the research questions. A five-point likert-type scale was employed to determine the level of acceptance of each item.

## Result and Data Analysis

The total number of SMEs who participated in this study was five hundred in Ekiti States. But only three hundred and fifty SMEs returned questionnaire were found useful for analysis. Results of the statistical analysis of the data are presented in the following tables:

### 1. Research Questions Analysis:

*How many youth empowerment programmes has been initiated by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration?*



**Figure 4.1: Youth Empowerment Programmes in Ekiti States under Dr. Fayemi Administration**

**Source: Ministry of Youth & Sport Ekiti State (2019)**

Figure 4.1 revealed that there are three existing youth empowerment programmes been pursued under Dr. Fayemi Administration in Ekiti State namely YESSO, YCAD and AGSMEIS. YESSO is a programme executed under the auspices of the World Bank-sponsored scheme called Youths Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO). Ekiti State Government, in partnership with the World Bank, has employed 5,000 jobless youths whose ages range from 18 and 45 years for community services in state through YESSO initiative. YCAD is an agricultural empowerment programme tailored to promote the Youth in Commercial Agriculture (YCAD) with a view to replenishing the human resources that are engaged in agriculture and utilize the strength of our youths in agribusiness. The initiative is to support the Federal Government's efforts and policy measures for the promotion of Agricultural Businesses, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as vehicles for sustainable economic development and employment generation. The AGSMEIS is an initiative of CBN known as the Agribusiness Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Investment Scheme (AGSMEIS) designed to enable SMEs gain access to loan without collateral with a maximum fund of N10 Million Naira only. This report coincides with Dr. Fayemi (2019) speech on the occasion of the LAUNCH OF EKITI YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME.

**2. Research Questions Analysis:**

*What are the different categories of SMEs designed for youth empowerment by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration?*

**Table 4.1 Different Categories of SMEs Youth Programme in Ekiti State**

1	Hair Dressing, Make-up, Barbing Sallon, manicure and Pedicure
2	Video covergae, photography, graphic media design, computer operator and Phone repair
3	Fashion designing and Tailoring
4	Painting, Plumbing, tyling, electrical installation and repair, brick laying services, builders
5	Welding, drilling and fabrication
6	Animal husbandry and Agro allied
7	Soap making and Cosmetic trade

**Source: Ministry of Youth & Sport Ekiti State (2019)**

Table 4.1 above reveals the different categories of SMEs designed for youth empowerment by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration. Finding revealed that hair dressing, make-up, barbing salon, manicure and pedicure take the lead among the different categories of SMEs programme designed for youth empowerment in Ekiti State. Next was Video covergae, photography, graphic media design, computer operator and Phone repair. Followed by fashion design and tailoring. Results show Painting,

Plumbing, tiling, electrical installation and repair, brick laying services and builders as the fourth categories of SMEs programme designed for youth empowerment in Ekiti State. Welding, drilling and fabrication emerge as the fifth categories of SMEs programme designed for youth empowerment in Ekiti State. Also Animal husbandry and Agro allied were identified as the sixth categories of SMEs programme designed for youth empowerment in Ekiti State. Finally and the seventh programme designed for youth empowerment in Ekiti State is soap making and cosmetic trade. Findings above corroborate Akpoyeta & Agbomah (2009) report that the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1986 introduced the “Small Scale Industry and Graduate Employment Scheme under the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to engage youths in skills acquisition workshops and seminars tailored for unemployed graduates who are practically re-trained on the technicalities of starting and running small scale business (self-employed) such as the production of soap, detergents and cosmetic, poultry, fish farming website design and network marketing, mobile phone repairs and maintenance etc.

**3. Research Questions Analysis:**

*What is the level of effectiveness of the youth employment programmes in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State?*

**Table 4.2: Youth Empowerment Programme under Dr. Fayemi Administration effectiveness in reducing unemployment**

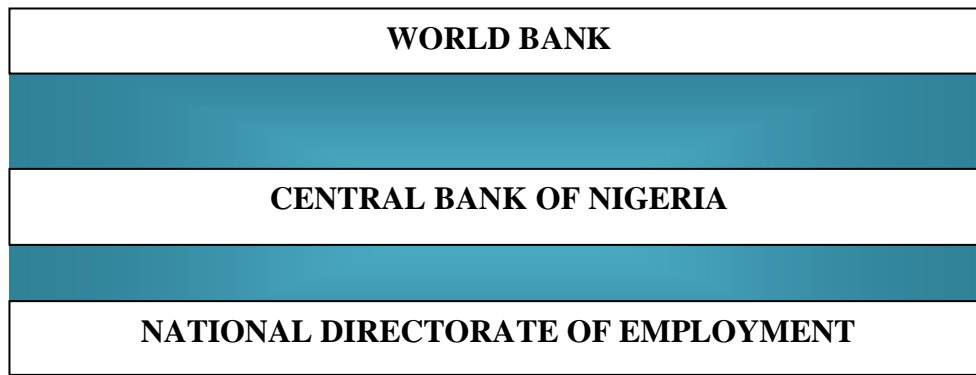
Response	Frequency	Percentage
SA	101	28.86
A	149	42.57
UD	50	14.30
D	35	10.00
SD	15	4.27

**Source: Field Survey (2019)**

Table 4.2 revealed that Youth Empowerment Programme under Dr. Fayemi Administration is effective in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State. Majority of the respondents representing 28.86% strongly agree with the statement that Youth Empowerment Programme under Dr. Fayemi Administration is effective in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State, 42.57% agree with the assertion that Youth Empowerment Programme under Dr. Fayemi Administration is effective in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State, 14.3% emphasize undecided about the matter on whether Youth Empowerment Programme under Dr. Fayemi Administration is effective in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State, 10% disagree with the idea that Youth Empowerment Programme under Dr. Fayemi Administration is effective in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State and 4.27% strongly disagree with the affirmation that Youth Empowerment Programme under Dr. Fayemi Administration is effective in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State. The findings above are in agreement with Ekpoh & Edet (2011) assertion that youth empowerment is aimed to allow individuals and groups to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes to enable them take the role of entrepreneurs thereby creating jobs for themselves, since creation of employment also requires the establishment of new ventures.

**4. Research Questions Analysis:**

*What are the different institutions supporting the youth empowerment programmes initiated by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration?*



**Figure 4.2: Institutions Supporting Youth Empowerment in Ekiti State**  
**Source: Ministry of Youth & Sport Ekiti State (2019)**

Figure 4.2 revealed that three institutions are supporting Ekiti State Government vision of creating employment through youth empowerment namely World Bank, Central Bank of Nigeria and National Directorate of Employment. Findings above corroborate Omoyeni (2019) affirmation that youths in the Ekiti State is been selected to undergo different skill acquisition training through support of the World Bank, Central Bank of Nigeria and National Directorate of employment at various skill acquisition centres in the State.

**5. Research Questions Analysis:** *What are the ways by which Dr. Fayemis’ Administration leverage on youth empowerment to eradicate unemployment in Ekiti State?*

**Table 4.3 Ways to leverage on youth empowerment to eradicate unemployment in Ekiti State**

S/N	Description	Results
1	Financial Literacy	Improve SMEs Access to Funding
2	Infrastructure Development	Enhance Social Development
3	Human Capital Development	Enhance labour productivity
4	School Curriculum Development	Employable skills
5	Moral Orientation	Tailored to address corruption

**Source: (Field Survey, 2019)**

The frequency distribution in table 4.3 above identify five ways Dr. Fayemi Administration can leverage on youth empowerment to eradicate unemployment in Ekiti State namely increase financial literacy among SMEs, infrastructure development, human capital development, redesign of school curriculum development in colleges and universities in Nigeria and moral orientation among youths in Nigeria. Findings above corroborate with Mohammed & Tersur (2013) report which identified provision of socioeconomic infrastructure, increase vocational training, access to micro credit, rural development, redesign of school curriculum in Nigeria in line with employable skill requirements and moral orientation as critical measures for eradicating youth unemployment in Nigeria.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study examined youth empowerment and employment generation in Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration. The study findings revealed that there are three existing youth empowerment programmes been pursued under Dr. Fayemi Administration in Ekiti State namely YESSO, YCAD and AGSMEIS, identified seven different categories of SMEs designed for youth empowerment by Ekiti State under Dr. Fayemi Administration, discovered that youth Empowerment Programme under Dr. Fayemi Administration is effective in reducing unemployment in Ekiti State, identified three institutions supporting Ekiti State Government vision of creating employment through youth empowerment namely World Bank, Central Bank of Nigeria and National Directorate of Employment and recommend on actionable measures for eradicating youth unemployment in Ekiti State.

Based on the foregoing the following recommendations are made:

1. The Educational authority in the country should review our curriculum to embrace the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills
2. Lectures, seminars and symposium should be organized for the youths on value reorientation as to dissuade them from get -rich-quick syndrome.
3. Notable and successful entrepreneurs should be invited to give talks from time to time to students at various tertiary institutions.
4. There should be eradication of corrupt practices among people in position of authority so that poverty reduction programmes introduced by the government can succeed.
5. Youths should as a matter of necessity understand themselves as it will help them to identify areas of their strengths and align with them. This will make them more focused in life as to evade unemployment.
6. Government should provide the necessary basic amenities and infrastructural facilities that will enable entrepreneurs to thrive in the country.

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