

COUNSELLING FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: PERSPECTIVES OF YOUTHS IN SAMARU-ZARIA, KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study focuses on Counselling for Sustainable Economic Development: Perspective of Youths in Samaru-Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria. It was guided by two research objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study comprises of 60 youth with small businesses in Samaru-Zaria. The researchers adopted purposive sampling techniques to select 30 participants for the study. Counselling for Sustainable Economic Development Questionnaire (CSEDQ) developed by the researchers and validated by experts in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The Null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significant using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics. It was found that there is a significant relationship between challenges of youths and sustainable economic development with ($r_{cal}=0.615$, $p=0.01$) and also significant relationship exists between counselling interventions and challenges of youths economic development ($r=0.635$, $p=0.011$). Basis of the findings, it was concluded that the main challenges of youths' sustainable economic development is unemployment and corruption of embezzlement among self-fish individuals in the country. Also,

counselling interventions play vital roles in empowering the youths through strategies and skills to drive the economic development.

Keywords: Economic, Growth, Development and Counselling interventions

Introduction

Nigeria is a country with large population with over 60% of its citizens mainly youth according the population census. Her main source of revenue lies on oil and gas. But the country's population is threatened by poverty due to unemployment; harsh economic environment and political instability. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), 87.3% of employed Nigerians were primarily self-employed with the remaining 12.7% being primarily engaged as employees. This statistics shows that poverty has aggrandized to a level where citizens desire to take advantage of any civil unrest to loot public goods as compensation for the economic condition as demonstrated during the August 2024 nationwide protest. Hopelessness and frustrations often lead the youth to embrace resistance to crime (UNDP, 2018). This is why poverty can be termed as a fertile soil for societal problem. Adeyemi (2006) attributed problem of economic development to a lack of political legitimacy to which proceeds to peg most of the crisis and especially the inability to bring about genuine development that responds adequately to the needs and aspirations of the masses. Outcome of frustration of the youth nurture rebellion and apathy among them and bring about restiveness, terrorism, violence and anti-social activities.

Youths are the major work force; strength and success of every nation since majority are actively involved in the social, economic and political activities in the nations. But this is true in the countries that provide enabling ground for the youths to unleash their potentials (Aliakor, 2016). Entrepreneurship and self-reliance is the bedrock of the youth in the society. Youth challenges can be surmounted through counselling initiatives spanning through career awareness, entrepreneurship, the art of leadership and management, growth mindset, and personal development. Economic growth is an increase in the production of economic goods and services compared with the previous growth. Increases in capital goods, labor force, technology, and human capitals all contribute to economic growth. Economic growth is measured in terms of increase in aggregate market value of additional goods and services produced, using estimates like GDP. Tordaro (1997) sees economic growth as an indicator to measure the level of economic development. Sullivant and Steven (2003) as cited by Abraham and Ahmed (2011) observed that the term economic growth refers to the increase of specific measures such as real national income, gross domestic product or per capita income of a nation.

Indeed (2024) describes economic growth as when the gross domestic product (GDP) increases over a period of time. Sustainable economic growth means maintaining the growth rate without causing other economic problems. Again, Indeed (2024) defines sustainable economic growth as maintaining growth without creating economic problems or complications.

This implies the practice of supporting long-term economic growth without depleting resources especially like water, food, energy, waste and ecology.

Economic sustainability is a practice that supports long term economic growth without negatively impacting social, environmental and cultural aspects of the community; it is an approach to economic planning that attempts to foster economic growth while preserving the quality of the standard of living of the people and future generations. Economic sustainability is linked with increased economic activity and property value, savings and lowered operating costs; it brings about additional savings values, revenues and economic development. Economic development is capable of addressing poverty and hunger, while also creating the path for a better standard of living. The social benefits of sustainable economic development are improved environmental quality and life. Tordaro (1997) describes economic development as social and technological progress. Abraham and Ahmed (2011) assert that economic development is linked to the well-being and quality of life of individuals. But the reality seems not to be felt in the country contemporarily as Omoniyi, & Iyabo, (2016) rightly assert that corruption and economic mismanagement in Nigeria have contributed to the poor health and socio-economic status of the citizens. To support this argument, Ike-Muonso (2024) reported that Nigeria's abundant raw material resources, from 1980s to 2020, over 2,000 major industries and over 10,000 small-scale industries have closed down due to the poor or hash economic conditions in the country.

Nelsen-Jones as cited in Kolo (2015) asserts that counselling can be approached in a number of ways by definition. He mentions that counselling involves a relationship; a reservoir of skills; a process, and a problem-solving. Quality of the relationship in counselling is determined by warmth, unconditional positive regards, genuineness and sensitivity to the clients' understanding and thinking process. Skills are used to succeed in a counselling encounter. The skills are selectively deployed to meet the needs of the client, in this case economic need. These skills which are interventions may focus on the feelings and thinking of the individuals. Therefore counselling is a process of applying the required skills or interventions to resolve the concern of the individual. According to American Counselling Association (ACA), (2024) defines counselling as a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, and education and career goals. ACA explains that counsellors help people gain personal insights, develop strategies and come up with real-life solutions to the problems and challenges they face in every area of life.

Theoretical Perspective

The study adopts Person-Centered Theory by Rogers (1940). Carl Rogers' theory proposes that supportive and non-judgmental environment encourages individuals to explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. In this context, the system provides unconditional positive regards and empathetic understanding environment for youth to explore their potentials

with the aim of solving economic challenges. Through this system, individuals can be encouraged to take economic decisions and actions; explore alternative means, resources, and resilience in achieving economic growth and development.

Review of Empirical Studies

Kuburat and Oluwole (2021) conducted a study on Vocational and Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition as Precursors of Economic Sustainability: Counselling Implication. They found that a combination of vocational and effective entrepreneurial skills significantly predict the economic sustainability of adolescents ($F(2,267)= 6.672, P<0.05$). The study concluded that career counsellor should help individuals to choose the vocational and entrepreneurial skill training that best suit their needs. Daodu, and Abidogun, (2024) conducted a study on the role of counselling psychology in empowering individuals to overcome poverty in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study highlights the therapeutic techniques and interventions employed by counselling psychologists to address the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural barriers associated with poverty. They found self-efficacy as significant therapeutic interventions. The study stresses the importance of integrating counselling psychology into poverty alleviation programs and policies to promote holistic and lasting empowerment.

However, many studies have not been conducted in this area. Therefore the gap informed the decision of the researchers to conduct a study in this area.

Objective of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study. To determine;

1. The relationship between challenges of youths and sustainable economic development
2. The relationship between counselling interventions and challenges of youths' economic development

Research Questions

The following are the research questions that guided the study;

1. what is the relationship between challenges of youths and sustainable economic development?
2. what is the relationship between counselling interventions and challenges of youths' economic development?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance

H₀₁ there is no significant relationship between challenges of youths and sustainable economic development

H₀₂ there is no significant relationship between counselling interventions and challenges of youths' economic development

Methodology

The researchers adopt correlational research design to determine the relationship between counselling and sustainable economic growth and development with the youth in focus. The population consists of 60 youths from ages 18-35 years in Samaru environs that are small scale business owners. A sample of 30 youths was carefully drawn using purposive sampling technique. The size of the sample was to obtain a controllable, accurate data for the study as well as give a genuine response to the instrument. Counselling for Sustainable Economic Development Questionnaire (CSEDQ) was designed by the researchers and validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The designed instrument has ten (10) items in each of the two variables. The instrument adopts liker scale of; Strongly Agreed (4); Agreed (3); Disagreed (2) and strongly disagreed (1). The validation was carried out to know if the instrument was appropriate for the study To test the reliability of the instrument, the researcher administer the instrument to 10 youths who were not part of the study. The reliability of the instrument was tested at 0.05 alpha levels of significance.

Results and Discussions

Analysis of bio data variables

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender		
Male	20	66.7
Female	10	33.3
Total	30	100.0
Age:		
18-26	16	53.3
27-34	12	40.0
35 and Above	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0
Educational level:		
Undergraduate	26	86.7
Graduate	2	6.7
Post Graduate	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0
Employment Status:		
Employed	4	13.3
Unemployed	11	36.7
Entrepreneur	15	50.0
Total	30	100.0

On gender, a total of 20 (66.7%) are male and the rest 10 representing (33.3%) are females. This shows that male gender outweighs the female gender. On age, a total of 16

(53.3%) falls within 18-26 years while 12 (40.0%) falls within age bracket of 27-34 and the rest 2 (6.7%) falls within age bracket of 35 years and above. This shows that participants from who falls 18-26 outweigh the other bracket. The educational level, showed that while 26 (86.7%) of respondents are undergraduates, 2 (6.7%) are graduates and the remaining 2 (6.7%) are post graduates. On the employment status: A total of 4 (13.3%) are employed while 11 (36.7%) are unemployed as against the rest 15(50.0%) that are entrepreneurs.

Answering Research Questions

Question 1: what is the relationship between challenges of youths and sustainable economic development?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD
Challenges of Youths’ Economic Development							
1	The biggest challenge faced by youth is unemployment	15	13	2	0	3.4	0.62
2	Economic resources are embezzled by self- ish individuals	21	5	3	1	3.53	0.82
3	No capital to start small scale business	12	11	4	3	3.07	0.98
4	I started a business yet it crashes due to harsh economy whether	14	11	2	3	3.20	0.96
5	I take three square meal a day comfortably	4	3	13	10	2.03	0.99
Sustainable Economic Development							
6	Sometime my I touch my capital to feed my family	14	12	2	2	3.27	0.86
7	I spend more than I earn monthly	17	6	4	3	3.23	1.04
8	I do other side jobs to support my business	10	6	7	7	2.63	1.18
9	I struggle on a daily basis to feed my fami- ly	8	11	7	4	2.77	1.01
10	Technology is taking jobs rapidly	13	13	3	1	3.27	0.78
Cumulative Mean						3.13	

Decision Mean =2.500

Above table shows that the challenges of youths’ economic development is very high due to the cumulative mean, 3.13 above the decision mean of 2.500. Specifically the highest challenge is that Economic resources are embezzled by selfish individuals, as this view attracted the highest mean of 3.53 as details showed that while 21 strongly agreed, 5 agreed as against 3 that disagreed and the rest 1 strongly disagree. Also another serious challenge is unemployment as this had the second highest mean agreement of 3.43 as details showed that while 15 strongly agree, 13 agreed as against the rest 2 that disagreed. In summary, the challenges facing the youth in achieving sustainable economic development, are quite disturbing, as the main challenges facing the youth Economic resources are embezzled by

selfish individuals and unemployment. Both the counselling interventions and challenges of youths’ economic development do not have significant difference in their mean and standard deviation.

Questions Two: what is the relationship between counselling interventions and challenges of youths’ economic development?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	S D	Mean	STD
Counselling interventions							
1	I know the importance of counselling in my fi- nance and business life.	70	45	24	21	3.57	0.56
2	I set goals and plan for achieving economic devel- opment.	23	6	1	0	3.73	0.65
3	Relevant skill set and training are available in counselling profession	14	15	1	0	3.43	0.56
4	Counselling has helped me save more money for my business start-up.	15	12	3	0	3.40	0.67
5	counselling is the way to improve living standard among youth.	18	9	3	0	3.50	0.68
Challenges of Youths’ Economic Development							
6	The biggest challenge faced by youth is unem- ployment.	19	11	0	0	3.63	0.49
7	Economic resources are embezzled by selfish individuals	13	16	1	0	3.40	0.56
8	No capital to start small scale business	12	17	1	0	3.37	0.55
9	I started a business yet it crashes due to harsh economy whether	15	15	0	0	3.50	0.50
10	I take three square meal a day comfortably	22	8	0	0	3.72	0.45
Cumulative Mean						3.52	

Decision Mean =2.500

The counselling interventions for challenges of youths’ economic development are quite commendable, as their cumulative mean response of 3.52 is above the 2.500 decision mean. Specifically, setting goals and planning are essential for achieving economic sustainability, as this has the highest mean of 3.73 with details showed that 23 strongly agree while 6 agreed as against 1 that disagreed. Also, Having ‘three square meal a day’ has the second highest mean of 3.72 as details showed that while 22 strongly agreed, the rest 8 agreed with this view. In summary, the counselling interventions for challenges of youths’ economic development are quite commendable, *especially as* setting goals and planning are essential for achieving economic growth and sustainability. Both the counselling interventions and challenges of youths’ economic development do not have significant difference in their mean and standard deviation.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: there is no significant relationship between challenges of youths and sustainable economic development

Table 1: Pearson product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on the relationship between challenges of youths and sustainable economic development Perspectives of Youths in Samaru-Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria

	N	Mean	STD	df	r-cal	P
Challenges of Youths' Economic Development	30	15.13	4.37	27	0.615	0.01
Sustainable Economic Development	30	15.17	4.87			

$r\text{-cal}=0.615 > \text{critical } r \text{ at } df\ 27, p\ 0.01 < 0\ 0.05$

Outcome of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics revealed that the calculated p-value of 0.01 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance at a correlation $r=0.615$. This means that challenges of youths' economic development has significant positive relationship on the sustainable economic development. This implies that the higher challenges of youth economic development, the higher youth device mean to sustain their economic development. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between challenges of youths and sustainable economic development is hereby rejected.

Hypothesis Two: there is no significant relationship between counselling interventions and challenges of youths' economic development

Table 2: Pearson product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on the relationship between counselling intervention and challenges of youths economic development Perspectives of Youths in Samaru-Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria

Variable	N	Mean	STD	df	r-cal	P
Counselling intervention	30	17.63	3.12	27	0.635	0.011
Challenges of Youths	30	17.62	2.55			

$r\text{-cal } 0.635 = \text{critical at } df\ 27, p=0.011 < 0\ 0.05$

The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics revealed that the calculated p-value of 0.011 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance at a correlation $r=0.635$. This means that counselling interventions has significant relationship on the challenges of youth's economic development. This implies that counselling interventions if not in place, the higher the challenges of youths' economic development. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between counselling interventions and challenges of youths' economic development is hereby rejected.

Discussion

The first finding indicated that challenges of youths economic development has significant positive relationship on sustainable economic development. The positive values of the r-cal imply that when youths are faced with economic challenges, youth devices strategies, or means of sustaining their economic development. This outcome concurred with the finding of Kuburat and Oluwole (2021) who conducted a study on Vocational and Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition as Precursors of Economic Sustainability: Counselling Implication. They found that a combination of vocational and effective entrepreneurial skills significantly predict economic sustainability of the youths. This also implies that when youths are faced with economic challenges, they device positive means like acquisition of entrepreneurship skills as a way of sustaining and promoting their economic development. Through this entrepreneurship, youths are engaged in businesses that will help them alleviate their financial struggles instead of depending solely on government for greener pasture.

The second finding indicated that counselling interventions has significant relationship with the challenges of youths' economic development. The r-cal implies that counselling interventions have influence on sustainable economic development of youths. This finding collaborates with the finding of Daodu and Abidogun (2024) who conducted a study on the Role of Counselling Psychology in Empowering Individuals to Overcome Poverty in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study found that some therapeutic techniques that can help youth to navigate and sustains their economic development. Rogers (1940)'s propositions also encourages the youths through enabling environment for youths to exploit their potentials in developing themselves through skills acquisition for strategic sustainable economic development.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the main challenges of youth sustainable economic development is unemployment and the corruption of embezzlement among selfish individuals. However, counselling plays vital roles in empowering youth through intervention strategies to drive the economy. Through counselling programme like essential life skill, goal setting, problem solving, personal growth and development and decision making would better equip them to contribute meaningfully to the economy. Therefore, it is imperative for stakeholders to invest in counselling initiatives that cater for career and entrepreneurial needs of youth and enabling environment to explore the advantages available in the economy.

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