



JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT (JET)

**A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ADULT
EDUCATION, FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS**

adejet@unilag.edu.ng

adejet.journals.unilag.edu.ng

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly prohibited.

Authors alone are responsible for the contents of their articles. The journal owns the copyright to the articles. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused, arising directly or indirectly in connection with or resulting from the use of the research material.

Assessing the Impact of Youth Employment and Community-Based Workshops on Sustainable Community Forest Management in Akamkpa LGA, Cross River State, Nigeria

Joseph O. Acha (Ph.D)
Mary Nandi A.
Okon Eunice Edet
Ewor Onor R.
Ettah Inah Ettah

Department of Adult and Continuing Education
University of Calabar, Calabar Nigeria.
Corresponding author: Joseph Odama Acha
+2348063223005, email: achajoseph5@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20447655>

ABSTRACT

This research examined the impact of youth employment and community-based workshops on sustainable forest management in Oban, Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study made use of a descriptive survey design, employing a multistage sampling procedure in selecting a sample of 151 respondents from this population, a population of 2,156 youth and community members engaged in forest-related activities within the study area. The instrument used in data collection was a researcher-developed instrument titled “Youth Employment and Community-Based Workshops on Sustainable Forest Management Questionnaire (YECWSFMQ), validated by experts in Environmental Education and measurement and Evaluation Departments both from University of Calabar, Calabar Cross River State, Nigeria. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach’s alpha coefficients analyses with the text coefficient ranging from 0.78 to 0.86, which was considered good enough for this study. In answering the research questions in the study, the mean and standard deviation were used, while simple linear regression analyses were used employed for the hypotheses testing at the 0.05 significance level. The data analyses results indicated that youth employment is significantly related to sustainable forest management practices within the research area. In like manner, finding as shown from the analysis of the second hypothesis indicated that community-based workshops significantly and positively impact local communities’ attitudes towards sustainable forest management. With regards to these results and subsequent findings, recommendations were made, among others, that the Cross River State government, as well as other relevant environmental agencies, strengthen youth employment opportunities with reference to forestry initiatives, in addition to intensifying community-based workshop programmes towards the promotion of positive attitudes and enhancing sustainable forest management practices in Oban Akamkpa and by extension Cross River State.

Keywords: Youth Employment, Community-Based Workshops, Sustainable Forest Management, Community Attitudes, Oban Akamkpa LGA, Cross River State.

Introduction

The concept of sustainable forest management has to do with planned utilization cum conservation of natural forest resources that takes priority in the maintenance of biodiversity, productivity, in addition to other ecological functions, meeting the needs of the present generation while making it possible for future need to be met equally. It therefore has to do with balancing environmental, economic, and social benefits to ensure forests continue to provide essential goods and services over time (FAO, 2020). The concept of sustainable forest management is of immense global interest due to deforestation, biodiversity loss, as well as climate change that threaten environmental sustainability.

The forest ordinarily affords important environmental services such as carbon compound extraction from the atmosphere, soil protection, water regulation and conservation of nature, making its sustainability crucial for man's survival and the enhancement of ecological balance. Within Oban and by extension Cross River State and globally, forest resources is the mainstay of rural livelihoods survival, economic development as well as cultural identity, but unsustainable uses such as illegal logging, agricultural expansion, and weak governance make this all-important gift of nature threatened and hence need to be conserved (FAO, 2020; UNEP, 2021). Oban, a community within Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria, happens to be among Nigeria's richest forest zones, but this area presently experiences pressure as a result of unsustainable exploitation in addition to inadequate community participation with regard to the government's proposed conservation efforts (Nwoboshi, 2018; Ajonina & Usongo, 2020).

The issues of youth employment are as a factor that has over the years promoted much resilience of the forest resources is increasingly been seen as a key strategy that could help in enhancing sustainable forest management practices mostly as it relates to the rural areas where unemployment is the order of the day. If the young people are provided with better and more affording livelihood opportunities that is devoid of total dependance on the forest resources,

Pg.257.JET 10:1, 2026

they will be engage in conservation, forest monitoring, agroforestry as well as sustainable resource use hence they are provided with alternative means of livelihood (World Bank, 2020; Adekunle & Oke, 2021). In many developing contexts, youth unemployment has been linked to increased involvement in deforestation, poaching, and unsustainable land-use practices as survival strategies (ILO, 2019; Mgbeoji, 2022). Past scholars through their studies opines that engaging youths with green jobs in addition to other community forestry programmes could bring down the level of environmental degradation thereby promoting long-term natural resources stewardship (Chukwuemeka & Okoye, 2020; Bassey & Akpan, 2023). Within Oban community where forest resources are seen as economic asset, means of livelihood and ecological treasure, youth employment could afford a decisive role in banging about sustainable forest management practices .

Community-based workshops are also an important approach towards the improvement of local attitudes as well as behaviours with reference to the promotion of sustainable forest management. Workshops therefore could make available the platforms that could bring about: environmental education, awareness creation, skill development as well as participatory learning, enabling communities to understand the long-term benefits of conservation practices (Pretty & Smith, 2019; Reed, 2020). Evidence suggests that communities exposed to consistent training programmes often develop stronger positive attitudes toward forest protection and become more willing to adopt sustainable practices such as controlled harvesting, reforestation, and biodiversity conservation (Agrawal & Benson, 2018; Etuk & Udofia, 2021). In Nigeria, community sensitization programmes have been found to enhance collective responsibility and reduce resistance to conservation policies (Ogunjinmi & Akinyemi, 2020; Eze & Onyebuchi, 2022). Hence, workshops will always be seen as a good instrument towards reshaping perceptions as well as strengthening community participation with reference to forest conservation in the research area.

The relationship between youth employment, community based workshop, and sustainable forest management is increasingly emphasized in contemporary environmental policy frameworks. Sustainable forest management needs both ecological strategies and socio-economic interventions which that's into consideration poverty, unemployment as well limited environmental awareness (UNDP, 2020; Global Forest Watch, 2021). The youths are usually empowered in becoming active stakeholders instead exploiters of forest resources when they are gainfully employed, as ideas from workshops strengthen the knowledge base as well as their attitudes toward sustainable practices (FAO, 2020; Kalu & Adegoke, 2021). But, Notwithstanding the ecological relevance of Oban forest reserve, there is limited empirical research and acknowledgement of youth employment community-based workshops, as these are important factors that enhance sustainable forest management practice.

World Bank (2020) and Reed (2020) emphasized that socio-economic empowerment as well as environmental education are essential factors towards effective sustainable resource conservation. On the other hand, strengthening youth participation by way of efficient employment as well as intensifying workshop-based sensitization programmes could promote forest conservation efforts, bring down illegal exploitation, and improve community participation regarding the sustainability of the environmental resources (ILO, 2019; UNEP, 2021). Sequel to the present assertion promoting youth employment as well as expanding community-based training initiatives is a move in the right direction towards ensuring the long-term sustainability of forest resources in the research area (Agrawal & Benson, 2018; Adekunle & Oke, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Sustainable management of the forest in Oban in Akamkpa Local Government Area remain a serious challenge as many inhabitants of the area directly or indirectly depends on the forest resources for there immediate needs and livelihood resulting to degradation as a result of

over usage or exploitation. Oban and its environment is rich in forest resources which support biodiversity, climate regulation serving as carbon sink and sustaining the rural livelihoods activities. But despite its environmental regulatory impact, the area facing serious threats from deforestation, illegal logging, bush burning as well as unsustainable farming methods. These activities promote rapid forest depletion, habitat loss and subsequent degradation of the environment.

Responding to these challenges the state government, alongside federal agencies and international organizations introduced measures example forest reserves, anti-logging policies, as well as other conservation programmes. The concept of Community sensitization campaigns, reforestation projects in addition to environmental awareness programmes have also been implemented to make sure that the local populace participates in environmental sustainability. Although, the aforementioned interventions did not achieve the expected outcome due to weak enforcement, poverty as well as poor involvement of the community. The challenges of youth unemployment make the situation more challenging leading to having young people engage in illegal forest activities for survival such as logging etc.

In addition, the issue of community-based workshops to large extent has not been fully utilised to promote attitudinal change towards usage of environmental resources. This suggests that existing strategies have not adequately addressed the socio-economic causes of deforestation. Hence, the need to examine how youth employment as well as structured community workshops could aid in forest management practices in the research area.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of youth employment and community-based workshops on sustainable forest management in Oban Akamkpa LGA, Cross River State.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. determine the effect of youth employment on sustainable forest management practices in Oban Akamkpa LGA.
2. evaluate the impact of community-based workshops on local communities' attitudes towards sustainable forest management in Oban Akamkpa LGA.

Research Questions

1. How does youth employment influence sustainable forest management practices in Oban Akamkpa LGA?
2. What is the impact of community-based workshops on local communities' attitudes towards sustainable forest management in Oban Akamkpa LGA?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a significant relationship between youth employment and sustainable forest management practices in Oban Akamkpa LGA.
2. Community-based workshops have a significant positive impact on local communities' attitudes towards sustainable forest management in Oban Akamkpa LGA.

Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey design. *For the research main objective to be achieved*, two research questions were raised and two null hypotheses were formulated to direct the investigation. The study was centered on forest-dependent communities within Oban Akamkpa LGA, where sustainable forest management needs to be considered when handling the issues of biodiversity conservation and environmental sustainability. The study made use of descriptive survey design, employing multi stage sampling procedure in selecting a sample of 151 respondents from this population, a population of 2,156 youth and community members engaged in forest-related activities within the study area. The instrument used in data collection was a researcher-developed instrument titled “Youth Employment and Community-Based Workshops on Sustainable Forest Management Questionnaire (YECWSFMQ), validated by experts in Environmental Education and measurement and Evaluation Departments both from **Pg.261.JET 10:1, 2026**

University of Calabar, Calabar Cross River State, Nigeria. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach’s alpha coefficients analyses with the texted coefficient ranging from 0.78 to 0.86 which was considered good enough for this study. In answering the research questions in the study, the mean and standard deviation were used, while simple linear regression analyses were used employed for the hypotheses testing at the 0.05 significance level.

Results

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between youth employment and sustainable forest management practices in Oban Akamkpa LGA.

The hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression. As shown in Table 1, youth employment significantly predicted sustainable forest management practices ($F(1,149) = 45.37$, $p < .05$), with an R^2 of 0.234, meaning that 23.4% of the variance in sustainable forest management practices is explained by youth employment. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected, indicating a significant positive relationship between youth employment and sustainable forest management practices in Oban Akamkpa LGA.

Table 1: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Youth Employment on Sustainable Forest Management Practices (N = 151)

Variable	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error
Youth Employment	.484a	.234	.230	1.776

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	142.396	1	142.396	45.370*	.000b
Residual	466.017	149	3.129		
Total	608.413	150			

Variables	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	10.745	1.203		8.934*	.000
Youth Employment	1.292	.192	.484	6.734*	.000

*Significant at .05 level

Hypothesis Two

Community-based workshops have no significant positive impact on local communities' attitudes towards sustainable forest management in Oban Akamkpa LGA.

Simple linear regression was used to test this hypothesis. Table 2 shows that community-based workshops significantly predicted positive community attitudes ($F(1,149) = 39.68, p < .05$), with an R^2 of 0.210, meaning that 21% of the variance in community attitudes is explained by participation in workshops. The null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that community-based workshops have a significant positive impact on attitudes toward sustainable forest management in Oban Akamkpa LGA.

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Community-Based Workshops on Community Attitudes (N = 151)

Variable	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error
Community-Based Workshops	.458a	.210	.206	1.725

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	130.425	1	130.425	39.680*	.000b
Residual	489.871	149	3.289		
Total	620.296	150			

Variables	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	11.026	1.160		9.503*	.000
Community-Based Workshops	1.102	.175	.458	6.299*	.000

*Significant at .05 level

Discussion of Findings

Impact of Youth Employment on Sustainable Forest Management Practices

The findings from Hypothesis One revealed that youth employment has a significant positive influence on sustainable forest management practices in Oban Akamkpa LGA, Cross River State. Youths engaged in forestry-related employment initiatives demonstrated higher adoption of sustainable practices such as reforestation, controlled harvesting, and forest monitoring. This suggests that providing meaningful employment opportunities for local youths encourages participation in forest conservation and reduces involvement in unsustainable activities such as illegal logging or bush burning.

This result aligns with the findings of Adekunle and Oke (2021) and Mgbeoji (2022), who observed that youth engagement in environmentally focused employment programmes enhances the adoption of conservation practices and improves resource sustainability in Nigerian forest-dependent communities. Similarly, Agrawal and Benson (2018) highlighted that economic incentives and active participation by community members, particularly youths, are critical in achieving sustainable management of forest resources. Despite these positive outcomes, gaps remain in providing equitable employment opportunities for all youths, limited capacity for advanced forest management training, and insufficient institutional support to fully integrate youth activities into broader conservation strategies.

Impact of Community-Based Workshops on Community Attitudes

The analysis of Hypothesis Two showed that community-based workshops significantly improve local community attitudes toward sustainable forest management. Respondents who participated in workshops reported higher awareness of forest conservation issues, greater compliance with sustainable practices, and a stronger willingness to adopt reforestation and protection measures. The positive influence of workshops indicates that knowledge transfer, awareness campaigns, and skill-building sessions effectively shape community perceptions and motivate proactive engagement in forest sustainability.

These findings corroborate studies by Etuk and Udofia (2021) and Ogunjinmi and Akinyemi (2020), which emphasized that structured community education programmes and participatory workshops enhance local attitudes toward environmental conservation and biodiversity protection. Similarly, Pretty and Smith (2019) noted that community sensitization and training programs strengthen social capital and collective action toward resource management. However, variations in participation and workshop effectiveness across communities suggest the need for regular, well-structured, and context-specific training to ensure long-term behavioural change and sustainability.

Conclusion

Based on the results, the study concludes that both youth employment and community-based workshops significantly contribute to sustainable forest management in Oban Akamkpa LGA. Youth employment enhances practical participation in forest protection activities, while community-based workshops improve knowledge, attitudes, and compliance with sustainable practices. Nevertheless, gaps persist, including limited access to employment opportunities, inconsistent workshop delivery, insufficient advanced training, and inadequate institutional support for long-term sustainability. The study underscores the importance of integrating socio-economic empowerment and educational interventions to ensure that forest resources are managed sustainably and local communities are actively engaged in conservation efforts.

Recommendations

In light of the results and findings in the study, the following recommendations were made

1. The Cross River State Government and relevant environmental agencies should strengthen youth employment initiatives in forestry-related activities in Oban Akamkpa LGA to further enhance the adoption of sustainable forest management practices among local youths.
2. Non-governmental organizations, community development associations, and local government authorities should intensify and regularize community-based workshops to improve local community attitudes toward sustainable forest management and encourage long-term participation in conservation activities.

References

- Adekunle, V. A. J., & Oke, D. O. (2021). Youth participation and sustainable forest management in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Sustainable Forestry*, 40(6), 567–583.
- Agrawal, A., & Benson, C. S. (2018). Common property theory and resource governance institutions. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 82, 34–42.
- Ajonina, G. N., & Usongo, L. (2020). Forest conservation and community livelihoods in Cross River State, Nigeria. *International Forestry Review*, 22(3), 301–315.

- Bassey, B. E., & Akpan, E. S. (2023). Green employment opportunities and youth involvement in forest sustainability initiatives in Southern Nigeria. *African Journal of Environmental Management*, 27(2), 112–125.
- Chukwuemeka, E. E. O., & Okoye, U. O. (2020). Employment creation and environmental sustainability in rural Nigeria. *Journal of Developing Societies*, 36(4), 455–472.
- Etuk, I. S., & Udofia, A. (2021). Community environmental education and attitudes toward forest conservation in Nigeria. *Environmental Education Research*, 27(5), 689–704.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2020). *Global forest resources assessment 2020: Main report*. Rome: FAO.
- Global Forest Watch. (2021). *Deforestation trends and forest monitoring in West Africa*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2019). *Working on a warmer planet: The impact of heat stress on labour productivity and decent work*. Geneva: ILO.
- Kalu, C., & Adegoke, J. (2021). Community-based strategies for biodiversity conservation in Nigerian forest reserves. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 30(9), 2551–2570.
- Mgbeoji, I. (2022). Youth unemployment and illegal forest exploitation in Nigeria: Implications for sustainability. *Journal of African Development Studies*, 14(1), 77–94.
- Nwoboshi, L. C. (2018). *Forest management and conservation in Nigeria: Policy and practice*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Ogunjinmi, A. A., & Akinyemi, O. (2020). Public awareness and community participation in forest governance in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 22(6), 821–835.
- Pretty, J., & Smith, D. (2019). Social capital in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. *Conservation Biology*, 33(4), 776–788.
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). (2021). *State of the environment and forests in Africa: Regional report*. Nairobi: UNEP.
- World Bank. (2020). *World development report 2020: Jobs and environmental sustainability*. Washington, DC: World Bank.