Analysis of Rural Employment Promotion in Southern Nigerian States

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Abstract
This paper identified some factors influencing rural employment promotion (REP) in three Southern Nigerian states. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 60 rural communities in Southern Nigeria thus: In all, 300 respondents were sampled and interviewed using structured and unstructured interview schedules. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, measures of central tendency and dispersion were used to describe and summarise the data collected. Inferential statistics such as Pearson product-moment correlation and regression analyses were used to make deductions. While the result showed that infrastructure variable (bank availability) had a significant relationship with REP at $P \leq 0.05$ level, institutional variables (Government and community support) had the same relationship with REP at $P \leq 0.01$ and 0.05 levels, respectively. Also, project characteristics variables (project type and corresponding capital outlay) had positive and significant correlation with REP at $P \leq 0.01$ level of significance. The values of the variables are as follows: Household size ($r = 0.26$); education ($r = 0.30$); income ($r = 0.31$); and cosmopoliteness ($r = 0.22$). Others are contact with government agencies ($r = 0.28$); association membership ($r = 0.15$); information source(s) ($r = 0.11$); and farm size ($r = 0.31$). Results also revealed that household size ($t = 1.84$), education level ($t = 2.09$), income ($t = 3.36$), contact with government agencies ($t = 1.95$), farm size ($t = 1.96$), bank availability ($t = 2.12$), family support ($t = 2.16$), and project type ($t = 2.83$) explained 28.3 percent of the variations or changes in REP score. Provision of basic and functional services (such as education, health care, water, electricity and motorable roads) and refocusing of empowering activities, among others, are vital for rural employment promotion drive in Southern Nigeria.

Key words: Rural, Employment, Infrastructure, Institution, Socio-economic, Farm, Household

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, there have been incidences of massive rural-urban drift, just as rural crime rate is becoming more and more evident. This is not unconnected with the poverty and

unemployment situations prevalent in the Nigerian countryside (ILO, 2008). Without doubt, socio-economic deprivation, which over time leads to people's disenchantment, would invariably engender infractions in any society. Rotimi (1997) buttresses this claim when he affirms that "...misdemeanour develops in reaction to a lingering stress caused by deprivations within a community". Indeed, this unwholesome trend has, over the years, gone from bad to worse.

Although, series of programmes have been introduced by various Nigerian governments to find solutions to these problems, most grassroots people still live from hand to mouth without any appreciable progress. Globally, the Micro-credit Summit of 1997 set a target of reaching the 100 million poorest families, especially the women in those families, with credit for self-employment by 2005 (Ekong, 2003). But then, year 2005 had come and gone. Yet, it appears no appreciable progress has been made in poverty reduction through entrepreneurship development and employment promotion. Why these efforts continue to fail remains a source of worry. Perhaps, policies issues and implementation have, in the past, been faulty. The realisation of the appropriateness of empowering the rural man through entrepreneurship development and employment promotion may have engendered a positive shift in paradigm. In economic literature, entrepreneurship development and employment generation are still regarded as veritable sources of endogenous growth and sustainable livelihood (Swanson, 1980; Osmani, 2003; Chen *et al.* 2004; Nkurunziza, 2006). Presently, it is becoming popular that employment generation is crucial to development and poverty alleviation in Africa (Nkurunziza, 2006). This is more important because it involves being alert to new profit opportunities and taking full advantage thereof.

Consequently, it is in appreciation of these facts that selected government actions were directed at skill acquisition, productivity enhancement, and credit-granting schemes with an emphasis on accelerating entrepreneurship development. One example of such previous schemes was the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), which operated four core programmes. These are Vocational Skills Development Programme (VSDP), Special Public Works (SPW), Small Scale Enterprises (SSE) and Rural Employment Promotion Programmes (REPP). Others are the Better Life

Programme of 1987; Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN), whose mandate included the provision of opportunities for self-employment for poverty eradication, etc. It is pertinent to attempt what employment could mean. Thus, employment has been defined as the means through which manpower resources are utilised and, to a large degree, developed and conserved (Heneman and Yoder, 1965). As such, employment is all about engaging human resources for harnessing available resources in order to achieve clearly spelt-out institutional goals, aims and objectives.

In line with the foregoing, the Centre for Rural Development (CERUD), a parastatal of the Lagos state government, in 2001, established the Rural Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Promotion Programme (REDEP) among rural dwellers in selected rural LGAs of Lagos state. Some authors have reported rural entrepreneurship and employment promotion activities in Lagos state, Nigeria (Kolawole, 2002; Kolawole and Torimiro, 2005; Kolawole and Ajayi, 2005). Experience from the field has, thus, shown certain variations in the acceptance of the programme by community people. While some accepted it with zeal, some were lukewarm in their approach. While some community-based associations (CBAs) were counting their gains, some CBAs activities were not impressive. These variations, therefore, aroused some questions. Could it be that variations in ecological endowment and socio-cultural activities would influence peoples' participation in employment generation in rural communities? Will socio-economic situations of the people affect their response to government policy implementations in relation to rural employment generation? What exactly could the situation be like in other states, particularly in the entire Southern Nigeria? These and other questions were addressed in this study.

The specific objectives of the project were to describe and analyse the socio-economic characteristics of rural women and men, which influence employment promotion in three selected Southern Nigerian states; describe and analyse the institutional, ecological and cultural variables promoting employment generation in the study area; and identify viable avenues for rapid rural employment promotion in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The study Area

Southern Nigeria comprises

about 17 states. To ensure a fair representation, Ekiti, Ebonyi and Rivers states were purposively selected (on the basis of their geographical features) from three geo-political zones viz: South-West, South-East and South-South. It should be noted that Ebonyi state comprises twelve Local Government Areas (LGAs), while Ekiti and Rivers states comprise sixteen and twenty-three LGAs, respectively.

Sample Selection and Research Instrument

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 60 rural communities in Southern Nigeria thus: About 25.0 percent of the 17 Southern states (which translates to about 3 States) were purposively selected based on the ecology of the geo-political zones. In essence, at least, one riverine state was selected amongst the three sampled for the study. From the three selected states (Ebonyi, Ekiti and Rivers), 25.0 percent of the rural LGAs was randomly selected. From the selected LGAs in each of the states, a total of 20 rural communities were proportionately selected, based on the number of communities in each selected LGAs and their ruralness, respectively. A total of 100 respondents were, therefore, proportionately sampled from the 20 communities in each of the states, based on the population of each selected community. In all, 300 interviewees were sampled and interviewed in the three states in Southern Nigeria using structured and unstructured interview schedules. Primary data were collected through survey method.

Measurement of Variables

Two categories of variables (both dependent and independent variables) were operationalised in the study. Rural employment promotion (REP) served as the dependent variable (Y) against which other variables were operationalised. The dependent variable (Y) was defined as, and measured by the average number of employees per enterprise supposedly owned by the respondent. All other independent variables (Xs) were either scored or coded depending on whether they are parametric or non-parametric variables, respectively. Household size was measured by the number of people living and eating together under the roof of the respondents. To measure age, for instance, a respondent who was 50 years old was scored 50 points. In terms of income, respondents were scored based on the amount they earned per month by assigning them the exact values of the amount they earned. Education

level was measured by scoring the respondent based on the number of years he or she had spent in school or in adult education programme. A male respondent was coded as 1 while a female respondent was coded as 0 etc. Some qualitative data were, however, converted to quantitative data based on certain criteria. For example, a respondent who had access to different sources of information was scored based on the number of such sources he or she got relevant information from Association membership was measured by assigning points to a respondent based on the number of association(s) to which he or she belonged and his or her commitments to such associations in terms of either being an ordinary member, serving as a committee member or as officer. For instance, if a respondent belonged to three associations, he or she was assigned 3 points, which were multiplied against 3 other points if he or she was an officer in all the three associations. The total maximum score for that respondent in question would, therefore, be 9 points. In terms of infrastructure, water supply from Water Corporation was scored 3 points; well/borehole was scored 2; and water from streams and brooks was scored 1 point. Electricity supply (which is also an infrastructure variable) from the national grid was scored 2 points; supply from generators was assigned 1 while no electricity supply was scored 0 point. Also, capital outlay was scored based on whether it was high (3 points), medium (2) or low (1). Project type was scored based on whether it was production-based (3 points); both production and service-based (2); or service-based (1). Please, note that production-based venture is assumed here to enhance a more meaningful rural development process. Motorable road [infrastructure] was scored as to whether community road(s) was/were tarred (3 points); both tarred and non tarred (2); or not tarred (1).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency, percentages, measures of central tendency and dispersion (mean and standard deviation), etc. were used to describe and summarise the data collected. Inferential statistics such as Pearson product-moment correlation and regression analyses were also employed in making deductions.

Linear regression model:

$Y = a + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 \ldots\ldots \beta_n.X_n$

Where:

Y = Rural employment promotion (REP), which is the average number of employees per enterprise;

a=Intercept (which is/are (averages) of number of people previously employed);
ß = Rate of change; and
$X_1 \ldots X_n$ = Independent variables such as household size, age, income, education level, cosmopoliteness, association membership, community features /attributes, ecology, and government institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic and socio-economic attributes of respondents

Results in Table 1a and 1b show that in Ebonyi, Ekiti and Rivers states, about 56.0, 93.0 and 63.0 percents of male respondents were sampled, respectively. Conversely, about 44.0, 7.0 and 37.0 percents of female respondents were also sampled, respectively, in the three states. Most respondents inter-viewed in the three states were married. In terms of household size, the average for Ebonyi state was 7.61 while Ekiti and Rivers states had 7.95 and 6.63, respectively. A substantial number of households in both Ebonyi (48.0 %) and Rivers (44.0 %) states had less than six members. However, Ekiti state had the largest household size, where about 75.0 percent of respondents indicated household members ranged between six to fifteen people. Only about 14.0 percent of respondents in Ebonyi state said they had over and above sixteen people as household members living under the same roof. It is, therefore, possible that households having more members have more easy access to labour. The average age of respondents in Ebonyi, Ekiti and Rivers states was 45.22, 52.42 and 43.0 years, respectively. This clearly indicated that most respondents in the three States were still within the active and productive age bracket. Educationally, about 43.0 percent of respondents in both Ebonyi and Ekiti states either completed secondary school or even had tertiary education, while in Rivers state, about 44.0 percent of those sampled had secondary education just as 26.0 percent of this acquired tertiary education also. The average levels of income of the rural people interviewed in Ebonyi, Ekiti and Rivers states were ₦9, 700.00; ₦14, 981.80; and ₦13,485.00 per month, respectively. These corroborate the findings of Kolawole and Ajayi (2005) in Lagos state, Nigeria. Results in Table 1 also reveal that rural people in Ekiti state had more contact with government agencies than any of the other two States. In Ebonyi, all the respondents (100.0 %) had contact with the Ministry of Health, just as 81.0 percent of the

Table 1a: Demographic and socio-economic attributes of respondents

State /Variable	Ebonyi State Percentage	Ekiti State Percentage	Rivers State Percentage	N=100 Per State
Sex				
Male	56.0	93.0	63.0	
Female	44.0	7.0	37.0	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Marital Status				
Single	23.0	2.0	33.0	
Married	70.0	97.0	60.0	
Separated/Divorced	-	-	1.0	
Widowed/widower	7	1	6.0	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Household size				
< 6 people	48.0	23.0	44.0	
6 – 10	28.0	55.0	29.0	
11 – 15	10.0	20.0	26.0	
16 and above	14.0	2.0	1.0	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Mean:	7.61	7.95	6.63	
Std. Dev.:	6.52	3.37	4.91	
Age				
20 – 40	41.0	21.0	42.0	
41 – 60	44.0	52.0	47.0	
61 – 80	15.0	27.0	11.0	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Mean:	45.22	52.42	43.0	
Std. Dev.:	15.23	12.23	14.27	
Education level				
No formal education	26.0	32.0	26.0	
Did not complete primary education	1.0	-	1.0	
Completed primary education	28.0	24.0	28.0	

Table 1b: Demographic and socio-economic attributes of respondents

State /Variable	Ebonyi State Percentage	Ekiti State Percentage	Rivers State Percentage	N=100 Per State
Did not complete secondary education	1.0	1.0	-	
Completed secondary education	18.0	20.0	18.0	
Had tertiary education	25.0	23.0	26.0	
Income (₦/month)				
No information	-	8.0	-	
< 7,500	48.0	21.0	43.0	
7,500 – 15,000	32.0	31.0	27.0	
15,001 – 22,500	15.0	20.0	8.0	
22,501 – 30,000	4.0	12.0	14.0	
> 30,000	1.0	8.0	8.0	
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	
Mean:	9,700.00	14,981.80	13,485.00	
Std. Dev.:	7,311.26	11,041.03	12,931.00	
Contact with Govt. Agencies*				
i. Ministry of Agric. & Coop	12.0	98.0	-	
ii. Ministry of Rural Development.	9.0	86.0	-	
iii. Water Cooperation	17.0	87.0	1.0	
iv. Direct Labour Agency	2.0	11.0	-	
v. Min of youth, Social Development & Women Affairs	5.0	49.0	3.0	
vi. Agric. Development. Programme	2.0	79.0	24.0	
vii. Ministry of Commerce and Industry	7.0	48.0	56.0	
viii. Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF)	7.0	54.0	50.0	
ix. Ministry of Health	100	70.0	51.0	
x. National Orientation Agency (NOA)	1.0	25.0		
xi. National Directorate of Employment (NDE)	81.0	44.0	36.0	
xii. Others	-	2.0		

*Multiple responses

Source: Data analysis, 2005

same set of respondents had contact with the National Directorate of Employment (NDE). This showed a sharp contrast with those of Ekiti and Rivers states, where just about 44.0 and 36.0 percents of interviewees had contact with the NDE, respectively. The highest contact in Ekiti was, however, recorded against the Ministry of Agriculture closely followed by Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). In Rivers state, a substantial number of those sampled had contact with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (56%), Ministry of Health (51%) and

Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) (50%).

Results in Table 2 also reveal that rural people's membership and participation in association were low in Ebonyi, Ekiti and Rivers states! Of all the rural associations identified (the Cooperative, Community Development Associations, CDAs, Village organisations, Trade unions, Esusu groups, and others), over and above 50.0 percent of respondents never belonged to any of such groupings in all the three states. Where they belonged at all, they never participated fully; just as very few respondents were Committee or executive members. While most respondents in Ebonyi state had more access to information through friends, neighbours and market fora (100.0%), as well as radio (94.0%), those sampled in Ekiti state had more access to information through friends and neighbours (98.0%), ADPs (94.0%), market fora (77.0%), radio (73.0%) and television (44.0%). Friends and neighbours and market fora (100.0%), radio (99.0%), television (42.0%) and newspapers (32.0%) were major sources of information for the ruralites in Rivers state.

Farming was rated as the occupation having the highest occurrence in rural Ebonyi (72.0%), Ekiti (100.0%) and Rivers (38.0%). Trading (46.0%) and civil service (17.0%) followed farming, in that order, in Ebonyi state. Civil service (24.0%) and transportation business (20.0%) were relatively more prominent in the rural communities of Rivers state after farming. This may not have been unconnected with the cosmopolitan nature of the State in general, as a result of oil exploration. The average farm size was 2.80, 5.10 and 1.43 hectare in Ebonyi, Ekiti and Rivers states, respectively. It could then be deduced that farming activities were more in Ekiti as compared with the other two states, particularly Rivers, where it is acclaimed that oil exploration seemed to have damaged its ecology. In terms of cosmopoliteness (external orientation), respondents (75.0%) in Ebonyi state were more cosmopolitan than their counterparts in either Ekiti or Rivers, where only 22.0 and 14.0 percents "...had travelled to other towns outside the state", respectively. Only 2.0 percents of respondents had ever "...travelled to other countries" from Ekiti and Rivers states, respectively.

Respondents' perception of ecological variables

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Table 2a: Demographic and socio-economic attributes cont'd

State/Variable	Ebonyi State Percentage	Ekiti State Percentage	Rivers State Percentage
Association Membership/ Participation*			
(a) **Cooperative Society**			
(i) Not a member	95.0	53.0	100.0
(ii) Ordinary member	1.0	38.0	-
(iii) Committee member	-	8.0	-
(iv) Executive member	4.0	1.0	-
(b) **Community Development Asso. (CDA)**			
(i) Not a member	100.0	98.0	100.0
(ii) Ordinary member	-	-	-
(iii) Committee member	-	1.0	-
(iv) Executive member	-	1.0	-
(c) **Village organization**			
(i) Not a member	47.0	77.0	77.0
(ii) Ordinary member	31.0	15.0	21.0
(iii) Committee member	16.0	4.0	2.0
(iv) Executive member	6.0	4.0	-
(d) **Trade unions**			
(i) Not a member	94.0	94.0	71.0
(ii) Ordinary member	5.0	4.0	25.0
(iii) Committee member	1.0	-	4.0
(iv) Executive member	-	2.0	-
(e) ***Esusu* Group**			
(i) Not a member	100.0	91.0	85.0
(ii) Ordinary member	-	8.0	11.0
(iii) Committee member	-	1.0	4.0
(iv) Executive member	-	-	-
(f) **Others**			
(i) Not a member	53.0	98.0	58.0
(ii) Ordinary member	39.0	2.0	41.0
(iii) Committee member	7.0	-	1.0
(iv) Executive member	1.0	-	-
Sources of Information*			
(i) ADP	12.0	94.0	-
(ii) Dept of Fisheries	-	12.0	3.0
(iii) NOA	6.0	46.0	4.0
(iv) Friends and neighbours	100.0	98.0	100.0
(v) Market fora	100.0	77.0	100.0
(vi) Television	26.0	44.0	42.0
(vii) Newspapers	33.0	14.0	32.0
(viii) Magazines	23.0	6.0	18.0
(ix) Radio	94.0	73.0	99.0

Table 2b: Demographic and socio-economic attributes cont'd

State/Variable	Ebonyi State Percentage	Ekiti State Percentage	Rivers State Percentage
Occupation*			
(i) Farming	72.0	100.0	38.0
(ii) Fishing	-	4.0	16.0
(iii) Trading	46.0	18.0	10.0
(iv) Artisan	2.0	11.0	6.0
(v) Civil service	17.0	23.0	24.0
(vi) Transportation business	4.0	-	20.0
(vii) Agro-allied processing	8.0	2.0	11.0
Farm size (ha)			
0 – 5.0	79.0	66.0	99.0
5.1 – 10.0	20.0	28.0	1.0
10.1 – 15.0	1.0	3.0	
15.1 – 20.0	-	3.0	-
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100**
Mean:	2.80	5.10	1.43
Std. Dev.:	2.74	3.98	1.82
Cosmopoliteness			
(i) I never traveled out of my locality	1.0		4.0
(ii) I have traveled to other villages in my locality	1.0	1.0	40.0
(iii) I have traveled to other towns within the State	22.0	75.0	40.0
(iv) I have traveled to other towns outside the State	75.0	22.0	14.0
(v) I have traveled to other countries	1.0	2.0	2.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100**

*Multiple responses
Source: Data analysis, 2005

locality affects the totality of the people's way of life.

Rural people's livelihood strategies and business orientations are partly but significantly determined by their environmental conditions. In developing economies such as Nigeria, agriculture remains the major source of rural employment (Wiggins and Deshingkar 2007). Thus, ecological variables (such as rainfall pattern, soil characteristics, topography) were also analysed in the study. Results in Table 3 reveal the perception of those sampled just as they affirmed that "soil strongly supports farming" in the states of Ebonyi (100.0%), Ekiti (100.0%) and Rivers (84.0%). The finding from the rural communities of Rivers seems to run contrary to the popular impression that oil has polluted both the soil and water in the state. It was also claimed by respondents (93.0%) in Rivers that there was "heavy rainfall throughout the year" while it is heavy in

Table 3: Respondents' distribution by ecological variables

State/Variable	Ebonyi Percentage	Ekiti Percentage	Rivers Percentage	N=100/ State
Soil nature				
(i) Soil strongly supports farming	100.0	100.0	84.0	
(ii) It fairly supports farming	-	-	12.0	
(iii) It is naturally unfit for farming	-	-	4.0	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Rainfall pattern				
(i) Heavy rainfall throughout the year	-	-	93.0	
(ii) Heavy rainfall in some months of the year	100.0	100.0	7.0	
(iii) Light rainfall in most part of the year	-	-	-	
(iv) Little or no rainfall throughout the year	-	-	-	
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: Data analysis, 2005

some months of the year in both Ebonyi and Ekiti states (100.0%).

Institutional and communal support

Results in Table 4 explain the support or forms of assistance provided for rural people (either at the government, community or family level) in the states investigated to enable them promote entrepreneurship development and rural employment. Analysis showed that about 88.0 and 100.0 percents of those sampled opined that "government has not funded any individual or group project that promotes rural employment" in Ebonyi and Rivers states, respectively. While about 39.0 percent of Ekiti respondents were of the same opinion, about 52.0 percent of them claimed that "government has recently given out loans for employment generating projects" in the state. Just as about 100.0, 92.0 and 87.0 percents of people in Ebonyi, Ekiti and Rivers state, respectively, claimed that their family members supported them morally in their business

ventures, a relatively substantial percentage acknowledged financial and labour support from their family members in all the States. Except for Ekiti and Rivers states, where less than 50.0 percent of those interviewed claimed their communities had provided land for them, a substantial percentage of respondents [in all the three states investigated] felt cultural and other forms of support were available (Table 4).

Envisaged profitable employment generating ventures

Further analysis indicated that most respondents in Ebonyi (67.0%) and Ekiti (100.0%) states felt agro-allied processing was likely to ignite rural entrepreneurship and employment promotion. Production of household essential needs (such as candle, soap, pomade etc.) was perceived as profitable in both states. However, about 20.0, 35.0 and 38.0 percents of respondents in Rivers also felt transportation business; agro-allied processing; and production of household essential needs, respectively, were also profitable. About 11.0 percent of those interviewed in both Ebonyi and Rivers states believed trading was worth the while.

Table 4: Institutional and communal support

State/Variable	Ebonyi State Percentage	Ekiti State Percentage	Rivers State Percentage
Government Support			
(i) Govt. has not funded any individual or group project that promotes rural employment	88.0	39.0	100.0
(ii) Govt. has recently given out loans for employment generating project	11.0	52.0	
(iii) There is an indication that govt. would fund such projects soon	1.0	9.0	-
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Family Support*			
(i) Family members have given rural support	100.0	92.0	87.0
(ii) Family members have given financial support	65.0	43.0	41.0
(iii) Family members have provided labour	63.0	43.0	63.0
Community Support*			
(i) My community has provided land	71.0	45.0	21.0
(ii) My community supports worthwhile projects	93.0	94.0	93.0
(iii) My community would allow the operation of cottage industries, which are compatible with its culture	100.0	95.0	100.0

*Multiple responses

Source: Data analysis, 2005

Nonetheless, most respondents in all the states affirmed that lack of fund, ill health and acute shortage of land were major constraints to rural entrepreneurship and employment promotion drive.

Explanatory variables that influence the promotion of rural employment

At $P \leq 0.01$ level of significance, results in Table 5 show that about seven socio-economic variables had positive and significant correlation with rural employment promotion in Southern Nigeria. While only one infrastructure variable (bank availability (t=2.12) had a significant relationship with REP at $P \leq 0.05$ level, two institutional variables (Government (r=0.20) and community support (r=0.15) had the same relationship with REP both at $P \leq 0.01$ and 0.05 levels, respectively. Also, project characteristics variables (project type (t=2.83) and corresponding capital outlay (r=0.25) had positive and significant correlation with REP at $P \leq 0.01$ level of significance. The values of the variables are as follows: household size (r = 0.26); education (r = 0.30); income (r = 0.31); and cosmopoliteness (r = 0.22). Others are contact with government agencies (r = 0.28); association membership (r = 0.15); information source(s) (r = 0.11); and farm size (r = 0.31). The positive correlation, which existed between REP and all other variables, explained that if more of those variables are favourably positioned and appropriated, the more the drive towards employment promotion of individuals. As for age, it is assumed that experience is its function, hence the existing positive correlation. The coefficient of determination (r^2) in Table 5 explained the degree of variation in REP, which was attributable to each of the variables presented. In essence, age (1.26%), household size (6.60%), education level (9.18%), income (9.86%), cosmopoliteness (4.75%), contact with government agencies (7.78%), association membership (2.22%), farm size (9.42%), government support (3.96%), motorable road availability (1.02%), project type (8.58%) and capital outlay of the project (6.05%) all contributed some relatively appreciable percentages to REP.

The relatively high percentage contributions of education level, income, and farm size and project type are notable. Kolawole and Ajayi (2005) had earlier reported that farm size alone accounted for about 43.6 percent of the variations, which was noticeable in REP score in Lagos state, Nigeria.

Table 5: Correlation and multiple regression analyses showing linear relationship between REDEP score and demographic/socio-economic variables, infrastructure and institutional support variables in Southern Nigeria

Variable	Correlation coefficient (r)	Coefficient of Determination (r^2)	Regression Co-efficient (b)	t-value for Ho
Age	0.112	0.0126	-0.072	-0.945
Household size	0.257**	0.0660	0.140	1.839
Education level	0.303**	0.0918	0.139	2.085*
Income	0.314**	0.0986	0.104	1.561
Cosmopoliteness	0.218**	0.0475	-0.079	-1.137
Contact with govt. agencies	0.279**	0.0778	0.163	1.945*
Association membership	0.149**	0.0222	-0.009	-0.160
Information source	0.114*	0.0130	0.018	0.317
Farm size	0.307**	0.0942	0.129	1.962*
Water supply source	-0.060	0.0004	0.074	1.149
Electricity supply source	0.048	0.0002	0.007	0.112
Bank availability	-0.119*	0.0142	0.116	2.117*
Government support	0.199**	0.0396	0.040	0.568
Family support	0.058	0.0003	0.122	2.155*
Community support	0.145*	0.0210	0.095	1.550
Motorable road(s)	0.101	0.0102	0.023	0.396
Project type	0.293**	0.0858	0.171	2.827**
Capital outlay	0.246**	0.0605	0.033	0.533

Number of independent variables: 18
Number of respondents: 300
Source: Data analysis, 2005
** 'r' and 't' are significant at 0.01 level
* 'r' and 't' are significant at 0.05 level
$R = 0.532$ (53.2%)
$R^2 = 0.283$ (28.3%)
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.231$

The data were further subjected to multiple regression analysis with a view to determining the magnitude of change in REP score (Y) as influenced by all significant independent (X) variables. Multiple correlations co-efficient (R) showed 53.2 percent relationship between REP and other variables. R-square (R^2) showed the total percentage variation in Y as attributable to the joint contribution of X variables that had significant relationship with Y. Hence, the data revealed that household size (t = 1.84), education level (t = 2.09), income (t = 3.36), contact with government

agencies (t = 1.95), farm size (t = 1.96), bank availability (t = 2.117), family support (t = 2.16), and project type (t=2.83) explained 28.3 percent of the variations or changes in REP score. The low value of R^2 may have been due to multi co-linearity of the variables included in the analysis.

The negative relationship existing between age (t = -0.95) and REP may, from another perspective, be explained on the ground that the older the individual is, the more his strength, drive and enthusiasm wane towards employment generation. Also, the negative sign of cosmopoliteness shows that a cosmopolitan individual, who is prone to constant travels, may not have enough time to look after/administer standing and or prospective business endeavours, which are most likely to generate rural employment opportunities for people, *Ceteris paribus*.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Any meaningful rural empowerment policy would rely on a thorough understanding of the factors that motivate the average rural dweller to engage in entrepreneurship development and employment promotion. This article has, therefore, identified certain crucial variables that influence the enhancement of rural employment promotion in Southern Nigeria (Kolawole, 2007). Apparently, over 50.0 percent of the variables that had some degrees of relationship with REP were identified in the study. Of importance are respondents' socio-economic variables (such as household size, education level, income, external orientation/ cosmopoliteness, contact with government agencies, association membership, source(s) of information and farm size. Possibly, the respondents' levels of education may have had a positive effect on their productive ventures in the promotion of rural employment. Availability of infrastructural facilities (such as electricity supply, motorable roads, and bank availability) is, apparently, very vital in REP. Institutional influence as reflected in government, family and community support is crucial to the enhancement of employment promotion.

Rural employment is closely linked with the challenges of meeting the United Nations' (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Wiggins and Deshingkar 2007). Indeed, it is acknowledged that the Nigerian government (in its drive towards conforming with the UN resolutions on poverty) has, of late,

devised a number of strategies in achieving the MDGs of halving the world's poor by year 2015. Notable amongst such strategies is the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS). The strategies are meant for repositioning and implementation at both state and local government levels as State Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (LEEDS), respectively. These can only achieve their aims in situations where grassroots people are adequately involved in the course of programme conceptualisation, planning and execution. Policy issues addressing these fundamentals are essential. More importantly, the provision of basic and functional services such as education, health care, water, electricity and motorable roads are vital for rural employment promotion drive in rural communities to jump start REP; and service delivery schemes, which poor people could afford either solely or through counterpart funding, need to be put in place. And this could, perhaps, be subsumed under the SEEDS or LEEDS. As finance is one of the major determinants of employment promotion, veritable sources of fund and fund mobilisation need to be created for vulnerable and poor people.

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