



Unlocking the Potentials of Agribusinesses among the Youths: Implications for Poverty Reduction in Benue South Senatorial District

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Abstract

In all societies of the world, a virile youth is the bedrock on which national development is predicated. Their energies, inventiveness, characters and orientations define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. In Nigeria, the greatest challenge confronting the youth today is unemployment which has become a great challenge to national security. Despite alleged success of various youth empowerment programmes across the country, over 54% of Nigerian youths remain unemployed. The Benue South Senatorial District comprises of nine local government areas with an estimated land mass of about 390 square Kilometres, and estimated population of about 1.8 million people, about 45% youth. Agribusiness is the only or one of the most flourishing businesses of the Benue South Senatorial District. This paper is posited to unveil the main challenges of youth self-employment and entrepreneurship in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue state Nigeria, and to provide suitable suggestions to promote and boost entrepreneurship particularly in agribusiness among the teaming youth in the area. Data was collected from the primary source by using a structured questionnaire. The sample was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The target respondents were youths between the ages of 20 and 30 years. Data was gathered from 270 youth drawn from the nine Local Government Areas of Benue South Senatorial District of the State, who participated in three-day empowerment programmes sponsored by comrade Abba Moro, the senator representing the senatorial districts between 2019 and 2021. SPSS and Excel were used to analyse the data. The findings however, indicate that factors other than entrepreneurship education finance/start-up capital and business support services are responsible for the laxity of youths in agribusiness in Benue South Senatorial District

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Youth Unemployment, Youth Empowerment, Agri-business, Poverty Reduction

Introduction

In all societies of the world, a virile youth is the bedrock on which national development is predicated. Without doubt, the youth reflect the positive and negative picture of our modern society. Their energies, inventiveness, characters and orientations define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. The role of the youth in the nation-building process cannot be overemphasized as countries that develop and utilize their youth in the right directions seem to be more developed. The young people are not only our future, they are also our present. They are the most connected, the most outspoken, most open-minded generation and powerful change agents the world has ever had. Despite all litanies of potentials, Nigerian youths had been exported to the most trying time imaginable. According to Fan, Agu and Tsav (2016) millions of Nigerian youths have been left wallowing in poverty as they roam the streets of major cities in search of non-

existent jobs and opportunities. Several graduates of tertiary institutions have been forced into crimes and criminality, and those of them who are not very physically daring have taken to frauds and all sorts of shady pre-occupation. The young women in this frustrated class have taken to disguised prostitution or full-blown harlotry.

Since the collapse of oil boom of the 1970s, there has been a dramatic increase in the incidence and severity of poverty in Nigeria, arising in part from dwindling performance of the agricultural sector where a vast majority of the poor are employed. Furthermore, poverty in Nigeria has been assuming wider dimensions including household income poverty, food poverty/insecurity, poor access to public services and infrastructures, unsanitary environment, illiteracy and ignorance, insecurity of lives and properties, and poor governance. In response to the dwindling performance of agriculture in the country, governments have over the years initiated numerous policies and programs aimed at restoring the agricultural sector to its pride of place in the economy (International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), 2005).

Before the introduction of SAP in 1986, past Nigerian governments came up with different measures intended to better the lot of Nigerians, especially people living in rural areas such as youths. Such measures of agricultural projects were aimed at providing gainful employment, food for the populace and raw materials for industries, housing and educational programmes. The overall objective in the case of agriculture was to ensure food sufficiency for the country. However, programmes embarked upon included Green Revolution, Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), National Agricultural and Land Development Authority (NALDA), Seed Multiplication Programme, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), among others (Ndem in Ajani, E.N. etal 2015).

Problem Statement

Unemployment is one of the most challenging issues in most developing countries. In the same vein, unemployment is the greatest problem confronting the Nigerian youth today which has invariably become a great challenge to national security. The unemployment and underemployment rate in Nigeria as of the second quarter of 2020 according to National Bureau of Statistics cited in Olufemi (2020) is 28.6% showing that about 21.8 million Nigerian youth are unemployed. According to the International Labor Organization database (ILO-STAT, 2021), the global unemployment rate stood at 6.4% in 2020, and it was forecasted that the global unemployment rate would be over 200 million in 2022 of which the majority portion will come from low and middle-income countries (ILO, 2021). Despite alleged success of various youth empowerment programmes across the country, a substantial percentage of Nigerian youth remains unemployed. The unemployment record in the country clearly portrays an increase in idle hands across the length and breadth of Nigeria. It is often said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop, so an unemployed youth is a disaster waiting to happen. Activities of groups such as Boko-Haram, Niger Delta militants, Biafra agitators and recently, the Badoo group, herdsmen and bandits have serious implications for national security in the country. Sadly, some of these rebellious groups have youths at the forefront of their nefarious activities. The number of tertiary institutions has remarkably increased, and their curriculum expanded. Despite the increase, graduates' quality still needs to be restored and even improved from what it used to be. According to Balogun (2016), the enrolment and graduates turn out to have increased

yearly without reflection in the Nigerian economy. Brixiová, et al (2014), Oladokun, & Ayodele (2015). Omaye & Adedoyin (2016), Palanivelu & Manikandan (2016), Fasola, (2019). and United Nations DESA Report (2015) strongly believe the issues of shortage of entrepreneurial skills, overemphasis on concept, not involving youth in traditional decision-making structure, limited access to finance/startup capital, inconsistent government policies, poor social infrastructure, among several others pose greater challenges to Nigerian youth today.

Research Questions

Arising from the aforementioned challenges, the following questions are posited to guide the discussion.

1. What is the influence of entrepreneurship education on the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts?
2. How does finance/start-up capital affect agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts?
3. What is the impact of business support services on the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts?

Research Objectives

The primary goal of this study is to identify the major constraints to youth entrepreneurship and proffer suitable recommendations to boost entrepreneurship mindset among youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts. The following specific objectives would be pursued.

1. To determine the influence of entrepreneurship education on the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.
2. To ascertain the impact of finance/start-up capital affect agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.
3. To ascertain the impact of business support services on the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.

Research Hypotheses

H₁: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.

H₂: There is no significant relationship between finance/start-up capital and the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.

H₃: There is no significant relationship between business support services and the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.

Theoretical Framework

Entrepreneurship theories and research remain important to the development of the entrepreneurship field. It is a universal fact that entrepreneurship is an important factor in economic development. The traditional notion of an entrepreneur is that he/she brings together the factor inputs and organizes productive activity. This paper is anchored on two specific theories relating to the major constructs in this study.

▪ **Human Capital Theory**

The human capital theory started in the early 1960s. The human capital theory has elevated education to a vital instrument in boosting economic growth. The human capital theory is based on the premise that individuals and society derive economic benefits from investment in people (Puni, et al. 2018). Human capital theory emphasizes how education increases the productivity and efficiency of workers by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human capability, which is a product of innate abilities and investment in human beings (Kwabena, 2011). Promoting education as an investment according to Brixiová, et al. (2014), yields returns in due course to the individual in terms of pay and to the state in terms of employment and economic growth. The related literature to human capital theory distinguishes among several types and means of education, such as formal (primary, secondary, and tertiary levels), informal (at home, work, on-the-job, apprenticeship and specialized vocational training).

▪ **Resource-Based Theory**

The resource-based view is widely adopted in the strategic management literature and increasingly in entrepreneurship studies. Resource-based theories focus on the way individuals leverage different types of resources to get entrepreneurial efforts off the ground (Tingko & Wenyi; 2011) Access to capital improves the chances of getting a new venture off the ground, but entrepreneurs often start ventures with little ready capital. Peteraf, (2018) identifies other resources a would-be entrepreneur might leverage to include social networks and the information, as well as human resources, such as education. In some cases, the intangible elements of leadership the entrepreneur adds to the mix operate as resource that a business cannot replace. The Resource-based theory of entrepreneurship argues that access to resources by founders is an important predictor of opportunity based entrepreneurship and new venture growth (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001). This theory stresses the importance of financial, social and human resources. Thus, access to resources enhances the individual's ability to detect and act upon discovered opportunities (Aldrich, 2001).

Thematic Review

▪ **Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship is widely seen as an important driver of economic development, employment and innovation. Education plays a vital role in shaping people's behaviour, even though some successful entrepreneurs may not further their education. Robinson & Sexton cited in Al-Jubari, et al 2019, however observed that many entrepreneurs have been greatly influenced by their education and established successful entrepreneurial ventures. Therefore, the importance of education in general and entrepreneurship education in particular should be realized as it helps individuals develop great ideas, execute them and launch and grow business ventures. Entrepreneurship education has gained growing prominence globally given its role as a facilitator of entrepreneurship engagement. Higher education institutions around the globe have extended entrepreneurship education and increased the number of learning programs offered in order to contribute to creating more entrepreneurs in society and ultimately improve economic development and innovation (Nabi, Walmsley, Liñán, Akhtar, & Neame, 2018). The importance and growth of entrepreneurship education is based on the argument that entrepreneurship can be learnt since it is a process that can facilitate entrepreneurial intentionality and perceptions of self-efficacy and control of business ventures (Ahmed, Chandran, & Klobas, 2017; Othman & Nasrudin, 2016; Westhead & Solesvik, 2016).

Onuoha cited in Echu, et al (2019) define entrepreneurship as the practice of starting new organizations or revitalizing mature organizations, particularly new businesses generally in response to identified opportunities. It involves recognizing opportunities, formulating the business concept, identifying the resources and launching the business. As far back, as the middle of the 20th century, Schumpeter (1952), opined that the role of the entrepreneur is to reform or revolutionize pattern of production by exploiting an invention or more generally, an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old in a new way, opening a new source of supply of materials or a new outlet for products by reorganizing a new industry. Entrepreneurs are seen as innovators and creators of new ideas, locators and implementers of ideas, tuned to market alerts and the potentials to find gaps in the market and fill them (Schumpeter, 1950). While the tools have changed with advances in services and technology, the ability to innovate has been present in every civilization and every society.

Alberti cited in Taruli et al (2021) defines entrepreneurship education as the process of providing individuals with the concepts and skills to recognize opportunities that others have overlooked and to have the insight and self-esteem to act where others have hesitated. This simply implies that an individual who has gone through entrepreneurship programme is expected to provide opportunities and skills in entrepreneurship. Gundry et al (2014) assert that entrepreneurship education is concerned with fostering creative skills that can be applied in practices, education, and environments supporting innovation. In other words, entrepreneurship education cultivates innovative talents, which are an important driving force for future development (Wei et al (2019). Entrepreneurship education is an important way for entrepreneurs to acquire resources, enhance innovative ability and innovative personality, and build multi-level learning channels for entrepreneurs by integrating various knowledge and value systems. From knowledge learning to skills improvement, entrepreneurship education includes general ability development and improvement of professional ability (Kettunen et al, 2013).

Entrepreneurship is widely seen as an important driver of economic development, employment and innovation. UNESCO/ILO Global (2006) sees entrepreneurship education as a collection of formalized teachings that informs, trains, and educates anyone interested in participating in socioeconomic development through a project to promote entrepreneurship awareness, business creation, or small business development. The primary objective of entrepreneurship education is to develop all essential entrepreneurial skills to meet entrepreneurial success. (Al-Jubari, et al, 2019, Audretsch & Belitski 2017, Audretsch, et al, 2016). Other specific objectives posited are:

- ⇒ To acquire knowledge germane to entrepreneurship
- ⇒ To acquire skills in the use of techniques in the analysis of business situations and in the synthesis of action plans
- ⇒ To identify and stimulate entrepreneurial drive, talents and skills
- ⇒ To undo the risk-adverse bias of many analytical techniques
- ⇒ To develop empathy and support for the unique aspects of entrepreneurship
- ⇒ To revise attitudes towards change
- ⇒ To encourage new start-ups and other entrepreneurial ventures

⇒ To stimulate the attractive socialization elements.

▪ **Poverty Profile in Nigeria**

A concise and universally accepted definition of poverty is elusive largely because it affects many aspects of the human conditions, including physical, moral and psychological. Different criteria have, therefore, been used to conceptualize poverty (Ajakaiye, & Adeyeye, 2001). Most analyses follow the conventional view of poverty as a result of insufficient income for securing basic goods and services. Blackwood and Lynch cited in Ajakaiye, & Adeyeye, 2001 view poverty, in part, as a function of education, health, life expectancy, child mortality etc. identify the poor, using the criteria of the levels of consumption and expenditure. Poverty is a multidimensional concept of deprivation that relates to human capabilities, including consumption and food security, health, education, rights, voice, security, dignity, and decent work (Oshewolo, 2010). The description of Nigeria as a paradox by the World Bank (1996) has continued to be confirmed by events and official statistics in the country. The paradox is that the poverty level in Nigeria contradicts the country's immense wealth. Poverty in Nigeria is characterized by a lack of participation in decision making process and in civil and socio-cultural life (Obadan, 2002).

The rising profile of poverty in Nigeria is assuming an alarming and worrisome dimension. Orokpo, et al (2018). A recent World Bank report has noted that the number of poor persons in Nigeria will rise to 95.1 million in 2022. With the projected 2022 figures, the number of poor persons in Nigeria has had a four years increase of 14.7% from the 2018/19 figure of 82.1 million to the projected 89.0 million in 2020 and 95.1 million in 2022. The latest evidence on the profile and drivers of poverty in Nigeria indicates that as many as 4 in 10 Nigerians live below the national poverty line. This is inseparably linked to lack of access to or loss of control over resources. Without resources, Nigerian youths have limited access to institutions, markets, employment opportunities and public services. The World Bank (2022) notes that Nigeria continues to battle with issues such as food inflation, rising cost of living among other economic challenges, and these issues are likely some of the reasons why more people are falling into poverty than those lifted out of it. Orokpo, et al (2018) itemize some of the specific causes of poverty in Nigeria to include unstable political history, lack of accountability, mismanagement and corruption, poor policy formation, implementation and evaluation, lack of involvement of the poor, dependence of the economy on oil, poor economic policies and management, poor revenue allocation and distribution and distribution, ethnic and religious conflicts, poor infrastructures, the list is endless. According to Garba cited in Oshewolo (2010), all the poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria since independence have yielded very little fruit. He claims that the programs were mostly not designed to alleviate poverty, they lacked clearly defined policy frameworks with proper guidelines for poverty alleviation, they suffered from political instability, interference, policy, and macroeconomic dislocations, they lacked continuity, and they are riddled with corruption, political deception, outright kleptomania, and distasteful looting.

Arising from the above there is an urgent need for specific measures to be taken in order to address poverty among Nigerian youths. This assertion is supported by Shubham Chaudhuri, World Bank Country Director for Nigeria, when he commented that “it is clear that much needs to be done to help lift millions of Nigerians out of poverty, including boosting health and education, bolstering productive jobs, and expanding social protection”. The empowerment of youths through agricultural development programmes will reduce poverty and provide them with opportunities that will enable them to be gainfully employed (Oyekale, 2011). The poverty reduction programme being implemented by the Nigerian government in all areas of the economy now is the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), a comprehensive reform strategy geared towards addressing the economic, social and political challenges facing Nigeria. It is primarily being monitored by the National Planning Commission of Nigeria. The sub-objective of the Nigeria poverty reduction programme is to promote agriculture and rural development aimed at reducing extreme poverty in rural areas where 90% of the poor reside (Akpan, in Ajani, etal 2015).

The World Bank report suggests at least three types of deep, long-term reforms to foster and sustain pro-poor growth and raise Nigerians out of poverty. These include:

- ✓ Macroeconomic reforms (including fiscal, trade, and exchange rate policy);
- ✓ Policies to boost the productivity of farm and non-farm household enterprises; and
- ✓ Improving access to electricity, water, and sanitation while bolstering information and communication technologies. These reforms together could help diversify the economy, invigorate structural transformation, create good, productive jobs, and support social protection programs as well as other redistributive government policies. The report emphasizes that these reforms are urgent as Nigeria’s population continues to grow at an alarming rate (World Bank, 2022).

▪ **Benue South Senatorial District**

The Benue South Senatorial District comprises of nine local government areas including Ado, Agatu, Apa, Obi, Ogbadibo, Ohimini, Oju, Okpokwu, Otukpo with an estimated land mass of about 390 square Kilometres, and estimated population of about 1.8 million people. David Mark was the first elected senator in 1999 and left at the end of his 5th term in the Senate in 2019 (after serving for 20 years). The current representative of Benue South is distinguished senator comrade Abba Moro of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), a Nigerian educational administrator, politician and former Minister of the Federal Ministry of Interior.

▪ **What is Agribusiness?**

Agribusiness is simply the business sector encompassing farming and farming-related commercial activities. It involves all the steps required to send an agricultural good to market: production, processing and distribution. It is an important component of the economy in Nigeria with arable land and good climate. According to Nigerian Finder (2022), agribusiness is basically the science and practice of activities with backward and forward linkage related to production, processing, marketing and trade, distribution of raw and processed food, feed, fiber including the supply of inputs and service for these activities. Nigeria has for decades placed enormous emphasis on diversifying its economy beyond oil and into sectors such as agribusiness and manufacturing. Lack of progress on the

diversification agenda could be blamed on weak implementation and misalignment of public spending, but it also reflects more profound underlying issues (Mghenyi, et al, 2022).

Nigeria used to be a major player in the global agribusiness. In the 1960s, Nigeria was the world's largest producer of groundnuts and palm oil, and the second largest exporter of cocoa. The country was self-sufficient in food production before the emergence of oil in the 1960s. According to the World Bank 77.7 per cent of Nigeria's land is arable and capable of producing key (cash) crops, including beans, sesame, cashew nuts, cassava, cocoa beans, groundnuts, maize (corn), melon, rice, millet, palm kernels, palm oil, plantains and rubber, amongst others. Nigeria also has quality manpower to complement the fertile land mass and drive the Sector, judging from her teeming population of able-bodied youths. (This Day, 2019). Agriculture is broadly divided into four sectors in Nigeria—crop production, fishing, livestock and forestry. According to Mghenyi, et al (2022), crop production remains the largest segment and it accounts for about 87.6% of the sector's total output. This is followed by livestock, fishing and forestry at 8.1%, 3.2% and 1.1% respectively. Agriculture remains the largest sector in Nigeria contributing an average of 24% to the nation's GDP over the past seven years (2013 – 2019). In addition, the sector employs more than 36% of the country's labour force, a feat which ranks the sector as the largest employer of labour in the country (National Bureau of Statistics (2020). World Bank reports that Nigeria is one of the world's largest producers of cassava, cashews, tubers (sweet potato, yams), fruits (mango, papaya) and grains (millet, sorghum and sesame) in spite the security and other challenges. Agribusiness in Nigeria consists of the following four major components.

- a. Agricultural input,
- b. Agricultural production,
- c. Agricultural processing-manufacturing or agro-processing and,
- d. Agricultural marketing-distribution sector.

These four major components act as interrelated parts of a system and the success of each operation depends, to a large extent, on the proper functioning of the other components. In summary, agribusiness is all about how to conduct successful business in the food and agriculture-related sectors. It is a business that has many opportunities and gives room to all players to participate at all levels (Nigerian Finder, 2022)

▪ **Lucrative Agribusinesses in Benue South Senatorial District**

Agriculture contributes about 24% to the overall GDP of the country (Nigeria) even though it can be much more Ekong, (2022). The agricultural sector is the only or one of the most flourishing businesses of the Idomas and Igedes. With proper strategic planning, and basic knowledge a little capital and small farmland one can start a profitable agriculture business. You may not need a huge capital or farmland to get into the agriculture business. Ekong, (2022) itemizes some of the key crops or livestock most lucrative and profitable agribusinesses Nigerian youths and beyond can venture into. These include:

- **Cassava Farming:** With the increasingly diverse use of cassava products in Nigeria, cassava farming is getting more lucrative with every passing day. This farm product has always been a source of lively hood and food for millions of Nigerians. 90% of Nigerian households consume cassava products every day. Some of the popular meals made out of cassava are: garri, wheat-flour, animal feed, and so forth. Cassava products are on Nigerian export list today.

- **Rice Farming:** Nigeria is the largest producer of rice in West Africa and the third in Africa after Egypt and Madagascar producing about 3.6 million metric tons on the average annually. Interestingly, Nigeria still falls short of meeting its local demand which is placed at about 5.5 million tons.
- **Maize Farming:** The Maize farming business has definitely been thriving in Nigeria for decades. Maize which is also known as corn is one of the most popular food crops in Africa. The importance of maize production in Africa cannot be ever-emphasized. This production gives rise to a lot of consumables like; pap, custard, alcohol, corn oil, cornflakes, animal/livestock feeds, etc.
- **Poultry Farming:** This is the process of raising domesticated birds such as chickens, ducks, turkeys, quail birds and geese for the purpose of farming meat or eggs for food. Poultry Farming in Nigeria is probably one of the most lucrative farming businesses one can go into.
- **Catfish Farming:** There is a very high demand for catfish all year round in Nigeria, particularly There are many kinds of fish growing in Nigeria, however, many people like catfish because its football viewing centers, restaurants, bars and drinking joints. Individuals also demand catfish too for personal and home consumption.
- **Pig Farming:** This is one of the most lucrative and profitable livestock businesses in Nigeria. Commercial pig farming is beneficial due to the fact that pigs are prolific breeders and can deliver 10 to 14 piglets in a single birth. The pork market in West Africa alone accounts for about \$3 billion consumption value. 80% of that is sourced by importation. That is a lot of untapped revenue.
- **Honey Bees Farming:** Honey bees can produce lots of honey, and this can be a lucrative business for people who are not allergic to bee stings. Honey is one of the oldest sweeteners on earth. Apparently, honey has many health benefits and uses. Keeping bees at the large scale for commercial purpose as a business is increasing in this fast growing world.
- **Snail Farming:** Snail farming is considered to be one of the most lucrative agribusinesses you can start with low capital in Nigeria today. Snail farming in Nigeria provides one of the finest opportunities to make money within a short period of time.
- **Mushroom farming:** One of the quickest agribusiness to make good profits in just few weeks is mushroom farming. It requires a low start-up capital investment. Even with a little Knowledge of mushroom growing and with a farm mushroom farming business can be done (Ekong, 2022).

Others agribusinesses include: Groundnut Farming, Goatery Farming, Cattle Rearing, Grass Cutter Farming, Fruits and Vegetables farming, Palm Tree Farming, Potato Farming, Soya Beans Farming, Quail Bird Farming, Cashew-nut Processing, the list is inexhaustible.

▪ **Agricultural Development Programmes in Nigeria**

- ⇒ National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP),
- ⇒ Operation Feed the Nation (OFN),
- ⇒ Green Revolution Scheme,
- ⇒ Back to Land,
- ⇒ Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Family Support Programme (FSP).
- ⇒ Farm Settlement Schemes (FSS)
- ⇒ River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs)

⇒ Fadama Programme

▪ **Starting Agricultural Business: Steps in Sequence**

Step 1: Make researches. ...

Step 2: Choose your crops or livestock. ...

Step 3: Secure adequate land. ...

Step 4: Register your farm/business with concerned organizations. ...

Step 5: Hire farm labour

▪ **Agricultural Grants and Loans in Nigeria**

➤ Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Agricultural Loan

➤ Bank of Agriculture (BOA) Loans

➤ Commercial Bank Loans

➤ Agricultural Co-operative Societies

Methodology

The research design for this study is both descriptive and cross sectional survey research design. The nature of the questionnaire used for this study was a five-point Likert-scale. The sample was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The target respondents were youths between the ages of 20 and 30 years. Data was gathered from 270 youth drawn from the nine Local Government Areas of Benue South Senatorial District of the State, who participated in three days empowerment programme sponsored by comrade Aba Moro the senator representing the senatorial districts between 2019 and 2021. SPSS and Excel were used to analyze the data.

▪ **Method of Analysis**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method of analysis was applied. SEM is of two methods; Variance Based Structural Equation Modelling (VB-SEM) and the Covariance Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) (Esposito, 2009). While the VB-SEM also known as Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) requires small sample size and little or no fitness tests. This study applied the CB-SEM because the sample data used is higher than 200 (Hoyle, 1995), and is parametric rather than the PLS-SEM which performs better using smaller samples and is non-parametric (Zainudin et al., 2015).

▪ **Analyses and Results**

A questionnaire was administered to 270 participants who participated in three days empowerment programme sponsored by comrade Aba Moro the senator representing the senatorial districts between 2019 and 2021. SPSS and Excel were used to analyse the data. Consequently, the response rate of 94.4% was recorded. This suggested that the sample is adequate for further analysis as recommended by Shannon (1948) who gave a benchmark response rate of 70% and Kerlinger (1964) who stated 80%. The data for this study was subjected to data cleaning tests such as out of range, missing values and normality tests. All the issues relating to the data cleaning were taken care of and the data was certified valid for the further analysis.

Normality Test

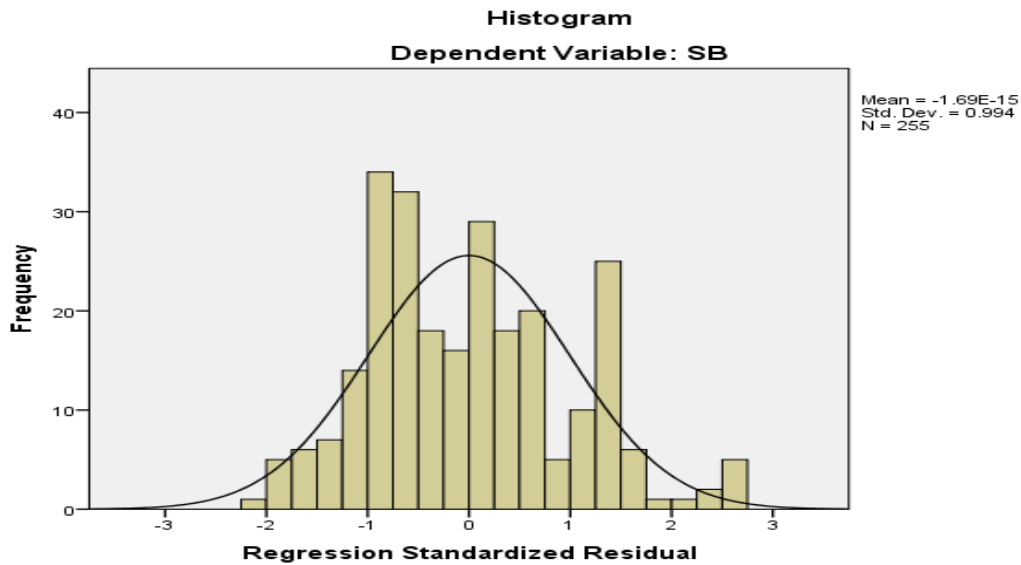


Figure 1: Normality test
 Source: SPSS Output 25.0

Normality test was conducted to ensure that the data used for analysis are suitable for parametric analysis. When the data is non-normal, a non-parametric analysis will be required. Normality test was conducted using the histogram. The study conducted, a normality test for all the dependent variable. Figures 1 shows the histogram for a test of normality. The histogram provides a useful graphical representation of the data. From the diagrams, the histograms show that the data follows a normal distribution given that the bell-shaped curve is symmetric.

The CB-SEM comprises both a measurement model and a structural model. The measurement is to examine the validity and reliability of the model, while the structural model is to test the hypotheses after the measurement model is validated.

■ Measurement Model

A total of 24 items were initially designed to measure the model. Based on the highly correlated factor from AMOS led to the dropping of 10 items altogether from the variables

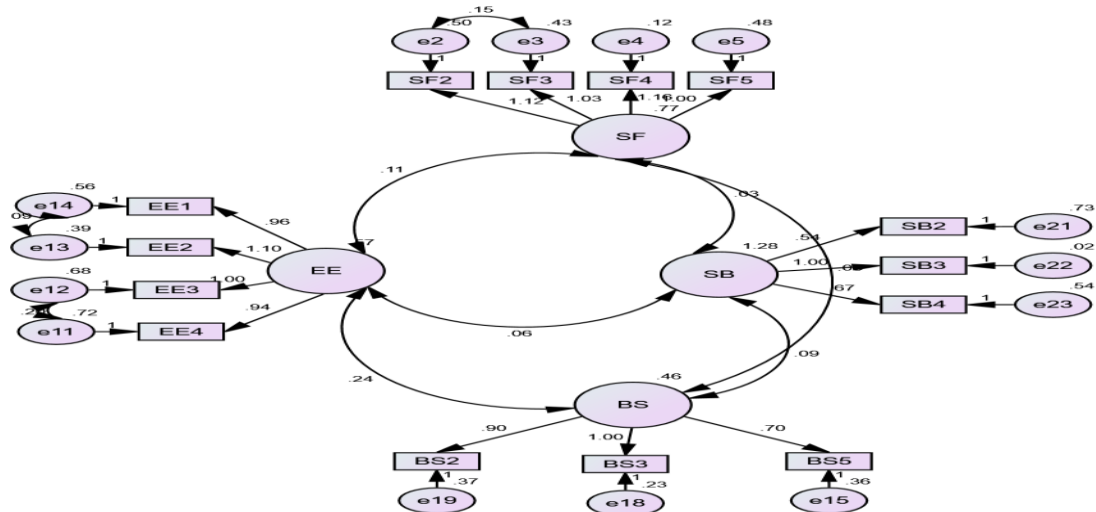


Figure 2: Measurement Model for Entrepreneurship Education, Finance/start-up Capital, Business Support Services and success of Agribusiness.

Figure 2 shows the Measurement model for entrepreneurship education, finance/start-up capital, business support services and success of agribusiness it revealed that eleven items SF1, SF6, SF7, EE5, EE6, EE7, BS1, BS4, SB1 and SB5 were dropped from model since the values are below 0.5. The model indicated a good fit because RMSEA is 0.042, CFI is 0.981, TLI is 0.975, GFI is 0.947, AGFI is 0.919 and NFI is 0.941. It took AMOS 2 iteration to achieve model minimization.

Constructs	Factor Loading
Finance/Start-Up Capital - AVE= 0.706, CR= 0.905	0.8
SF2	09
SF3	0.8
SF4	09
SF5	0.9
	48
	0.7
	85
Entrepreneurship Education - AVE= 0.529, CR= 0.816	0.6
EE1	95
EE2	0.6
EE3	44
EE4	0.6
	75
	0.8
	75
Business Support Services -AVE= 0.515, CR= 0.759	0.7
BS2	06
BS3	0.8
BS5	15
	0.6
	19
Success Of Agribusiness -AVE= 0.616, CR= 0.821	0.8
SB2	67
SB3	0.8
SB4	60
	0.8
	86

Table 1: Factor Loading, Convergent validity, Average variance extracted and Composite Reliability

Table 1 shows the factor loading of all items obtained are higher than 0.5 and they indicate a strong correlation to the constructs used in this study. Also the Composite reliability values are higher than 0.7 indicating a reliability and AVE values are equally higher than 0.5. This indicated that convergent validity is achieved for the items, the data collection tool is reliable and the AVE was above the threshold of 0.5.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed based on the criterion recommended by Fornell and Lacker (1981). The Criterion states that the square root of AVE for each construct must be greater than its correlation with other construct. From table 2, the bold values represented the AVE while un-bold represented the correlation. Since the AVE is greater, it confirms discriminant validity.

▪ Structural Model

The structural model then specifies relations among latent variables and regressions of latent variables on observed variables. The relationship between the measurement and structural models is further defined by the two-step approach to SEM. The two-step approach emphasizes the analysis of the measurement and structural models as two conceptually distinct models. This approach expanded the idea of assessing the fit of the structural equation model among latent variables (structural model) independently of assessing the fit of the observed variables to the latent variables (measurement model). The rationale for the two-step approach is given by Jöreskog and Sörbom (2003) who argued that testing the initially specified theory (structural model) may not be meaningful unless the measurement model holds. This is because if the chosen indicators for a construct do not measure that construct, the specified model should be modified before the structural relationships are tested.

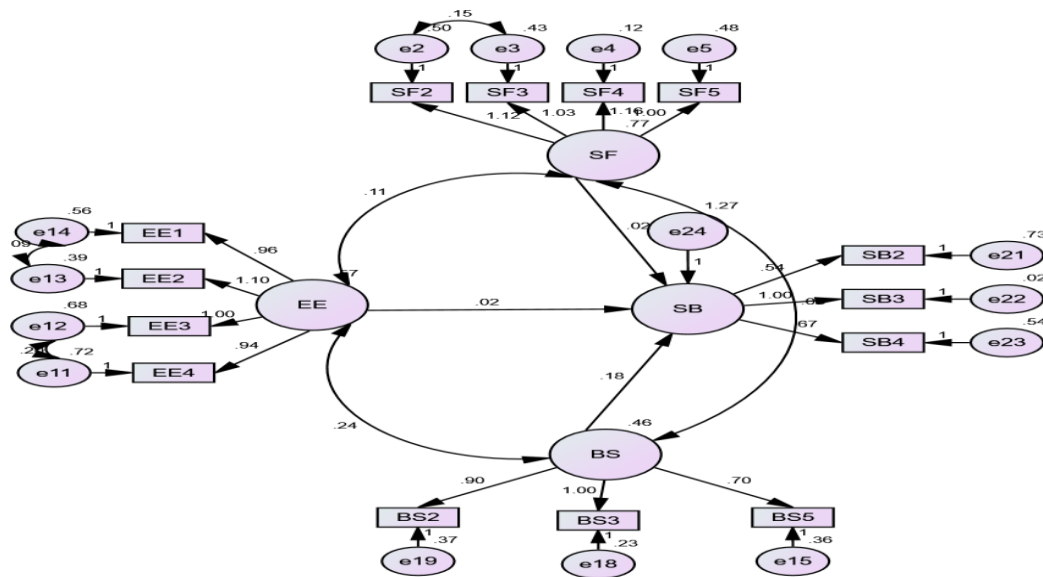


Figure 3: Structural Model

Table 3: Regression estimates of latent constructs

Construct	Direction	Construct	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-value	Remark
SB	<--	EE	0.021	0.129	0.164	0.870	Insignificant
SB	<--	SF	0.023	0.086	0.256	0.791	Insignificant
SB	<--	BS	0.182	0.144	1.266	0.205	Insignificant

Source: AMOS output 23.0

From the result, the effect of entrepreneurship education on success of agribusiness was found to be positive but insignificant. This implies that the entrepreneurship education was not sufficient to trigger success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.

Again, the effect of finance/start-up capital on success of agribusiness was found to be positive and insignificant. The result indicated that the finance/start-up capital was not adequate to result in success of agribusiness.

Lastly, the effect of business support services on success of agribusiness was found to be positive and insignificant. The result showed that the business support services were successfully carried out to effectively boost success of agribusiness.

Hypotheses Testing

H₁: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts. Entrepreneurial education has a positive and insignificant relationship to success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts. With p-value of 0.870,

which is greater than the significance level of 0.05 as shown in Table 3, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Hence, there is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.

H₂: There is no significant relationship between finance/start-up capital and the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.

Finance/start-up capital has a positive and insignificant relationship to the success of agribusiness. With p-value of 0.791, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05 as shown in Table 3, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Hence, there is no significant relationship between finance/start-up capital and the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.

H₃: There is no significant relationship between business support services and the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.

Business Support Services has a positive and significant relationship to success of agribusiness. Given that the p-value is 0.205, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05 as shown in Table 3, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, there is no significant relationship between business support services and the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts.

Findings and Discussion

This paper is posited to unveil the main challenges of youth self-employment and entrepreneurship in Benue South Senatorial District of Benue state Nigeria, and to provide suitable suggestions to promote and boost entrepreneurship particularly in agribusiness among the teaming youth in the area. The study reveals that entrepreneurship education, finance/start-up capital and business support services as dimensions of success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts are not significantly related. The findings imply that the success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts does not depend on the level entrepreneurship education acquired, or the availability of finance/start-up capital and business support services. These findings are in contradiction to the assertion of Al-Jubari, et al (2019) who stress the adoption of entrepreneurship education as national policy since it renders entrepreneurship activity more advantageous and generates confidence in building and realizing success in new ventures, and emphasize the role of educational institutions and educators in designing more entrepreneurship programs and courses that could lead to successful business venture creation. Several other studies have found entrepreneurship education to be a significant predictor of entrepreneurial attitudes, efficacy, intention and the success of business venture in many cultural contexts (Wilson, et al 2007, Elmuti, et al 2012). Ndwakhulu, (2022). The results of finance/start-up capital and business support services as dimensions of success of agribusiness among the youth in Benue South Senatorial Districts are insignificantly related. These results are in contradiction to the assertions of Ndwakhulu, (2022), and Yatich, (2022) who argue that entrepreneurial mind-set together with innovative skills, education and competencies as well as financial and infrastructural support could enable young people to curb existing poverty and unemployment challenges.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The challenges of our modern society can be met only when its youths develop a sense of what are to be active, critical and responsible citizens, and when they are equipped to make the best choices for themselves in a constantly changing world. To achieve this, there is a need to encourage young people, to instill a spirit of entrepreneurship from early on in life- initiative, confidence, calculated risk-taking, creativity, organization, tenacity, and to help them in the transition from youth to adulthood. Nigeria is full of countless opportunities particularly in agribusinesses.

There are no boundaries and no limits to their potentials. Agribusiness is said to be a veritable tool for rural development and the highest employer of the rural labour force in Nigeria. Empirical evidences have attributed endogenous constraints of agribusiness in Nigeria to include shortage of entrepreneurial skills, overemphasis on concept, limited access to finance/startup capital, inconsistent government policies, poor social infrastructure, low capacity utilization, inadequate working capital, and poor policy articulation. Nigerian governments (both past and present) had come up with different measures intended to better the lot of Nigerians, especially people living in rural areas such as youths. Such measures including agricultural projects were aimed at providing gainful employment, food sufficiency for the populace and raw materials for industries, housing and educational programmes. The primary goal of this study is to unveil the main challenges of youth self-employment and entrepreneurship, and to provide suitable suggestions to promote and boost entrepreneurship particularly in agribusiness among the teaming youth of Benue South Senatorial District of Benue state, Nigeria. Many of the government initiated programmes aimed at reducing poverty over the years had little or no impact on poverty alleviation. To mitigate these challenges while also encouraging the youths to explore as many ideas, passions, and dreams as possible, we recommend the followings:

1. Development of a sound Ideology and Robust Political Will: Poverty reduction programmes will have to adopt a holistic approach involving the three tiers of government and the civil society for it to be sustainable. The institutional framework for poverty alleviation in the country need to be revisited. Many of the government initiated programmes aimed at reducing poverty in Nigeria since independence have yielded very little fruit. It has been observed that sluggish growth, low human capital, lack education and access to basic infrastructure, labor market weaknesses, and exposure to shocks are holding Nigeria's poverty reduction initiatives back. The World Bank Report suggests at least three types of deep, long-term reforms to foster and sustain pro-poor growth and raise Nigerians out of poverty. These include: (1) macroeconomic reforms (including fiscal, trade, and exchange rate policy); (2) policies to boost the productivity of farm and non-farm household enterprises; and (3) improving access to electricity, water, and sanitation while bolstering information and communication technologies. These reforms together could help diversify the economy, invigorate structural transformation, create good, productive jobs, and support social protection programs as well as other redistributive government policies.

2. Promotion and support of advocacy work to boost Agribusiness among the Youths: Most rural youths do not foresee a prosperous future for themselves in the agriculture sector, mostly because of lack of profitability of agricultural activities and lack of physical and social infrastructure in rural areas. The sector is seen as highly unattractive due to ignorant

assumptions which often times limit it to labour- intensive engagement; ignoring many other professional and entrepreneurial opportunities across the value chain. There is an urgent need to remove all visible constraints in area of access to productive infrastructures such as land, roads, electricity, marketing facilities, irrigation facilities, small-scale agro-processing technologies, credit institutions, specialized agricultural careers across the value chains, etc. There should also be the incorporation of information communication technologies such as the Internet, mobile phones, computers, and global positioning systems, to meet the needs and expectations of today's youths.

3. Education and capacity-building programmes for rural youths should be clearly defined: Education in general and entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in enhancing people's preferences, mindsets, intentions, behaviours and skills. Education and capacity-building programmes for rural youths should be defined in a more participatory way and focused on agricultural best practices, land laws and knowledge sharing. It is quite necessary to encourage partnerships with the education sector to integrate agriculture into primary and secondary school curricula. Its broad-based and compulsory inclusion with the appropriate resources will help to motivate youths towards having a more favorable view of employment opportunities in the agriculture sector. Informal education and youth empowerment programmes such as those organized and sponsored by comrade senator Abba Moro from 2019 – 2021 in Benue South Senatorial Districts should be showcased more frequently in rural areas to change the mindset parents about agriculture and agribusiness.

4. Promote Improve Economies of Scale: Young farmers are often too small to permit effective use of mechanization, commercial agriculture and irrigation. Being small-scale and resource constrained, small landholders also face huge barriers in being able to afford every service and input such as technical, market extension information. Since agribusiness undertaken by many individual small landholders suffers from these inherent disadvantages, the world is paying great attention to means of collaboration and aggregation to create scale economies. Formation of cooperatives, associations, and other vehicles for aggregation offer substantial opportunities for increasing scale that enables smaller agriculturalists and agribusinesses to obtain important inputs at reasonable prices. Combining resources and sharing information allows participants improve quality, service, and savings through increased access to inputs, gain leverage, in sales negotiations, and increase ability to design initiatives that emphasize upgrading the value chain.

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