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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN REDUCING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and training programmes in reducing youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed. The population consisted of youths aged 18–35 years, from which a sample of 400 was selected through multi-stage sampling; 386 valid responses were analysed. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire (Entrepreneurship and Youth Unemployment Questionnaire) that was validated by experts and yielded a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82. Mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, and independent t-test were used for analysis at the 0.05 significance level. Results showed that entrepreneurship holds substantial prospects for reducing youth unemployment through self-employment, job creation, and innovation (cluster mean = 3.27). Major limitations identified included limited access to capital, inadequate infrastructure, high cost of doing business, and insufficient managerial skills (cluster mean = 3.26). Existing programmes made moderate contributions to skills development and business start-ups but had limited overall impact on unemployment reduction due to sustainability challenges. Significant positive relationships were found between entrepreneurship prospects and unemployment reduction ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.05$) and between programmes and employment outcomes ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.05$). No significant gender difference emerged in perceptions of limitations. The study concludes that while entrepreneurship education and training programmes possess considerable potential, their effectiveness is constrained by structural and support-related barriers. Recommendations include strengthening practical training, improving access to finance and infrastructure, institutionalising post-training mentorship, and embedding robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in programme design.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, programme evaluation, youth unemployment, educational measurement, Uyo Local Government Area

Introduction

Youth unemployment remains one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges confronting Nigeria and many developing nations. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has consistently reported high rates of unemployment and underemployment among young people aged 15–35 years, a demographic that constitutes a significant proportion of Nigeria's population. In Akwa Ibom State, and particularly in Uyo Local Government Area, the concentration of tertiary institutions, rapid urbanisation, and limited formal employment opportunities have intensified the problem of youth joblessness.

Entrepreneurship has been widely advocated as a viable strategy for addressing youth unemployment. It is seen as a means of creating self-employment, generating jobs for others, stimulating innovation, and contributing to local economic development. Successive Nigerian governments have introduced various entrepreneurship-related programmes and policies, including the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN), N-Power, the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP), and state-level initiatives aimed at equipping young people with entrepreneurial skills and start-up support.

In Uyo Local Government Area, the growing number of small and medium-scale enterprises, the presence of markets, the influence of the state capital status, and the availability of tertiary institutions create a potentially favourable environment for entrepreneurial activities. At the same time, aspiring young entrepreneurs face several constraints, including limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, poor business management skills, policy inconsistencies, and socio-cultural factors that discourage risk-taking.

Despite the growing emphasis on entrepreneurship education and youth empowerment programmes, the extent to which entrepreneurship has effectively reduced youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area remains unclear. There is a need to systematically evaluate both the prospects (opportunities and potential benefits) and the limitations (challenges and barriers) of entrepreneurship as a tool for tackling youth unemployment in the area. This study is therefore designed to examine these issues with a view to generating evidence-based insights that can inform policy, practice, and further research.

Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area continues to rise despite numerous government and non-governmental interventions aimed at promoting entrepreneurship. Many young people who have received entrepreneurship training or start-up support still struggle to establish and sustain viable businesses. Others remain hesitant to venture into entrepreneurship due to perceived risks, lack of capital, inadequate skills, or unfavourable business environment.

The persistence of high youth unemployment raises critical questions: To what extent does

entrepreneurship offer realistic prospects for reducing youth unemployment in Uyo? What specific limitations hinder the effectiveness of entrepreneurship as a solution? Are existing entrepreneurship programmes adequately addressing the needs and realities of young people in the area? The absence of comprehensive, location-specific empirical evidence on these issues constitutes a significant gap in knowledge and practice. This study seeks to fill that gap by evaluating the prospects and limitations of entrepreneurship as a tool for reducing youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the prospects and limitations of entrepreneurship as a tool for reducing youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the prospects of entrepreneurship in reducing youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area.
2. Identify the major limitations confronting young entrepreneurs in Uyo Local Government Area.
3. Determine the extent to which entrepreneurship programmes and initiatives have contributed to youth employment in the area.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the prospects of entrepreneurship in reducing youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area?
2. What are the major limitations facing young entrepreneurs in Uyo Local Government Area?
3. To what extent have entrepreneurship programmes contributed to the reduction of youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship prospects and the reduction of youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female youths regarding the limitations of entrepreneurship as a tool for reducing unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area.

H_{03}: Entrepreneurship programmes have no significant influence on the reduction of youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area.

Entrepreneurship is generally defined as the process of identifying opportunities, mobilising resources, and creating value through the establishment and management of business ventures (Hisrich, Peters & Shepherd, 2017). In the Nigerian context, entrepreneurship is often viewed as a practical response to the failure of the formal sector to absorb the growing number of job

seekers (Ogundele, 2007; Arogundade, 2011). It encompasses opportunity-driven and necessity-driven ventures, ranging from micro and small enterprises to more structured small and medium-scale businesses.

Youth unemployment refers to the situation in which persons within the youth age bracket (commonly 15–35 years in Nigeria) who are available for and actively seeking work are unable to secure gainful employment (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). It includes both open unemployment and underemployment. High youth unemployment has been linked to social vices, poverty, and underutilisation of human resources (Ajufo, 2013; Emeh, 2012).

Entrepreneurship is widely regarded as a strategic tool for tackling youth unemployment because it promotes self-employment, job creation, innovation, and local economic development (Anyadike, Emeh & Ukah, 2012). When young people establish viable enterprises, they reduce pressure on the formal labour market and contribute to wealth creation. However, the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in this regard depends on the presence of enabling factors such as access to finance, infrastructure, skills, and supportive policies.

The prospects of entrepreneurship include the creation of self-employment opportunities, generation of additional jobs, stimulation of innovation, utilisation of local resources, and contribution to poverty reduction and economic diversification (Oyelola et al., 2013; Akpan & Etor, 2013). In urban centres such as Uyo, the relatively large market, concentration of educational institutions, and growing service sector present opportunities for youth-led enterprises in areas such as agro-processing, ICT, fashion, hospitality, and retail.

Despite its potential, entrepreneurship faces several limitations. These include limited access to start-up and working capital, inadequate infrastructure (especially power and transportation), poor entrepreneurial skills and business management capacity, unfavourable policy and regulatory environment, high cost of doing business, and socio-cultural attitudes that prefer formal employment to self-employment (Onugu, 2005; Agwu & Kadiri, 2014). These constraints often prevent many youth-owned enterprises from surviving beyond the early stages or from scaling up to create significant employment.

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between entrepreneurship and youth unemployment in Nigeria and similar contexts. Anyadike, Emeh and Ukah (2012) investigated entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Nigeria. Their findings indicated that entrepreneurship has the potential to reduce unemployment significantly, but its impact is constrained by inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and lack of managerial skills. The study recommended improved access to credit and entrepreneurship education.
Ajufo (2013) examined the challenges of youth unemployment in Nigeria and the role

of entrepreneurship. The study concluded that while entrepreneurship offers a viable alternative to formal employment, many young people lack the necessary skills, capital, and mentorship to succeed. The author emphasised the need for practical, demand-driven entrepreneurship training.

In a study conducted in Akwa Ibom State, Akpan and Etor (2013) explored the role of entrepreneurship education in poverty alleviation and employment generation among youths. They found a positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and youth self-employment, but noted that the absence of start-up capital and enabling infrastructure limited the translation of skills into actual enterprises.

Oyelola et al. (2013) assessed entrepreneurship for economic development in Nigeria and reported that micro and small enterprises contribute substantially to employment. However, the study highlighted challenges such as multiple taxation, epileptic power supply, and limited access to markets as major obstacles.

Agwu and Kadiri (2014) investigated the prospects and challenges of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Their findings revealed that although entrepreneurship is widely promoted as a solution to unemployment, many ventures fail within the first few years due to poor planning, inadequate financing, and harsh operating environments.

More recent studies (e.g., National Bureau of Statistics reports and state-level assessments) continue to show that while entrepreneurship programmes have increased the number of young people attempting self-employment, the sustainability and employment-generation capacity of these ventures remain limited by structural and individual-level constraints.

These empirical works collectively suggest that entrepreneurship holds considerable prospects for reducing youth unemployment, but its effectiveness is moderated by a range of limitations that must be addressed for meaningful impact.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theoretical perspectives: **Schumpeter's Innovation Theory of Entrepreneurship** and the **Human Capital Theory**.

Schumpeter's Innovation Theory of Entrepreneurship (Schumpeter, 1934) posits that entrepreneurs are innovators who introduce new products, new methods of production, new markets, or new forms of organisation. Through the process of "creative destruction," entrepreneurship drives economic development and generates employment. In the context of youth unemployment, the theory suggests that when young people engage in innovative entrepreneurial activities, they not only create self-employment but also generate additional jobs, thereby reducing unemployment. The theory provides a useful lens for examining the prospects of entrepreneurship as a tool for employment generation in Uyo Local Government Area.

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) emphasises that investment in education, training, and skills development increases individuals' productivity and

employability. When applied to entrepreneurship, the theory argues that youths who acquire relevant entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and attitudes are better positioned to identify opportunities, manage businesses successfully, and create sustainable employment. This theory underpins the role of entrepreneurship education and training programmes in enhancing the capacity of young people to address unemployment through self-employment and venture creation.

Together, these theories provide a framework for understanding both the potential of entrepreneurship to reduce youth unemployment (prospects) and the constraints that may limit its effectiveness (limitations), particularly in a local context such as Uyo.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey design is appropriate when the researcher aims to describe systematically the characteristics, opinions, perceptions, or conditions of a population as they exist at a particular point in time without manipulating any variables (Nworgu, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was considered suitable for the present study because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a sizeable number of youths in Uyo Local Government Area regarding their perceptions of the prospects and limitations of entrepreneurship as a tool for reducing youth unemployment. The design also allowed for the examination of relationships among variables and the testing of hypotheses through the use of structured questionnaire responses. The population of the study consisted of youths aged 18 to 35 years residing in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. A sample of 400 youths was selected for the study. The sample size was determined with reference to the guidelines provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and was considered adequate for achieving representativeness and for conducting meaningful statistical analysis (Nworgu, 2015). A multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting the sample. In the first stage, Uyo Local Government Area was stratified according to its major communities and clans to ensure geographical coverage. In the second stage, simple random sampling (through balloting) was used to select a number of communities from the strata. In the third stage, accidental (convenience) sampling was used to select individual respondents from the chosen communities, markets, skill acquisition centres, motor parks, and environments around tertiary institutions. This combination of techniques ensured both spread and practicality in reaching the target respondents.

The instrument for data collection was a researcher-developed structured questionnaire titled **"Entrepreneurship and Youth Unemployment Questionnaire (EYUQ)"**. The questionnaire was organised into two sections:

- **Section A** sought demographic information of the respondents, including gender, age bracket, highest educational qualification, current employment/entrepreneurial status, and whether the respondent had

participated in any entrepreneurship training or empowerment programme.

- **Section B** contained clusters of items designed to elicit information on:
  (a) the prospects of entrepreneurship in reducing youth unemployment,
  (b) the limitations confronting young entrepreneurs,
  (c) the contribution of existing entrepreneurship programmes, and
  (d) the perceptions of youths towards entrepreneurship as a viable solution to unemployment.

The items in Section B were structured on a four-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). To ensure that the instrument measured what it was intended to measure, face and content validity were established. The draft questionnaire was given to three experts: two specialists in Educational Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Psychological Foundations of Education and one specialist in Vocational and Technical Education, all from the University of Uyo. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a trial testing procedure. Thirty (30) youths who were not part of the main study sample but shared similar characteristics were randomly selected from a neighbouring area within Akwa Ibom State. The questionnaire was administered to them, and the data collected were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained. This value was considered high and indicated that the instrument possessed internal consistency and was reliable for the study (Nworgu, 2015).

The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

- Demographic information in Section A was analysed using frequency counts and simple percentages.
- The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted for decision-making on the four-point scale. Any item or cluster with a mean score of 2.50 and above was interpreted as "Agreed," while any mean score below 2.50 was interpreted as "Disagreed."

The hypotheses were tested as follows:

- Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis on the relationship between entrepreneurship prospects and the reduction of youth unemployment.
- Independent t-test was used to test hypotheses involving comparison of mean responses between groups (e.g., male and female youths).

All statistical analyses were performed at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What are the prospects of entrepreneurship in reducing youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area?

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The responses of the participants on the prospects of entrepreneurship are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Prospects of Entrepreneurship in Reducing Youth Unemployment (N = 386)

S/N	Item Statement	Mean (x̄)	SD	Decision
1	Entrepreneurship creates self-employment opportunities for youths	3.42	0.71	Agreed
2	Entrepreneurship helps youths generate employment for others	3.28	0.76	Agreed
3	Entrepreneurship encourages innovation and creativity among youths	3.35	0.69	Agreed
4	Entrepreneurship contributes to local economic development in Uyo	3.19	0.82	Agreed
5	Entrepreneurship reduces over-dependence on formal sector employment	3.11	0.88	Agreed
6	Entrepreneurship provides opportunities for utilising local resources	3.24	0.74	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.27**	**0.77**	**Agreed**

The results in Table 4.1 show that all the items had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.27 indicates that the respondents agreed that entrepreneurship holds considerable prospects for reducing youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area.

Research Question 2: What are the major limitations facing young entrepreneurs in Uyo Local Government Area?

Table 4.2: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Limitations Facing Young Entrepreneurs (N = 386)

S/N	Item Statement	Mean (x̄)	SD	Decision
1	Limited access to start-up capital	3.51	0.68	Agreed
2	Inadequate infrastructure (especially electricity and transport)	3.47	0.72	Agreed
3	Poor business management and entrepreneurial skills	3.22	0.81	Agreed
4	High cost of doing business (rent, multiple taxes, etc.)	3.39	0.75	Agreed
5	Inconsistent government policies and programmes	3.18	0.84	Agreed
6	Difficulty in accessing markets and customers	3.09	0.89	Agreed
7	Socio-cultural preference for formal white-collar jobs	2.97	0.91	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.26**	**0.80**	**Agreed**

Table 4.2 reveals that respondents agreed with all the listed limitations (cluster mean = 3.26). The most strongly endorsed limitations were limited access to start-up capital (x̄ = 3.51) and inadequate infrastructure (x̄ = 3.47).

Research Question 3: To what extent have entrepreneurship programmes contributed to

the reduction of youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area?

Table 4.3: Mean Ratings on the Contribution of Entrepreneurship Programmes (N = 386)

S/N	Item Statement	Mean (x̄)	SD	Decision
1	Entrepreneurship training programmes have improved youths' business skills	3.14	0.79	Agreed
2	Government empowerment schemes have helped some youths start businesses	2.98	0.86	Agreed
3	Many beneficiaries of entrepreneurship programmes still struggle to sustain businesses	3.31	0.73	Agreed
4	Entrepreneurship programmes have created noticeable employment opportunities	2.76	0.92	Agreed
5	The impact of existing programmes on overall youth unemployment remains limited	3.28	0.77	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.09**	**0.81**	**Agreed**

The results indicate that while entrepreneurship programmes have made some positive contributions (cluster mean = 3.09), respondents also agreed that the overall impact on reducing youth unemployment remains limited, and many beneficiaries still face sustainability challenges.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship prospects and the reduction of youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area.

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to test this hypothesis. The result showed a positive and significant relationship ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This implies that the higher the perceived prospects of entrepreneurship, the greater the perceived contribution to reducing youth unemployment.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female youths regarding the limitations of entrepreneurship as a tool for reducing unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area.

An independent t-test was conducted. The result showed no significant difference between male and female respondents ($t = 1.21$, $df = 384$, $p > 0.05$). The null hypothesis was retained. Both male and female youths held similar views regarding the limitations of entrepreneurship.

Hypothesis 3: Entrepreneurship programmes have no significant influence on the reduction of youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area.

The analysis revealed a significant influence ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that entrepreneurship programmes have a statistically significant, though moderate, influence on the reduction of youth unemployment.

Discussion of Findings

The finding that entrepreneurship holds strong prospects for reducing youth unemployment aligns with earlier studies by Anyadike, Emeh and Ukah (2012) and Oyelola et al. (2013), who reported that entrepreneurship contributes to self-employment and job creation. In the specific context of Uyo, the relatively large market and concentration of young people appear to enhance these prospects. The identification of limited access to capital and poor infrastructure as major limitations is consistent with the observations of Onugu (2005), Agwu and Kadiri (2014), and Akpan and Etor (2013). These structural constraints continue to hinder the ability of many young people to translate entrepreneurial intentions into sustainable enterprises.

The moderate contribution of existing entrepreneurship programmes supports the view of Ajufo (2013) that while training and empowerment schemes are beneficial, they often lack adequate follow-up support, mentorship, and access to finance, thereby limiting their long-term impact on unemployment reduction.

The generally positive perception of youths towards entrepreneurship is encouraging and suggests that with improved support systems, more young people in Uyo could embrace self-employment. However, the lingering preference for formal employment among some respondents indicates that socio-cultural attitudes still play a role, as noted in previous Nigerian studies. Overall, the findings confirm that entrepreneurship remains a relevant and promising tool for addressing youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area, but its effectiveness is significantly constrained by financial, infrastructural, and policy-related limitations that require deliberate intervention.

Summary of the Study

This study evaluated the prospects and limitations of entrepreneurship as a tool for reducing youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The study was motivated by the persistent high rate of youth unemployment despite various entrepreneurship and empowerment programmes implemented at both national and state levels.

The study was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population consisted of youths aged 18–35 years in Uyo Local Government Area. A sample of 400 youths was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique, and 386 valid responses were used for analysis. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire titled “Entrepreneurship and Youth Unemployment Questionnaire (EYUQ)”. The instrument was validated by experts and subjected to reliability testing, yielding a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.82. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation, and independent t-test at the 0.05 level of significance.

The major findings of the study were as follows:

1. Entrepreneurship has considerable prospects for reducing youth unemployment in Uyo Local

Government Area through the creation of self-employment, generation of additional jobs, promotion of innovation, and contribution to local economic development.

2. The major limitations facing young entrepreneurs include limited access to start-up capital, inadequate infrastructure (especially electricity), high cost of doing business, insufficient managerial skills, weak mentorship, and inconsistent government policies.
3. Existing entrepreneurship programmes have made moderate contributions to skills acquisition and business start-ups, but their overall impact on reducing youth unemployment remains limited due to sustainability challenges and inadequate follow-up support.
4. Youths in Uyo generally perceive entrepreneurship as a viable alternative to formal employment and express willingness to engage in it when adequately supported.
5. There is a significant positive relationship between the prospects of entrepreneurship and the reduction of youth unemployment.
6. Male and female youths do not differ significantly in their perceptions of the limitations of entrepreneurship.
7. Entrepreneurship programmes have a significant influence on the reduction of youth unemployment in the study area.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Entrepreneurship holds substantial prospects as a tool for reducing youth unemployment in Uyo Local Government Area. It offers pathways for self-employment, job creation, innovation, and local economic development. However, these prospects are significantly constrained by structural and individual-level limitations, particularly limited access to finance, poor infrastructure, high operating costs, and inadequate business support services. Although existing entrepreneurship programmes have produced some positive outcomes in terms of skills development and business initiation, their impact on the overall reduction of youth unemployment remains moderate. The sustainability of youth-owned enterprises continues to be a major challenge.

Youths in Uyo Local Government Area generally have favourable perceptions of entrepreneurship and are willing to embrace it as an alternative to formal employment if the enabling environment is improved. Therefore, while entrepreneurship remains a relevant and promising strategy, its effectiveness depends largely on the extent to which the identified limitations are addressed through deliberate and coordinated interventions.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Akwa Ibom State Government and relevant agencies should improve

access to affordable start-up and working capital for young entrepreneurs through dedicated youth enterprise funds, low-interest loans, and grant schemes with simplified application processes.

2. Concerted efforts should be made to improve critical infrastructure, particularly electricity supply and transportation networks, in order to reduce the cost of doing business for small enterprises in Uyo.
3. Entrepreneurship training programmes should be strengthened by incorporating practical modules on business management, financial literacy, marketing, and record-keeping, and by providing structured post-training mentorship and monitoring.
4. Government and private sector stakeholders should establish business support centres or incubation hubs in Uyo where young entrepreneurs can access advisory services, shared facilities, and market information.
5. Policy consistency and better coordination among agencies implementing youth entrepreneurship programmes should be ensured to avoid duplication and improve programme effectiveness.
6. Public enlightenment campaigns should be intensified to encourage positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship and to reduce the excessive preference for formal white-collar employment among youths.

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