

Attitude of Youth Towards Rural Development Projects in Lagos State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT The contribution of the youth is essentially important in the development of rural areas. The youth are essential human beings in the development of rural areas. Studies have shown that rural areas, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, have high population ratio when compared to the urban centres. The development of rural areas in developing countries is the root of economic upliftment for these nations. The study was carried out to investigate the attitude of youth towards rural development projects. Variables considered in the study include personal characteristics of the youth; role played by youth and the attitude of youth towards rural development projects. Eighty respondents were purposively selected for the study. Youths were interviewed from formal and non-formal education. The results of the study showed that majority of the respondents belonged to youth organizations and participated in rural development projects. The study further revealed that educational level does not have any effect on the respondents' action towards rural development, but attitude had an impact on the level of participation of respondents in rural development projects. This is a positive index to project sustainability in rural areas, and government should assist in the provision of funds needed for rural development projects. Also, extension agents, especially those in the agricultural sector, should assist in forming youth organizations that are germane to rural development.

INTRODUCTION

Youth are one of the greatest assets that any nation can have (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, they are, potentially and actually the greatest investment for a country's development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). They serve as a good measure of the extent to which a country can reproduce as well as sustain itself. The extent of their vitality, responsible conduct and roles in society is positively correlated with the development of their country (Zonal Youth Summits, 2000).

Nigeria's population is predominantly young (National Youth Policy, 2001). Therefore the present Nigerian government, having given due consideration to the significance of the youth in socioeconomic and political development, has found it most desirably necessary and urgent to initiate this National Youth Development Policy so that there will be a purposeful focus, well articulated and well directed efforts aimed at tapping the energy and resourcefulness of youth and harnessing them for the vitality, growth and development of the country well into the 21st Century. This commitment to the development of the youth has been reinforced by resolution

of various international organizations which draw attention to the need to concretely address the problems of the youth and empower them (Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment, 1998).

According to Nigeria's National Youth Development Policy (2001), the youth comprises all young persons of ages 18 to 35, who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This category represents the most active, the most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population.

Youth has been defined as individuals male or female, above ten but below thirty years of age (Alao, 1978). The youth has also been viewed as a concept, defined as the period in an individual's life which runs between the end of childhood and entry into the world of work (Onuekwusi and Effiong, 2002). People in this age bracket definitely constitute a sizeable chunk of a nation's population on which the burden of nation building falls. The youth also constitute the major resource base for any country that want to embark on any meaningful rural development projects. Lagun (2002), observes that investment in the youth is the only way to ensure the future growth and development of any country. He further asserts that increasing

number of young people must be trained and as quickly as possible, to provide leadership in agriculture, industry, government and rural development projects. These youth must be developed intellectually, morally, socially and with relevant skills to face a rapidly advancing technological world.

Nigeria is passing through socio-economic and technological changes that are separating rural development from agricultural development. The nation's progress and growth in a developing economy like Nigeria, depend to some extent, on the growth, modernization and development of their rural areas. This is so, because in many developing countries, a large proportion of the population live in the rural areas, such that no national development can succeed without rural development. Studies such as Fenley (1986), Odusanya (1972) and Olujide (1999), have also revealed that the youth constitute the highest percentage of the rural population.

In Nigeria, for example, youths are seen as "vital sources of manpower for development" (Odusanya, 1972, Olujide, 1999). Youths are rightly seen as leaders of tomorrow. Hence, the kind of education (formal or informal) that youth are exposed to or have access to will determine the nation's overall development. It has been observed that if we meet up with the challenge of the rural sector, the youth that constitute part of the population that makes up the rural areas, have certain roles to play in the process of rural development. These include social, economic, political and civil roles, which will aid the development of rural areas and the nation in general. However, these young people do not know how they can contribute their best to the development of their areas. Those that know the need for them to play significant roles in the socio-economic development of their localities, do not know how to go about it. It is in view of this, that the study provides answers to the following research questions that were posed:

- (i) What are the personal characteristics (such as gender, educational level and occupation) of youth?
- (ii) What are the roles played by youth in rural development?
- (iii) What are the attitudes of youths towards rural development projects?

METHODOLOGY

Area of Study: The study area was Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State. Epe local government lies approximately 84 Kilometers North of Lagos. It is one of the riverine local government area of the state. It is bounded on the North by Ijebu-ode, in Ogun state, on the south by Ibeju-Lekki local Government, on the West by Ikorodu local Government and on the East by the Ise-Igbogun in Ogun state. Epe Local Government area covers a land area of approximately 121 square kilometers. Epe area is inhabited by Odomola, Eredo, Ikosi-Agbowa, Igbonla, Ota-Ikosi, Noforija, Orimadu, Epe township and Ejinrin. The 1991 provisional census result of National Population Commission (NPC Report, 1991).

The people of the area are mainly farmers, fishermen, traders, hunters and sometimes, casual workers.

Sample and Sampling Procedure: The population of the study comprised youths in the four (4) selected villages and they were of 2 groups. The first group comprised students in the secondary schools while the second group comprised youths that were not in school but were involved in various vocations such as carpentry, fishing, farming and hunting. A total of 80 respondents were randomly selected for the study. Out of this, 60% of the respondents (48 students) were selected from four purposively selected secondary schools. The 4 secondary schools were purposively selected because of the existence of youth organizations in the schools. The remaining 40% of the respondents (32 youths) were selected among the youth that were involved in other vocations like farming, fishing, carpentry, hunting and tailoring. Questionnaires were administered on respondents who happened to be secondary school students, while interview schedule was used for youths in the vocational setting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The personal characteristics (gender, educational level and occupation) of the youth is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that majority of the respondents 53.8% were male. This shows that any development project which requires physical and

Table 1: Personal characteristics of the youth

<i>Personal Characteristics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	43	53.8
Female	37	46.2
Total	80	100.0
<i>Educational Level</i>		
No Formal Education	6	7.5
Adult Education	8	10.0
Primary Education	-	-
Still in Secondary School	48	60.0
Finished Secondary Education	18	22.5
Total	80	100.0
<i>Occupation</i>		
Farming	2	2.5
Carpentry	4	5.0
Bricklaying	8	10.0
Civil Servants	10	12.5
Tailoring	8	10.0
Schooling	48	60.0
Total	80	100.0

muscular work can be easily executed by youths in the area. Also, youths organizations that can lead to rural development which could be easily organized since men are known to have always organized them.

On educational level, 60% of the respondents were in secondary school while 7.5% had no formal education. The high literacy level reveals that the youth in the local government are more enlightened and can easily organize themselves into formal organizations that may lead to rural development.

On the occupation of the respondents, majority of them 60% were still in school. This shows that there is a bright future for rural development for the local government. Few of the respondents 2.5% were into farming which is good for agriculture and rural development. This is because majority of the youth are now taking to formal education that could develop them and rural development.

Youths involvement in rural development project shows that 71.2% of the respondents were involved in development project. This reveals that youths in the study area were really participating in rural development, which is a positive approach to agricultural development vis-à-vis rural development.

On membership, 71.2% of the respondents belonged to one organization or the other while 28.8% did not belong to any organization. This is a right step towards the development of the rural sector as youth organization activities are

geared towards this. Corroborating this (Odusanya, 1972) said at the inception of the young farmers club, its activities were to orientate the training of school teachers and students in improved agriculture, as well as serving as an avenue for extension to disseminate agricultural information.

On the mode of participation, majority (62.5%) of the youth were really involved in rural development project in one way or the other, while only few (37.5%) were not participating. This is a position index for project sustainability, because youth in the area are really participating in one developmental activity or the other. This participation is advantageous to the development of the area.

On the operations of youth in development projects, 42.5% were involved in were building schools, 20% in road construction, 15% in market construction, while the remaining 15% were involved in hall construction and environmental sanitation. This reveals that youth participated more in construction works, which is a positive factor towards the development of the area, most especially in building physical structures.

The mean of the total sum (3.62) shows that majority of the respondents had favourable

Table 2: Frequency distribution of respondents according to independent variables

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Youth Involvement in Rural Development Project</i>		
Yes	57	71.2
No	23	28.8
Total	80	100.0
<i>Membership of Youth Organisation</i>		
Yes	57	71.2
No	23	28.8
Total	80	100.0
<i>Mode of Participation</i>		
Provision of manual labour	36	37.5
Motivating other youths	9	11.2
Payment of levies	12	15.0
Being member of Committee	6	7.5
Donation of Materials	16	20.0
Zero participation	7	8.8
Total	80	100.0
<i>Operations</i>		
Road Construction	16	20.0
Market Construction	12	15.0
Laying of pipes for water	6	7.5
Hall Construction,		
Environmental Sanitation	12	15.0
Building School	34	42.5
Total	80	100.0

Table 3: Mean score and rank order of attitudinal statements

S. No.	Statements	Mean score	Rank
1	Agriculture should not be neglected by rural dwellers	4.48	1
2	More factories and industries are needed in the rural area in order to enhance its development	4.47	2
3	The government should be assisted because it does not have enough fund for all that is needed for successful execution of youth development projects	4.26	3
4	Youth should actively participate in finding solutions to problems that affect them	4.23	4
5	The amenities required by youth in any development programme should be provided by government alone	3.79	5
6	Government and people should jointly provide all amenities required in development programmes	3.73	6
7	Youth development projects are meant to develop the rural areas	3.71	7
8	All youth in your village are supposed to belong to youth organization	3.69	8
9	Youth are needed in the rural areas for their development	3.69	9
10	Youth are not supposed to be contributing money for the development of youth programme since there are elders in the community	3.60	10
11	Youth participation in programme development should not be compulsory	3.43	11
12	The youth are not supposed to be committed to all the activities of the organization which they belong	3.21	12
13	Financial contribution is not enough for youth participation in programme development	3.10	13
14	The extent of youth participation in youth development programme should be limited to financial contribution only (payment of levies, taxes, dues)	3.05	14
15	Most of the youth join bad gangs through their involvement in youth organization	2.91	15
16	The government is supposed to concentrate on development of urban areas, since many people are living there	2.54	16

Total mean score: 3.62

attitude towards the statement that agriculture should not be neglected by the rural dwellers. This reveals that government should assist in the provision of funds needed for the rural areas and the agricultural extension agents should assist the youth in forming organizations that are germane to rural development. This is because majority of the youth have favourable attitude towards the statements that 'youth in the village are supposed to belong to youth organizations and that youth are needed in the rural areas for development'. However, respondents have a favourable attitude towards the statement rank, 1 to 8. Organizations that are germane to rural development. This is because majority of the youth have favourable attitude towards the statements that 'youth in the village are supposed to belong to youth organizations and that youth are needed in the rural areas for development'.

The table 4 revealed that there is no significant relationship between gender and attitude of the respondents. This indicated that the gender of the respondents whether male or female did not have anything to do with their attitude towards their rural development. There was no differential behaviour of male and female youth towards rural development.

Table 4: Chi-Square testing the relationship between independent variables (sex, age and school experience) and dependent variable (attitude of respondents towards rural development project)

Variables	Unfavourable Attitude	Favourable Attitude	χ^2	Df	χ^2 Cal.
1. Gender					
Male	7	36	3.78	2	3.84
Female	14	23			
Total	21	59			
2. Age					
11-15	2	9	22.5	2	5.99
16-20	6	9			
21-25	12	38			
26-30	3	12			
Total	21	59			
3. School Experience					
Yes	2	24	0.21	2	0.16
No	1	5			
Total	3	29			

Also, there is a significant association between the age of respondents and their attitude towards the rural development. More respondents between the age bracket 21-25 years had favourable attitude towards rural development than the number of respondents under unfavourable attitude in the corresponding age bracket.

This revealed that older youths did see the need for more rural development, hence, their positive action (attitude) towards rural development.

On the test of significant association showed that there was no significant association between schooling experience and attitude of respondents. The schooling experience does not have any effect in the respondents' action, behaviour or emotions towards rural development. The education of the respondents is supposed to influence them towards a positive action (Olujide, 1999).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Youths in the study area are highly literate as majority of them are in schools. Though as expected, the school experience does not influence the youth attitude towards rural developmental projects. Rural projects such as roads and construction works that require physical and muscular work are easily executed by the youth in the area, although the areas are male-dominated.

The projects in the area will be highly maintained as the youth in the study area are members of youth developmental organizations. Moreover, they highly participate and involve themselves in development programmes. The rural areas must be assisted with funds by governments and the area must not be neglected by rural dwellers. Finally, the favourable attitude of youths in the area towards rural developmental programmes signifies a better approach to the development of the area.

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