

## **Vocational Aspiration of Youths in Rivers State of Nigeria: Implications for Counselling**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study investigated vocations engaged in by youths in Rivers State, causes of youths' engagement in these vocations, sources of capital and problems faced by the youth entrepreneurs. The study used a sample of 2, 150 youth entrepreneurs from different streets in Port Harcourt, which was made up of 1,298 (60%) males and 862 (40%) females. Researchers' self developed Interview Schedule tagged 'Youth Enterprises Interview Schedule (YEIS)' was the instrument used to collect data. The data collected was analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and rank ordering. Results of the study showed that car and carpet wash, carpentry, beauty/barbing salon, tailoring, repair of generators, automobile mechanics, repairs of bicycles, arts work and petty trading were some of the enterprises engaged in by youths. Personal savings, loan from banks/friends and contributions from family and relatives were identified as some of their sources of capital while insecurity, inadequate capital and unfair taxation constituted some the problems facing youth entrepreneurs in Rivers State. Provision of credit facilities, vocational counselling, establishment of Entrepreneurship Centres and tax holidays were some of the implications/or counselling proffered.*

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**Keywords:** *Vocation, aspiration, counselling, youths*

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### **Introduction**

Olakwa (2006) expressed that since 1999, numerous youths in Nigeria both males and females, educated and non-education, citizens as well as the legal and illegal aliens are roaming the streets having nothing worthwhile to be engaged in for a living. The post-primary schools have been graduating at least 700,000 youths and the Universities and other tertiary institutions produce an average of 120,000 graduates annually which translates into high level of unemployment. A conservative estimate puts the figure at 2.5 million unemployed youths as at 2000 Aliyu (2004).

Youths in contemporary Nigeria are faced with a range of socio-economic challenges. In spite of the elaborate youth empowerment measures/policies designed by the successive Nigerian governments at all levels such as the Small Scale Industries (SSIs), Small and Medium Enterprise (SME), Nigerian Enterprise Promotion Decree (NEPD), Small Business Congress (SBC), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Centre of Management Development (CMD), Nigerian Association of Small Scale Industries (NASSI), Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI), Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NIDB), Nigerian Agricultural and Development Bank (NADB), Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NADB), Small Scale industry Credit Scheme

(SSICS), National Association of Women in Business (NAWB), National Animal Production Research Scheme (NAPRS), National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), the Cassava Production Scheme (CPS) and the Bank of Industry (BOI) and the effort made by the organized private sector towards providing employment, numerous youths are roaming the streets unemployed (Bala, 1990).

Bolaji (2002) stressed that problem of unemployment is obvious and government alone cannot continue to create employment for the teeming populace. Therefore, youths should begin to create enterprises that would earn them employment. That entrepreneurship involves using ones' ability, knowledge, initiative and creativity to come up with something worth-while to do that one can hang on for a living. According to Eyiye (2001), Mobis (2004) and Barry (2007), an entrepreneur is the person who conceives of a business idea and organises all other factors of production to achieve his/her objectives of maximizing profit. The entrepreneur combines the functions of organising, planning, funding, managing, taking major decisions, employing additional hands to work and bears the risk that could arise from the business enterprise. However, Bridge, Neil and Cromic (2003) postulated that entrepreneurship is all about the willingness and ability of an individual or group of persons to search for investment opportunities, source the funds, establish and run an enterprise/business successfully.

Fajonyomi and Jacks (2004) identified entrepreneurship business for youths in the following areas: Acting home video turns, animal fattening, baking, books binding, bus/taxi driving, carpentry, child day care, farming and mobile phone business while Ngohi and Adamu (2006) emphasized on others like computer operation and maintenance, dyeing, automobile mechanic, sewing, weaving, knitting, hair dressing and barbing salon, car and carpet wash, manicure and pedicure, bicycle repairing, commercial motorcycles (Okada. Achaba), soap making, poultry/fish farming, electronic repairs, block making, bricklaying, sealed water and ice block production and painting. Others include reviving traditional industries for the production of shoes, bags, fans, carpets, arts and craft in addition to gold and blacksmithing. It is against this background that this study seeks to identify the types or enterprises engaged in by youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, causes of enterprises, their sources of capital and encountered predicaments.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In spite of the elaborate youth empowerment policies designed by the government, numerous youths are still searching for something worth-while to do for a living. Rivers State Government only employed few youths in 2015 after many decades and the visible scene as one drives or walk along the streets is that of youths (males and females, graduates and non-educated) scouting for employment opportunities in the private and public sectors of the economy and most of those that are not gainfully engaged and cannot invest independently to enhance their quality of lives roam the streets and end up indulging in unlawful acts.

### **Methodology**

The study was a survey research designed to identify the types of enterprises engaged in by youths in Rivers State, Nigeria, causes of youths' engagement in enterprises, their sources of capital and problems encountered. Population of the study comprised of all youths in the State. The study however used a sample of 2,160 youth entrepreneurs made up of 1,298 males and 862 females selected through volunteer sampling technique from

streets in Port Harcourt, Rivers State which were identified as the major areas where enterprises take place. Respondents' ages range from 16-32 years and were all out of school.

The research instrument used to collect data for the study was Interview Schedule (IS) developed by the researchers tagged 'Youths Enterprises Interview Schedule (YEIS).' The instrument was divided into three (3) sections (A, B and C). Section A elicited information on respondents' bio-data. Section B was the main body of the instrument containing 22 items which required the respondents to tick the types of enterprises they engaged in. Section C sought information on the respondents' causes of engagement in enterprises, sources of capital and the problems they face in carrying out their enterprises. The instrument was pilot tested among 127 youth entrepreneurs in Ikwerre Local Government Area, Rivers State using test-retest method. Data from the test-re-test was correlated using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient (PPMC). A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was found which was considered adequate and appropriate for the study.

To administer the instrument, the researchers visited the youth entrepreneurs at the following areas: Ikwerre Road, Olu-Obasanjo Road, Iloabuchi Street, Rumuokoro Roundabout, Ada-George Road, Choba Road, Oil Mill Market, UST Road, Leventist Car Wash Road, Ikoku Road, Azikiwe Road, Agip Road, Anozie Street, Cherubim Road, Mile 3 and Education Flyover Road. While at each point, the researchers explained the purpose of the study to the youth entrepreneurs, assured them of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses and that participation was voluntary. The researchers personally administered the instrument to the volunteered youth entrepreneurs thus, there was 100% return of the instrument. Four research questions were raised and answered in the study. The data collected for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques of frequency counts, percentages and rank ordering. The results are presented in Tables 1-4.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to identify the:

1. Types of vocational enterprises engaged in by youths in Rivers State.
2. Causes of youths' engagement in vocational enterprises in Rivers State.
3. Sources of capital for youth entrepreneurs in Rivers State.
4. Problems facing youth entrepreneurs in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the types of vocational enterprises engaged in by youths in Rivers State?
2. What are the causes of youths' engagement in vocational enterprises in Rivers State?
3. What are the sources of capital for youth entrepreneurs in Rivers State?
4. What are the problems facing youth entrepreneurs/vocation in Rivers State?

### **Results**

**Research Question One:** What are the types of enterprises/vocation engaged in by youths in Rivers State?

Table 1: Types of Enterprises Engaged in by Youths in Rivers State

| Enterprises                            | Responses  | Rank             |
|--|------------|------------------|
| Tailoring                              | 210(9.72)  | 1 <sup>st</sup>  |
| Car and carpel wash                    | 170 (7.87) | 2 <sup>nd</sup>  |
| Driving (Taxi, Bus & Napep)            | 160(7.41)  | 3 <sup>rd</sup>  |
| Carpentry                              | 157 (7.27) | 4 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Beauty/Barbing salon                   | 154 (7.13) | 5 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Petty trading                          | 137(6.34)  | 6 <sup>lh</sup>  |
| Laundry services                       | 133(6.16)  | 7 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Repair of generators                   | 120(5.56)  | 8 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Running of business centres            | 116(5.37)  | 9 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Sales and repair of handsets           | 108(5.00)  | 10 <sup>th</sup> |
| Dying of clothes                       | 105 (4.86) | 11 <sup>th</sup> |
| Vending (News papers & recharge cards) | 104 (4.81) | 12 <sup>th</sup> |
| Automobile mechanics                   | 91(4.21)   | 13 <sup>th</sup> |
| Interlocks production/fixing           | 84(3.89)   | 14 <sup>th</sup> |
| Electrical installations               | 74 (3.43)  | 15 <sup>th</sup> |
| Arts work                              | 70(3.24)   | 16 <sup>th</sup> |
| Bicycle repairs                        | 60(2.78)   | 17 <sup>th</sup> |
| Bakery                                 | 49 (2.27)  | 18 <sup>th</sup> |
| Cap making and washing                 | 20(0.93)   | 19 <sup>th</sup> |
| Carpets/rugs                           | 16(0.74)   | 20 <sup>th</sup> |
| Cyber cafe                             | 14(0.65)   | 21 <sup>st</sup> |
| Vulcanizing                            | 08(0.37)   | 22 <sup>nd</sup> |
| Total                                  | 2.160(100) |                  |

Table 1 revealed that tailoring, car and carpet wash, driving, carpentry, beauty/barbing salon, petty trading, laundry services, repairs of generators, business centres and sales and repair of handsets are the ten top enterprises engaged in by youths in Rivers State. Others include dying, vending, automobile mechanics, interlocks production/fixing and electrical installations. Those ranked the least are arts work, bicycle repairs, bakery, cap making and washing, sales of carpets/rugs, cyber cafe and vulcanizing.

**Research Question Two:** What are the causes of youths' engagement in vocational enterprises in Rivers State?

Table 2: Causes of Youths' Engagement in Vocational Enterprises in Rivers State (N=2,160)

| Causes                               | Male  | %     | Female | %     |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Unemployment                         | 774   | 35.77 | 412    | 19.11 |
| Poverty                              | 297   | 13.72 | 227    | 10.53 |
| Pressure from parents                | 105   | 4.85  | 146    | 6.77  |
| Encouragement from friends/relatives | 98    | 4.53  | 69     | 3.22  |
| Personal interest                    | 24    | 1.13  | 08     | 0.37  |
| Total                                | 1,298 | 60    | 862    | 40    |

Table 2 revealed that unemployment, poverty and pressure from parents are the major causes of youths engaging in enterprises in Rivers State. Others include encouragement

from friends/relatives and personal interest.

**Research Question Three:** What are the sources of capital for youths' entrepreneurs in Rivers State?

Table 3: Sources of Capital for Youth Entrepreneurs in Rivers State (N=2,160)

| Sources                                | Male  | %    | Female | %     |
|--|-------|------|--------|-------|
| Contribution from family and relatives | 1,004 | 46.4 | 170    | 7.90  |
| Loan from Friends                      | 122   | 5.64 | 42     | 1.95  |
| Assistance by Government               | 98    | 4.53 | 21     | 0.97  |
| Loan from Banks                        | 56    | 2.60 | 31     | 1.43  |
| Personal Savings                       | 18    | 0.83 | 598    | 27.75 |
| Total                                  | 1,298 | 60   | 862    | 40    |

Table 3 shows that contribution by family and relatives constituted the major sources of capital for male youth entrepreneurs in Rivers State while their female counterparts have personal savings as their major source of capital for engaging in enterprises.

**Research Question Four:** What are the problems faced by youth entrepreneurs in Rivers State?

Table 4: Problems Faced by Youth Entrepreneurs in Rivers State (N=2,160)

| Problems            | Male  | %     | Female | %     |
|---------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Insecurity          | 988   | 45.67 | 719    | 33.36 |
| Inadequate Capital  | 140   | 6.47  | 71     | 3.30  |
| Unfair taxation     | 112   | 5.18  | 29     | 1.35  |
| Lack of Electricity | 58    | 2.68  | 43     | 1.99  |
| Total               | 1,298 | 60    | 862    | 40    |

Table 4 indicated that insecurity and inadequate capital are the major problems facing youth entrepreneurs in Rivers State, Nigeria. Others include unfair taxation and lack of electricity.

## Discussion

The study reveals the types of vocational enterprises engaged in by youths in Rivers State, causes of youths' engagement in enterprises, their sources of capital and the problems faced by the youth entrepreneurs. On the types of enterprises engaged in by the youths, the major types as revealed by the study in descending order are tailoring, car and carpet wash. driving, carpentry, beauty/barbing salon, petty trading, laundry services, repair of generators, running of business centres, sales and repairs of handsets, dying of clothes, vending and automobile mechanics. Others include interlocks production/fixing, electrical installations, arts work, bicycle repairs, bakery, cap making and washing, carpets/rugs, cyber cafe and vulcanizing. The findings of this study corroborate the earlier findings of Bala (1999), Bolaji (2002), Fajonyomi and Jacks (2004) and Ngohi (2006) that government alone cannot continue to create employment opportunities to all its citizenry. Therefore, individuals/youth should use their knowledge, skills, and ideas/initiatives to create enterprises that can earn them a means

of livelihood. Studies conducted by Hirsch and Peters (2005) and Goni, Mustapha and Mburza (2011) affirms the findings of this study that despite the spectre of unemployment characterised by abject poverty, youths prefer engaging in the public sector or any of the already flourishing organisations/ventures instead of initiating and investing in their private enterprise and the situation is encouraged by government because of inadequate funding. This is unhealthy for youths' development and nation building which is the acclaimed priority of the Nigerian Governments at the Local, State and Federal levels.

On the causes of youths' engagement in enterprises in Rivers State, the study shows unemployment, poverty and pressure from parents as the major causes of youths' engagement in enterprises. Others include encouragement from friends/relatives and personal interest. This study corroborates the earlier findings of Goni, Mustapha and Mburza (2011) that youths in Rivers State are forced by the surrounding circumstances except 32 (1.48%) that indicated personal interest for engaging in different types of enterprises.

On the sources of capital for youth entrepreneurs, the study shows contribution from family and relatives, personal savings and loan from friends as the major sources of capital for the youth entrepreneurs. Others include assistance from government and loan from banks. This agrees with the views of Eyiye (2001), Mobis (2004) and Ngohi and Adamu (2006) that lack of capital to establish a business is the principal factor militating against youth enterprises in most advancing nations. Ngohi and Adamu (2006) for example, expressed that despite the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills for setting up/establishing an enterprise, capital remains the major bottleneck.

Affirming the findings of this study on the problems facing youth entrepreneurs Bolaji (2002) and Ayuba (2010) expressed that insecurity and the epileptic power supply are the twin and major problems facing entrepreneurs in contemporary Nigeria and remain a major threat to the future of this country. Eyiye (2001) for instance, lamented that during periods of insecurity government resources will be diverted for security reasons and entrepreneurs will be disturbed thus no diversification of investment hence killing of entrepreneurial initiatives and that unfair taxes has the tendency of discouraging entrepreneurs from investing their money in certain ventures. This has the effect of slowing down economic development. This is the actual case in most parts of Rivers State where by the insurgency attacks are often than not targeted at youth entrepreneurs.

### **Implications for Counselling**

Readdressing the socio-economic risk of the youths constituted by the spectre of unemployment will require the Ministries of labour and Productivity, Youths and Social Development. Poverty Alleviation, the National Directorate of Employment and National Orientation Agency need to organise and re-orient the youths on vocational training on regular bases with a view to providing them with soft loans to establish Small Scale Business (SSB). Encouraging the youths to engage in enterprises requires an integrated and multidimensional approach involving public and private sector enterprises, voluntary organizations, philanthropists and highly spirited individuals are to put hands on deck and provide capital that can engage the youths in vocational enterprises to avoid being misdirected by the self centred political elites.

Counsellors, educationists, parents/guardians, community leaders/elders, religious based organizations and other stakeholders should in collaboration with the media and Ministry

of Education embark on organizing public lectures such as conferences, seminars, symposium and workshops to the youths on the world of work, vocational and career guidance with a view to helping them initiate and develop private business enterprises to earn them a living.

### **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that tailoring, car and carpet wash, driving, carpentry, beauty/barbing salon, petty trading, laundry services, repair of generator, running of business centres and sales/repairs of handsets are the ten top most vocational enterprises engaged in by youths in Rivers State. Bakery, cap making and washing, carpets/rugs, cyber cafe and vulcanizing are ranked as the lowest enterprises engaged in by the youths. Unemployment, poverty and pressure from parents are the major causes of youths' engagement in enterprises in Rivers State. Others include encouragement from friends/relatives and personal interest.

Loan from friends, contribution from family and relatives and assistance from government are the major sources of capital for youth entrepreneurs in Rivers State. Others include loan from Banks and personal savings. Insecurity and inadequate capital are the major problems faced by youth entrepreneurs in Rivers State. Others include unfair taxation and lack of electricity.

### **Recommendations**

From the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Rivers State Government should establish Rivers State Entrepreneurship Board (RISEB) where micro-credit facilities should be provided to enable the youths set up Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) and be self employed.
2. Vocational courses should be taught in all institutions at all levels in Rivers State so that entrepreneurial knowledge and skills could be acquired.
3. Rivers State Government should establish Entrepreneurial Centres where the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and the private sector should be providing non-formal vocational training programmes (apprenticeship) for the non-educated youths to develop entrepreneurial skills and access fund at the end of the training programme to start an enterprise.
4. Rivers State Government should in conjunction with the Federal Government and Security operatives devise means of providing effective security, electric power supply and tax holidays with a view to encouraging the youths engage in viable enterprises/vocations.

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