

Chapter 8

Can Entrepreneurial Skills Development Mitigate Poverty Among Dropped Out High School Teenage Mothers in North–Central Nigeria?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recently, it was observed that a majority of girls dropped out of high schools due to early marriage, pregnancy, and poverty in North Central Zone of Nigeria. This led to the increase of out-of-school children which is now put at 12 million. Based on the conversation, the researcher seeks to examine whether entrepreneurial skills development do mitigate poverty among now teenage mothers in the zone. Two research questions guided the study. Furthermore, qualitative approach was used as research design for the study. Six focus groups were formed to elicit information for the study. Additionally, semi-structured interview was developed; thereafter, narrative analysis was adopted to analyse the data. It was discovered that teenage mothers were engaged in sewing and needle work, laali design, and mobile phone repairs. Similarly, it was also found that teenage mothers' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills has a great impact on their financial autonomy, poverty reduction, and improving the Nigerian economy.

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is abundantly blessed with enormous human and natural resources. There is no part of the country where one particular natural resource or the other is not found. For instance, in Akwa Ibom state, there is crude oil, in Zamfara state gold is found, in Enugu state, there is abundant deposit of Iron Ore, more so, cassiterite is found in Plateau state, among others. In the area of human resource, Nigerians have excelled in various professions such as medicine, law, engineering, teaching, among others. Apparently, the success story of these Nigerians in various fields is a function of their doggedness in achieving their goals in the face of extreme hardship and unfriendly business environment. However, it is sad to say that most Nigerians who could not navigate this harsh situation are made to face abject poverty. In other words, most Nigerians go to bed every day without food because of high level of poverty. The few, who manage to eat one meal per day, do so from the position of extreme struggle and resilience (Ogbe, 2020). This chapter examines entrepreneurial skill development among high-school drop-out teenage mothers to understand its role in poverty mitigation in North Central Nigeria.

Background of the Study: Poverty in Nigeria

In addition, World Bank Report (2022) reports that every eight in ten Nigerians live below the national poverty line. This claim was corroborated by Uzoho (2022) who stated that Nigeria has maintained the infamous position as the poverty capital of the world, with over 93.9 million people currently living below the poverty line. This situation was further compounded by the recent outbreak of coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) in the world which sent most families in Nigeria to unimaginable hardship and lack levels (Chitiga, Henseler, Mabugu, & Maisonnave, 2022). Andam, Edeh, Oboh, Pauw and Thurlow (2020) opine that during the COVID-19 outbreak, about 17 million more people fell into poverty in Nigeria, a country that already accounted for the highest absolute number of poor people in Sub-Saharan Africa. Farley (2020) postulate that COVID-19 has made females secondary school to servitude, prostitutes, street hawkers, among others on the ground of making ends meet. Similarly, Gichuna, Hassan, Sanders, Campbell, Mutonyi and Mwangi (2020) are of the view that women and girls suffered adversely during the COVID-19 pandemic because of increased poverty, Akanbi, Ope, Adeloye, Amoo, Iruonagbe and Omojola (2021) food insecurity, and unplanned pregnancies as well as reduced access to healthcare, water, and sanitation. These unfortunate situations eventually resulted in an alarming rate of school dropout among female teenagers.

In Nigeria, particularly in North Central Nigeria, millions of young teenage girls were forced to drop out of school due to early pregnancy occasioned by force early

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