

ATTITUDE OF YOUTH CORPERS TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE OF NYSC IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines attitude of youth corpers towards the community development service of National Youths Service Corps Programme (NYSC) in Nigeria. A random sample of 159 Corpers was involved in the study and they were administered with questionnaire to obtain relevant information related to the study. Data analysis was by use of frequency, percentage, mean scores and multiple regression. Findings of the study revealed that respondents attitude towards the Community Development Service (CDS) was favourable. This is a manifestation that they are willing to contribute their quota to national development. Age, attendance at CDS, number of group CDS projects embarked on, number of individual CDS projects, embarked on gender, marital status, nature of service area significantly influenced attitude towards the NYSC programme. Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that funds should be made available for individual and group projects so that meaningful activities can be carried out. Also adequate monitoring and evaluation should be done to ensure that project funds are properly utilized. This will motivate corps members to work. Individual corpers who have personal projects to embark on should be encouraged to do so. More Corpers should be posted to the rural areas where they are seriously needed.

Key words: attitude of youth corpers, community development, National Youth Service Corps

INTRODUCTION

The National Youth Service Corps Scheme is a National Programme meant for graduates of tertiary institutions to serve the nation for one year as a way of integrating them to other geographical region in the country. The primary purpose of the scheme is to inculcate in the Nigerian youths the spirit of selfless service to the community, and emphasize the spirit of oneness and brotherhood of all Nigerians irrespective of cultural or social background (NYSC 1992). The history of the nation since independence point to the need for unity among the people and the future professionals were at the center point of this initiative of unity (Adesope, 1993). This category of young professionals from diverse fields who are called upon to serve the nation after graduating from the higher institutions of learning are referred to as Corps members or Corpers.

The importance of the youths to national development is without doubt. This is evident in the various programmes directed at the youths by government at various times which include farm settlement schemes, young farmers club, school-to-land programme, National Directorate of Employment programme, Poverty Alleviation Programme, among others. . The youths are in their active stage in life and their potent energies need to be channeled into meaningful endeavours for the purpose of achieving desired objectives. It has been noted that the revelation that in Nigeria young people of the age of 30 years and below make up 80% of the population and constitute about 76% of the labour force stresses the need to organize them and channel their latent but potent energies in any constitutional and career making activities (Onemolease, 1992)

The primary assignment of corpers involved in the NYSC scheme is to serve in whatever capacity they have professional training in. They are involved in teaching administration, industry, and so. Apart from this there is a secondary assignment known

specifically as Community Development Service (CDS). Corps members are expected to contribute to the communities where they are serving. The objectives of the Community Development Service include the following:

1. Harnessing the knowledge and skills of corps members into an effective machinery for achieving self-sufficiency in the priority areas of food production and provision of agro-based raw materials for industry, economic recovery and self-reliance.
2. Providing on-the-job training and experience for corps members in the area of Health, Engineering, Agriculture, Education and Social services, among others.
3. Providing a forum for corps members to experiment with ideas and translate them into concrete achievements towards national development.
4. Developing the spirit of entrepreneurship in corps members thus deemphasizing dependence on public service employment and promoting self-employment ventures (NYSC 1992).

The Community Development Service programme is significant to the effective completion of the NYSC programme but it seems that Corpers disposition towards the programme was not encouraging. Preliminary discussion revealed that Corpers were not impressed with the CDS programme. This study therefore investigated Corpers attitude towards the CDS programme. The study described personal characteristics of corpers and also determined the relationship between personal characteristics of corpers and their attitude towards community development service.

METHODOLOGY

The study population was 1, 200 Corps members who served in Imo State, southeastern Nigeria in the 2004/2005 service year. Corpers were visited during their CDS programme in their project sites and also at the NYSC Secretariate during their interactive sessions. A random sample of 159 Corpers was involved in the study and they were administered with questionnaire to obtain relevant information related to the study.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire which contained structured and unstructured questions on personal characteristics and attitude towards the Community Development Service. The instrument was administered to respondents during the CDS programme with the help of trained enumerators who were also corps members. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; The first section elicited information on personal characteristics of corpers while the second section elicited information on attitude towards the Community Development Service programme. The attitude of respondents was measured using a 12-item statements on a 5-point rating scale of strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and strongly disagree. For the purpose of interpreting each statement a mid-point of 3.00 was established. Decision rule was that any mean score that is less than or equal to 3.00 implies disagreement with the statement while any mean score that is greater than 3.00 implies agreement with the statement. The Data analysis was by use of frequency, percentage, mean scores and multiple regression.

The regression model was specified as follows:

$$Y = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, X_7, U)$$

Where Y = attitude towards community development service (index measure of attitude based on pooled individual scores from the five point rating scale)

X1 = age (years)

X2 = marital status (married =1, single =0)

X3 = gender (male =1, female =0)

X4 = attendance of CDS (Yes =1, No =0)
 X5 = Number of group projects
 X6 = Number of individual projects
 X7 = Nature of service (urban =1, rural =0)
 U = Error term

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the personal characteristics of respondents involved in the study. From the table, 62.9% of the respondents were aged between 22 and 27 years, while 37.1% were between 28 and 32 years. The finding revealed that majority of the respondents were between 22 and 27 years old, with an average age of 27 years. This shows that respondents were young and in the active stage of their life. The National Youth Service Corps programme stipulates that prospective corps members should not be more than 30 years old as at the time of graduation. The findings also revealed that 23.9% of the respondents were married and 76.1% were single. The findings of the study showed that 69.8% of the respondents were males and 30.2% were females.

Table 1: Personal characteristics of respondents (n=159)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
22-27	100	62.9
28-32	59	37.1
Marital status		
Married	38	23.9
Single	121	76.1
Gender		
Male	111	69.8
Female	48	30.2
Do you think the CDS is worth it		
Yes	103	64.8
No	56	35.2
Are you fully involved in the CDS		
Yes	126	79.2
No	33	20.8
Do you attend CDS regularly		
Yes	133	83.6
No	26	16.4
Number of group CDS project embarked on		
0 - 2	131	82.4
3 - 4	28	17.6
Number of individual CDS projects embarked on		
0 - 2	151	95.0
3 - 4	8	5.0
Nature of service area		
Rural	42	26.4
Urban	117	73.6

Respondents also indicated that they attended the CDS programme regularly. In a previous study (Adesope, 1993) corps members indicated that the CDS programme was not encouraging. They gave reasons such as lack of support services from local governments and communities. The present study revealed similar findings because some respondents indicated that they were not interested and not fully involved in the CDS because there was no encouragement from NYSC staff and government, there were no funds made available for embarking on projects.

On the average, respondents have embarked on about 2 projects both on individual and on group basis. The study revealed that most respondents involved in the study were serving in urban areas.

Table 2: Attitude of Corpers towards the Community Development Service

Statements	Mean score	Remarks
1. The CDS is a waste of time and energy	2.79	Disagreement
2. I like the ideals of the CDS programme	3.82	Agreement
3. There is need to make the CDS more functional than it is presently	4.15	Agreement
4. Working materials are not available and this makes the CDS a burden	4.01	Agreement
5. There is little motivation from the NYSC directorate to make corpers work at CDS	3.62	Agreement
6. Corpers themselves do not take the CDS programme seriously	3.16	Agreement
7. I consider national interest a priority so I still put in my best to ensure this	3.67	Agreement
8. The NYSC and the CDS are not worth all the trouble	2.99	Disagreement
9. The CDS programme is one of the best programme of the NYSC scheme	3.42	Agreement
10. I derive personal satisfaction as a stakeholder in the CDS programme	3.34	Agreement
11. I have the opportunity to experiment with ideas during the CDS programme	3.14	Agreement
12. My further interaction with other corpers during the CDS is a way of actualizing the objectives of the scheme	3.87	Agreement
Grand mean	3.50	Agreement

Source: Field survey, 2005

Table 2 shows that respondents indicated favourable attitude towards the CDS programme. This is evident from their responses to the 12 items measuring their attitude towards the CDS programme. The grand mean of 3.50 also lends credence to this finding. The implication of the finding is that corpers like and appreciate the ideals of the community development service. This is likely because they want to contribute their quota to the development process through individual and group involvement in the community development service of the National Youth Service Corps programme.

Table 3: Multiple regression results

Variables	Coefficient	t-values
Constant	102.751	10.849
Age	-1.217	-4.716**
Attend CDS	8.831	5.453**
Group CDS	1.421	2.333*
Individuals CDS	-1.928	-2.723**
Gender	-3.650	-2.787**
Marital status	-5.103	-3.872**
Nature of service area	-3.876	-2.720
Multiple R	0.681	
R ²	0.463	
F-ratio	14.288**	
N	159	

Source: Computed from Field survey data, 2005

** Significant at 0.01 level

* Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 shows that all the 7 variables in the equation were significant and together explained 46.3% variation in the attitude of corpsers towards community development service programme of the National Youth Service Corps. Age was negatively correlated with attitude towards the CDS programme. This suggests that the older the respondent, the less favourable his attitude towards the CDS programme and vice versa. This finding implies that younger respondents were more favourably disposed to the programme. This is likely because the younger ones are more active and more adventurous.

Attendance at CDS showed positive correlation with attitude towards the CDS programme. This is expected because attendance should influence the way the respondent feels about the programme. As they attend the programme more regularly they see the need to be more committed. Number of group projects embarked on correlated positively with attitude towards the CDS programme. This is expected because as corpsers work in group they share more ideas and discuss why there should be progress. This is the importance of group dynamics. Asiabaka (2002) had reported that group dynamics allows for interaction that will lead to achieving set objectives.

Number of individual projects embarked on correlated negatively with attitude towards the CDS programme. This is in consonance with *a priori* expectation because most respondents complained of lack of resources to embark on individual CDS projects. Gender of respondent correlated negatively with attitude towards the CDS programme. This is because of the higher involvement of the males involved in the study. Marital status correlated negatively with attitude towards the CDS programme. This is also because of the higher number of unmarried respondents involved in the study. Nature of service area correlated negatively with attitude towards the CDS programme. This is due to the fact that more respondents from the urban areas were involved in the study and were not comfortable with the CDS programme. The respondents who served in the rural areas seem to appreciate the CDS programme more than their urban counterparts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme of Nigeria has been on since 1973. the programme has been useful in creating a sense of oneness and belonging to corps members who are young adults. They serve the nation in states outside their states of origin. This

study found that the corps members were actively involved in the Community Development Service but were handicapped because of lack of encouragement from NYSC staff, communities of service and government, there were no funds made available for embarking on projects. However, respondents attitude towards the Community Development Service was favourable. This is a manifestation that they are willing to contribute their quota to national development. Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that funds should be made available for individual and group projects so that meaningful activities can be carried out. Also adequate monitoring and evaluation should be done to ensure that project funds are properly utilized. This will motivate corps members to work. Individual corpsers who have personal projects to embark on should be encouraged to do so. More Corpsers should be posted to the rural areas where they are seriously needed.

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