

# COMPETENCIES REQUIRED BY UNEMPLOYED YOUTHS IN THE PRODUCTION OF QUAIL BIRDS IN COMMERCIAL QUANTITY IN EBONYI STATE

By

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## **Abstract**

*The study was carried out to determine the competencies required by unemployed youths in the production of quail birds in commercial quantity in Ebonyi State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Five research questions guided the study. The population of the study was 147. This is made up of 45 (Lecturers of Animal Science, Technologists, Farm Managers) and 102 Extension Agents from Ebonyi State Ministry of Agriculture. Because the population was relatively small, no sampling was done. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire termed "Competencies in Quail Birds Questionnaire" (CQBQ). The instrument consists of thirty (37) items. The instrument was validated by five experts. Test-re-test method was adopted to determine the reliability of the research instrument. The result gotten from the test-re-test was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and an index of 0.75 was obtained. 147 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents by the researcher through the help of five research assistants. The data collected was analyzed using Statistical Mean and Standard Deviation. Any Statistical Mean score that is 2.50 and above were accepted while those below 2.50 were rejected. The result showed that all the items presented were accepted by the respondents. It was recommended that the items identified should be integrated into the curriculum of all the schools, colleges and tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State for students to learn and acquire the competencies among others.*

## **Introduction**

Quail birds are one of the over 130 species of small short-tailed game birds classified in the family of Phasianidae and Odontophoridae (order Galliformes), resembling partridges but generally smaller and less robust. Quail birds according to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2021) are plump, short-necked game birds whose natural habitat includes large areas of North America, Europe, Asia, and Northern Africa. It also inhabits South America and Australia to a lesser extent. Some species of quail birds have been domesticated and raised on farms for their meat and eggs, while some still live in the forest in certain locations where they are often hunted as wild quail. Quail birds are today raised on commercial basis but not everybody have the

competencies to raise it. Commercial quail farming have many advantages. According to Adebisi (2018), the advantages include that it: is smaller in size when compared to other available poultry birds and require less space, food, care and management; requires smaller initial investment for starting a farm when compared to other livestock farming business; has higher Returns on Investment (ROI) ratio; eat less quantity of food when compared to other livestock; hardly require any medication; products such as meat and eggs have huge demand and high value in the market; is a good layer; takes less time for becoming mature and start laying; products have huge demand and high value in the market; and meat and eggs have medicinal value, and suitable for aged people.

Quail birds spend most of their time on the ground as their squat body makes it difficult for them to stay in flight for long distances. Birders of quail can readily identify any specie by the plumes on their heads, which are a collection of small feathers (a-z-animals.com, 2021). One can depend on quail farming for livelihood; it creates job opportunities for both rural and urban dwellers. Because of the benefits attached to quail bird production, it can be domesticated and farmed in commercial quantity in our environment. Quail farming means, raising quails commercially for the purpose of profitable eggs and meat (Isidro, 2019). Quail farming serves as a good source of income. The business of producing, processing, transporting, storing and servicing can give jobs to many people in quail bird production if farming is carried out on commercial basis. But today in Ebonyi State, quail birds are reared in subsistent quantities by small scale farmers who are mostly old. This form of production is not sustainable and cannot be relied on for producing quail birds for food security. Therefore to produce quail birds for food security, there is need to train younger ones to venture into it in commercial quantity

Commercial quail bird farming is a highly profitable business when compared to any other farming business. This is because quail birds farming requires lesser investment when compared to other birds; less labour; small space; It is easy to management, has high value of both eggs and meat in the market and can generate high profit within a short period. Quail farming in Nigeria can play a very important role in food security, health, wealth and employment source creation (Roy, 2021). Quails are like other poultry birds, but the difference is that they are highly productive, and has strong disease resistant status than other birds. As a result of these characteristics, risks are less in quail bird farming business. Isidro (2019), stated

that quail farming is profitable like other farming ventures such as chicken, turkey or duck business. Quail birds farming are advantageous because it can be reared in almost all types of weather conditions; its meat and eggs are very tasty; it's nutritious and suitable for diabetic patient. Quail birds production presents a viable option in agricultural sector which can be engaged by unemployed people.

Unemployment is a situation where people are ready and willing to work but there is no available and befitting paid job which they can engage in. Unemployment, according to Ekpo (2011), is a socio-economic problem in which graduates from tertiary institutions are willing and able to work but cannot find jobs. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE, 2002) refers to unemployment as a situation where some people are not in paid or self-employment and currently available to take up any work. Unemployment therefore is a situation where qualified, able bodied and willing young graduates could not get paid jobs of interest which can earn them sustainable income for livelihood. Unemployment is a major challenge facing economies of the world with more damaging effects on developing economies. According to Ekpo (2008), a developing economy such as Nigeria's is faced with poor growth performance which manifests in the rising incidence of poverty; skyrocketing inflation; worsening balance of payments disequilibrium; monumental external debt burden; widening income disparity; growing fiscal imbalances; and massive graduate unemployment which taken together constitute the major causes of under development. Ekpenyong and Edokpolor (2015) stated that the national unemployment rate which was 13.1% in 2000 increased to about 15% in 2008, 20% in 2009, 21.1% in 2010 and 23.9% in 2015. In 2023, the figure of unemployed youths vary from month – to - month and year – to - year in Nigeria depending on the source of the information

In Ebonyi State, many youths who are gainfully employed in the private sector are disengaged most often thus increasing the rate of unemployment. There are also many unreported cases of disengagement of youths in government offices, industries, banks and private sectors in the state as a result of economic difficulties experienced by the organizations. The menace of unemployment in Ebonyi State both now and in the recent past has been an issue of great concern to the economists, policy makers, individuals, government and stakeholders. As a result, various government and non-governmental organizations has initiated policies through different support agencies such as National Directorate for Employment (NDE), Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), Ebonyi State Fadama III

Programme; Ministry of Human Capital Development (MHCD), World Bank Office among others to address the problems of unemployment among citizens. The most recent of such programmes is Governor Umahi Employment Beneficiaries Association (GUEMEBA) which is an association of youths empowered in different ways by Ebonyi State Government to be temporarily engaged in where they can earn their daily bread. Despite these interventions, many youths are still unemployed because most of the interventions are given a long political party line.

Observations from the researcher also shows that many school leavers are either finding it difficult to secure employment or are laid off from existing ones for one reason or the other. Therefore, it is no longer about going to school and graduating or learning a trade, but about how to face the reality of graduating and joining the brigade of unemployed people with little hope of what the future holds. Azunku and Ogbaekirigwe (2018) noted that in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular, there is no social security system to cater for the unemployed. Thus, unemployed youths do not receive any benefit from the government who are unable to fend for them. In the absence of government or private sector jobs, the youths need trainings in occupational areas that can help them to feed themselves. The areas which requires competencies in the production of quill birds in commercial quantity include planning; breeding; house construction; production; and marketing. It is against this background that this study is undertaken to identify the competencies required by unemployed youths in the production of quail birds for commercial purposes in Ebonyi State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Ebonyi State, unemployment abounds because youths graduates from institutions without corresponding work in the labour market. These graduates are faced with lots of challenges and harsh realities which include poverty, food insecurity, conflict and disease. Some of these unemployed youths engaged in other societal unacceptable behaviors such as robbery, prostitution, kidnapping, among others to eat. This negatively affects human resource development, internally generated revenue of Ebonyi State and gross domestic product of the country.

The National Bureau of Statistics (2021) noted that Nigeria's unemployment rate rose to 35 percent in 2021 and stated that in the long-term, it is projected to reach 40 percent in between 2022 and 2024. Given the youth unemployment situation, skill acquisition remains the viable option to create jobs which will reduce unemployment and poverty. This will empower the youths to develop their business dreams and contribute to overall productive capacity and national economic growth and development. It is however regrettable that most youths who acquired different levels of academic certificates, have inadequate competencies which could make them employable or self employed/self reliant after their graduation. The worrisome aspect of this scenario is the continued increase in the number of youths yearly which is far beyond the carrying capacity of the state labor markets. The researcher observed that with the high demand of nutritious quail meat and egg in Ebonyi State, quail farming could be a great opportunities for self-employment that are wasting and under-utilized. Most of these unemployed youths need to acquire competencies in quail farming for commercial purposes. This triggered the researcher's zeal into identifying competencies required by unemployed youths in the production of quail birds for commercial purposes in Ebonyi State.

### **Research Questions:**

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. What are the competencies required by unemployed youths for planning commercial quail birds production in Ebonyi State?
- ii.* What are the competencies required by unemployed youths for constructing houses for commercial quail birds production in Ebonyi State?
- iii. What are the competencies required by unemployed youths for breeding quail birds in commercial quantity in Ebonyi State?
- iv. What are the competencies required by unemployed youths for marketing of quail birds in commercial quantity in Ebonyi State?
- v. What are the competencies required by unemployed youths for the production of quail birds in commercial quantity in Ebonyi State.

### **Method**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The design entails the collection and use of data systematically arranged from a given population to describe certain characteristics or features of the population. The design is considered appropriate for this study since the work is intended to collect data from small group with view to describing the entire population from the results. The study was carried out in Ebonyi State. Ebonyi is an agrarian state located in the tropical rain forest area of Southern Nigeria. Ebonyi as a state in the tropical environment supports the rearing of animals like turkey, chicken, duck, geese, and other farm animals. Because of the favourable environment, adaptation and rearing of quill birds in the state will be an easy thing.

The population of the study was 147. This is made up of 45 (Lecturers of Animal Science, Technologists, Farm Managers) and 102 Extension Agents from Ebonyi State Ministry of Agriculture. The Lecturers, Technologists, Farm Managers came from the Faculties of Agriculture in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki and Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo in Ebonyi State. The staff of the two universities were considered relevant for filling the questionnaire because they are experts in different fields of agriculture and have taught or guided students in courses relating to the rearing of birds at different times. The Extension Agents were considered relevant for filling the questionnaire because they are implementing agricultural programmes in rural communities and have very good information about rearing birds. Because the population was relatively small, no sampling was done as all the population was used.

The instrument for data collection is structured questionnaire termed ‘‘Competencies in Quail Birds Questionnaire’’ (CQBQ). The instrument consists of thirty seven (37) items. The questionnaire items were formulated in such a way that the respondents were required to tick (√) against any of the options that best represent their view on the items. The options are: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

The instrument was validated by five experts. Two from the Department of Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation option) University of Nigeria, Nsukka and three from the Department of Animal Science Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. After going through the instrument, the experts made corrections and confirmed the validity of the instrument for its use in carrying out the research.

To ensure that the research instrument is stable and consistent in measuring what it is supposed to measure at different circumstances, a test-retest method was adopted to determine the reliability of the research instrument. The result gotten after the administration was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and an index of 0.75 was obtained. The result showed that the instrument is reliable. The 316 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents by the researcher through the help of five research assistants. The respondents were required to fill the questionnaire immediately under the guidance of the researcher and his assistants. Where it is impossible for the researcher to collect the questionnaire that same day, arrangements were made for a later date to collect it. This was to minimize loss of questionnaire copies and guarantee 100% return rate.

The data collected was analyzed using Statistical Mean and Standard Deviation Statistics. The formula for Statistical Mean used is as follows:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum FX}{N}$$

Where:

$\bar{X}$  = Mean     $\sum$  = Summation    X = Scores    F = Frequency

N = Number of occurrence    Thus =  $\frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$

Likert four points rating scale was used as the instrument for data analysis.

**Decision Rule on mean:** The researcher accepted any Statistical Mean score that is 2.50 and above and rejected any mean score that is below 2.50. Thus 2.50 was the cut off Statistical Mean score for decision taking.

## RESULTS

**Research Question One:** What are the competencies required by unemployed youths for planning commercial quail birds' production in Ebonyi State?

N = 147

S\N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\sum FX$	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1	Formulate specific objectives for determining the direction of the quail	55 220	52 156	20 40	20 10	426	2.90	Accepted

	farming enterprise							
2	Draw a time table of activities in quail farming enterprise	50 200	50 150	22 44	25 25	419	2.85	Accepted
3	Decide on location for sitting the quail farm	55 220	41 123	23 46	26 25	414	2.82	Accepted
4	Identify relevant farm input(s) required for the production	50 200	47 141	22 44	28 28	413	2.80	Accepted
5	Make a budget for the quail farming enterprise	52 208	45 135	24 32	26 26	401	2.73	Accepted
6	Identify sources of funds for establishing of quail farm	57 228	44 132	25 50	21 21	431	2.93	Accepted
7	Provide relevant equipment for use in the enterprise	56 224	42 126	25 50	24 24	424	2.88	Accepted
8	Identify relevant personnel for relevant tasks	57 228	41 123	28 56	21 21	428	2.91	Accepted

**Sources:** Researcher Field Survey 2023

Table 1 presented mean response on the competencies required by unemployed youths in planning for quail production for commercial purposes in Ebonyi State. All the items in the table have means scores above 2.50 and were all accepted.

**Research Question Two:** What are the competencies required by unemployed youths for constructing houses for commercial quail birds production in Ebonyi State?

**N = 147**

S\N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\Sigma FX$	X	Remark
9	Select suitable site for quail farming	55 220	50 150	22 44	20 20	434	2.95	Accepted
10	Build the wall to the height of 1.2 meters with bricks or mud	50 200	45 135	24 48	26 26	409	2.78	Accepted
11	Roof the house with suitable material such as asbestos, corrugated iron zinc or grasses	50 200	45 135	44 88	28 28	451	3.06	Accepted
12	Cover the house/cage with polythene materials during cold period	52 208	52 156	23 46	20 20	430	2.92	Accepted
13	Fence to protect the quail pen from predators and thieves	56 224	46 168	24 48	21 21	461	3.13	Accepted
14	Construct cage with wood, wire mesh, or iron-rods	55 220	41 123	23 46	27 27	416	2.83	Accepted



15	Placed cage/hutch under a shade for optimum temperature	50 200	47 141	22 44	26 26	411	2.80	Accepted
16	Locate the housing close to the residence of breeder for proper supervision	58 232	42 126	20 40	27 27	425	2.89	Accepted

**Source:** Researcher Field Survey, 2023

In table 2, the researcher presented the competencies required by unemployed youths in housing construction for quail production for commercial purposes in Ebonyi State. In the table, all the items have mean scores of 2.50 and above and were all accepted.

**Research Question Three:** What are the competencies required by unemployed youths for breeding quail birds in commercial quantity in Ebonyi State?

**N = 147**

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\Sigma FX$	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
17	Identify the breeding season for quail birds	57 228	44 132	27 54	19 19	433	2.95	Accepted
18	Select appropriate breeding stock	56 224	42 126	25 50	24 24	424	2.88	Accepted
19	Set up breeding pen for quail mating	47 188	51 153	38 76	11 11	428	2.91	Accepted
20	Sterilize the breeding pens before stocking the quail	48 192	50 150	32 96	17 17	455	3.10	Accepted
21	Determine when to put the breeding quail in the pens	50 200	51 153	26 52	20 20	425	2.89	Accepted
22	Provide enough space for the breeding of quail	65 260	42 126	20 40	20 20	446	3.03	Accepted

23	Provide enough feed and water for the breeding stock	50 200	54 162	23 46	20 20	428	2.91	Accepted
24	Remove the breeding stock from the breeding pen after parturition for the next stock	56 224	44 132	26 52	21 21	429	2.92	Accepted

**Sources:** Researcher Field Survey, 2023.

In table 3, the researcher presented data on competencies required by unemployed youths in breeding quail for commercial purposes in Ebonyi State. All the items in the table have means score above 2.50 and were all accepted.

**Research Question Four:** What are the competencies required by unemployed youths' for the production of quail birds in commercial quantity in Ebonyi State?

**N = 147**

S\N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\Sigma$ FX	X	Remarks
25	Competencies in marketing	50 200	30 90	45 90	27 27	407	2.77	Accepted
26	Competencies in breeding	52 208	45 135	24 48	26 26	417	2.84	Accepted
27	Competencies in house construction	57 228	41 123	23 46	25 25	422	2.87	Accepted
28	Competencies in planning	52 208	45 135	22 44	28 28	415	2.82	Accepted
29	Competencies in management	60 240	40 120	20 40	27 27	427	2.90	Accepted

30	Competencies in feeding	58 232	42 126	20 40	27 27	425	2.89	Accepted
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**Source:** Researcher Field Survey, 2023

In table 4, all the items in the table have mean scores 2.50 and above and were all accepted as the competencies required by unemployed youths for quail production for commercial purposes in Ebonyi State.

**Research Question Five:** What are the competencies required by unemployed youths for marketing of quail birds in commercial quantity in Ebonyi State?

**N = 147**

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\Sigma FX$	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
31	Identifying target population of quail birds consumers	59 236	44 132	25 50	19 19	437	2.97	Accepted
32	Identifying when quail is mostly needed	53 212	42 126	25 50	27 27	415	2.82	Accepted
33	Identifying possible competitors	49 196	31 93	36 72	31 31	392	2.66	Accepted
34	Determining appropriate strategy to win customers	55 220	40 120	20 40	32 32	402	2.73	Accepted
35	Convincing customers to buy quail products	62 248	40 80	20 40	25 25	393	2.67	Accepted
36	Ensuring that customers are satisfied	47 188	52 156	23 46	25 25	415	2.82	Accepted
37	keeping market records	45 180	54 162	22 44	26 26	412	2.80	Accepted

**Source:** Researcher Field Survey, 2023.

In table 5, all the items in the table have mean scores 2.50 and above and were all accepted as the competencies required by unemployed youths for quail birds marketing for commercial purposes in Ebonyi State.

## Findings

The data collected and presented above led to the following findings:

The competencies required by unemployed youths in planning for quail bird production in commercial quantity include: formulation of specific objectives, drawing a time table of

activities, identifying relevant farm input(s), identifying sources of funds and Identifying relevant personnel for relevant tasks.

The competencies required by unemployed youths in breeding quail birds in commercial quantity include: identifying the breeding season for quail for successful breeding, selecting appropriate breeding stock for production of superior offspring, setting up breeding pen for quail mating, Sterilize the breeding pens before stocking the quail to destroy pathogens, Determining when to put the breeding quail in the breeding pens for high performance, provide enough space for the breeding of quail, providing enough feed and water for the breeding stock and removing the breeding stock from the breeding pen after parturition for the next stock.

The competencies required by unemployed youths for quail production in commercial quantity include: planning; breeding; house construction; production; and marketing.

The competencies required by unemployed youths in marketing quail birds in commercial quantity are identifying: target population of quail birds consumers; when quail is mostly needed in the market; possible competitors; appropriate strategy to gain customers; appropriate strategy to gain customers; convincing customers to buy quail products; ensuring that customers are satisfied; and keeping market records.

## **Conclusion**

Commercial quail farming business is highly profitable business than any other farming business in Nigeria. Hence the challenges of unemployment in Nigeria can be tackled if the competencies required by unemployed youths in quail birds identified in this study is used to train them. From the findings of this study, it is concluded that the competencies required by unemployed youths for quail birds production in commercial quantity in Ebonyi State include: competencies in marketing competencies in breeding, competencies in housing, competencies in house construction, and competencies in planning.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made:

- i. The identified competencies should be integrated into the curriculum of agricultural courses in secondary and tertiary institutions so that students would acquire the requisite skills in quail farming before passing out of school.
- ii. The identified competencies in this study should be incorporated into the programme of the skills acquisition centre's in the state so that it could be used for retraining the unemployed youths for self employment in commercial quail bird production.
- iii. The finding of the study should be made available to subsistence farmers by the state government through the state agricultural extension services and media to enable

many of the unskilled farmers to acquire the identified competencies in quail farming which will improve their source of income generation.

- iv. All tertiary institutions in the state should establish quail units in their farms where agricultural undergraduates would be taught relevant competencies required in quail farming after graduation.

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