

Coping Strategies of Unemployed Youths in Kwara State, Nigeria

Lateef Omotosho Adegboyega, Falilat Anike Okesina (Ph.D),

Mulikat L. A. Mustapha (Ph.D)

Department of Counsellor Education, Faculty of Education,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
adegboyegalateef@gmail.com

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Abstract - *The aftermath of unemployment is a great concern for researchers as the coping strategies are farfetched therefore, this study investigated the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State, Nigeria. The influence of variables such as gender, highest educational level and age were also examined. Quantitative research design was adopted for this study, while descriptive survey was also adopted as a research method for this study. Random and purposive sampling techniques were used to draw a total sample of 600. Coping Strategies of Unemployed Youths Questionnaire (CSUYQ) was used to collect relevant data. The instrument was subjected to test re-test reliability co-efficient which yielded 0.68 and the hypotheses tested were analyzed using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the demographic data. The study revealed that the coping strategies employed by unemployed youths include dependent on parents, attending vocational training workshops, engaging in casual labour etc. The research hypotheses tested revealed no significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on educational qualification while there was a significant difference based on gender and age. In line with the findings of the study, it was recommended that Nigerian government should design more vocational programmes and revitalize the existing ones, provide take-off grants for unemployed youths to establish business, invest in, re-tool and re-engineer the farming system with modernized implements to accommodate large percentage of unemployed youths.*

Keywords: *Coping Strategies, Unemployed Youths, Kwara State*

INTRODUCTION

Youths occupy a prominent place in any Society. They are one of the greatest assets any nation can have. Apart from being the leaders of tomorrow, they out-numbered the middle aged and the aged [1]. The National Youth Development Policy [2] indicated that the youth are the foundation of a society; their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pattern of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour power, a nation makes giant strides. The youth are a particular segment of the national population that is sensitive, energetic, active and the most productive phase of life as citizens. The youth are also most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population in terms of social, economic, emotion and other aspects [3].

Youths Unemployment in Nigeria is a consequence of several factors; one major factor is that of population growth. Nigeria has continued to experience high rate of population growth; this increasing population growth has produced an overwhelming increase in the youth population thereby resulting in an increase in the size of the working age population. Related to the rapid population growth is the massive rural-urban migration by the youth. According to the United Nations (UN) Report [4], the high degree of geographical mobility of youth in Africa is in form of rural to urban which has been influencing youth unemployment. In Nigeria, youth migrate to the cities more than other migrants. However, in cities, job opportunities are very limited thus; the rate of urbanization of the youth has continued to create unemployment.

According to the World Bank report on Nigeria, annual growth indicated an average of over seven percent during the last decade; this placed the nation among the fastest growing economies in the world [5].

This growth has not concentrated on trade and agriculture, which would suggest substantial benefits for many Nigerians. Nevertheless, improvements in social welfare indicators have been much slower than would be expected in the context of this growth. Poverty reduction and job creation have not kept pace with population growth, implying social distress for an increasing number of Nigerians.

In the Opinion of Adebayo [6], unemployment exists when members of the labour force wish to work but cannot get jobs. Youth unemployment, therefore could be described as the conglomerate of youths with diverse background willing and able to work but cannot find any, or cannot find the type of job that they are trained to do and which they will be proud to do as their area of expertise. When the supply of labour outstrips the demand for labour, it causes joblessness and unemployment. Given the lack of sufficient employment opportunities in the formal sector, young people may be forced to engage in casual work and other unorthodox livelihood sources, thus leading to underemployment [7], [8], [9].

Coping strategies or survival strategy according to Torimiro and Kolawole [10] is the approach employed by the unemployed youths as a means of last resort to earn their living amidst poverty situation. Such strategy is perceived as unimaginable situation propelled by poverty. This has to do with desperation and with no regard for personal integrity. It is in fact not their intended job. These survival or coping strategies are discussed as follows:

Buying and selling/street hawking: These are coping strategies employed by both young men and women. They were observed to go to the neighboring cities or towns to purchase domestic goods that may be useful to the rural dwellers. Youth of this category are mostly educated up to at least school certificate level. Also, many of the youth bought farm produce and hawk through the streets. Proceeds from such business are often used to cater for their needs, while some deliver such to their parents who primarily own the enterprise. Those who engage in farming activities often bring their farm produce to market for sale. The illiterate among them were observed to engage in selling of fruits, leafy vegetables, peppers, iced fish and other groceries [10].

Motor Park Touting: Most of the motor-park in the areas is characterized by the presence of touts, which are mostly the youths. These youths have perpetually resulted to spending their days in the part to extort money from the professional motor drivers.

Sometimes, they lord it over the drivers through the act of hooliganism and extort money from the unwilling drivers. It was also observed that these youths engage in cigarette and hemp smoking and drinking of alcohols. Majority of these youths constitute themselves into social miscreants popularly known as “area boys”. They have neither regards for law nor for fellow human beings. Mostly, they act under the influence of Indian hemp or alcoholic drinks [10].

It is obviously expressed in their appearances that they are at the extreme state of frustration and hopelessness as they are highly involved in local crises even at the expense of their lives. Many of them take advantage of any crisis situation to vex their anger against the public. This buttresses Rotimi’s [11] submission that “misdemeanor develops in reaction to a lingering stressed caused by deprivations within a community”. At times these youths are employed by unscrupulous politicians as agents of destruction and vandalism during electoral campaigns.

Armed Robbery: In recent times the rate at which armed robbery incident are reported in Nigeria’s daily newspapers are becoming alarming. It was, however, observed that teenagers, undergraduates or graduate categories are more involved [11]. Whenever they are caught by anti-crime agents, they often confessed that they are lured into armed robbery as a result of frustration. Because of their unemployment situation, majority of them claimed to have ‘god father’ as sponsors who usually empowered them with ammunitions and charms in which they put their confidence. They also act under the influence of dangerous drugs such as Indian hemp, Chinese capsules, heroin, cocaine, alcohol and so on. They are always merciless at the point of operation and life has no meaning to them.

Involvement in Daily Paid Casual Labour: Many unemployed youths are often found gathered together in different locations at the various community centres almost on a daily basis, awaiting anybody who may want to engage them in a casual work for the day. Such works include bus conducting, construction site labour, fetching of water, general cleaning, cutting of grasses, and digging of wells. Over 20% youths in this category according to Torimiro and Kolawole [10], are non-indigenes of the community under study, but other from the satellite neighboring villages or completely from different tribes.

Parents support: One of the problems confronting the Nigerian society in this period of global recession

is unemployment. Majority of its citizens are unemployed and even for those employed are under employed. According to Chinyere [13], most unemployed youths rely on their parents for financial assistance and the belief is that there exists a relationship between unemployment and vice. The study also shows that unemployment in African context entails absence of basic necessities of life which are often taken for granted in the development nations.

Prostitution: This survival strategy is exclusively employed by young women, who claimed to have been stretched beyond the limit of enduring the hardship meted on them by poverty and unemployment situations. They either constitute themselves into a group or rent an apartment for transacting their dangerous business [14]. They sexually offer themselves to men who patronize them in return for money. Some were also observed doing the business without joining any group. Some would stand by the road side leading to the main town or cities enticing men who are perceived as car owners to patronize or sexually engage them in the night. Their charges are negotiable depending on the services rendered to the men, ranging from companionship to a party or bed mates for a particular period.

Nigerian youths are really feeling the crunch of the poverty and unemployment situations. These have been the main reasons for engaging in all kinds of undignified means of livelihood and even sometimes in criminal acts under the guise of survival. There is, therefore, an urgent need for intervention. Social amenities, rural infrastructure and basic farm needs required by the rural youth [15] must be adequately provided in the rural areas as a way to make the youth stay in the rural areas especially, and engage in farming activities.

Part Time Jobs/Self Employment: According to Youth Employment World Youth Report [16], in both developing and developed countries, significant portions of the population live below nationally defined poverty lines. In many African, Asia and American countries, more than half of the population earns incomes below the national poverty line and in the more developed regions, there are countries in which more than a fifth of the population live in poverty. Many youths work in what is known as the intermediary zone; they are engage in casual employment, 'get by' through enforced self-employment, underemployed or hold a variety of part-time jobs. Part time employment among young people

is on the rise in many countries and can be regarded as an aspect of actualization of the labour market [17]. While young people frequently hold part-time jobs and at the same time pursuing a formal education, there are also cases, in which part-time or temporary jobs are the only alternatives available as there is an insufficient number of regular full-time jobs to go around.

PROBLEM

Unemployment has exposed youths to various challenges such as loss of status, loss of prestige and economic strength. Lack of self-confidence, infliction of psychological injury as result of the breakdown in social contacts and isolation from the world of work, loss of responsibility, identity and respect, loss of purchasing power, to mention a few. Many of these youths have engaged in many destructive ways in order to cope with unemployment. Some of the ways include smoking, clubbing, stealing, pick pocketing etc. To the best knowledge of the researchers, none of these studies focused on psycho-social challenges of unemployment thereby creating a gap in research.

Earlier researchers such as Ajufo [18], Awogbenle and Iwuamadi [19], Saka [20] etc have worked on unemployment at various times, location and areas of interest. Awogbenle and Iwuamadi [19] studied "Youth Unemployment, Entrepreneurship Development Programme as an Intervention Mechanism". In their studies it was discovered that youth development and empowerment are vital stages in life for building the human capital that allows young people to avoid poverty and lead better, and possibly have a more fulfilling life. The researchers asserted that the human capital which formed in youth is thus an important determinant of long term growth that a nation can invest on. Also, Ajufo [18] carried out a study on challenges of youth employment in Nigeria; effective career guidance as a Panacea. In the study, it was discovered that unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of Nigerian youth, causing increased militancy, violent crimes, kidnappings, restiveness and socially delinquent behavior. The researcher also discovered that youth employment is devastating to both the individual and the society as a whole both psychologically and economically. This study, therefore, intends to fill the gap left by previous studies on unemployment by focusing on the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are evolved to guide the conduct of the study.

1. What are the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. Is there any difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on gender?
3. Is there any difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on educational level?
4. Is there any difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on age?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The following null hypotheses were generated to guide the conduct of this study:

1. There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on educational level.
3. There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed Youths in Kwara State based on age.

METHODS

The research design adopted for this study is quantitative design. Meanwhile the research method adopted for this study is descriptive survey. Daramola [21] defined descriptive survey as systematic attempt to describe the characteristics of a given population or area of interest factually.

The population for this study comprised all unemployed youths in Kwara State. However, based on the analysis of the Kwara State Bridge Empowerment Scheme (KWABES) as at November 2013, the total of 85,428 candidates applied for jobs, out of which 58,267 were employed leaving 27,161 unemployed [22]. Thus, the target population for this study is therefore 27,161 unemployed youths in Kwara State.

Using the research advisor, the researchers selected 600 respondents. In selecting these respondents, the researchers employed a two staged sampling procedure. At stage 1, the researchers adopted the three senatorial districts using purposive sampling technique. At stage 2, random sampling was also used to select 200 respondents from each of the three districts. The selection was done in various cyber-café centers, schools, newspaper arena,

industrial areas and other establishment areas in the three senatorial districts of Kwara State (Kwara South, Kwara Central & Kwara North). Purposive sampling is a good representation of the population for its arbitrary selection of respondents.

The instrument that was used to collect data for this study is a researchers-developed questionnaire titled "Coping Strategies of Unemployment Youths Questionnaire" (PSCUYQ). The questionnaire consists of sections A and B. Section A deals with respondents' demographic data such as gender, educational level and age. Section B consists of twenty (20) items on coping strategies of unemployed youths. Section B required the respondents to indicate their responses as appropriate by ticking the space provided such as SA – strongly Agree; A- Agree; D- Disagree; SD- Strongly Disagree.

To ascertain the validity of the instrument, draft of the questionnaire was given to five experts in the Department of Counsellor Education for vetting. All corrections and modifications made were later incorporated. This made the instrument valid for the study.

The reliability of the instrument was established using the test re-test method on ten unemployed youths within an interval of 4weeks. After which Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) was used in determining the reliability of the instrument. A coefficient of 0.68 was obtained, hence, the instrument was adjudged reliable for the research.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researchers. Researchers' involvement in the administration process was to guide the respondents on how to answer the questionnaire, to assure them of confidentiality and ensure quick and complete recovery of the questionnaire.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for the data analysis. That is, frequency count and percentage were used to analyze the demographic data section of the instrument. While t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools were used to test the research null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Data

This section presents the results of data obtained on the respondents in frequency counts and percentages.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender, Religion, Parental Educational Qualification and Age (N=600)

| Variables | f | % |
|----------------------------------|-----|------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 225 | 37.5 |
| Female | 375 | 62.5 |
| Educational Qualification | | |
| Pry/Secondary | 140 | 23.3 |
| NCE, ND, Grade II | 124 | 20.7 |
| HND/Degree | 277 | 46.2 |
| Master/Ph.D. | 59 | 9.8 |
| Age | | |
| 16-20 years | 218 | 36.3 |
| 21-25 years | 158 | 26.3 |
| 26-30 years | 130 | 21.7 |
| 31 years and above | 94 | 15.7 |

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by gender, educational qualification and age. The total number of 600 respondents participated in the study, out of which 225 (37.5%) were male while 375 (62.5%) were female. Educational qualification of the respondents revealed that 140 (23.3%) were primary/secondary school certificate holder, 124 (20.7%) have NCE/ND/Grade II certificate, 277 (46.2%) were HND/Degree holder while 59 (9.8%) possessed certificate in master/Ph.D. Also, 218 (36.3%) of the respondents were of age 16-20 years, 158 (26.3%) fall within 21-25 years old, 130 (21.7%) were within the age bracket 26-30 years while 94 (15.7%) were 30 years old and above.

Table 2 presents the mean and rank order of coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State, Nigeria. The table indicates that items 1 (with mean score 3.46), 3 (with mean score of 3.24) and 19 (with mean score of 3.20) were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. Item 1 stated "vocational training workshops"; item 3 stated "casual labour" while item 19 stated "commercial motor cycling (okada) and business" as the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State. On the other hand, items 10 (with mean score of 2.71), 6 (with mean score of 2.70), 5 (with mean score of 2.70), 18 (with mean score of 2.70) and 17 (with mean score of 2.64) were the least rated items i.e 16th, 17th and 20th respectively. However, all the items have more than mean score of 2.5, which implies that unemployed youths engage in most of the listed behaviours in coping with unemployment situation. It can be concluded that the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State, Nigeria are: engaging in vocational training

workshop, casual labour, street trading, small scale farming, drug trafficking, hooliganism, prostitution, alms begging, underpaid jobs etc.

Table 2: Mean and Rank Order on Coping Strategies of Unemployed Youths in Kwara State, Nigeria

| Item No. | In order to cope with unemployment situation I get involved in: | Mean | Rank |
|----------|---|------|------------------|
| 1 | vocational training workshops | 3.46 | 1 st |
| 3 | casual labour | 3.24 | 2 nd |
| 19 | commercial motorcycling (okada) and taxi business | 3.20 | 3 rd |
| 2 | street trading (Hawking | 3.17 | 4 th |
| 12 | post graduate study | 3.07 | 5 th |
| 11 | under-paid job | 3.05 | 6 th |
| 16 | relying on parents for financial assistance | 3.04 | 7 th |
| 13 | small scale farming | 3.01 | 8 th |
| 20 | internet fraud | 2.91 | 9 th |
| 8 | politics (as thugs/members or combined) | 2.86 | 10 th |
| 9 | examination marcenaries | 2.81 | 11 th |
| 15 | duping | 2.81 | 11 th |
| 4 | extortion of money | 2.80 | 13 th |
| 14 | blood donation on commercial basis | 2.75 | 14 th |
| 7 | prostitution | 2.75 | 14 th |
| 10 | drug trafficking | 2.71 | 16 th |
| 6 | armed robbery | 2.70 | 17 th |
| 5 | hooliganisms | 2.70 | 17 th |
| 18 | illegal migration to outside countries | 2.70 | 17 th |
| 17 | alms begging | 2.64 | 20 th |

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Three null hypotheses were postulated and tested for this study. The hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA statistical methods at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on gender.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value showing the Coping Strategies of Unemployed Youths based on gender

| Gender | N | Mean | SD | df | Cal. t-value | p-value |
|--------|-----|-------|-------|-----|--------------|---------|
| Male | 225 | 51.12 | 12.31 | 598 | 2.11* | 0.04 |
| Female | 375 | 59.15 | 10.85 | | | |

* Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Table 3 shows that the calculated p-value of 0.04 is less than 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is a significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on gender, thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on educational qualification.

Table 4: ANOVA Showing the Coping Strategies of Unemployed Youths Based on Educational Qualification

| Source | df | SS | Mean Squares | Cal. F-ratio | p value |
|---------------|-----|-----------|--------------|--------------|---------|
| Between Group | 3 | 841.538 | 280.513 | 2.15 | 0.09 |
| Within Group | 596 | 77716.980 | 130.398 | | |
| Total | 599 | | | | |

Table 4 shows that the p-value of 0.09 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on educational qualification, thus, the hypothesis is not rejected.

Hypothesis Three:

There is no significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on age.

Table 5: ANOVA Showing the Coping Strategies of Unemployed Youths in Kwara State Based on Age

| Source | df | SS | Mean Squares | Cal. F-ratio | p value |
|---------------|-----|-----------|--------------|--------------|---------|
| Between Group | 3 | 2937.466 | 979.155 | 7.72* | 0.03 |
| Within Group | 596 | 75621.052 | 126.881 | | |
| Total | 599 | 78558.518 | 979.155 | | |

Table 5 shows that the p-value of 0.03 is less than 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is a significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on age, thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6 presents the DMRT to show which of the variables bring about the difference observed in the ANOVA table 5.

Table 6: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) Showing Direction of Difference in Coping Strategies of Unemployed Youths Based on Age

| Duncan Grouping | Mean | N | Rank | Age |
|-----------------|-------|-----|------|------------------|
| A | 53.36 | 94 | 1 | 31 years & above |
| B | 58.60 | 130 | 2 | 26-30 years |
| C | 59.24 | 158 | 3 | 21-25 years |
| C | 59.81 | 218 | 4 | 16-20 years |

The table shows that group A (with mean score of 53.36) differed significantly from group B and C (with mean scores of 58.60, 59.24 and 59.81 respectively), which also differ slightly from one another. Thus, group A (age bracket 31 years and above) is responsible for the difference noticed in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on age.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The major findings of this study are that in the efforts of youths to cope with unemployment situation in the country, this study revealed that unemployed youths engage in vocational training workshops, casual labour and commercial motor cycle (okada) and business. This is an indication that the youths have realized the need to be self-employed for their survival in this unemployment situation. This is in support of the findings of Adebambo [23] who noted that technical vocational training has the potentials of not only providing skilled manpower and reducing youth unemployment, but also can contribute significantly to economic development by reducing poverty. Also, in a study by Torimiro and Kolawole [10], it was discovered that many youths engage in casual labour for survival. They stated that over 80.0 percent of Yoruba boys and 20.0 percent of non-Yorubas, engage in motorcycle riding (popularly known as *okada*).

The first hypothesis revealed a significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on gender. This indicates a gender bias in ways by which the male and female unemployed youths cope with unemployed situation. This finding is in line with that of Jana and Terrell [24] who analyzed gender difference in unemployment in the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Russia. It was found that the higher unemployment rate among women was primarily because women are less likely than men to leave unemployment for a job.

Hypothesis two revealed no significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on educational qualification. This implies that education does not affect the coping strategies adopted by unemployed youths. This finding is in contrast with the observation of Kingdon and Knight [25] that relative to individuals without education, those with only primary education have lower probability of unemployment. While secondary graduates have relatively higher probability of being unemployed, university graduates are less likely to be unemployed.

Hypothesis three showed a significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on age. This shows that age affects the type of coping strategies employed by youths. This is in line with the findings of Daniela-Emanuala and Cirnu [26], “does age and gender influence the duration of unemployment for ISCED 5 unemployed person”. They discovered that age has a significant impact for the duration of unemployment.

CONCLUSIONS

The study investigated the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State, Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that unemployed youths adopt coping strategies such as attending vocational training workshops, engaging in casual labour and involving in commercial motor cycle (okada) and business among others to adjust with the unemployment condition. The research hypotheses tested revealed no significant difference in the coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State based on educational qualification while there were significant differences based on gender and age.

Implications of Findings for Counselling Practice

Counseling is a universal helping relationship relevant in all sphere of life endeavour and can help remediate common social problems such as unemployment. According to Idowu [27], counselling is the service offered to individual who is undergoing a problem and needs professional help to overcome it. The problem keeps him/her disturbed, harmstrung and under tension and unless solved, his/her development is harmpared or sturned [27]. Unemployment situation is a worrisome situation for Nigeria youths that has led many into crime and deviant behaviours. From the findings of this study, it is revealed that unemployed youth in Kwara State employed both beneficial and harmful coping strategies. On this note, counsellors

can help the unemployed youths employ beneficial coping strategies. Counsellors can mount programmes to inform and orientate youths on better ways to cope with unemployment and be useful to themselves and the society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Nigeria government should create more employment opportunities for youths in all sectors. The agricultural sector of the Nigeria economy which employs larger percentage of Nigerians should be resuscitated. Parents should support their children to choose good coping strategies that will benefit the society. The counsellors with the help of all stake holders should organize programmes that will create appropriate employment opportunity for youths in Nigeria.

This study was limited to coping strategies of unemployed youths in Kwara State, Nigeria; future researchers can investigate the various coping or adjustment strategies of unemployed youths in other states and other countries.

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