

**THE ROLE OF SMALL-SCALE STONE MINING IN MITIGATING YOUTH
UNEMPLOYMENT IN ZAMFARA STATE**

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Abstract

The paper examined the role of small-scale stone mining in mitigating unemployment among youths in Zamfara State. The paper informed on the basis that small-scale stone mining is a key factor in reducing unemployment in Zamfara State. Zamfara is one of the poorest states in Nigeria where youths are engaged in small-scale mining. The sample size of the study comprised of 371 respondents. Structured interview was used as the primary instrument of data collection. Purposive sampling techniques was used to select quarry sites while simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Data collected was presented in tables and percentages.

The study found out that small-scale stone mining had significantly helped in mitigating unemployment among youths in Zamfara State. This is because before joining small-scale stone mining, majority 63.3% of youths were unemployed prior to joining small-scale stone mining while after joining stone mining majority of youths had were employed by participating in the mining activities as 46.4% served as diggers, 34.5% stone breakers while 16.4% served as loaders

The major factors limiting youth involvement in small-scale stone quarrying were lack of modern quarrying equipment, absence of personal protective gadgets and ignorance about government regulations in the mining industry. The study therefore recommends more youths in Zamfara State should be given the enabling environment by respective authorities to carry out small scale stone mining in Zamfara state as a way of mitigating unemployment and the Federal Government of Nigeria should provide financial incentives to quarry operators to enable them buy modern quarry equipment to ease their jobs.

Keywords: Youths, Small-Scale, mining, unemployment,

Background to the Study

Small scale mining activities has the capacity to contribute in no small measure in mitigating unemployment in many states of the federation especially in Zamfara State. This is because most of the young people who do not have an education to pursue white collar jobs are capable of channelling their energies in to a gainful venture like mining. It is important to note that Zamfara is one of the states in Nigeria that is blessed with a huge amount of unexploited solid mineral resources. According to the former Governor of the State; Alhaji Mahmuda Aliyu Shinkafi the state possesses 60% of the untapped total solid minerals deposits of the federation (Salisu, 2010). He also noted that the discovery of large deposits of solid minerals

comprising of gold, copper, iron ore, tantalite, manganese among others can contribute to the development of the state and Nigeria at large (Salisu, 2010).

As a matter of concern, if the small scale-scale mining is properly harnessed, it will reduce the high rate of unemployment in the state and will also key in to the Federal Governments agenda to diversify the economy. If properly harnessed, small-scale stone mining will also reduce youth restiveness and crime in the society as most of the youth rather than roaming the streets will have a little source of income to take care of their basic needs of life. Solid mineral sector in Nigeria is effectively harnessed, it can become a key instrument in the diversification of the economy, and can help the country to move beyond the orbit of oil, gas and agriculture (United Nations Development Programme([UNDP], 2014) also shares the view that if the. UNDP (2014) emphasized that if the solid mineral sector is given the desired attention, it can serve as an engine of growth for the Nigerian economy as well as the capacity to promote inclusive development in the future. This implies that it will take off the heavy dependence on oil revenue and other sectors of the economy that are considered to be lucrative by most of the young people who in turn has little or no opportunity to it. It is against this background that the study seeks to assess the role of small-scale stone mining on youth employment in Zamfara State.

Statement of the research Problem

Zamfara State is one of the poorest states in Nigeria with an unemployment rate of 18.0 in 2018 (World Resource Atlas, 2018). There is need for youths in Zamfara State to key into small scale mining because the state has a large number of small-scale stone mining workers. Data also shows that small-scale stone mining is a positive and comparatively inexpensive way of reducing poverty (Labonne & Gilman ,1999).

As a matter of concern, if small scale mining is properly harnessed, it has the potential to reduce the high unemployment rate as well as poverty reduction not just in Zamfara State but in the entire country. This has consequently made studies on the role of small-scale mining and unemployment a major gap in literature particularly in Zamfara State. It is as a result of this missing gap in knowledge that this study seeks to examine the effect of small-scale stone mining on mitigating unemployment among youths in Zamfara State.

Research Objectives

The main aim of the study is to assess if small-scale stone mining has contributed in mitigating among youth unemployment in some selected local government areas in Zamfara State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the socio-economic characteristics of youths involved in small-scale stone quarrying in Zamfara State.
2. Determine the status of youth employment prior to joining small-scale stone mining Zamfara State.
3. The role of small-scale stone mining in mitigating youth unemployment in Zamfara State.

Literature Review

In Nigeria, solid minerals have an important role to play in development especially in mitigating unemployment. This fact was emphasized by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2009) when it stated that solid mineral sector is crucial to the diversification of the economy from oil dependence. It also elaborated further that, sources of income, employment and foreign exchange earned from the solid minerals sector could potentially exceed those from the oil and gas sector.

In Zamfara State, small scale stone quarrying is one of the major industries that has played a key role in poverty reduction and development generally. Mining activities (small scale stone quarry) has a long history in the state dating to 1945 (Salifu, e'tal, 2016). Over the years, the solid mineral sector in Zamfara State has grown significantly creating jobs for hundreds of people and generating revenue for the state. This is evident in the report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2017) that Zamfara State produced a total of 101,809.19 tons of solid minerals in 2016.

Despite the fact that small scale quarrying has the prospects of reducing poverty among youths, most studies on poverty reduction in Zamfara State tend to focus on the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) on

poverty reduction. For instance, the study by Abdullahi and Zakari (2013) focused on strengthening small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as a strategy for poverty reduction in north western Nigeria.

Methodology

The study setting is in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The state is made up of fourteen (14) local government areas. The local government areas are: Anka, Bakura, Birnin -Magaji, Bukkuyum, Bungudu, Gummi, Gusau, Kaura-Namoda, Maradun, Maru, Talata-Mafara, Shinkafi, Tsafe and Zurmi. However, since small scale stone quarrying is not done in all the 14 local government areas of the state, the study utilised purposive sampling technique to select only the local government areas where small-scale quarrying activities is carried out while simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. To achieve this, a desk study report obtained from Zamfara State Ministry of Environment and Solid Minerals showed that small-scale stone quarrying activities is done in the following local governments: Anka, Bukkuyum, Bungudu, Bakura, Gusau, Maradun, Talata-Mafara and Tsafe Local Government Areas. Therefore, it is from these 8 local government areas where small-scale stone quarrying activities is done that the respondents were selected for the study.

The population of the study consisted of youths involved in small-scale stone quarrying in the selected local government areas in Zamfara State. For the purpose of clarity, the study adopts the African Youth Charter definition of youths due to its consideration of the social, cultural and religious complexities of member States. The African Youth Charter (2006) defines youth or young people as persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years

However, since the exact number of youths involved in small-scale stone quarrying in Zamfara State is unknown, the sample size of the study was determined based on proportion. Therefore, the sample size of the study consisted of 400 youths involved in small-scale stone quarrying in some selected quarry sites in Zamfara State. Structured interview was used to elicit data from youths engaged in small scale stone quarry in Zamfara State. The reason is because majority of the population can neither read nor write. In line with this, the researchers engaged the services four research assistants who understood Hausa language to assist in data collection. Meanwhile, tables and percentages were used to analyze the data collected so as to establish the effect of small-scale stone quarrying on poverty reduction among youths in Zamfara State.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents and analysis the data obtained from the field with the aim of determining the effects of small-scale stone quarrying on poverty reduction among youths in Zamfara State. The presentation is done in the following order: Socio-demographic characteristic of the respondents, effects of small-scale quarrying on poverty reduction and factors limiting small scale stone quarrying activities in Zamfara State.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable		Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Sex	Male	371	100.0
	Female	0	0.00
	Total	371	100.0
Marital Status			
	Married	226	60.9
	Single	141	38.0
	Widowed	4	1.1
	Total	371	100.0
Age			
	15-25	121	32.6
	26-35	250	67.4
	Total	371	100.0
Education			
	No formal Education	221	59.6
	Primary	94	25.3
	Secondary	48	12.9
	Tertiary	8	2.2
	Total	371	100.0
Annual Income			
	Below N50,000	185	49.9
	N51,000-N100,000	15	4.0
	N101,000-N150,000	104	28.0
	N151,000-N200,000	37	10.0
	N201,000 and Above	30	8.1
	Total	371	100.0
Religion			
	Islam	371	100.0
	Christianity	0	0.00
	Others	0	0.00
	Total	371	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

The data in table 1 indicated that all the respondents represented by 100% (371) were males. This is not surprising because Zamfara is one among the states in Northern Nigeria where sharia is practiced and women are not allowed to engage in most outdoor activities hence the dominance of males in small scale stone quarrying. On the marital status, majority of the respondents represented by 60.9% (226) were married, 38.0% (141) were single while 1.1% (4) were widowed. It can be deduced from the data that majority of the youths involved in small-scale quarrying in Zamfara state were married and may have dependents to cater for hence their involvement in small- scale stone quarrying. On age distribution, 67.4% (250) were between the age bracket of 26-35 years while those between 18-25 years with 32.6 % (121). From the data presented, the number of youths between 26 to 35 years were actively engaged into small scale quarrying more than other age categories in Zamfara State. This is because breaking of quarry requires strength and energy and the youths possess both qualities. The educational characteristics of the respondents showed that many of the respondents represented by 59.6% (221) had no formal education, 25.3 % (94) had primary education,

12.9% (48) had secondary education while 2.2 % (9) had tertiary education. The dominance of respondents without any formal education and primary school education is because small scale stone quarrying does not require skilled labour force.

On the annual income of respondents, many of the respondents represented by 49.9% (185) earned below N50,000, 28.0% (104) made between N101,000-N150,000, 10.0% (37) got between N151,000-N200,000, 8.1% (30) received N201,000 and above while 4.0 % (15) earned between N51,000-N100,000. In terms of religious affiliation, all the respondents that is 100% (371) practiced Islamic religion and the reason is because Zamfara State is a Muslim dominated State.

The Employment Status Youths prior to Joining Small-Scale Stone Mining in Zamfara State

This section examined the employment status youths before joining small-scale stone mining in Zamfara State.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Employment Status prior to joining stone mining in Zamfara State.

Employment Status Youths before Joining Small-Scale Stone Mining	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Employed	21	5.7
Partially Employed (menial jobs)	115	31.0
Unemployed	235	63.3
Total	371	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 2 above showed the distribution of the respondents based on the status of employment of youths before joining small-scale stone mining. Based on the data collected, majority 63.3% (235), of youths were unemployed prior to joining small-scale stone mining. Data collected also showed that only a few numbers 5.7% (21) of youths were employed before joining small-scale stone mining. It was also found that a significant number 31.0% (115) of respondents were partially employed by means of doing menial jobs within the state.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Employment Status after Joining Mining

Nature of employment after joining stone mining	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Stone Diggers	172	46.4
Stone Breakers	128	34.5
Loaders	61	16.4
Others	10	2.7
Total	371	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Based on the data collected as shown in table 3 above, most of the youths 46.4% (172) used digger. Data also showed that 34.5% (128) of the youth were stone breakers while 16.4% (61) served as loaders 4.9% (18). It was also found that the number of respondents who were doing other jobs apart from the above mentioned constitutes 2.7% (10) of the total respondents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the research makes the following recommendations:

1. More Youths in Zamfara State should be given the enabling environment by respective authorities to carry out small scale stone mining in Zamfara state as a way of mitigating unemployment.
2. The Federal government of Nigeria should provide financial incentives to quarry operators to enable them buy modern quarry equipment to ease their jobs.
3. There should be an intensive campaign by government at all levels to encourage youth to engage in gainful ventures such as stone mining in order to reduce youth restiveness in the state.
4. Community leaders and other stakeholders in each of the mining sites should be involved in the regulation of mining activities such that it will not be hijacked by unscrupulous elements for other criminal activities.

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