
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA: THE 21ST CENTURY EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of entrepreneurship on youth empowerment in Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, three research questions were posed to guide the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Relevant data for the study were collected using questionnaire instrument. The study sampled 167 respondents. Data collected were analyzed using frequency and simple percentages. The findings revealed that entrepreneurship has positive impact on youth empowerment; it has affected the youth in Nigeria especially through job creation at 53.9% and it also creates opportunity among youth to be self-reliant. That factor like lack of awareness of the functional entrepreneurship centers for the development of youth empowerment programmes, have left the existing entrepreneurship opportunities untapped in Nigeria. That measure such as provision of credit facilities, steady power supply and funding of infrastructural development, among others can enhance the functionality of entrepreneurship centres in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others that Federal government should hasten the

power sector reforms and re-stabilize it to end the looming energy crisis in Nigeria. This is to encourage entrepreneurial activities in the country.

Key words: *Entrepreneurship, Youth empowerment, Century experience*

Introduction

Developing of ideas, teachings of technical skills, and creating of business among Nigerian's youths in families and communities. Coupled with the desire to support young people to access finance, and mentorship to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria is the progenitor of this study. The bedrock of Nigeria's economy that lies in entrepreneurship. Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) make up a sizable portion of all businesses in Nigeria and account for 49.8% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023). They are present in all economic sectors and make up about 85% of all industrial employment in terms of the labor force. These businesses have greatly aided the value creation in the industries in which they operate by providing original ideas, creative solutions, and business models (Newo, Oladipo, Ayankoya, & Olanrewaju, 2023).

Youth empowerment is a focal point for economic growth, and entrepreneurship significantly affects youth development. Overcoming the phenomenon of youth unemployment in Nigeria is realistic considering the fact that youth empowerment through entrepreneurial skills could change the situation for better. In the 21st century, many youths are still not seen the available opportunities through the establishment of entrepreneurship centers that could lead self-reliant and curtail all forms of criminality associated with youth. Entrepreneurship constitutes a vital engine in the economic growth and development of community including states and the nations at large. This is because it helps in the stimulation of indigenous businesses, it leads to the transformation of traditional industry, creates employment opportunities, and generates income. Entrepreneurship is thus relevant to the society as it promotes social change and drive innovation. Job creation, reduction in

unemployment levels, increased competition, opening new markets, increasing productivity, foreign income generation and poverty alleviation are some of the positive impacts that entrepreneurship have on an economy (Uju & John-Akamelu, 2018). Before embracing the colonial government in Nigeria, youth empowerment was a rare phenomenon because people were highly entrepreneurial and productivity engaged. In pre and post independent Nigeria, Nigerians were recognized internationally their culture of entrepreneurship and enterprise development (Dana, 1995).

According to Nicks (2008) and (Raimi, 2010) , Entrepreneurship is influenced by distinct factors; economic, cultural, technological, and educational, environmental and political factors. In areas where these factors are present and consistent, entrepreneurial growth is very much assured. These and other factors like taxation, availability of capital, labour, raw materials, infrastructure, and authorship/referencing, have contributed to the growth of entrepreneurship and therefore to the growth of the economy of any given area. Research by Emeka (2006), has proven that entrepreneurship is the only potent tool for youth empowerment and industrial growth.

According to Mbaegbu (2008), various theories have been advanced to explain the nature of entrepreneurship and the factors of variables that drive entrepreneurship in a given society. For the purpose of this study, Kirzner's entrepreneurship theory is adopted. The Kirzner's theory was first proposed by Kirzner in (1979). It focuses on “entrepreneurial alertness” to available, but as yet unnoticed opportunities. Kirzner believes that this alertness is a trait successful entrepreneurs have. The uses of entrepreneurial development to generate employment, economically empower youth, reduce poverty and propel economic growth. Kirzner also assumed that people venture in entrepreneurship for four main reasons or motives; unemployment, need for independence, financial gains and redundancy.

The economic policy direction encapsulated in the Nigeria Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) I & II has entrepreneurship development as its focal point. Entrepreneurship development aims at equipping the youth and school leavers

especially the graduates of Tertiary Institutions with skills to create jobs for themselves and other people instead of hunting for non-existing jobs from the Public sector. According to Kirzner, an improvement in the technique of production or a shift in preferences leads to change (disequilibrium) in the market where initially there was equilibrium. If there is equilibrium in the market there is nothing for the entrepreneur to do and no exchange and profit opportunities for them since everybody will be able to carry out his initially determined exchange plans. Most importantly, Kirzner's theory better explains entrepreneurship and youth empowerment as it relates to the economic growth outcomes. The theory throws more light on how entrepreneurship education can inculcate entrepreneurship spirit in an individual to spur a desired and expected economic growth outcome which relates to the study variables (i.e. the impact of entrepreneurship on youth empowerment).

This theory is relevant to the subject matter of this study based on the established fact that youth empowerment is an opportunity, whereas, entrepreneurial alertness plays an important role in the processes of opportunity exploration and exploitation. A central thesis of this project is that opportunity creation requires a certain transformation of an individual entrepreneur's mental schema. Significantly, knowledge is power, A subjectivist theory of knowledge argues that things simply do not exist if a person does not know about them (Kirzner, 1979). The strength of this theory lies on the traits alertness as identified by Kirzner, which is referred to the impact of entrepreneurship serving as an opportunity for exchange. For Kirzner, entrepreneurship programmes are good opportunities for youth empowerment which will bring about better living and the development of individual welfare even though there are factors that have left the existing entrepreneurship opportunities untapped. Impact of entrepreneurship is self employed opportunities that arise out of new technology.

Nigeria is blessed with numerous business and investment potentials due to the availability of abundant, vibrant and dynamic human and natural resources it possesses. In addition, federal governments have created youth entrepreneurship center for skills acquisition and entrepreneurship education centers at various

Universities for the training of students at the secondary, undergraduate and post-graduate levels to acquire resourceful skills to enhance productivity and self-reliance. Nevertheless, these entrepreneurship opportunities have not yielded remarkable impact on youth empowerment and development. This implies that these opportunities have remained unharnessed, due to numerous factors ranging from poverty, lack of awareness, increase in urban migration and *large-scale youth unemployment*. According to (Okafor, 2011), Nigeria like most developing countries of the world is faced with a lot of problems and realities which include conflicts and diseases. These have had negative consequences on the development of entrepreneurship.

These situations pose great challenges to the very existence of individuals in most developing nations. Successive administrations in Nigeria introduced formal education which enables people to have the opportunity to being employed in the civil service after graduation. As such, the system has failed to encourage self-reliance, self-employment and entrepreneurial skills of Nigerians as they became permanently dependent on the non-existing civil service jobs (Raimi, 2010). This has led to massive unemployment in the contemporary Nigeria society. Nigeria's diverse economic, social and political problems have adversely affected the sustainable development of entrepreneur. The problem is becoming more complex each passing year; underemployment and rural-urban migration have enveloped the Nigerian labour market. This has been compounded by frightening number of graduates from polytechnics, colleges of education, mono-technics and universities that leave school each year (Michael, 2012). This has increased the rate of social vices like arm robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, human trafficking, child abuse and unfair labour practices experienced in the state and outside the state by the unemployed youth. Against this backdrop, the study focuses on examining the impact of entrepreneurship on youth empowerment in Nigeria the 21st century. This study achieved the following specific objectives:

- i. Examined the impact of entrepreneurship on youth empowerment in Nigeria
- ii. Outlined the factors that have left the existing

- entrepreneurship opportunities untapped in Nigeria
- iii. Suggested measures that could enhance the functionality of entrepreneurship centers in Nigeria

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

- i. What is the impact of entrepreneurship on youth empowerment programmes in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the factors that have left the existing entrepreneurship opportunities untapped in Nigeria?
- iii. What are the measures that can enhance the functionality of entrepreneurship centers in Nigeria?

Methods

This study adopted survey research designs; which is the procedures in quantitative research of this kind in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire study population to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics of the population. And it is flexible, appropriate, efficient, and economical. Generally, the design minimizes bias and maximizes the reliability of the data collected and analyzed. The study sampled 167 respondents. And adopts quantitative method of data collection. On that note, the use of structured questionnaire is the basic instrument for data collection. The questionnaire instrument was validated by expert and tested to be reliable. The data collected was coded and analyzed with the aid of SPSS statistical tool version 16. One purpose of statistical analysis as stated by Dickinson (1977) is to reduce a mass of data into a more compact form that shows general trends and relationships between variables.

Results

Results of the study are presented in line with the research purpose and questions that guided the study.

Research Question One: What are the impacts of entrepreneurship on youth empowerment programmes in Nigeria?

Table 1: Impacts of Entrepreneurship on Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Job creation	90	53.9	54.2	54.2
	Wealth creation	27	16.2	16.3	70.5
	Increased productivity	21	12.6	12.7	83.1
	Increased competition	12	7.2	7.2	90.4
	Innovation	16	9.6	9.6	100.0
	Total	166	99.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.6		
Total		167	100.0		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From table 1, data shows that entrepreneurship has impacted on the youth in Nigeria through job creation at (54.2%) 90 respondents, through wealth creation at (16.3%) 27 respondents. While (12.7%) 21 respondents said is through increased productivity, (7.2%) 12 respondents opine is through increased competition. (9.6%) 16 respondents mentioned innovation.

Research Question 2: What are the factors that have left the existing entrepreneurship opportunities untapped in Nigeria?

Table 2: Reasons why existing entrepreneurship opportunities untapped in Nigeria

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Corruption and nepotism	52	31.1	34.0	34.0
	Non-existence of national policy on entrepreneurship	12	7.2	7.8	41.8
	Government unfavourable policy	27	16.2	17.6	59.5
	Lack of credit facilities	41	24.6	26.8	86.3
	Poor nature of power supply	9	5.4	5.9	92.2
	Insecurity	12	7.2	7.8	100.0
	Total	153	91.6	100.0	
Missing	System	14	8.4		
Total		167	100.0		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In Table 2, the data shows the factors that have left the existing entrepreneurship opportunities untapped in Nigeria to include corruption and nepotism at (34.0%) 52 respondents, while (7.8%) 12 respondents said is Non-existence of national policy on entrepreneurship, (17.6%) 27 of the respondents mentioned Government unfavourable policy. (26.8%) 41 respondents are of the opinion that is lack of credit facilities, (5.9%) 9 respondents debunk to poor nature of power supply, (7.8%) 12 respondents said is insecurity. This implies that corruption and nepotism, Non-existence of national policy on entrepreneurship, Government unfavourable policy, with lack of credit facilities, poor power supply and insecurity are the major known factors that have left the existing entrepreneurship opportunities untapped in Nigeria.

Research Question 3: What are the measures that can enhance the functionality of entrepreneurship centers in Nigeria?

Table 3: Measures to enhance the functionality of Entrepreneurship Centres in Nigeria

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Religious, ethnic and political violence and crisis should be controlled by all means	37	22.2	24.5	24.5
	Adequate and needful attention must be given in the areas of capacity building	28	16.8	18.5	43.0
	Entrepreneurship education programme should be accorded the necessary attention	38	22.8	25.2	68.2
	Provision of credit facilities	32	19.2	21.2	89.4
	Provision of steady power supply	9	5.4	6.0	95.4
	Funding of infrastructural development	7	4.2	4.6	100.0
	Total	151	90.4	100.0	
Missing	System	16	9.6		
Total		167	100.0		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From Table 3, the data indicates that (24.5%) 37 of the respondents are in agreement that if religious, ethnic and political violence and crisis is controlled by all means, **the functionality of entrepreneurship**

centres in Nigeria could be enhanced. (18.5%) 28 respondents viewed that to enhance the functionality of entrepreneurship, adequate and needful attention must be giving to capacity building, while (25.2%) 38 respondents opines that entrepreneurship education programme should be accorded the necessary attention, (21.2%) 32 of the respondents believed in the provision of credit facilities, (6.0%) 9 respondents are relying on provision of steady power supply. (4.6%) 7 respondents believed in the funding of infrastructural development. This implies that the functionality of entrepreneurship centres could be enhanced, if measures such as provision of credit facilities, steady power supply and funding of infrastructural development, coupled with adequate and needful attention giving to capacity building, entrepreneurship education programme accorded the necessary attention, and if religious, ethnic and political violence and crisis is controlled by all means.

Discussions

This study found that entrepreneurship has positive impact on youth empowerment and that it has affected the youth in Nigeria especially through wealth creation, increased productivity, increased competition, innovation and through job creation and it also creates opportunity among youth to be self-reliant. Assudani (2009), affirmed this finding with the opinion that job creation, reduction in unemployment levels, increased competition, opening new markets, increasing productivity, foreign income generation and poverty alleviation are some of the positive impact that entrepreneurs have on an economy. However, this is not to say that there are no negative impacts such as the wastage and plundering of resources, yet taken as a whole it is apparent that entrepreneurs positively impact an economy.

The study further identified some factors that have left the existing entrepreneurship opportunities untapped in Nigeria to include; corruption and nepotism, Non-existence of national policy on entrepreneurship, Government unfavourable policy, lack of credit facilities, poor nature of power supply, and insecurity. Other factors that are hindering the youth from embracing the existing entrepreneurship opportunities identified by the study include; lack of loans or capital for take-off, lack of knowledge/information, fear of

risk-taking, and lack of proper orientation. This has confirmed the views of Money & Edjore (2016), on the growth of entrepreneurship that has been hampered by inconsistency of government policies and programmes; especially near nonexistence of National policy on entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

The study discovered that there are measures that can enhance the functionality of entrepreneurship centres in Nigeria, and outlined that if measures such as provision of credit facilities, steady power supply and funding of infrastructural development, coupled with adequate and needful attention giving to capacity building, entrepreneurship education programme accorded the necessary attention, and if religious, ethnic and political violence and crisis is controlled by all means. It was also found that the functionality of entrepreneurship centres can be enhanced through the provision of loans or take-off capital, and provision of necessary facilities for training.

Conclusion

The study having examined the impact of entrepreneurship on youth empowerment in Nigeria, discovered that entrepreneurship has positive impact on youth empowerment and it has affected the youth through wealth creation, increased productivity, increased competition, innovation and job creation, opportunity and self-reliance. It was further discovered that though very many persons are not aware of the existing entrepreneurship centres like community links and human empowerment initiative, and gender and community empowerment initiative centre. It is important to note that the functionality of entrepreneurship centres in Nigeria can be enhanced through implementation of the discovered measures; like the provision of credit facilities, steady power supply and funding of infrastructural development, and adequate attention giving to capacity building.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore made that: Federal government should hasten the power sector reforms and re-stabilize it to end the looming energy crisis in Nigeria. This is to encourage entrepreneurial activities in the country as lack of power has remained

a major factor in the economy, in terms of enterprise activities. Religious, ethnic and political violence and crisis should be controlled by all means necessary as it displaces people and causes serious harm on their means of livelihood. Youth generally should be allowed to have access to capital for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria through microfinance. In addition to the entrepreneurship intervention programme, effort should be made in monitoring whether the set objectives are met.

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