

A Survey of Institutional Discrimination and the Optimism of Nigerian Fresh Graduates about Chances of Recruitment for Community Participation

By

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This study is a survey of Nigerian fresh graduates' optimism about getting employed and the institutional discriminatory factors they envisaged might work against their bid to get employed. Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 548 corps members at an NYSC camp in Ilorin, Kwara State. Data were analyzed using percentages and chi-square statistics. Findings revealed that a high percentage of Nigerian fresh graduates (85.52%) were not optimistic about getting employed. Also, a high percentage of them (75.52 %) believed they would be discriminated against in the world- of- work on the ground of inadequate political power. However, using chi-square statistic, it was discovered that respondents' optimism differed across gender. Thus, it was recommended among other things that Nigerian government need to eradicate all forms of institutional discrimination so as to be able to tap the potentials of its youthful population- to the maximum level.

Introduction

Recruitment of youths for employment is one way of affording them the opportunity to participate in their community development. Availability of job opportunities is rudimentary in nation building, it affords the employed self-development and the nation the avenue to tap the recourses of its working population .Employment opportunity gives one sense of identity -one becomes aware of who one is and what one's role in society is .Besides, a nation develops when it is able to pool the talent and physical resources of all its citizens irrespective of their gender, tribe, religion and political power but regresses if it is governed on the principle in which members of one or more groups in the society don't have access to the privileges, prestige,

power, legal right, equal protection of the law and other social benefits that are available to members of other groups (Hughes, Kroehler & Zanden, 2002). Where institutional discrimination is not allowed, citizens are said to be more motivated to feel attached, committed, develop strong belief in their nation's developmental programmes and thereby become physically and morally energized to contribute their quota. In non-discriminatory situations, the rewards of social life can be made to flow to citizens in accordance with their merit and competence and in proportion to the contribution they make to their community and nation.

Similarly, education performs the dual role of equipping one with knowledge and skill needed in the world of work and the opportunity to break away from any form of institutional discriminatory experiences. Institutional discrimination is a situation when in the discharge of their responsibilities, the institutions of societies such as schools, ministries, agencies and parastatals function in a way that give unequal opportunities and outcome to their clients. It is also a situation when citizens have unequal access to social services such as education, employment, security and justice because of differences in their gender, tribe, religion and political power. However, while schools determine to a large extent what form of education a child is equipped with, the chance of applying the education rest largely on the socio- economic principles that prevail in the economic sector.

Specifically, employers of labour often stipulate the requirement candidates must have to be considered for a particular job opportunity. Tienda & Lii (1987) argue that such requirements must have to do with prior job- related experiences and some measure of formal education not to be discriminatory. This means that in situation of no discrimination, acquisition of education may make one hopeful of being recruited for community participation. One can as well opine that the higher the volume of one's education the higher one's chance in the world of work.

Nigeria is a country that makes higher education available to its youths. It is a nation that believes that education, particularly, higher education, is needed for national development and self-empowerment. With 92 universities (27 federal, 3 states, and 34 private) the country expects its youths to be equipped with adequate higher education that can make them functional in the society (Okebukola 2008). They are expected to contribute to the development of their community and be relevant in the affairs of the world. Nigerian youths are not expected to lag behind just as they are not expected to be discriminated against in whatever sector of the society.

Theoretical Framework

This study is framed on Karl Marx's (1818- 1883) theoretical perspective on the importance of work in the development of man and the empowerment of man to contribute to his national development. The theory sees work as source of human happiness and fulfillment. Work is seen as an instrument of cohesion if administered appropriately or an instrument of disintegration if not made to tap - to the maximum level- the nation's resources that are endowed citizens.

Thus it is terrorized in this study that institutional discrimination is a negative phenomenon that can hinder individual and national development and at the same time bare individual's chance of recruitment for community participation. Where institutional discrimination exists, there can't be optimism about having access to benefits of one's national resources and one's chances of contributing to the development of one's community are limited.

Statement of the problem

As expressed in a Population Reference Bureau! PRB (2007) there is an increase in Africa's youthful population and this is said to have great economic advantages for the continent if properly utilized. To derive the benefits of the youthful population, Africa countries are advised to make available to their youths a wide range of employment, educational, family and

health development opportunities. The countries are expected to make the life of their youths better in major ways from those of youths of one or two generations ago. It is also expected that African youths should be more hopeful in terms of opportunities for self-development most especially in the area of having job opportunities (PRB, 2007). However, research interests have not been adequately focused on knowing graduates' optimism about getting employed or whether there discriminatory practices they envisaged might hinder their job prospects.

This study therefore investigates how optimistic were Nigerian graduates about getting employed. Also the study was interested in finding out whether there are societal discriminatory practices that Nigerian graduates envisaged might hinder their job prospect.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the focus of this study.

1. Are Nigerian fresh graduates optimistic about getting recruited for community participation through offer of job opportunities?
2. What discriminating factors do Nigerian fresh graduates envisage might hinder their chances of getting recruited in the world of work?

Research Hypothesis

H₀: Graduates' optimism about getting employed does not significantly vary across gender.

Methodology

The study employed the survey method of research. The target populations for the study were Nigerian fresh graduates that were mobilized for the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). From this population, stratified random sampling techniques was used to sample 548 corps members, across gender, from those camped on Yipata NYSC Camp, Kwara State, Nigeria for the year 2007 NYSC orientation and mobilization programme. This sampling approach provided a good representative of graduates from universalities and polytechnics across the country; it there by

gave the study a national outlook

A researcher - made questionnaire titled Optimism about Job Opportunity (JOB) was used in eliciting data for the study. The questionnaire has two parts, Part one elicited respondents' demographical data while the part two has two items - one asking the dynamics of the referred optimism the second asking the discriminatory factors the graduates envisaged might work against them in the world of work. The options for item one ranged from Very Sure (VS) to Not Very Sure (NVS). Respondents ticked only one option for each item.

The instrument was validated using content validity approach. The instrument was given to two experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Sociology of Education at the faculty of education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, to determine the relevance and adequacy of the items of the instrument in eliciting the needed data. The instrument was found reliable with reliability coefficient of 0.72 that was derived through test - re-test approach, using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient statistic.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data were analyzed using, frequency count, percentages and chi-square statistics in answering the raised research questions and hypotheses.

Results of the Analysis

Research Question 1:

Are Nigerian fresh graduates optimistic about getting recruited for community participation through offer of job opportunities?

Table 1: Optimism about chances of Recruitment For job opportunities

Item 1 : I can easily get employment if I wish to work	NS		NVS		S		VS	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%

Female	116	61	34	17.89	28	14.73	12	6.31
Male	138	72.63	37	19.47	11	5.79	4	2.10
Both gender	254	66.84	71	18.68	39	10.26	16	4.21

Key:

NS: Not Sure

NVS: Not Very Sure S: Sure

VS: Very Sure

For easy interpretation, the options were compressed as following:

NS + NVS = Pessimism

S + VS = Optimism

As shown on Table 1, a very large percentage (85.52%) of Nigerian fresh graduates were pessimistic about their chances of getting recruited in the world of work. Specifically, 78.89% of the sampled female and 92.1 % of sampled male were of the opinion that their possibility of getting employed, even with their level of education, is narrow - not certain. Only 14.47% of the fresh graduates (male and female combined)- on separate analysis, 21.04% of female and 7.89% of male- were optimistic about their chances of participating in their community development- through gaining job opportunities.

Research Question 2:

What discriminatory factor do Nigerian fresh graduates envisage might hinder their chance of getting recruited in the world of work?

Table 2: Envisaged job opportunities discriminatory factors

Item 2: I can easily get	HE		AG		HPC		AT	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
Employed if I were to be a								
Female	14	7.36	8	4.21	134	70.52	34	17.89
Male	2	1.05	32	16.84	153	80.52	3	1.57

Both gender	16	4.21	40	10.52	287	75.52	37	9.73
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Key:

HE = Higher Education

AG = Another Gender

HPC = High Political Connection

AT = Another Tribe

Data on table 2 indicate that a very small percentage of Nigerian fresh graduate (4.21 %) believed their possibility of not getting employed would depend on their level of education, 10.52% believed theirs would depend on their gender; 9.73% believed their tribal affiliation could hinder their chances, whereas a very large percentage (75.52%) of the graduates believed they might not get employed because they were not politically connected. Thus, getting employed and having chances of community participation depended more on one's political connection than on one's level of education, tribe or gender.

Hypothesis testing:

H01: Graduates' optimism about getting employed does not significantly vary across gender

Table 3: X2 Description of variance in graduates' job optimism

Gender	Levels of Optimism			df	X ² cal V.	X ² Tab V.
	Optimism	Pessimistic	Total			
Male	15 (27.5)	175 (162.5)	190	1	5.59	3.84
Female	40 (27.5)	150 (162.5)	190			

Significance level > 0.05

As shown on table 3, the X² calculated value (5.59) is higher than the X² table value (3.84) thus, Ho 1 is rejected and it was concluded that graduates' optimism about getting

employed and thereby be involved in community development varied across gender.

Discussion

Optimism is anchored in one's assessment of the past experience and future possibilities. Optimism is all about hope and trust that things will work out well; it is a sort of collateral on which one endures the sidelines of educational, social and economic investments. Emile Durkheim, a sociologist, claimed that to have belief in and become attached to one's society, one must feel in it something that is real, alive and powerful and which dominates one and to which one also owes the best part of oneself (Haralambos and Heald, 1980). Having hope of livelihood in the form of job opportunity can keep one obedient and committed to the course of one's society.

However, findings in this study revealed that a good percentage of Nigerian fresh graduates (85.52%) are not optimistic about getting opportunities to put into use, for their community development, what they have acquired as knowledge and skills through schooling. They envisaged that there won't be job opportunity for them in the society. The main source of their pessimism was political discrimination. A good percentage of them (75.52%) believed they lacked political power/support or connection that can give them placement in the world of work.

That fact that Nigerian fresh graduates are not optimistic about job opportunities can be interpreted in two ways. One is that the job opportunities are not available, the other is that the jobs opportunities are there but educational qualification is no longer the main requirement for getting at the opportunities.

Unemployment hinders the progressive transition of youths to adulthood and it holds down the pooling of youths' talent for national development. Yet, new global realities are confirming the importance of youth empowerment as the bedrock of any nation's economic and political advancement. Internationally, it is believed that the youth possesses the physical and mental strength with which a nation can establish itself. Based on these findings, Nigeria has a

lot to do to be able to draw the resources of its youth for national development.

Recommendation and Conclusion

To avert the consequences of unemployment and particularly to reassure Nigerian *youths* that the country is a free and just nation, the following recommendations were made. All forms of institutional discrimination must be eradicated in the principles and policies that guide the governing of the nation. Qualification admitting candidates to employment must be nondiscriminatory- they should be developed on candidates' prior-job experiences and specified level of acquired education, rather than on requirements that are not universal.

Graduates, though while on study, should be exposed to different skills not necessarily academic oriented, so that they can be job creator rather than job seekers.

Also, in any process of job allocation, the principles of Due Process and Federal Character must be entrenched .This has implication for the activities of the following agencies:

- Federal Character Commission (FCC)
- National Directorate of Employment (NDE)
- Civil Service Commissions (at federal and state levels)
- Economic and Financial Crime Commissions (EFCC)
- National Orientation Agency (NOA)

These agencies must be made to ensure fairness in the allocation of job opportunities to every Nigerian as long as that Nigerian has the requirement for the job. Doing this will help the Nigerian youth see education as a worthy endeavour.

In conclusion, one major way through which Nigeria can tap from the abundant human recourses available in its youthful population is to give them the opportunity of participating in their community development through series of employment opportunities. As expressed in the report of the National Population Commission, the country is blessed with healthy youths that

can take responsibilities in the nation development. The report indicates that the country has about 80 million youths, i.e. 60% of the country's population. (Ojewale , 2008). The international perspective on the economic advantage of this is enormous. It is believed that well managed youthful population will " result in large work force, throw open the window of opportunity to save money on health care and other social services and thereby increase the quality of education, increase the economic output because more people are working, ... and create the wealth needed to cope with the future ageing of the population (PRB 2007: PI). All these can however be achieved in the situation of no institutional discrimination.

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