
Socio-Economic Policy and Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: An Assessment of Ekiti State Youths for Commercial Agriculture Development Programme (YCAD)

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ABSTRACT: *The place and the important of youth in the development of any country cannot be over emphasized. This study seeks to examine the impact of Ekiti State policy on Youths for Commercial Agriculture Development Programme (YCAD) on job creation and youth empowerment in the state. Survey research design was adopted in this study. Data for this study were generated through both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data includes questionnaire and interview conducted among unemployed beneficiaries of YCAD. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive methods involving tables and percentages. The findings of the study reveals that YCAD programmes, like any other government policy surfer implementation gap and as a result, have not impacted significantly on the well-being of Ekiti youths. The paper therefore, recommended amongst others that government should improve access to social amenities such as feeder roads, electricity and regular water supply to enhance their well-being. Also the government should ensure prompt release of fund and other equipment directly to the beneficiary of the programme, this would enhance youths' participation in agricultural development programme.*

KEYWORDS: Youth Empowerment, Unemployment, Public Policy, YCAD.

INTRODUCTION

The principal objective of Nigeria's national development, since independent has been to achieve stability, material prosperity, peace and social progress. Nevertheless, a variety of problems have persistently slowed down the country's growth and its vision to attain sustainable levels of national development. These problems includes; inadequate human development, high level of corruption, unemployment, weak infrastructure, poor policy and regulatory environment and mismanagement of resources e.t.c (MDGS, 2010). A particular

issue in this regards is the case of youth unemployment. The National Youth Development Policy (2001) puts the youth age between ages 18-35, who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This category represents the most active, most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population. Youth unemployment has thus provoked studies aimed at resolving this menace given the immense role that can be played in the country's national development drive by the youth. According to Abada and Omeh (2020), youth unemployment in any country is an indication of far more complex problems.

The International Labour Organization put the global rate of youth unemployment at 13.1 percent in 2016 (ILO, 2016). On 11 August, 2022 Geneva (ILO News) estimates that the global youth unemployment rate has reached 14.9 percent by the end of 2021. However, in Sub-Saharan Africa, youth unemployment stands at 12.7 percent (ILO,2022). Nigeria shares a great proportion of this figure. Over 0 million Nigerian youth are unemployed (ILO, 2021). The youth unemployment rate in Nigeria has risen to 22.97.percent as at September, 2023 (ILO News, 2021). More than half of the Nigerian populations are under the age of 30 (NPC 2001). Hence, it can be said that the economy of Nigeria is a youth economy (Oviawe, 2010). The Nigeria government in 2020 stated that 35% of Nigerian's youth were unemployed while 18% were under employed (<https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/ypouth-unemployment-rate>). Thus, the Nigerian youths are said to be confronted with poverty, unemployment, urbanization, lack of capacity and skills needed to move the economy forward.

Low economic growth, low economic activity and low investment have been adduced as factors contributing to low job creation and due to increase in population growth, the small labour market is unable to absorb the resulting army of job seekers in Nigeria (Emeh, 2012). Also describing the important role of youth in the economic development, Tunde Lemo, the former Deputy Governor of Operation Central Bank of Nigeria asserts that:

Theeconomic benefits of youth participation in development process are varied; youth empowerment has multiplier effects on the national economy, including boasting productivity, wealth creation, consumption and tax revenue. The rate of development of a country depends largely on how productive and active the youths are...the nation cannot achieve development when they are mostly idle and unproductive (The Punch, 2016).

The above are the words of Tunde Lemo, recognizing the wealth imbued in the youth and the need to harness this potentials for the development of the country through a very effective empowerment policy. It should be noted that Nigeria as a Federation, public policy on employment has to be address at the three level of government, Federal, State and Local government, and that this new emphasis on unemployment has made youth the primary constituency of concern. In Nigeria, and Ekiti State in the South western part of the country in particular, policies have been enunciated and implemented in a bid to correct certain perceived neglect of youths in terms of gainful employment by previous administration in the state. Of all government policies deliberately put in place to address problems of unemployment among youths in Ekiti State through affirmative action, the policy of youths for Commercial Agriculture Development programme (YCAD) by the last administration in the State occupies a pride of place in Governor Kayode Fayemi's administration (the executive governor of Ekiti

Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK State); Youth for Commercial Agriculture Development programme (YCAD), which it was believed would provide immediate and direct jobs for 2000 youths in Ekiti State. There is need to assess the programme to identify if there is a gap between its expected end and what it's achievements in Ekiti State.

Moreover, not much intellectual resources have been deployed in assessing YCAD policy as a tool for job creation and youth empowerment in Ekiti State. The basic issue to which this study addresses the programme is to, in an exploratory manner; assess YCAD within the context of youth's skills acquisition and youth empowerments. Also, the study is interested in knowing if jobs are actually created and youths are empowered with the implementation of YCAD, and also, to what extent has the programme achieve its objective in enhancing the standard of living and economic well-being of Ekiti youths.

Research Problem

The government of Ekiti State in 2012 formulated and implemented a policy tagged YCAD (Youth for Commercial Agriculture Development programme) to harness the potentials of the youth and address the problem of unemployment and poverty among Ekiti youth. Meanwhile, programmes at enhancing the problem of youth unemployment had been formulated by the previous government without achieving the expected result. Therefore, it become necessary to assess YCAD intervention and identify gap between its expected outcomes and achievements in Ekiti State as an instrument for much needed youth empowerment policy.

Research Objective

The major aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of YCAD policy on youth empowerment in Ekiti State. In order to achieve this, the following objectives are set to: Investigate the extent at which YCAD has addressed the problem of youth unemployment and empowerment in Ekiti State and to Identify challenges encountered in the implementation of YCAD and suggest measures that can strengthen YCAD as a policy for youth empowerment in Ekiti State.

Conceptual classification

Public policy is government actions or inactions. It is a programme designed to tackle certain issue in a society. It is the formulation of what is to be done by government whether it is actually done or not is a policy (Isa, 2019). This implies that policy is not necessary need to be implemented, it is important to note that YCAD as matter of fact can be regarded as public policy or palliative measure designed to address certain perceived problems of employment, poverty and low capacity of youths in Ekiti State.

Youth empowerment is a vital stage in life for building the human capital that allows young people to avoid poverty and lead better, possibly have a more fulfilling life (Dibie, 2011). Agary, views youth empowerment as a process whereby young people gain the ability and authority to make decisions and implement change in their own lives (Agary, 2013). Furthermore, Esisco, Ejumudo and Ejumudo (2023) asserted that there is a direct relationship between the stock of human capital and the level of development. Job creation is a way of strengthening the workforce and therefore a means of achieving sustainable development. It is expected to achieve the following amongst others. Job creation for youths in Nigeria can raise

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the psychic and moral of people. Youth employment means engaging more human resources or labour which can in turn create more goods and services. Youth empowerment examines six interdependent dimensions: psychological, community, organizational, economic, social and cultural. Psychological empowerment enhances individual's consciousness, belief in self-efficacy, awareness and knowledge of problems and solutions and of how individuals can address problems that harm their quality of life. This dimension aims to create self-confidence and give youth the skills to acquire knowledge. Community empowerment focuses on enhancing the community through leadership development, improving communication, and creating a network of support to mobilize the community to address concerns. Organizational empowerment aims to create a base of resources for a community, including voluntary organizations, unions and associations that aim to protect, promote and advocate for the powerless. Economic empowerment teaches entrepreneurial skills, how to take ownership of their assets and how to have income security. Social empowerment teaches youth about social inclusion and literacy as well as helping kids find the resources to be proactive in their communities.

Cultural empowerment aims to recreate cultural practices and redefine cultural rules and norms for youth. Through these dimensions of empowerment, programs can work on empowering youth in one or more aspects of their lives. These can also boost the economy via more trade, more taxes accruing and more income through the multiplier effect, and a fiscal lift. Creating more jobs for youths will boost future earning, improve the standard of living and possibly reduce youth restiveness via improved engagements, higher health delivery services, and further development of skills and creation of more market at home. Job creation for youth will strengthen the system of income redistribution in the market economy which is dependent on employment. If people do not have jobs, they do not earn income. Generally, people which is dependent on employment. Generally, people worry about unemployment of labour than unemployed capital, because it is labour that facilitates turning capital into use to create further wealth for better living. Again, increased government spending on creating more jobs for youths will raise the general levels of the national income, taxes and economic growth. Hence, an increase in job creating expenditure will cause the national income to increase at high points due to direct increase in aggregate demand upon incremental government spending. (Odeh and Okoye, 2014). One could deduct that majority of youth segment of the Nigerian population live below the poverty line of 2dollars a day, due to unemployment. This may be corroborated from the views of Leonard and Kazi (2012); who stated that despite the fact that Nigeria's economy is projected to be growing, poverty is likely to get worse as the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen due to poor distribution of income.

The Nigeria Economic environment and youth unemployment

In the words of Oviawe,(2010), the level of unemployment is a reflection of the state leadership and a nation's economy. There is no gainsaying the fact that agriculture has traditionally been the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. Indeed, over the years, many roles have been assigned to it in the course of the country's economic development (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2000:33). Many factors combine to favour agricultural production and even self-sufficiently in Nigeria. This situation is well captured by the Central of Nigeria when it observed that: Nigeria is endowed with huge expanse of fertile agricultural land, rivers, streams, lakes forests and grassland, as well as a large active population that can sustain a highly productive and

profitable agricultural sector. This enormous resource base if well managed could support a vibrant agricultural sector capable of ensuring self-sufficiency in food and raw materials for the industrial sector as well as, providing gainful employment for the teeming population and generating foreign exchange through exports. (Ibid: 31).

Prior to the discovery of crude petroleum in commercial quantity in the late 1960s, agricultural export accounted for the bulk of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings. Among the agricultural commodities export were cocoa beans, palm produce, rubber, groundnut and cotton. However, the contributions of agricultural export earnings began to dwindle as from the early 1970s. By 1997, crude oil export had accounted for about 92 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings (Akpokodie, 1997:25). Economic development is a term that economists, politicians, and others have used frequently since the 20th Century. The concept, however, has been in existence in the West for centuries. The term refers to economic growth accompanied by changes in output distribution and economic structure. It is concerned with quality improvements, the introduction of new goods and services, risk mitigation and the dynamics of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Economic development has direct relationship with the environment. Whereas economic development is a policy intervention endeavour with aims of economic and social well-being of citizens. Economic growth is a phenomenon of market productivity and rise in GDP. Consequently, as an economist Amartya Sen. points out, "economic growth is one aspect of the process of economic development. According to Ogunleye and Simon-Oke (2013), economic growth and development is a two-way relationship. According to them, the first chain consists of economic growth benefiting human development, since economic growth is likely to lead families and individuals to use their heightened incomes to increase expenditures, which in turn furthers human development. At the same time, with the increased consumption and spending, health and education, infrastructure and systems grow contribute to economic growth. Economic development typically involves improvements in a variety of indicators such as literacy rates, life expectancy, employment rate, and poverty rates. Due to the fact that GDP alone does not take into account other aspects such as leisure time, environmental quality, freedom, or social justice; alternative measures of economic well-being have been proposed. Essentially, a country's economic development is related to its human development, which encompasses, among other things, health, education and employment opportunity. These factors are, however, closely related to economic growth so that development and growth often go together.

The Nigerian economy was agrarian at independence in 1960. Agriculture was the major contributor to the gross domestic product (GDP) and foreign exchange earnings until the 1970s, when oil displaced the position of agriculture as the mainstay of the economy. Consequently, the Nigerian economy over relied on oil and became a mono-product economy. However, the oil crisis of 1973 precipitated recession in the developed economies and consequently declining demand for raw materials from the underdeveloped economies. As these crises deepened many of these countries went into a borrowing spree from the International Monetary Fund, IMF (in order to deal with balance of payment crises) or from the World Bank (in order to fund development projects) which further tied them to the apron strings of western capital

Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK (Heywood, 2011) and the vicious circle of rising debt, low capacity utilization, unemployment, deteriorating infrastructures and the poverty and disease they found themselves in today (Ake, 1996). The decline in the demand for oil, particularly from Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) member countries from late 1980 led to economic crises in the country. The glut in the market made Nigeria's crude oil production to decline with government revenue declining progressively. The climax was reached in 1985 when the external sector became virtually unmanageable. Therefore, the economic crisis reflected in serious inflationary pressures and undesirable erosion of the naira undermined credit worthiness of the country (Obamuyi, 2016).

As a petroleum-dependent economy, the country's range of economic strategy shrinks by the day and further liability to external shocks and vagaries became heightened. The inability of government to diversify its revenue base, the receding agricultural productivity and apparent visionlessness of successive government have subjected the country to the whims, caprices and antics of global financial donors.

Nigeria's economic aspirations have remained that of altering the structure of production and consumption patterns, diversifying the economic base and reducing dependence on oil, with the aim of putting the economy on a part of sustainable, all-inclusive and non-inflationary growth. The implication of this is that while rapid growth in output, as measured by the real gross domestic product (GDP), is important, the transformation of the various sectors of the economy is even more critical. This is consistent with the growth aspirations of most developing countries, as the structure of the economy is expected to change as growth progresses. Successive governments in Nigeria have since independence in 1960, pursued the goal of structural changes without much success. The growth dynamics have been propelled by the existence and exploitation of natural resources and primary products. Initially, the agricultural sector, driven by the demand for food and cash crops production was at the centre of the growth process, contributing 54.7 per cent to the GDP during the 1960s (Ogunleye, 2010). The second decade of independence saw the emergence of the oil industry as the main driver of growth. Since then, the economy has mainly gyrated with the boom-burst cycles of the oil industry. Government expenditure outlays that are dependent on oil revenues have more or less dictated the pace of growth of the economy. Looking back, it is clear that the economy has not actually performed to its full potential, particularly in the face of its rising population. The Nigerian economy has grossly underperformed relative to her enormous resource endowment and her peer nations. It has the 6th largest gas reserves and the 8th largest crude oil reserves in the world. It is endowed in commercial quantities with about 37 solid mineral types and has a population of over 170 million people. Yet economic performance has been rather weak and does not reflect these endowments. Compared with the emerging Asian countries, notably, Thailand, Malaysia, China, India and Indonesia that were far behind Nigeria in terms of GDP per capita in 1970, these countries have transformed their economies and are not only miles ahead of Nigeria, but are also major players on the global economic arena. The major factors accounting for the relative decline of the country's economic fortunes are easily identifiable as political instability, lack of focused and visionary leadership, economic mismanagement and corruption. Prolonged period of military rule stifled economic and social progress, particularly in the three decades of 1970s to 1990s. During these years,

resources were plundered, social values were debased, and unemployment rose astronomically with concomitant increase in crime rate. This scenario portrays Nigeria's socio-political and economic situation as a true reflection of the quality of leadership. Even though the clamor for democracy was evolved by the belief that popular and accountable governance will resolve the generated crisis and put the country on the part of transformation and development, it seems Nigerian political leaders and those in positions of power lead a life of wanton selfishness and greed because somehow, they have lost track of morality (Edema, 2014). Therefore Nigeria democracy is unable to meet the expected social and economic transformation.

However, since 1999 economic growth in Nigeria has risen substantially, with annual average of 7.4 per cent in the last decade. But the growth has not been inclusive, broad-based and transformational. The implication of this trend is that economic growth in Nigeria has not resulted in the desired structural changes that would make manufacturing the engine of growth, create employment, promote technological development and induce poverty alleviation. Available data has put the national poverty level at 54.4 per cent (World Bank, 2015). Similarly, there has been rising unemployment with the current level put at 19.7 per cent by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The Nigerian economy is import dependent with very little non-oil exports. It relies heavily on crude oil and gas exports with other sectors trailing far behind. For example, crude oil accounts for about 90 per cent of foreign exchange earned by the country while non-oil exports account for the balance. The economy is, therefore, susceptible to shocks in the oil industry. In recent times, these shocks have been caused by either developments in the International crude oil market or the restiveness in the Niger Delta region of the country. Agriculture and other mining (besides oil and gas) have been abandoned to the rural poor. Economic and social infrastructure, especially power is grossly dilapidated; this led to the closure and relocation of many manufacturing industries in the country to neighbouring countries where the supply of electricity are stable. The power sector is generally recognized as a binding constraint on Nigerian economy. More also, poor corporate governance, both in the public and private sectors have led to high incidence of corruption and inequity in income distribution in Nigeria.

Although corruption is a global scourge, Nigeria appears to suffer particularly from it. Everyone appears to believe that the nation has a 'culture of corruption'. Over the years, Nigeria has earned huge sums of money from crude oil, which appears to have largely gone down the sinkhole created by corruption. The prospects for the Nigerian Economy towards full employment for the citizens depend on the policies articulated for the medium-to-long term and the seriousness with which they are implemented.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study is generated through primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data includes a structured questionnaire and in-depth interview to elicit information from the unemployed beneficiaries, coordinators and officers in charge of the programme. This was carried out using a convenient sampling method. For quantitative method of data collection, 50 people from each farm settlement were interviewed using structures questionnaire, while for the qualitative method of data collection an interview guide was used for the remaining

beneficiaries drawn from each farm settlement in the state as well. The three farm settlements that were used were Orin-Ekiti, Ayede-Ekiti and Itapaji Farm Settlement. The secondary source of data includes books, journals, newspapers, periodicals and internet materials. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis.

Evolution, Strategies and mandate of YCAD Programme in Ekiti State

Over the years, several attempts have been made by the successive governments in Nigeria, both at the Federal and State government levels to reduce the unemployment situation in the country. Ekiti State has naturally been a beneficiary of these attempts. Examples of such are Better Life for Rural Dwellers (BLRD), Directorate for food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI), Family Support Programme (FSP), among others. Though, laudable, all these programmes were obviously unable to achieve the expected result nation-wide and more importantly in a more vulnerable and economically less viable area like Ekiti State (State Data Base, 2015).

Ekiti State is one of the six State in the South/West geopolitical zone, lies on an area underlain by metamorphic rock. It is generally undulating location in the rain forest region, rich in both clays, loamy and red soil that is really fertile for agricultural purpose. The indigenous populations are mainly peasant farmers in crops like yam, cassava and beans, and even cash crop such as cocoa, oil palm, cola nut and the likes (<http://pmnews.mobi/output.Phd?id=2561>). These probably informed the choice of YCAD programme in the State.

YCAD is some grassroots driven youth empowerment scheme that is aimed at reducing unemployment induced poverty among the army of unemployed youth in Ekiti State. The scheme was inaugurated in 20th April, 2012 by the then Governor Kayode Fayemi where he declared his intention to engage 2000 youths across the State in commercial Agriculture programme with the use of modern equipment. The Commissioner for Agriculture informed that the initiative is intended to turn the farm settlements in the State into centre of excellence in Agriculture and to ensure all round production of both the food crops and cash crops in the State.

Also, the move was to reduce unemployment in the state and ensure that Agriculture contributes fifty(50) percent of the state internally generated revenue (IGR) to the state. (Nation, Nov,2012).

In view of this, the state government embraced a volunteer's scheme of training the youths on how to handle farm implements or machines to learn how to become specialists on fish pond farming; livestock and poultry production, and irrigation as well as related dry a season farming in order to be self-reliant and employers of labour after graduation. Notable among the units of YCAD programmes are: Fish farming, Poultry production, Food crops i.e. variables such as cassava, rice and maize production, Cash crops' cocoa, palm oil, and Processing and marketing unit.

For effective performance of each unit, the programme coordinator, Arowosafe informed that "for poultry unit; the State government has an expandable loan resources for

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youth farmers in the state to develop according to their capacity. Each participant under that programme is entitled to a minimum of ₦1.5million that is expandable based on performance”.

Findings from the study

This section entails the pursuit and achievement of the stated research objectives with the presentation, analyses and discussion of primary data gathered from the field survey through the questionnaire administration and interview.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentages(%)
Sex		
Male	125	83.3
Female	25	16.7
Total	150	100.00
Age		
18-30	55	36.6
31-40	75	50.0
41 and above	20	13.4
Total	150	100.00
Education level		
Drop out	15	10.0
Secondary	30	20.0
NCE/OND	40	26.6
Graduate	55	37.0
Post Graduate	10	6.4
Total	150	100.00
Occupation		
Employed	09	6.0
Unemployed	121	80.6
Self Employed	20	13.4
Total	150	100.00
Religion		
Christian	110	73.3
Islam	40	26.7
Total	150	100.00

Table 1 presents personal data of respondents, regardless of their sex, age, educational background, occupation and religion affinity. From the above table, the percentage distribution of respondents shows that the issue of empowerment is a phenomenon that is associated with both male and female folk with (male 83% and female 16%). As regards age, an important variable to the determinant of the focused of this research (youth). The respondents who claimed to be between the real youthful age of 18-30 and 31-40 represent 36.6% and 50% of the respondent respectively, while those between 41 and above with 13.4%. On the educational background of this respondent, 10% were dropout, who could be engaged in menial job, 20% claimed to have gotten secondary education while the majorities undergraduate and graduate were 26.6% and 37.0% respectively, the remaining 6.4% claimed to be at varying level of their

Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK postgraduate studios. Also from the table only 6.0% were employed all with private concern huge of number of 80.6% were unemployed and very few 13.4% were self-employed. On religion, 73.3% claimed to be Christian, while only 26% are Islam faithful. The table also established that youth unemployment is prevalent in Nigeria and Ekiti State in particular where the percentage of unemployed youth was 80.6%.

In an interview, a respondent joyfully stated that “on my struggle to be part of the programme (YCAD), about 1000 of us applied; only 150 were picked. I was opportune to be amongst them”.

Table 2: Respondents views on the awareness and level of implementations of YCAD in Ekiti State

S/N		YES	%	NO	%
1.	Beneficiaries of YCAD were financially empowered by the government to initiate project?	20	13.3	130	86.7
2.	Jobs were created through YCAD empowerment scheme thereby reduced unemployment?	45	30	105	70
3.	Many people that were trained through YCAD are now self-employed?	10	6.6	140	93.4
4.	By your own assessment, YCAD scheme was successful?	45	30	105	70
5.	Have this empowerment programme change your life positively any way?	50	33.3	100	66.7

Table 2 above show the respondents’ views on the effects of YCAD on youth empowerment in Ekiti State. The table reveals that a huge numbers of the respondents representing 86.7% said that the beneficiaries of YCAD scheme were not financially empowered, while a small number, representing 13.3% asserted that they were financially empowered. To ascertain if the implementation of YCAD actually created jobs for the unemployed youths, 70% of the entire population, most especially those on crops production disagree that the programme created job, while a small proportion of the respondents, representing 30% agreed that YCAD has reduced youth unemployment in the State. Also, a sizable proportion of the respondent representing 6.6% believe that those who were trained by YCAD enhanced specialized skill and now self-employed. 93.4% disagreed with this assertion. 30% of the respondents agreed that YCAD programme is a successful scheme, while 70% believed that the programme did not meet the expected result.

Finally, two third of the beneficiaries representing 33.3% claimed that the programme of Ekiti State had not affected his life positively, while one third of the respondents 66.6% agreed that the programme has positively affected their life.

Another respondent said “we got raw materials in form of loans, which really helped our production. Though YCAD has its shortcomings but at the same time, the scheme has been able to create small job for me to sustained myself.

Table 3: Challenges in the implementation and measures that can strengthen the YCAD programme

S/N		YES	%	NO	%
1	Do you know or involved in the design and the mandate of YCAD programme?	03	02	147	98
2.	YCAD programme like most other government policies suffer implementation gap?	140	93.3	10	6.7
3.	People's perception of YCAD programme as avenue to share political spoil among politicians was true.	110	73.3	40	26.7
4.	There was prompt and timely release of fund (tranches) by government for the beneficiaries?	05	3.4	145	96.6
5.	Products of YCAD received a boost patronage by the local manufacturer and marketers?	10	6.7	140	93.3

The table 3 above is to ascertain if the implementation of YCAD was flawed with challenges and measures that can strengthen future policies in Ekiti State. YCAD like the previous government policies, 99.1% of the respondents claimed they that were not involved in the conception, implementation and mandate of YCAD programme, while meaner number of 0.9% has the knowledge of the mandate of the programme. 93.3% of the respondents agreed that YCAD programme like most other government policies suffered implementation gap while insignificant number of 6.7% respondents does not agreed with this assertion. Also, 73.3% respondents admitted that people's perception of government policies as avenue to share political spoil among politicians was applicable to YCAD, and a handful of 26.7% of the respondents disagree with this fact.

Furthermore, only insignificant percentage of respondents 3.4% claimed that funds and other tranches were released to the beneficiaries on time, while 96.6% respondents said no. Finally, 93.3% respondents agreed that there is no ready market for the YCAD products; 6.7% asserted that there is market for their products.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations:

The recognition of the importance of investment in youth has led the various tiers of government in Nigeria to channel resources for the development of this segment of the society. All the states, including Ekiti State in Nigeria were actually not devoid of how to design and formulate loud-mouthed policies on youth empowerment, but the implementation of such policies or schemes have always been done badly. Also, there is a link between youth unemployment, and poverty, and youth restiveness as evidenced by the numerous violent protests among the unemployed youths in Nigeria. To overcome this and many other societal ills in our country and in Ekiti State in particular, the government at all levels needs to go back to the drawing board to fashion out a more effective empowerment policy to curb the menace of unemployment among the youths. This could be achieved through the following: Involving youth in agriculture development and decision making processes is key to ensuring sustainable development in Ekiti State and in Nigeria. In formulating a policy, the policy formulations require a good and thorough understanding of the local needs and problems of the people. Emphases should be given to the needs of the people, their capacities and total commitment to

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the programme. Government should develop a holistic approach to the creation of jobs, relevant to the individual area of specialization as not every youth are entrusted in Agriculture. The level of accountability and transparency in the pattern of administering the programme, particularly the disbursement of funds should be encourage ensuring judicious use of available resources. Government should initiate monitoring and evaluation machinery to ensure implementation of youth policies such as regular evaluation should be made to provide immediate feedback. The government should establish new and enhance existing human capital development Centre most especially the skills acquisitions centre at each senatorial district of the State at affordable cost and accessible to her citizen. The government should initiate policies and programs that encourage the growth and development of SMES. Government should provide the necessary infrastructures in the rural area these would encourage the youth to stay in the rural communities this would reduce rural urban migration.

Above all, there should be a massive reduction in the political corruption index of the country to enable a viable youth development. This is because corruption, which has permeated the entire social structure of Nigeria, has robbed the country of development.

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