

PERCEIVED EMPLOYMENT-CREATION AND POVERTY-REDUCTION AS CORRELATES OF PEACE-BUILDING AMONG THE YOUTHS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, OYO STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WELFARE COUNSELLING

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Abstract:

The study examines employment creation and poverty reduction as correlates of peace building among the youths in Ibadan. The study utilised descriptive survey design. The survey sample size was 250 youths who were randomly sampled from tertiary institutions and job seekers' bureau in Ibadan. A self-constructed and validated questionnaire, "Perceived Employment Creation and Poverty Reduction for Peace" (PECPP) was used to assess the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables in the study. A piloted split-half reliability of the test was found to be 0.72 in this study. Three null hypotheses were tested. The data collected were subjected to Pearson Moment Correlation and Regression Analysis so as to determine the correlation among the variables. Findings reveal significant relationship between perceived employment creation and peace building among the youths ($r = 0.396$, $p = < 0.05$); there is significant relationship between perceived poverty reduction and peace building ($r = -.198$, $p = < 0.05$); also the ANOVA result shows there is a significant effect of the independent variables on the peace building ($F_{(4,117)} = 12.627$, $p = < 0.05$). It is recommended that social welfare counsellors should guide both parents and students in the students' choice of courses; the students should be opened to training in entrepreneurial skills and the government should still put more efforts in job creation.

Key Words: *Perceived Employment-Creation, Poverty-Reduction, Peace-Building, Youths, Entrepreneurial*

Introduction

Peace is one of the essential needs of life that can aid longevity. It starts with the individual, then the family, extends to the neighbourhood and the society at large. Without peace in the society, absolutely nothing can work because a luxury home cannot be built in the midst of desert and decay. There are many factors that could

foster peace directly or indirectly in the society. Two of such factors are employment and poverty reduction. Poverty reduction also involves improving the living conditions of people who are already poor. Peace can effectively be achieved by fighting poverty with the aid of employment. According to Hubbard (2012) while reporting the speech

of Pope Benedict XVI on the World Day of Peace in February 2009, he pointed out that Pope's focus on poverty around the world proposes a much global vision because difficult times demand a complex and comprehensive response. He highlighted the importance of building "participatory institutions" and a civil society internationally that enable nations invest in people, fight crime, strengthen the role of law and reduce poverty. Youths are talent resource that could be used to better their own lives and curb crimes such as, violence, kidnapping, abduction and the like.

The term "Youth" is best understood as a period of transition from childhood dependence to adulthood independence and awareness of interdependence as members of a community. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group. However, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment. Therefore, "youth" is often indicated as a person between the age where she/he may leave compulsory education, and the age at which she/he finds first employment. This latter age limit has been increasing, as higher levels of unemployment and cost of setting up an independent household puts many young people into a prolonged period of dependency.

The United Nations (2013), for statistical consistency across regions, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by member states. Furlong (2013) posited that Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with one of the largest populations of youth in the world, comprising 33,652,424 members. This population calls for an attention because they can easily be used for an uproar in the society if care is not taken, hence they need to be usefully engaged.

Employment can be defined as an occupation, work or business by which a person engages to earn a living. Employment is either created by the government, private institutions or the individuals self through entrepreneurial efforts. It is very unfortunate that many Nigerian youths today are jobless. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) three out of five unemployed people in Africa especially, Nigeria, are young people (Awosusi, 2012). In 2012, The International Labour Organisation, an organization that takes statistics of both the employed and unemployed in the world, stated that about 6% of the world population is unemployed and that the most unemployed are the youths. Iwayemi (2013) and Asaju, Arome, and Anyio (2014) opined that employment data are very hard to obtain in Nigeria even from statutory institutions and agencies established for gathering socio-economic data. They further said that it is only in urban areas where unemployment is biting hard that employment seekers register their need; this may contribute to peace being gradually eroded in the urban centres. Persistent poverty, increasing income inequality and slow job growth further exacerbated by financial and economic crises and climate change, are critical constraints on economic and social progress of the employed. Youth often make up the demographic majority in countries where they are politically, socially and economically marginalised. In most countries with insurgents or ethnic militia; unemployed youth are often susceptible to recruitment, more so if they are being offered some goodies. Adebayo (2013) asserted in his study that the danger of youth unemployment is better understood when considered from the perspective that they are future generation understood on the point of

considered from the perspective that they are future generation understood on the point of view that young people are the next generation of potentially productive, economic and social actors. He also posited that youth's unemployment in Africa has been a major problem signalling other criminal tendencies.

According to Obadan (2008), rather than recording remarkable progress in socio-economic development due to her enormous wealth, Nigeria retrogressed to becoming one of the 25 poorest countries in the threshold of the twenty-first century. Despite the positive macro-economic indicators of Nigeria, more than 70% of its population lives under poverty line of \$2 a day. Mohammed (2004) on his part observed that despite these huge resources, Nigerians are wallowing in abject poverty with its attendant social, economic, political and psychological consequences, biting very hard on the youth who happen to have the zeal and energy to develop and progress in life. The level of poverty in Nigeria is difficult to check. The more unemployment rate is being curbed, the more the increase because the number keeps increasing on daily basis, the employment created do not commensurate with the high number of the youth being turned out yearly. Falusi (2014) asserted that at least around 1.8 million youths are entering the labour market yearly.

Unemployed individuals are unable to earn money to meet financial obligations. Inability to pay rent can lead to homelessness and lack of settling down in life; there is no peace for the unemployed. Unemployment increases susceptibility to cardiovascular disease, somatisation, anxiety, depression and suicide. Unemployed people have higher rates of medication use, poor diet, physician visits, tobacco smoking, alcoholic beverage

consumption, drug use, and lower rates of exercise. According to a study published in Social Indicator Research, Maede, Glenn and Wirth, (2013) asserted that those who tend to be optimistic find it difficult to look on the bright side of things when employed. The ILO, according to Osmani, (2002); Islam, (2004) and Khan, (2007); highlighted employment as the main link between growth and poverty reduction. The relationship between unemployment and poverty is very complex in Nigeria. While unemployment rate has remained very high due to the rising rate of poverty, the poverty rate has equally remained high due to the high level of unemployment (Odeh & Okoye, 2014).

Many Nigerian youths migrate to different parts of the world to have greener pasture despite the complex consequences attending to their decisions. It is found that international migration has increased steadily over the year, becoming an established feature of the contemporary social and economic landscape for many youths (UNESCO, 2013). More often, the main driving force behind youth migration is the issue of poverty as a result of unemployment. According to article 15 of African Youth Charter, "Livelihoods and Youth Employment" would lead to the development of programmes necessary to address unemployment, such as entrepreneurship training. It has been proved that the systematic and coherent use of sport can make an important contribution to poverty reduction, environmental sustainability as well as peace-building and conflict resolution. The question that should be asked is "how many youths are sport oriented?" when majority of them are not privileged to be exposed to sports due to lack of sport facilities and infrastructures.

Certain institutional arrangements have been established to promote employment among youths. For example SURE-P was introduced in February 2012, to focus on management and investment of federal government savings from the proceeds of Petroleum Subsidy Removal Project (SURE-P) was established to provide job opportunities to graduates of tertiary institutions. SURE-P had to create another scheme, Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) to train the graduates for job opportunities due to their lack of skills. Some of such programmes are actually helpful while some did not survive because they lacked structure, so the successful few were not enough compared to the number of the unemployed youth; it is like a drop from an ocean. However, for the poor, labour is often the only asset they can use to improve their well-being. Hence, the creation of productive opportunities is essential towards achieving poverty reduction and sustainable economic and social development. It is crucial to provide decent jobs that both secure income and empowerment for the poor, especially younger people.

Self-employment is the gospel that is being preached all over, especially, in the developing countries with prevalent unemployment crisis. Youths are not well prepared by those who know the rudiment and the technical know-how of self-employment. They feel stressed and socially disconnected because all the necessities of self-employment are not on ground before going into it. Self-employment rates for the youth are, therefore, close to zero in several countries, and differences across these countries cannot be evaluated (Tejvan, 2012). People under the age of 25 have relatively low self-employment rates (OECD, 2013). In creating employment for the youths, some indices have not been taken

into consideration such as culture, geographical location, interest, ability, and others. UNICEF (2009) asserted that even though many poverty reduction strategies identify the needs of young people, they are limited in their analysis of the situation of youth and they lack consideration for the differences in young people's realities. UN's World Youth Report says if youth are given more consideration in poverty reduction strategies, their ability to help themselves escape from poverty would increase. Eliminating poverty requires that young people must be recognised as a source for change in the society. The number of people globally aged 12-24 years has reached 1.3 billion, the largest in history. This group is healthiest and best educated, as a strong base to build on in a world that demands more than basic skills (Wolfowitz, 2007).

Youth restiveness is linked to unemployment which gives room to poverty, unrest and chaos. According to Oyebade (2003), Nigeria's unemployment can be grouped into two categories: first, the older unemployed who lost their jobs through retrenchment, redundancy, or bankruptcy; and second, the younger unemployed, most of whom have never been employed. Youth unemployment is worse than their older counterparts because they are in their prime age, full of activities. When they have nothing viable and profitable to channel their activities, they engage in anti-social behaviours which can degenerate to societal problems and social conflicts, taking away peace from the society. This world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, and a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease (Kennedy, 2007). The second National Youth Policy document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

(2009) puts the development and participation of young people at the centre of national development efforts. It sets guidelines and provides the framework for all stakeholders to empower youth in their potential and take advantage of the opportunities available to make positive contributions to the well-being of their communities.

Peace Direct has been founded by the European Union to launch a new project in some African nations such as Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Burundi, and Democratic Republic of Congo. It is aimed at bringing peace and stability to local peoples' lives. Peace Direct intends tackling the problem by training the youths to prevent violence when it erupts and helping them create jobs for a better future (Mercy, 2012). It is found that in many of these countries, much of the conflict fuelled by the youths is driven by poverty and a functioning local economy is a key step towards achieving a lasting peace. Generating employment, particularly for the youth is a critical poverty reduction strategies being implemented in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which have enjoyed relative peace in recent years (Laishley, 2009).

Peace is gradually leaving the stage for insecurity through the youth due to their complacency to unemployment and poverty. Crime, conflict and violence in Nigeria have become worrisome. Young people are most vulnerable, they are being used as militants because of their strength. They are usually caught in the web of these acts because they are jobless. They need to finance themselves, but due to their joblessness, they are entangled in poverty. As vulnerable as they are, if they can be used to perpetrate evil acts, they can also be used to effect positive change that could lead to peace in the society. Youths can be compared to an instrument that could be used both positively

and negatively. Efforts have been made to create and encourage entrepreneurial spirit among the youths, the efforts can actually be increased if the two independent variables have a link with peace building which is very vital to human existence. This is why this study attempted to look at the youths' perception of employment creation and poverty reduction as two variables that could help build peace in the society.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between perception of employment-creation and peace-building among youths in Ibadan metropolis
2. There is no significant relationship between perception of poverty-reduction and peace-building among the youths in Ibadan metropolis
3. There is no joint effect of independent variables on peace building among the youths in Ibadan metropolis.

Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The factors under investigation are in existence and not manipulated. It manifested through response to questionnaire.

Population and Sample

A total of two hundred and fifty youths were participants of the study. They were selected from different areas of Ibadan. Job seekers at a bureau in Ibadan and students from tertiary institutions universities, polytechnics and colleges of education within Ibadan metropolis were selected as respondents through purposive sampling. The general known characteristics of the group called for this type of sampling.

Instruments

A self-designed instrument was used in this study to collect data from the participants,

The PECPP questionnaire comprised of 30 positively worded items utilising a four-point Likert rating scale. It also got information on personal background of the participants. A pre-test of the PECPP questionnaire was carried out among twenty-five youths from Ibadan environs but far from the target sample. A split-half reliability co-efficient alpha value of 0.72 was recorded for the reliability of the instrument. The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through the help of co-lecturers in Psychology and Education for adjusting and restructuring of the questions.

Procedure

Administration of the questionnaire was done with the assistance of the lecturers in

those institutions using different departments and faculties and some other individuals in the employment bureau. They ensured that the questions were correctly filled with due explanations. The filling took about 50 minutes to 1 hour to complete and it was collected the same day.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Pearson Moment Correlation and Regression Analysis

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant relationship between perceived employment creation and peace building among the youths.

Table 1: PPMC showing relationship between perceived employment creation and peace building among the youths

Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev	R	P	Remark
Perceived	250	20.2417	6.99579	-0.396	<0.05	Significant
Employment Creation						
Peace Building	250	3.0917	.72176			

Table 1 reveals that there is significant relationship between perceived employment creation and peace building among the youths, $r=-0.396$, $p<0.05$. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is significant relationship between employment creation and peace building. The table

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant relationship between perceived poverty reduction and peace building among the youths.

further reveals that when employment is not created, neither by the government nor individual, the peace of the society will be distorted, which invariably means the more employment created the higher the peace that will be fostered in the society through the youths.

Table 2: PPMC Summary showing relationship between perceived poverty reduction and peace building among the youths

Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev	R	P	Remark
Perceived Poverty Reduction	250	20.2417	6.9958	-.198		Significant
Peace Building	250	23.458	5.378		<0.05	

Table 2 reveals the relationship between perceived poverty reduction and peace building among the youths; $r = -.198$, $p < 0.05$. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between poverty reduction and peace building. (The table further reveals that poverty reduction, will positively affect the fostering of peace in the society. That is,

if poverty is drastically reduced, there will be maximum enjoyment of peace in the society)

Hypothesis 3:

There is no joint effect of independent variables (perceived employment creation and poverty reduction) on peace building among the youths.

Table 3: Summary of regression for the joint contributions of independent variables to the prediction of peace building

R = .421 R square = .178 Adjusted R square = .163 Std Error = 6.39850					
Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1033.911	2	516.955	12.627	.000
Residual	4790.081	117	40.941		
Total	5823.992	119			

Table 3 above reveals significant joint contribution of the independent variables (employment creation and poverty

reduction) to the prediction of peace building among the youths. The result suggests that the two factors combined accounted for

16.3% (Adj. $R^2 = .163$) variance in the prediction of peace building. The ANOVA result from the regression analysis shows that there was a significant effect of the independent variables on the peace building, $F(4,117) = 12.627$, $P < 0.05$.

Discussion

The findings from the first hypothesis reveal that when employment is neither created by the government nor the individuals, the youths suffer and the peace of the land will be distorted. This invariably means the more the employment created, the higher the peace that will be experienced in the society. And when there is peace in the society, there will be incredible development in the nation. However, to allow maximum employment, the government should use all in its capacity to address the issue as suggested by Pope Benedict XVI. The basic essentials of production and other infrastructural amenities such as water, electricity, good road should be available to encourage the youths to be gainfully engaged. In other words, entrepreneurial development should be encouraged after the essentials are put in place. Maximum security should be provided and maintained. If the youths are not well engaged, they will pose a threat and truncate the peace of the society as pointed out by Adepegba (2011). The employment referred to here for the youth is not the buying and selling type because it does not last, without production, it is useless. Such will still keep them jumping from one selling and buying to the other. The slogan we have all over the world today is education for all. However, little education with appropriate skills acquired by the individuals goes a long way in thinking and fending for oneself. When an individual's need is met to a reasonable extent, he would be comfortable and

peaceful. Thus collective peace can easily generate societal peace in the long run. Efforts should be geared towards eradicating poverty in the society so as to make life bearable for citizens. When good condition of life is absent, and life's challenges present may be pushed to do the unexpected. So poverty can lead to violence and destruction of properties. One who is gainfully employed to a certain extent has the ability to think right unlike one who has nothing doing. Poverty reduction is found to be closely associated with peace building in the society. The life of a poor person is not organised, and can be called at any time into violence and criminal acts disturbing the peace of the society. If poverty level of the youth is reduced through gainful employment, peace is likely to resurface in Nigeria as it was in the past.

Education may be a driver of conflict (fuelling grievances, stereotypes, xenophobia and other antagonisms), but can also be a way of contributing to 'conflict transformation' and 'peace-building' if appropriately used (Bush & Salterelli, 2000; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Davies, 2004). However, in conflict-affected situations, education is also about more than service delivery because it is a means of socialization and identity development through the transmission of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes across generations (Allan, 2010). Many Nigerian youths are not well educated and skilled, for this reason it has become very easy for them to be traumatised and thus join rebels and other different categories of criminals who are systematically discriminated against by the society. According to Akande (2014), the younger youth struggle even more to find jobs because many of such are out of school. In situations where violent conflict already exists, adequate and sound education that

could lead to self-reliance may have a protective role, for example, by providing quality education, with sound judgment. With this, the youths would be able to channel their strength towards productive exercise and embrace peace and shun violence in the society (Bush & Salterelli, 2000). Education is thus a platform for youths to think about skill development for self-employment.

It is important to note that the Federal Government through its National Youth Service Corps Programme (NYSC) has organised a skill development and acquisition programme for every corp member. This scheme is not enough but is a welcome development. The Corps members are taught skills like cake making, bead making, poultry farm management, snail farm management and the like (Onu, 2006). It is high time we started embracing self-employment in Nigeria as opposed to white collar jobs, which are no longer available in abundance. In a society where the youths are self-employed, they get themselves busy and ultimately, this leads to a peaceful environment. Nigeria is often described as the giant of Africa, yet more than one third of her youth is unemployed because the main stay of her economy is oil and gas. We forget that not all our youths are engineers and geologists. Nigeria needs to diversify to improve its economic power and employment rate.

Ultimately, Nigeria needs to diversify, to create jobs for the youths, the manufacturing, agricultural produce, and export industry needs to function properly. The need to diversify is a welcome development for the country. An instance, is the resuscitation of the former Nigerian newsprint manufacturing corporation is a right and timely step for the new owners who are now called the Oku-Iboku Pulp and

Paper. The joy of the youths in the Oku-Iboku community knew no bounds when the African Development Bank (ADB) approved a loan of US\$30 Million to resuscitate the Oku-Iboku Pulp and Paper Mill in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States of the south-eastern Nigeria. This development means creation of Jobs particularly for the youths of the community, and this no doubt would definitely reduce the crime of abduction and violence rate in that community. We cannot talk about peace where there is abject poverty and lack of employment.

Implications of the findings for Social Welfare Counselling and Recommendations

- (i) The youth should be well guided in career choice by both their parents and the social welfare counsellors. The youths should be properly skilled, thus there should be a correlation between their interest and ability; this can help a lot to self-create a job around their career when there is no government employment. Youths should not be forced into any career; they should rather be encouraged in the career traits noticed in them.
- (ii) The social welfare counsellors in various schools in Nigeria should always organise workshops in different entrepreneurial jobs apart from areas of their studies, while the students are in both high school and tertiary institution.
- (iii) Youths should be well engaged and occupied in useful ventures that can blur their vision against violence and criminal activities. There are in door games that could print their names on gold apart from sport such as playing of chess and scramble. It should be

inculcated in them that whatever their hands find doing, it should be done well.

(iv) Religious organisations, parents, teachers and neighbours should also be available to monitor and mentor the youths right from their childhood for a peaceful society. At their youthful age, they would have been molded and adjusted to peaceful life.

(v) The government should endeavour to create jobs for the youths. Though it can never be enough, it will cushion the effect of unemployment on the populace. Government should also encourage foreign investors and philanthropists to invest in Nigeria so that many youths can be gainfully employed.

Conclusion

This study illuminates on the need to gainfully engage the youths on employment opportunities, knowing their perception and become visible actors in global development. It means placing young people at the centre of what is done in order to move more rapidly and effectively towards eliminating poverty and achieving the results reached by UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Young people should be given the chance to be actors of change and not only be a target for development. From the perception of the youth, employment creation and poverty reduction could both lead to fostering peace among the youths in Ibadan. When youths are gainfully employed, poverty will thin out and there will be maximum peace.

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