YOUTH WORK PROGRAMS: RELIABLE SOLUTION TO POVERTY AMONG YOUTHS IN KANO STATE, NIGERIA

By

Rabilu Abdu Yahaya (PG Student)
Department of Adult Education and Community Services
Faculty of Education
Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria

Abstract
Youth work programs have been commended as a solution to poverty among youths in Kano State, Nigeria. This paper examines the influence of youth work initiatives on reducing poverty rates among youths in Kano State. A review of the empirical literature suggests that youth work programs can be a key factor in alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable livelihoods among youths. The study categorizes and examines diverse types of youth work programs, analyzes the mechanisms by which they reduce poverty and showcases exemplary case studies of successful youth work initiatives in Kano State. Research findings of the study confirm the success of youth work programs in reducing poverty rates among young people in Kano State. The research concludes with a compressive set of recommendations for key stakeholders including policy makers, practitioners, community leaders, government officials and private sector partners to ensure the sustainability and scalability of youth work programs.

Keywords: Youth Work Programs, Poverty Reduction, Social Inclusion, Sustainable Livelihood, Community Development

Introduction
Poverty among youths is a pressing concern in Nigeria with an estimated 40.1% of the population living below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Kano State, one of the most populous states in Nigeria is no exception. Poverty among youths in Kano is a pervasive issue, with many young people facing limited access to education, employment and economic opportunities (World Bank, 2020).

The consequences of poverty among youths in Kano are severe and long-lasting, affecting their education, employment, health and overall well-being (World Bank, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020). Poverty among youths in Kano State has far-reaching implications, including limited access to education, increased vulnerability to radicalization and reduced life expectancy (International Labour Organization, 2020; United Nations,

2020). The effects of poverty among youths in Kano State are multifaceted, encompassing reduced social mobility, increased crime violence, poor mental health as well as limited access to health care (National Bureau of Statistics,2020; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). The consequences of poverty among youths in Kano are severe, affecting not only their well-being but also the social and economic development of the state (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Youth work programs have been identified as a potential strategy for reducing poverty among youths (International Labour Organization, 2020). These programs aim to equip youths with the skills, knowledge as well as support required to access employment, education and opportunities. By addressing the root causes of poverty, youth work programs can help reduce poverty and promote sustainable development (United Nations, 2020). In Kano State, various youth work programs have been implemented to address the challenges of poverty among youths. However, there is a need for a detailed understanding of the contributions of these programs to reducing poverty among youths. This paper aims to investigate how youth work programs serve as a panacea to poverty among youths in Kano State.

Conceptual Framework

The youth work program is a social and educational practice that aims to support the personal, social and educational development of young people (Jeffs & Smith, 2010). Kazepides (2012) defines youth work programs as intentional efforts to provide young people with opportunities for socialization, education and personal development. Youth work is a dynamic and multifaceted field that focuses on supporting the personal growth, development and empowerment of young individuals, typically between 12 and 30 years old. This educational, social and community-driven approach aims to equip young people with essential skills, knowledge and values, enabling them to become active, engaged and responsible members of society. Youth work programs can take various forms including after-school programs; leadership development programs; and education and vocational training programs. These programs are designed to address specific needs and challenges faced by young people such as poverty, unemployment and marginalization.

Poverty reduction and youth development are theoretically supported by the theories of the culture of poverty, social exclusion, youth livelihood development, family stress model, poverty reduction strategy, capability approach and social capital all of which justified the contributions of youth work programs on the reduction of poverty among youths. According to Oscar Lewis (1966) culture of poverty theory suggests that poverty is a cultural phenomenon that is passed down from generation to generation. Secondly, the theory of social exclusion by Silver (1994) views poverty as a result of social exclusion, where individuals or groups are denied access to resources, opportunities and services. The third theory, youth livelihood development framework of Valentine (2021) focuses on the development of young people's livelihoods, emphasizing the importance of education, skills training and employment opportunities. Fourthly, the family stress model of Conger et al.

(1994) describes the pathways through which child poverty affects development, including the impact of financial stress on family relationships and parenting practice. Fifthly, the poverty reduction strategy framework by the Asian Development Bank (2004) provides a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction, emphasizing the importance of economic growth, social protection and good governance. The sixth theory, the capability approach by Sen (1999) emphasizes the importance of enhancing the capabilities and freedoms of individuals to reduce poverty and promote human development. The last theory, social capital by Putnam (1995) emphasizes the importance of social media relationships and networks in reducing poverty and promoting economic development.

Research has shown that youth work programs can have a positive impact on reducing poverty among young people. For example, vocational training and work readiness programs have been shown to enhance youth employability, particularly for marginalized youths facing socio-economic challenges (De Luca et al., 2017). In addition to vocational training, youth work programs have been noted to address psychosocial dimensions such as self-esteem, resilience and social networks. These programs often incorporate mentoring and counselling services which have been shown to positively impact the mental health of participants (Gonzales et al., 2018). Civic engagements within youth work programs have also been shown to encourage active participation in society, leading to both personal and community benefits. Participation in civic activities has been associated with greater social capital which plays a critical role in reducing poverty (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Overall, the above research revealed that youth work programs can play a significant role in reducing poverty among young people by providing a detailed approach to poverty alleviation that incorporates skill development, employment opportunities, psychosocial support and civic engagement.

Youth Work Programs and Poverty Reduction
Youth work programs encompass a wide range of initiatives designed to support the social, emotional and economic development of young people. These programs can be categorized into various types, including:
Vocational Training Programs: Vocational training programs offer young people hands-on training and skill development in areas such as carpentry, plumbing, culinary art etc enabling them to secure better employment opportunities.
Leadership Development Training Programs: These programs aim to cultivate leadership capabilities among young people, equipping them with essential skills such as effective communication, strategic problem solving and decision-making.
Mentorship Programs: Mentorship programs connect young people with experienced mentors who offer guidance, support and encouragement, helping to build confidence, foster positive relationships and promote personal growth.
Literacy Programs: Literacy programs aim to enhance the reading and writing ability of young people, providing targeted support to those who struggle with literacy or lack access to quality educational resources.

Life Skills Training Programs: Life skills training programs aim to equip young people with the fundamental skills required to thrive in daily life, including skills like time management, financial planning and effective communication.

Entrepreneurship Programs: Entrepreneurship programs provide young people with comprehensive training in the skills required to start and run a business, including business planning, marketing as well as financial management.

Civic Engagement Programs: These programs aim to foster a sense of social responsibility among young people, encouraging them to participate in community activities, advocate for social justice and develop leadership skills.

Recreation and Leisure Programs: These programs provide young people with opportunities to engage in enjoyable activities, fostering physical and mental health, while also developing essential life skills like teamwork, communication and socialization.

Education Support Programs: Education support programs provide young people with a supportive learning environment in which academic assistance, guidance and counselling to help them succeed academically, build confidence and reach their full potential.

Health and Wellness Programs: These programs provide young people with comprehensive education and resources on physical and mental health, nutrition and wellness, aiming to foster healthy behaviour, positive relationships with food and holistic well-being.

There are many mechanisms through which youth work programs reduce poverty among youths, these include: education and skills development, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, mentorship and coaching, access to resources and services, social support and networking, personal development and empowerment, community engagement and participation, addressing systematic barriers, fostering resilience and adaptability as well as promoting economic mobility.

The case studies of successful youth work programs in Kano State include: Alliance for Youth Nigeria's Vocational Skill Training Programs. These programs provided vocational skill training to 400 unemployed in Lagos and Kano States, covering areas like beauty, graphics design and solar installation. Eleven top-performing trainees were awarded toolkits to encourage their entrepreneurial spirit and promote self-reliance (Alliance for Youth Nigeria, 2020). Another successful program was the Mufarka Youth Development Initiatives (MYDI) skills acquisition project. This initiative empowered vulnerable youths in Kano State through a comprehensive skills acquisition program focusing on tailoring, barbing and leatherwork and providing start-up kits and financial literacy training (MYDI,2020). These programs demonstrate the positive impact of youth work in initiatives in Kano State, promoting economic empowerment, self-reliance and community growth.

Impacts of Youth Work Programs on Poverty Reduction
Research has consistently shown that youth work programs have a positive impact on poverty reduction among people in Kano State, Nigeria (Sani, 2019). Youth empowerment programs are effective in reducing poverty among young people in Kano State, with beneficiaries

experiencing significant improvement in their economic well-being (Sani, 2019). Social protection programs such as N-power, have been shown to have a positive impact on poverty reduction among young people in Nigeria including Kano State (Oyekunle, 2020). Research has found that youth employment is a critical factor in reducing poverty among young people in Africa including Nigeria (AFDB, 2020). A study on youth unemployment and poverty reduction in the Kano metropolis found that addressing unemployment is crucial to reducing poverty among young people in the area (Dandago & Aliyu, 2020).

Different youth work programs are effective in reducing poverty among youth, these include: vocational training programs. These programs provided young people with skills training in areas such as carpentry, tailoring and mechanics. Studies have shown that vocational training programs can be effective in reducing poverty among young people, particularly in urban areas (World Bank, 2020). Education and literacy programs. These programs provide young people with access to education and literacy training. Studies have shown that education and literacy programs can be effective in reducing poverty among youths, particularly in areas with low levels of educational attainment (UNESCO, 2020). Life skills training programs. These programs provide young people with training in areas such as leadership, communication and problem-solving. Research has shown that life skills training programs can be effective in reducing poverty among young people, particularly in areas with high levels of youth unemployment (World Vision, 2020). Mentorship and coaching programs. These programs provide young people with mentorship and coaching from experienced professionals. Studies have shown that mentorship and coaching programs can be effective in reducing poverty among young people, particularly in areas with access to education and job opportunities (Mentor, 2019).

Sustainability and Scalability of Youth Work Programs

Several factors contribute to the sustainability and scalability of youth work programs, including funding and resource availability. A stable and sufficient funding base is crucial for the sustainability and scalability of youth work programs. Strong partnership and collaboration. Building partnerships with local organizations, government agencies and private sector entities can help leverage resources, expertise and funding to support the sustainability and scalability of youth work programs. Effective program design and implementation. Well-designed and implemented programs that are tailored to the specific needs of the target population are more likely to be sustainable and scalable. Capacity building and training. The capacity of program staff and volunteers through training and professional development opportunities can help to ensure the sustainability and scalability of youth programs. Monitoring and evaluation. Regular monitoring and evaluation of program outcomes and impacts can help identify areas of improvement and inform decisions about program expansion and replication. Youth participation and engagement. Meaningful participation and engagement of young people in program design, implementation and decision-making processes can help ensure that programs are responsible for their needs and priorities. Government support and policy and framework. Supportive government policy and

framework can help create an enabling environment for youth work programs to operate and scale (World Bank, 2019; ILO, 2020; UNICEF, 2020; World Vision, 2020; OECD, 2020; UNFPA, 2020; World Bank, 2019).

There are various strategies for ensuring the long-term sustainability and scalability of youth work programs, including: ensuring long-term commitment and investment. Secure long-term commitment and investment from stakeholders, including government, donors and private sector entities. Develop a sustainability plan. Establish a clear plan for sustaining programs over the long term including strategies for maintaining funding, partnerships and community engagement. Foster collaboration and knowledge sharing. Establish mechanisms for collaboration and knowledge sharing among programs, organizations and stakeholders. Empower youth participation and leadership. Empower young people to take leadership roles in program design, implementation and decision-making processes. Leverage technology and innovation. Utilize technology and innovation approaches to enhance program delivery, increase efficiency and reduce costs. Develop a scalability plan. Establish a clear plan for scaling up programs, including strategies for expanding reach, increasing impact and maintaining quality. Foster community engagement and ownership. Encourage community participation and ownership of programs to ensure they are responsive to local needs and priorities. Monitor and evaluate progress. Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track program outcomes, identify areas for improvement and inform decision-making processes. Build capacity and expertise. Invest in training and capacity-building initiatives to improve the skills and competencies of program staff and volunteers. Secure funding and partnerships. Establish a stable funding base and form strategic partnerships to ensure the long-term sustainability and scalability of youth work programs.

Policy makers, practitioners and stakeholders should support the sustainability of youth work programs. Policy makers should develop supportive policies and allocate resources to ensure the long-term sustainability of youth work programs; and provide funding and resources to scale up effective youth work programs. Practitioners should design and implement sustainable program models that can be replicated and scaled up; and establish robust monitoring and evaluation systems to track program outcomes and impact. Stakeholders should provide financial and technical support to youth work programs and organizations; and engage in collaborative efforts in promoting the sustainability and scalability of youth work programs. Collective action should be taken to ensure youth work programs respond to local community needs and priorities; and prioritize youth participation and leadership in program design, implementation and decision-making process.

Conclusion
Youth work programs play a vital role in supporting the development of young people, helping them navigate life's challenges and empowering them to succeed. Youth work programs shape the future of individuals, communities and societies by fostering personal development, promoting social inclusion and encouraging active citizenship. Youth work

programs have been proven to be a successful tool for alleviating youth poverty in Kano State, Nigeria. The study highlights the need for youth-centred approaches that prioritize participation, leadership and empowerment in program development and delivery. It also highlights the critical need for reliable funding, collaborative relationships and institutional strengthening to secure the future viability and scalability of youth work programs. The study concludes that youth work programs can be a panacea to poverty among youths in Kano State if they are well designed, implemented and sustained.

Recommendations

1. Policymakers should develop supportive policies and allocate resources to ensure the sustainability and scalability of youth work programs.
2. Practitioners should design and implement sustainable program models, invest in workforce development and prioritize youth participation and leadership.
3. Stakeholders should provide financial and technical support, advocate for supportive policies and engage in collaborative efforts to promote sustainability and scalability.
4. Communities should support and own youth work programs to ensure responsiveness to local needs and priorities.
5. The government and private sector should establish a comprehensive national youth policy framework, provide funding and resources and support the scaling up of effective youth work programs.

References

AFDB (2020). The Effect Youth Employment on Poverty in Africa.

Alliance for Youth Nigeria (2020). Vocational Skills Training Program Report.

Asian Development Bank (2004). Poverty Reduction Strategy Framework. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

Conger, R.., Ge, X., Elder, G.H., Jr., Lorenz, F.O., & Simons, R L. (*1994). Economic Stress, Coersive Family Process and Developmental Problems of Adolescents.* Child Development, 65(2),541-561.

Dandago, K. I., & Aliyu, A. (2014). Youth Unemployment and Poverty Reduction in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria.

De Luca, M., et al. (2017). The Role of Skills in Youth Employment: Evidence from a Mayor's Youth Employment Program. Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 36(1), 98-119.doi: 10.1002/pam.22073

Flanagan, C., & Levine, P. (2010). *Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood.* The Future of Children, 20(1), 159-179. Doi:10.1353/foc.0.0027

Gonzales, E. et al. (2018). *Empowerment and Employment: Evaluating the Impact of Youth Work* Journal of Youth and Society, 50(2), 174-190. Doi: 10.1177/0044118x16806062.

International Labour Organization (2020). Global Empowerment Trends for Youth (2020).

Jeffs, T., & Smith, M. K. (2010). You Work: Voices of Practice. Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing.

Kazepides, T. (2012). Youth Work: A Critical Approach. Palgrave Macmillan

Lewis, O. (1966). *The Culture of Poverty*. Scientific American, 215 (4), 19-25.

Mentor (2019). Monitoring: A Key to Unlocking Young People's Potential

Mufarka Youth Development Initiative (2020). Skills Acquisition Project Report

National Bureau of Statistics (2020). Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria

OECD (2020). OECD Economic Outlook, Volume 2020, Issue 1.

Oyekunle, O.A. (2020). Addressing Youth Unemployment and Poverty through Social Protection programs in Nigeria. A Published Master's Thesis. University of Adger: Norway

Putnam, R.D. (1995). *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital.* Journal of Democracy 6(1), 65-78.

Sani, I. (2019). The Role of Youth Empowerment in Kano State, Nigeria

Sen, A. (1999). Development as Freedom. Oxford University Press

Silver, H. (1994*). Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three paradigms*. International Labour Review, 133(5-6), 531-578.

UNESCO (2020). Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges

UNFPA (2020). The State of the World's Population 2020

UNICEF (2020). The State of the World's Children 2020

United Nations (2020). Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 1- No Poverty

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2020). World Drug Report (2020).

Valentine, G. (2011). *Youth Livelihood and Entrepreneurship in Africa: A Review of the Literature*. Journal of International Development, 23(4), 537-554.

World Bank (2019). World Development Report 2019

World Bank (2020). Poverty and Shared Prosperity (2020): Reversal of Fortunes

World Health Organization (2020). World Health Statistics 2020

World Vision (2020). Youth Empowerment and Leadership Development