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Towards Food Security and Youth Participation in Community Development in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States: Implications for Counselling

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Abstract

The study was designed to investigate food security and youth participation in community development in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States. The ex-post factor research design was employed in this study. Four research hypotheses were formulated to guide the researchers in this study. The population for the study was five thousand (5,000) youths from Cross River and Akwa Ibom

States. The sample was 506 youths made up of 307 boys and 199 girls using stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The major instrument for data collection was a four point likert type scale called Food Security and Youth Participation in Community Development (FSYPCD). Pearson Product Moment Correlational statistics, independent t-test and simple percentage were used to analyze the data. Findings indicated that there is a relationship between youths' participation in community development and food security. That there is no significant difference between Akwa Ibom and Cross River States in-terms of government's motivation of youths to ensure food security, food production and that there is a relationship between youths' participation in community development and political education. Counselling implications were raised to ensure food security in the two States, Cross River and Akwa Ibom and the nation at large such as reversing rural-urban migration to urban-rural migration, providing more social amenities in the rural areas, giving interest free loans and giving the youths adequate political education to enliven their participation in food security, food production and community development.

Key words: Food Security, Food Production, Youth Participation, community development, Political Education, Government's Motivation of Youths.

Introduction

Several attempts in the past to ensure food security were among others, Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution and River Basin Development Authorities but were not sustained to get the desired results. Agricultural practice involves over 60% of the early 120 million Nigerians. Food security refers to the availability, accessibility and acceptability of food at all times. Food insecurity is the reverse situation in most parts of our dear country, Nigeria, particularly in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States (Frankenberger, and Goldstein, (2000). This is so because food production has now exclusively been preserved for the elderly men and women. Youths many of whom, rather resort to unwholesome attitudes and migrate from rural areas to urban areas for sedentary life style and to seek their fortune there in the towns and cities. Many factors can give rise to food insecurity. These include poor natural resource endowments, poor climate, adverse economic situations, as well as social, demographic, cultural and political instability resulting from wars and civil unrest such as youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region which Cross River and Akwa Ibom States geographically

belong. Of the many factors which give rise to food insecurity certainly is oil spillage which has left the land and rivers with the adverse effects of pollution (Hutchful, E. 2000).

The land is infertile and aquatic life is endangered. The occupation of the indigenes; which is farming, is jeopardized and the household economy is affected and malnutrition results. The contemporary adolescent from affected households might be a victim of malnourishment from childhood. This has seriously affected the development of adolescent potentials. Unarguably, with the natural abilities that could be developed to make one very good at something (i.e. potentials according to the Advance Learners' Dictionary), the youths are the vanguards of community development as they are very energetic, knowledgeable and more exposed to current happenings in many societies and belong to youth organizations. A youth organization could be viewed as a group of young people engaged in activities that improve or develop the communities to which they rightly belong. They physically contribute to community development work. Moreover, they have imbibed ethics, morals and other socio-cultural traits of their community (Anyanwu and Adekanmbi, 2001). The youths are divided into age groups in some communities and such age groups are assigned specific duties for the progress of their respective communities.

Community development by and large involves all members of the community irrespective of age and gender. Community development orders a kind of a collective action by people in a community. This is a desire to better their conditions socially, economically and environmentally. It is to make the quality of life better for every member of the community. It is also described as a process which increases the capacity of communities to identify their own needs and priorities (Church, 2000). He further stressed that it involves a commitment to the principles of participation, empowerment, equity and social justice. Moreover, it is a process through which people get together, communicate, identify priority needs, plan and take action to resolve problems in order to achieve outcomes which are desired by the communities. These lofty ideas cannot be achieved without food which is central to man's energy, survival and healthy living. A healthy individual, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2004), is one who is free from diseases and is physically, socially and mentally sound. Here health is not merely the absence of communicable diseases and infirmity. It also entails the welfare of the individuals in all spheres of life.

Healthy individuals make healthy nations. Food security is therefore a vital prerequisite for community development.

Review of related literature

Theory of population vis-avis food production

Thomas Malthus was the first to state a systematic principle of population in 1798 which also pointed to the state of food production. The Malthusian doctrine is stated as follows:

(1) There is a natural sex instinct in human beings to increase at a fast rate. As a result, population increases in geometrical progression and if unchecked doubles itself every 25 years. Thus starting from 1, population in successive periods of 25 years will be 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 258 (after 200 years).

(2) On the other hand, the food supply increases in a slow arithmetical progression due to the operation of the law of diminishing returns based on the supposition that the supply of land is constant. Thus the food supply in successive similar periods, will be 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (after 200 years).

(3) Since population increases in geometrical progression and food supply in arithmetical progression, population tends to out run food supply. Thus an imbalance is created which leads to over-population and mouths to be fed. Way back in 1959, Nigeria's population was 55 million. Following the recent population census, Nigeria it is said to be well over 150 million people with obvious increase in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States. Akaman (18 century) advocated that population and food production growth should be in the ratio of 3 to 4 but this is not the case with Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, you rather have more people and less food. This is why there is influx of food items like yams and potatoes into the two States from Lafia Nasarawa, Zakibam Benue and Onitsha, Anambra States which go for higher prices here. The postulations of Malthus also hold water for these states meaning that population is high and does not meet food production and therefore, food security is being threatened.

Moreover, there is has been a shift from food production to oil exploration in recent times. It is against this background that the researchers are asking these questions: Are youths actively involved in food production as part of community development effort in line with President Umaru Yara'Adua's seven point agenda? Are they adequately motivated to partake in food security? Are they given political education on food security to ensure active participation?

The purpose of this paper is therefore to find out whether:

(i)   Youths participate in community development in terms of food security.

(ii) Governments of Cross River State and Akwa Ibom States motivate youths to participate in food security.

(iii) Governments of the two states give adequate political education to fast track food production.

(iv) Youths partake in food production in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

Hypotheses

(i)   There is no significant relationship between youths in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, and food security.

(ii) There is no significant relationship between youths in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States and government encouragement of youths in terms of food security.

(iii) There is no significant relationship between youths and political education by the government on food security.

(iv) There is no significant relationship between youths and food production in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

Methodology

Research design

The research design used in this study was the causal comparative or ex-post facto design. This design aims at investigating possible cause effect relationship by first identifying some existing congruence and searching back

by analyzing data to establish possible cause factor (Denga, 2004). The researchers choose this because there is the need to find out the relationship between youths' participation and food security as well as government role in fostering youths to achieve food security in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

Population of the study

This comprises employable five thousand (5,000) youths of Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

Sample and sampling technique

The sample of this study consists of 506 employable youths of Cross River and Akwa Ibom States. 246 of them were drawn from River Cross and 260 from Akwa Ibom States made up of 307 boys and 199 girls of both urban and rural dwellers

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was a four point likert scale and a fifteen item questionnaire titled Food Security and Youth Participation in Community Development (FSYPCD). It was developed by the researchers based on the theoretical and empirical literature and experience of the researchers. The questionnaire was designed in two parts; the first part elicited demographic information about the subjects such as sex, age, class, and occupation/applicant.

The instrument was a four point, likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points to Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point.

Validation of instrument

The developed items were given to two psychologists and two psychometrics in the Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling of Cross River State University of Technology Calabar for scrutiny, to certify the face and content validity of the instrument.

The instrument was subjected to further validation through a test-retest with a sample of 50 students (25 male and 25 female) randomly selected from two communities in the study area. Reliability Alpha values of the instrument ranged from 0.81 to 0.92. This was considered high enough for the instrument to be used in this study.

Data analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Independent t-test and simple percentage were used to analyze the data collected.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant relationship between youths' participation in community development and food security.*

This hypothesis was tested using the Pearson, Product Moment Correlation Analysis.

The result of correlational analysis on table 1 shows that the calculated coefficient is r = 0.81. This is greater than the observed r = 0.25 at 0.05 probability level. Since the calculated r is greater than the critical value r, it means that there is a significant relationship between youths' participation in community development and food security. On the basis of the result, the null hypotheses were rejected.

Hypothesis II: *There is no significant relationship between youths' participation in community development and governments' motivation to increase food security.*

This hypothesis was tested using independent t-test comparison of youths in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

Table 2 shows results of t-test comparison between Akwa Ibom and Cross River States governments' motivation of youths in terms of food security. The result shows that calculated t = 1.3423 is less than the observed t = 1.960 at 0.05 significant level. This result indicates that the null hypothesis is retained. It follows that there is no significant difference between Akwa Ibom and Cross River States in terms of government's motivation of youths in the production of food in the region.

Hypothesis III: *There is no significant relationship between youths and political education on food security for youths in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.*

This hypothesis was tested using Pearson moment correlational analysis.

Table 3 shows the correlational coefficient of the relationship between youths' participation in community development and their political education

by government of the two states. The result shows that the correlational coefficient r = 0.92 is greater than the observed r = 0.25 at 0.05 probability level. This result implies that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means youths' participation in community development is significantly related to their political education.

Hypothesis IV: There is no significant relationship between youths and food production in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

Discussion of findings

The result of the first hypothesis states that there is a relationship between youths' participation in community development and food security. This is supported by the United Nation (1976) studies which opined that community development is the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of a nation and enable them to contribute fully to national progress. It implies that youth participation in community development must include food security and ensure national progress of this country in line with President Umaru Yara'Adua's seven point agenda.

The result of the second hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between Akwa Ibom and Cross River States in terms of government's motivation of youths in the production of food in the region. This is contrary to the findings of Oghenekome (2004) which confirmed that youths have physiological potentials which involves the physical strength. He further opined that youths at this age have a lot of muscles and strength to do hard work and strenuous exercise. They could easily form a powerful labour force, if properly harnessed. The Nigerian armed forces for example, do tap into the potentials of the young and virile adolescents who indicate interest in becoming officers and members of the force. Another example in the adolescents involved in the motorcycle transportation business popularly known as "okada". In the same vein the governments of Cross River and Akwa Ibom States can tap into the youths by way of motivation to make for food security in the region in the pieces of fertile lands not affected by oil spillage. Furthermore, good habits or positive behaviours formed during adolescence and young adulthood can be expected to have beneficial effect on a person's psyhosocial health during adulthood (Money and Eboh, 2009).

That is why it is very imperative to motivate the youths to improve food production and food security in the region.

The result of the third hypothesis states that youth's participation in community development is significantly related to political education they have had from the governments of the two States. This result agrees with the findings of Dewey (2006) who noted and supported the devotion of democracy to political education. He argued that democracy cannot thrive without political education. In the opinion of Pye (2005), political education is capable of creating and establishing national integration through national identification. He meant that the individual must perceive himself as an integral member of the nation and his loyalty to the nation should be unquestionable. Fanon (2005) thought of political education as individual identification with the nation in terms of political experience of each citizen in the nation. He described political education as making the nation part of personal experience of each of the citizens because it is national and because it is linked in the chain of national existence, ceases to be individual limited.

He further argued that it is through this indoctrination that the masses are taught purposefully that everything depends on them, that collectively they and they alone are responsible for either progress or stagnation of the society. Political education therefore brings about personal identification with the national goals and aspirations as it concerns food security and community development in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

Looking the table above, one sees youths taking active part in community development but only on infinite decimal number and percentage of them go into food production. This does not agree with Akaman's theory of population and food production of 3 (population) to 4 (food production). The reverse is the case ie more population but less food in the two States. It does not even agree with Dyson (1996) which examines trends in food production and assesses the prospects for feeding humanity into the 21st century.

Counselling implications

To supplement National Directorate of Employment (NDE) efforts to make youth self-employed, Cross River and Akwa Ibom State Governments should pay attention intensively, actively and proactively to engaging youths with energy and knowledge in food production to ensure food security which is one of the seven point agenda of Mr. President rather than resorting to crime,

militancy and other vices that keep the youths at loggerheads with societal justice system (the police and the courts).

Through a deliberate policy of ensuring food security by motivating the youths through interest free loans and making it possible to reverse the trend of rural-urban migration to urban-rural migration should be governments' watchword. Furthermore, efforts should be made to ensure, on a continuous basis the provision of social amenities through community development in the rural areas where agricultural lands abound to stem the tide of youths moving into towns for non-existent white collar jobs, therefore making the youths engage themselves in the production of food for themselves and the nation at large. Furthermore, there should be provision of subsidized fertilizers, agricultural extension services and farm instruments for youth's participation in production and ensure food security. The governments of the two states should revitalize and increase plantation agriculture for the production of cash crops for export as was done in the early 60s. This will revamp the ailing economy and make life worth living and reduce dependence on petroleum as a foreign income earner.

All youths should be exposed to political education in order to have keen interest in community development programmes. This could be done through formal and informal education. There should be radio forum, lectures, seminars and grassroots mobilization towards good political education. In other words, both the leaders and followers should have political education in order to put the nation or community above individual selfish needs in their communities.

This is necessary because political education will minimize cases of embezzlement of public funds and at the same time create a sense of belonging to the nation in the minds of the youths. The lack of interest in community based self-help will change, since available public funds will be for the general use. Youths will be willing to make sacrifices for the betterment of our nation.

Conclusion

Food security and community development are vital elementc in the development of the Crgss River and Akwa Ibom States ac sell as the nation at large. For food`arrsid13727712 ensures the proper development of the body, pboper nutrition through balanced died, is very important. In the words of

Mr. President in granting amnesty to the Niger Delta militants 25/06/09 asserted that the youths are able bodied percols who are an asset to the development of the Niger Delta area". Therefore, it is not out of place for the governments of Cross River and Akwa Ibom States to utilize their potentials to ensure food production and food security and community development in the region.

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Table 1: The Pearson Product Moment Analysis of the Relationship between Participation in Community Development and Food Security

Variables	$\sum x \sum^Y$	$\sum x^2 \sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	N	Cal.r	df	r	
Youths participation in community development (x)	16214	483472	487243	506	0.81	504	0.25	**Sig**
Food security (y)	16504	495623						

P<0.05; n = 2; df = 504

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of youths' participation in community development and government food security motivation in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States

Variables	Ti.srsid13057980NTX	SD	Cal t	df	obs	Sig.	
`rrTclbrdrbTclw Width762,lp8496 Akwa Ibom State Youths	260	27.96	5.6	1.3423	504	1.960	ns
`rr_`dth3 Cross River State Youths	246	28.56	4.9				

Cal. t = Calculated t-value; obs = Observed value, ns = not significant

Table 3: Correlational Analysis of the relationship between youths' participation in community development and political education of youths in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States

Variables	$\sum x \sum^Y$	$\sum x^2 \sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	N	Cal.r	df	r
_rdrsYouths participation in community development (x)	16017	48324					
			482687	506	0.92	504	0.25
Political education on food security (y)	16504	495628					

P<0.05; n = 2; df = 504

Table 4: Simple percentage of youth participation in community development and food production in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States

S/N	Activity	No of Participants	Percentage
1	Security	101	20%
2	Cleaners	90	18%
3	Fruit Sellers	70	14%
4	Hawkers	105	21%
5	Toll collectors	30	6%
6	Drivers/Artisans	98	19%
7	Food Production	12	2%