

# Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment in Sokoto State: A Study of Selected Leather Industries

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## Abstract

*The youths are the bed rock of any society. Empowering the youth implies having good leaders tomorrow. Deterioration in the development indices of most countries in Africa has forced world leaders to search for other approaches for development in the African continent. For obvious reasons, entrepreneurship is one of those practical approaches that could fast track Africa's trajectory to development. Eradication of unemployment in general but especially youth unemployment has become the prevalent developmental challenge in Africa. This study poses to examine the relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Sokoto State. It attempts to answer the following question: Does the solutions to the problems of unemployment lies mainly in entrepreneurship and self employment? A total of 58 questionnaires were administered to the employees who were randomly selected to serve as the sample population of this study. An interview was also conducted with four entrepreneurs in the leather industry. They were purposely selected because they share the same characteristics- privately*

*owned, age, popularity and size. All the three hypotheses formulated to guide this study were accepted. The study found that entrepreneurship creates job opportunities for the youth, thus, inculcates self-reliance into Nigerian youth, reduces burden on parents and youth criminal activities. We recommended among others that government should as a matter of emergency encourage secondary school leavers and graduates to seek employment in entrepreneurship ventures.*

## Introduction

Eradication of unemployment in general but especially youth unemployment has become the prevalent developmental challenge in almost every country in the world. The large part of human resources in the world is lying idle due to large-scale unemployment. The facts and figures on unemployment in Nigeria are truly overwhelming. Bamkole (2007) reveals that at least 60% of graduates in Nigeria are not able to get employment immediately. In developing countries including Nigeria, one thing is obvious.

The mindset of young people wanting government jobs has to change. Unemployment is important not only in Nigeria but for the entire world. The fundamental purpose of any economy is to meet human needs through the agency of human labour. It means that every able-bodied man and woman in the working age should get work. It is unfortunate to observe, however, what is obvious has not yet become achievable. Youth is the age when life is most creative and joyful. It is the age when idealism blooms and social consciousness is sharpened. The youths are the bed rock of any society. Empowering the youth implies having good leaders tomorrow. This is possible only if the minds and hands of young people are employed in gainful work (Vajpayee, 2003).

According to Chike Okoli Centre for Entrepreneurial Studies (COCES), persisting stagnation and in some cases deterioration in the development indices of most African countries has continued to resonate the need for other alternative approaches for development in the continent. The Centre observes that emerging evidence suggests rather forcefully that entrepreneurship is one of those pragmatic approaches that could fast track Africa's trajectory to development. Diversityworld (2008) reveals that the numbers of small independent businesses are growing in Nigeria making entrepreneurship a realistic option for many people because of obvious reasons, among them is the inability to find work in a particular profession. Even in developed countries small independent businesses are increasing. For example, it is estimated that over 20 million Americans work in home-based businesses and that self-employment rate is growing at over 20% annually. In a study on immigrant entrepreneurship in USA, Camarota (2000) discovers that groups that have the highest self-employment rate tend to have the highest income. The employment generation of small and medium enterprises is much higher than large enterprises because the more capital intensive a production unit is, the less employment it

generates.

The Nigerian governments are beginning to realize the solutions to problems of unemployment lies mainly in entrepreneurship. For example, the former Nigerian President Obasanjo wants the country to become one of the world's top 20 economies during the next two decades and in order to hit that target by 2020, entrepreneurship was one of the priority issues of his government. In Sokoto State, Wamakko (2008) declared that, one of the most ambitious programmes of his administration is youth empowerment. He has established Skill Acquisition Centre to train at least 25,000 youth per annum to acquire requisite skills and be self-employed so as to inculcate self reliance and by extension reducing the burden on parents and at the same time occupying the youth usefully and away from crime.

Theoretical and empirical investigations have emphasized the crucial role that entrepreneurship plays in fostering the development of nations (Drucker, 1970; Shumpeter, 1947; Busentz and Barney (1997); Stevenson and Jarillo (1990); Shane and Venkataraman (2000); Adjebeng-Asem, 2008). For example, Adjebeng-Asem (2008) explains that in the literature, it has been established that the development of innovation and the capacity to translate such innovation into entrepreneurial ventures is a positive step in the direction of socioeconomic development. Countries experience underdevelopment when this effort is missing.

Based on the above consideration, this study surveys the role of entrepreneurship in youth employment generation in Sokoto State. It attempts to answer the following question: Does the solutions to the problems of unemployment lies mainly in entrepreneurship and self employment? The study seeks to address this question by exploring the experiences of leather industries situated in Sokoto Metropolis. The study is guided by four hypotheses (a) that

entrepreneurship inculcates self-reliance in Nigerian youth (b) that entrepreneurship reduces burden on parents and (c) that entrepreneurship does not increase criminal activities among the youth. The remainder of the paper is divided into four sections. The next section discusses the methodology of the study. It is followed by analysis and discussions of the findings of the survey; and the last section concludes the discourse.

### **Methodology**

#### *The Study Area*

Sokoto is situated at about eight kilometers northwest of the confluence of the Rima and Sokoto Rivers. Because of the site is protected by escarpments on the east and northwest, small valleys on the west and southwest, Sokoto historically had an excellent regional situation combined with a strategic defensive position. Moreover, the area was a gathering place for cattle rearers or nomads. Its location in the open country at an elevation of about 275 meters means that the site has the advantage of being above the highest flood levels, and at the same time being able to utilise the flood plains and the river for agriculture and fishing respectively (Mamman, 1999).

Sokoto State shares boundaries with Niger Republic, Zamfara and Kebbi States. Due to high slaughter figures in Sokoto state, animal by-products such as hides and skins are found in large quantities. This provides a favourable situation for the establishment of tannery, leather shoe and bag industries (TradeInvestNigeria, 2008).

#### *Data Collection*

Questionnaire and interview served as the survey instruments employed to collect data for the study. Four leather industries situated in Sokoto Metropolis were purposely selected because they share the same characteristics-age, popularity, size and privately owned. The enterprises in the study include Khalir, Alnuri, Madunka and Mutunci Leather Industries. A simple random

sampling method was used to distribute a total of fifty eight copies of the structured questionnaire to employees of these firms. Data were collected in September, 2008.

The questionnaire was structured into three major parts. Questions in the first part were designed to gather information on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents -age of respondents, sex, monthly income, marital status and education. Questions in the second part were formulated to generate data on contribution of entrepreneurship to socio-economic development. Specifically, the questions sought responses on training opportunities, increase in income, less reliance on importation, employment and satisfaction of societal needs. The last part of the instrument comprised of questions that were carefully formulated to answer the research question. They focused on some of the problems of youth unemployment- burden on parents, self-reliance and crime.

The managers of the four leather industries were also interviewed to solicit information on the role of entrepreneurship in youth employment in Sokoto State. The questions focused on a number of issues-the number of employees they recruit per annum, entrepreneurship training they provide, frequency and methodology of the training programme, role of entrepreneurship in solving social problems, employee motivation and independence.

#### *Methods of Data Analysis*

Simple descriptive statistics (frequencies, tables and percentages) were employed to present and analyse the survey data. Statistical tests were also performed on the data to test their significance. Specifically, we utilised the Chi-square to scrutinize the hypotheses of the study. To compute the degree of freedom for any set, the following formula is used:

$$df = (r-1)(c-1)$$

Where

r = the number of rows

c = the number of column

At 0.05 level of significance from the critical value, we reject the null hypothesis if the calculated value of  $X^2$  is greater than the critical value in the table, else accept the null hypothesis.

*Data Analysis and Discussion*

Interestingly, all the 58 copies of the questionnaire distributed were correctly completed and returned representing 100 per cent response rate. Hence our analysis will be based on 58 respondents. The information gathered from the questionnaire and the oral interview will be presented and analysed concurrently for clear scrutiny.

Table 1 exposes some interesting findings on the age of respondents, their sex, marital status and monthly pay. Out of the total respondents of 58, majority of the respondents (78%) are within 18-45 age brackets. This implies that the employees of these leather industries are in the active labour force of Sokoto State. Most of the members in the active labour force as shown in the table are in the youth category (18-25) age bracket representing 64% of the total respondents.

The table also shows the sex of the respondents. It reveals that the leather industries employ both male and female employees. Table 1 reveals that 59% of the total respondents that participated in the study are females. This finding confirms the claim advanced by Pilat (2008) that countries with the highest level of entrepreneurial activity are also those where women are most engaged. Moreover, this is in line with the observation of Umar (2006) that most of the women in northwestern Nigeria participate in informal sector activities because of the entry requirements of the formal sector such as education and training. When the employers were asked to state the nature of their work, they reveal that they are concentrated in sewing of the leather goods. This confirms the Bullock's (1994) findings that women are concentrated in blue-collar jobs and that they do work associated with 'home-making' such as sewing, food preparation, assembly etc. But unfortunately, the owners of these enterprises that participated in this study are males. This means men have dominated the

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

AGE (Yrs)			SEX			MARRITAL STATUS			MONTHLY INCOME		
Age Bracket	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent	Status	Frequency	Percent	Income Bracket	Frequency	Percent
8-17	09	0.16	Male	24	0.41	Married	48	0.83	Below N5,000	00	0.00
18-25	37	0.64				Single	10	0.17	N5,000-10,00	10	0.17
26-35	08	0.14				Divorce	00	0.00	N10,001-15,000	20	0.34
36-45	04	0.07				Separated	00	0.00	N15,001-25,000	28	0.48
46-65	00	0.00	Female	34	0.59				N25,001 and above	00	0.00
Total	58	100		58	100		58	100			

Source: Questionnaire administered (2008)

ownership of entrepreneurial ventures.

On the marital status of the respondents, Table 1 also shows that only few of them are married representing 17% of the total respondents. This is not surprising because majority of the respondents are females and moreover, Sokoto is a Muslim dominated area. The impact of Islam on these people is deep and widespread. Islam encourages Muslims to quickly marry if they are opportune.

Lastly, Table 1 presents the monthly income of the respondents. None of them earn less than N5, 000 per month. In fact, majority of them representing 76% of the total respondents earn between N5000 and N25, 000 per month depending on employee performance.

Table 2 also shows responses on another demographic variable, that is, education. The table reveals that majority of the respondents have not gone through the Western education system. Specifically, none of the respondents did attend both secondary and tertiary institutions, representing 81% of the total respondents. Only few of them (19%) have attained primary education. This implies that most of the youth employ in these enterprises are illiterates. This finding corroborates with evidence from studies carried out by Awosika (1992), Vones and Lucas (1992), Strobel (1979), and Dantumbishi (2002)

in Nigeria and other African countries and the Middle East which tend to support the view that Western education is low among Muslims. The finding of this study also implies that those that are educated prefer to take employment in the public sector which supports Nicks (2008) conclusion that one of the factors that have in many ways discouraged the flow of entrepreneurship development in Nigeria is the value system brought about by formal education. With formal education, people had the opportunity of being employed in the civil service and therefore allowing the youth to depend on the government. Thus, since uneducated youth have no opportunity to work in the civil service, the only option for them is to work in entrepreneurship ventures and eventually become self-employed.

Table 3 explains clearly whether the respondents are exposed to training opportunities. Majority of the respondents (60%) completely agree that they receive training while on the job. Only few respondents (31%) have a negative view. The mixed results observed may be as a result of the feeling that apart from the on-the-job training, the employees are not exposed to off-the-job training. The obvious explanation is that since almost all of the respondents have no Western education, the employers cannot sponsor them to enroll in tertiary institutions, especially the Polytechnics.

Table 2: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Quranic Education	47	0.81
Primary	11	0.19
Secondary	00	0.00
Tertiary	00	0.00
Total	58	100

Source: Questionnaire administered (2008)

Table 3: Training Opportunities for Employees

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	20	0.34
Agree	15	0.26
Undecided	05	0.09
Strongly Disagree	08	0.14
Disagree	10	0.17
Total	58	100

Source: Questionnaire administered (2008)

Table 4: Relationship between Entrepreneurship and Increase in Income of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	30	0.52
Agree	28	0.48
Undecided	00	0.00
Strongly Disagree	00	0.00
Disagree	00	0.00
Total	58	100

Source: Questionnaire administered (2008)

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents Based on Whether Entrepreneurship Reduces reliance on Importation

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	08	0.14
Agree	10	0.17
Undecided	14	0.24
Strongly Disagree	12	0.21
Disagree	06	0.10
Total	58	100

Source: Questionnaire administered (2008)

Table 4 presents the responses on whether entrepreneurship ventures create avenue for earning income for youth. All the respondents (100%) accept the opinion that entrepreneurship has enhanced their earnings. This implies that, entrepreneurship provides a source of income for the Nigerian youth.

It has been argued in the literature that entrepreneurship helps in reducing importation of goods and services into a country. Table 5 shows mixed results. Equal number of respondents

(31%) each indicated that they fully agree or disagree respectively with this opinion. When interviewed, the employers in this study accept that their customers have stopped buying leather goods from abroad. In fact, they argued that in the near future, with government support they will start exporting the goods to other countries. On the other hand, they also explained that the industry presently imports only some few inputs such as sewing machines and dyes.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents Based on Whether Entrepreneurship Provides Employment to Youth in Sokoto State

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	28	0.48
Agree	18	0.31
Undecided	00	0.00
Strongly Disagree	04	0.07
Disagree	08	0.14
Total	58	100

Source: Questionnaire administered (2008)

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents Based on Whether Entrepreneurship Satisfies Societal Needs

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	32	0.55
Agree	18	0.31
Undecided	00	0.00
Strongly Disagree	02	0.03
Disagree	06	0.10
Total	58	100

Source: Questionnaire administered (2008)

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents Based on Whether Entrepreneurship Instills Self-Reliance in Youth

Variable	EMPLOYEES		EMPLOYERS	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	25	0.43	04	1.00
Agree	26	0.45	00	0.00
Undecided	00	0.00	00	0.00
Strongly Disagree	04	0.07	00	0.00
Disagree	03	0.05	00	0.00
Total	58	100	04	100

Source: Questionnaire administered (2008)

Table 6 shows that 79% of the total respondents both strongly agree or simply agree that entrepreneurship has helped a lot in providing jobs to the youth in Sokoto State. This agrees with what the employers said during the interview. All the employers in this study indicate that annually they provide job opportunities to more than one hundred youth. Thus, entrepreneurs augment the effort of governments in job creation. Respondents were also asked to indicate their opinion on whether entrepreneurship provides

goods and services to satisfy the needs and wants of the society. Table 7 shows that majority of the respondents (86%) accept that entrepreneurship ventures are established to fill a gap in satisfying societal needs.

Table 9 shows that majority of the employees (88%) Strongly agree and simply agree that entrepreneurship inculcates self-reliance into the youth. On the other hand, all the employers in the study (100%) strongly agree that there is positive relationship between entrepreneurship and self-

reliance. They explained further that most of the youth become independent by establishing their own ventures after working for two to three years. Thus, entrepreneurship gives youth the opportunity to be self-employed and financially independent.

Table 8 shows that almost all the respondents (both employers and employees) agree that entrepreneurship has helped in reducing burden on parents by providing employment to the youth. Only few employees (9%) indicate a negative opinion. Akeredolu-Ale (1999) observes that one of the Nigeria's youth problem is economic hardship; especially poverty at the household level. Thus, open youth rebellion against parents, against the older generation, against the state and/or the society will be curtailed if financial burden on parents is reduced through youth employment.

Involvement of youth in serious deviance, crime and other social problems such as armed robbery, drug trafficking and prostitution are partly caused by unemployment. Table 10 reveals that majority of the employees representing 60% of the total respondents strongly agree that entrepreneurship helps in curtailing criminal activities among the youth while all the employers (100%) completely support the opinion.

**Test of Hypotheses**

Three hypotheses are to be tested in this study using Chi-square distribution.

- a) That entrepreneurship inculcates self-reliance in Nigerian youth
- b) That entrepreneurship reduces burden on parents and
- c) That entrepreneurship does not increase criminal activities among the youth.

In order to test the first hypothesis, the observed values in Table 8 will be represented below:

Table 9: Distribution of Respondents Based on Whether Entrepreneurship Reduces Burden on Parents

Variable	EMPLOYEES		EMPLOYERS	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	35	0.60	04	1.00
Agree	18	0.31	00	0.00
Undecided	00	0.00	00	0.00
Strongly Disagree	00	0.00	00	0.00
Disagree	05	0.09	00	0.00
Total	58	100	04	100

Source: Questionnaire administered (2008)

Table 10: Distribution of Respondents Based on Whether Entrepreneurship Reduces Criminal Activities among Youth

Variable	EMPLOYEES		EMPLOYERS	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	35	0.60	04	1.00
Agree	23	0.40	00	0.00
Undecided	00	0.00	00	0.00
Strongly Disagree	00	0.00	00	0.00
Disagree	00	0.00	00	0.00
Total	58	100	04	100

Source: Questionnaire administered (2008)

CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	TOTAL
EMPLOYEE	25	26	00	04	03	58
EMPLOYER	04	00	00	00	00	04
TOTAL	29	26	00	04	03	62

Table 11: CONTINGENCY TABLE (From Table 8)

Fo	Fe	fo - fe	(fo-fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(fo-fe)^2}{Fe}$
25	27.13	-2.13	4.54	0.17
26	24.32	1.68	2.82	0.12
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
04	3.74	0.26	0.07	0.02
03	0.31	2.69	7.24	23.35
04	1.87	2.13	4.54	2.43
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
				$\chi^2_c = 26.09$

To test the second hypothesis, Table 9 will be represented as shown below:

CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	TOTAL
EMPLOYEES	35	18	00	00	05	58
EMPLOYERS	04	00	00	00	00	04
TOTAL	39	18	00	00	05	62

The degree of freedom (df) = (r-1) (c-1) = where "r" represent number of rows and "c" number of columns. Thus, df = 2-1 x 5-1=4. From the table, at 0.05% level of significance and at the df of 4, the tabulated value = 0.711 for x<sup>2</sup> to be significant at 0.05 level of significance, therefore x<sup>2</sup> must equal to 0.711. The decision rule is: reject H<sub>0</sub>, if x<sup>2</sup> computed is greater than x<sup>2</sup> table value.

Table 11 shows that the x<sup>2</sup>C calculated = 26.09. At 0.05% level of significance and 4 degree of

freedom, x<sup>2</sup> tabulated = 0.711. Since calculated value is greater than the table value, we accept the hypothesis that entrepreneurship inculcates self-reliance into the youth.

The x<sup>2</sup>C calculated = 1.03 as shown in Table 12 below. At 0.05% level of significance and 4 degree of freedom, x<sup>2</sup> tabulated = 0.711. Since calculated value is greater than the table value, we accept the hypothesis that entrepreneurship reduces burden on parents.

Table 12: CONTINGENCY TABLE (From Table 9)

Fo	Fe	fo - fe	(fo-fe) <sup>2</sup>	(fo-fe) <sup>2</sup> Fe
35	36.48	-1.48	2.19	0.06
18	16.84	1.16	1.35	0.08
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
05	4.68	0.32	0.10	0.02
04	2.52	1.48	2.19	0.87
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
				$\chi^2_c = 1.03$

The last hypothesis will be tested using Table 10. The table is represented as indicated below:

CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	TOTAL
EMPLOYEE	25	23	00	00	00	58
EMPLOYER	04	00	00	00	00	04
TOTAL	29	23	00	00	00	62

Table 13: CONTINGENCY TABLE (From Table 10)

Fo	Fe	fo - fe	(fo-fe) <sup>2</sup>	(fo-fe) <sup>2</sup> Fe
25	27.15	-2.13	4.54	0.17
23	21.52	1.48	2.19	0.10
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
04	1.87	0.12	0.01	0.01
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
				$\chi^2_c = 0.28$

The  $\chi^2$  calculated = 0.28. At 0.05% level of significance and 4 degree of freedom,  $\chi^2$  tabulated = 0.711. Since calculated value is less than the table value, we accept the null hypothesis that entrepreneurship does not increase criminal activities among Nigerian youth.

### Conclusions

Youth unemployment problem is a social problem in the sense that the problem has significant and adverse consequences not only for the well-being of particular individuals or groups but also for the integration and functioning of the society. This study has established that entrepreneurship is an engine for job creation and solution to social problems in Nigeria and specifically in Sokoto State. It is therefore recommended that:

1. It is the finding of this study that most of the respondents have no formal education. Nigeria governments at all levels should encourage secondary school leavers and graduates to seek employment in entrepreneurship ventures. This will reduce the burden on the governments (Federal, State and the Local Government) for providing jobs to the youth who have finished their schooling. Since eventually, employees in these entrepreneurial ventures will become self-employed by establishing their own businesses, if they were educated, their businesses will perform better than what we are witnessing presently.
2. The government should give necessary support to entrepreneurs for their businesses to survive. This may be in the form of patronizing their goods through awarding contracts to supply their products to the government and its agencies.
3. The study finds that, all the leather industries in Sokoto state are owned by men. Government should encourage women to establish their own entrepreneurship ventures in the leather industry. This can be achieved by establishing Women's Business Development Centres.

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