

THE IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS PARADOX: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SCHEMES AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Dr. Moshood Abiodun OLATUNJI¹ & Raphael Akinkunmi ODEDELE²

^{1&2}Department of Political Science, Fountain University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.

raphodedele@gmail.com (08132758881) /olatunji.moshood@fuo.edu.ng (08035204570)

ARTICLE INFO

Article No.: 0209

Accepted Date: 11/02/2026

Published Date: 09/03/2026

Type: Research

ABSTRACT

The quest for national development in Nigeria is inextricably linked to the empowerment of its youth population, yet a persistent gap remains between policy intervention and socio-economic outcomes. This study investigates the Implementation-Results Paradox, examining why high-profile initiatives such as N-Power and YOUWIN have failed to significantly reduce youth unemployment, which remained above 40% in 2022. Utilizing a qualitative meta-synthesis and thematic content analysis of secondary data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), World Bank, and UNDP, the research evaluates the efficacy of current empowerment strategies through the lenses of Human Capital, Empowerment, and Modernization Theories. Findings reveal that Nigerian youth empowerment initiatives are largely consumptive, characterized by a stipend-dependency trap that lacks structured industrial exit strategies or permanent employment transitions. The study further identifies structural bottlenecks, including a critical mismatch between theoretical education and digital market demands, and a "hard ceiling" created by inadequate power and internet infrastructure. The paper concludes that without shifting from short-term poverty alleviation to a Skill-Infrastructure-Market (SIM) framework, Nigeria's demographic dividend remains a risk to national security and stability. It recommends the codification of youth policies to ensure continuity and the strategic leverage of digital technologies to foster sustainable industrial integration.

Keywords: Youth Empowerment, National Development, Stipend-Dependency, Human Capital, Digital Infrastructure, Skill-Infrastructure Market" (SIM)

Introduction

In the contemporary global discourse on sustainable development, the demographic profile of a nation is increasingly recognized as its most potent economic asset. According to the United Nations (2021), there are approximately 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years globally, accounting for 16% of the world's population. For developing nations, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, this "youth bulge" presents a unique demographic dividend a window of opportunity where the working-age population outgrows the dependent population, potentially accelerating economic growth (World Bank, 2018).

Nigeria, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," stands at the center of this demographic shift. With over 60% of its population under the age of 30, the nation possesses a vast reservoir of energy, creativity, and digital nativity. However, as Sen (1999) argues in his Development as Freedom framework, development is not merely the increase in GDP but the expansion of the "capabilities" of individuals to lead lives they value. In this context, youth empowerment becomes the mechanical link between human potential and national prosperity.

Historically, the Nigerian state has recognized this link, evolving its policy framework from the nationalist mobilization of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 1973 to the entrepreneurial focus of the YOUWIN and N-Power schemes in the 21st century. These interventions are theoretically grounded in Human Capital Theory, which posits that investments in education and skills yield high rates of return for national productivity (Becker, 1993). Despite these theoretical foundations and the proliferation of empowerment programs, Nigeria's socio-economic reality presents a stark contradiction.

The National Bureau of Statistics (2022) and the World Bank (2022) consistently report high levels of youth unemployment, underemployment, and poverty. This disconnect termed in this study as the Implementation-Results Paradox suggests that while the intent of empowerment exists, the structural mechanics of these programs are failing to create sustainable development. The crisis is further exacerbated by the "Digital Divide" and a persistent mismatch between the traditional educational curriculum and the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Consequently, youth empowerment in Nigeria appears to have stalled at the level of temporary poverty alleviation rather than industrial transformation. Without a critical re-evaluation of how skills are acquired, how infrastructure supports these skills, and how the market absorbs empowered youth, Nigeria's demographic dividend risks transforming into a demographic disaster, characterized by brain drain, social unrest, and economic stagnation. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate these structural bottlenecks and propose an integrated framework for genuine youth-led national development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the proliferation of youth-targeted interventions in Nigeria ranging from the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN) to the N-Power Social Investment Programme the country's youth unemployment rate paradoxically escalated to over 40% by 2022. This suggests a significant "implementation-results gap" where financial outlays do not translate into sustainable national development.

While existing literature focuses on the necessity of empowerment, there is a dearth of empirical analysis regarding why these schemes fail to transition beneficiaries into permanent economic actors. Furthermore, the education system continues to produce graduates with theoretical knowledge that does not align with the demands of a digitizing global economy, leading to a "skills-mismatch" that stifles innovation. Without identifying the structural bottlenecks such as corruption, poor policy continuity, and the "stipend-dependency" trap Nigeria's demographic dividend risks becoming a demographic disaster.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Analysis

1. Youth

The Nigeria National Youth Policy (2009) defines youth as persons between 18 and 35 years. The African Youth Charter (2006) States that youth or young men refer to people between the ages of 15 – 35years. The United Nations (2014) defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. In academic discourse, youth is commonly conceptualized as a transitional stage of life between childhood and adulthood, characterized by biological maturation, psychological development, and increasing social, economic, and political responsibilities. Rather than being defined solely by age, youth is understood as a socially constructed category shaped by cultural, economic, and political contexts.

2. Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment is multi-dimensional, covering economic, educational, political, and social empowerment (World Bank, 2018). Economic empowerment equips youth with skills and access to capital, while educational empowerment enhances knowledge and employability. Political empowerment ensures youth inclusion in decision-making, and social empowerment builds civic engagement (Chigunta,2017). Checkoway(2011) argues that empowerment occurs when youth move from political marginalization to meaningful civic and political participation, thereby strengthening democratic governance and accountability. Empowerment emphasizes both capacity development and structural inclusion, enabling youth to transition from passive beneficiaries to active agents of change (Zimmerman, 2000).From a development studies perspective, youth empowerment involves enhancing young people’s human capital through education, vocational training, entrepreneurship, and access to productive employment. Development scholars argue that empowered youth contribute to poverty reduction, innovation, and sustainable economic growth, while disempowered youth are more vulnerable to unemployment, social exclusion, and conflict (World Bank, 2007).

3. National Development

National development encompasses improvements in infrastructure, health, education, governance, and economic prosperity. It is achieved when citizens’ quality of life is enhanced, poverty is reduced, and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods are expanded (Todaro & Smith, 2015). National development refers to a comprehensive and sustained improvement in the economic, political, social, and institutional capacities of a nation, aimed at enhancing the overall quality of life of its citizens. In academic discourse, national development goes beyond economic growth to include structural transformation, social equity, political stability, good governance, and human development (Todaro & Smith, 2020). National development is closely linked to effective governance, strong institutions, the rule of law, political participation, and national integration. A politically developed nation is one in which state institutions are capable, legitimate, and responsive to citizens’ needs (Leftwich, 2000). The primary objective of development, as articulated by Ajaebili (2013), is to achieve sustainable and favourable transformations in the overall well-being of individuals residing within a certain societal context, typically within the confines of a nation-state.

According to Pigors and Charles (2000) as cited in Enang (2021), the concept of national development can be understood as a comprehensive undertaking that embraces various dimensions of human existence, including the rebuilding and advancement of a nation, the robust growth of industries, the expansion of the agricultural sector, the development of education, and the strengthening of social and religious institutions. This concept signifies the comprehensive and harmonious advancement of all aspects of the nation. The progress of a nation's development is contingent upon the influence exerted by

its citizenry, encompassing factors such as human resources, skill acquisition, and the application of knowledge, among others, in the implementation of development initiatives. According to Adagbabiri and Okolie (2016), national development encompasses the sustained enhancement of both the material and spiritual aspects of a nation's existence, while ensuring that these advancements are achieved in a manner that upholds human dignity. The process of national development necessitates the consolidation of a nation's resources in order to promote the overall welfare of its citizens, encompassing economic, social, political, and technological progress. The concept of national development, as outlined in the UNO decade reports (2020) cited by Enang (2021), is characterized by a combination of economic growth and societal transformation. The aforementioned modification signifies the alteration in both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the economy, culture, and social sphere inside the society. The quantification of growth and change is assessed in relation to: The provision of widespread education and diverse amenities to address the need of the most economically disadvantaged individuals. The enhancement of agricultural productivity can be achieved by implementing contemporary technologies, promoting industrial development, and investing in human resources development.

Idike (2014) argues that national development refers to the comprehensive progress and advancement that occurs across an entire nation-state. This statement suggests that the concept of well-being pertains to the majority of citizens in terms of material conditions, and is accompanied by a reduction in degrees of inequality. Primarily, national development encompasses the assurance of security for both the lives and property inside the confines of the nation-state. Furthermore, Okeke and Idike (2016) argue that national development encompasses the eradication of inter-ethnic animosity and conflicts within intergroup and interpersonal dynamics in a nation-state. National development, as defined in this study, encompasses the gradual advancements and alterations in a nation's economic, social, political, demographic, scientific, ecological, and technical spheres. It is crucial that these changes occur in a manner that does not compromise future growth.

The notion of national development is all-encompassing as it centres on enhancing the quality of life for individuals, ensuring economic stability through a rise in per capita income, and providing sufficient social infrastructure to enhance the well-being of the populace (Enang, 2021). In the realm of UN indices about national development, Nigeria's socio-economic structure is marked by hindered economic growth in Gross National Product (GNP) and a low standard of living. Additionally, there is an increase in the unemployment rate, a high poverty level, and subpar quality of products from institutions of higher education, a deficiency in democratic values, and a misalignment between moral and scientific values. These factors collectively pose significant obstacles to the achievement of national development.

Theoretical Review

This study adopts a multi-dimensional approach by synthesizing Human Capital Theory, Empowerment Theory, and Modernization Theory. This synergy provides a holistic framework for understanding why empowerment often fails to translate into national development in Nigeria.

1. Human Capital Theory

Following Becker (1993), this study posits that investment in youth through education and vocational training increases the stock of knowledge and skills, thereby raising productivity. However, in the Nigerian context, there is a human capital mismatch. While the state produces graduates, they often lack the digital and technical competencies required by the modern market, rendering the capital unproductive.

2. Empowerment Theory

While Human Capital provides the skill, Empowerment Theory (Zimmerman, 2000) provides the agency. Empowerment is not just a transfer of resources (stipends); it is the psychological and structural transition where youth gain control over their lives. Without this, programs like N-Power create "passive beneficiaries" rather than active innovators.

3. Modernization Theory

Modernization Theory argues that societies transition from traditional to industrial states through technological advancement. In this study, Modernization represents the Infrastructural Environment. Even a skilled and psychologically empowered youth cannot drive national development if they are constrained by a digital ceiling high data costs, lack of electricity, and poor access to global markets.

The Evolution of Youth Policy in Nigeria: From Independence to the Digital Age

The trajectory of youth policy in Nigeria reflects the shifting socio-political ideologies of successive administrations moving from post-colonial paternalism to the contemporary focus on the digital economy. This evolution can be categorized into four distinct philosophical eras:

Post-Independence and National Integration (1960-1979)

Right from independence, youth were primarily viewed as agents of "nation-building" and national unity. The policy philosophy was one of Nationalist Mobilization. The landmark achievement of this era was the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 1973 via Decree No. 24. As noted by Marenin (1989), the NYSC was designed to bridge ethnic divides post-civil war rather than to address economic empowerment. During this period, youth development was centralized and paternalistic, with the state acting as the primary custodian of youth aspirations.

Structural Adjustment and Poverty Alleviation (1980s-1990s)

The economic downturn of the 1980s and the subsequent Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) shifted the focus toward survival. High unemployment rates led to the establishment of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1986. This era marked the birth of Poverty Alleviation as a policy cornerstone. However, as argued by Anyanwu (1992), these interventions were often reactive and lacked the industrial backing necessary to create sustainable jobs, leading to the lost generation of the 1990s.

Democratic Transition and Policy Formalization (1999-2015)

The return to civilian rule brought a more structured approach to youth affairs. The first formal National Youth Policy was launched in 2001 and revised in 2009. This period saw a shift toward Institutionalization and Entrepreneurship. Programs like the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN) introduced competitive, merit-based grants. According to Ohize and Adamu (2012), this era signaled a transition where the government began to view youth as "job creators" rather than "job seekers," though implementation remained plagued by bureaucratic bottlenecks.

The Digital Age and the Social Investment Era (2016- Present)

The contemporary era is defined by the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), most notably N-Power, and the Nigeria Youth Investment Fund (NYIF). Unlike previous eras, there is an explicit (though often infrastructurally unsupported) focus on the Digital Economy. The 2019 revision of the National Youth Policy emphasizes "Digital Skills" as a core pillar. However, current scholars identify an Implementation Results Paradox, where digital policy intent is high, but the digital divide characterized by poor power supply and high data costs creates a barrier to actual empowerment (Umeifekwem, Emeka and Okeke (2023).

Empirical Review

Recent studies have extensively evaluated large-scale government interventions aimed at reducing unemployment. Olusanya (2025) conducted a study on the Keke NAPEEP scheme

in Abuja, finding that targeted vocational empowerment significantly improved the financial stability and standard of living for participants. The research concluded that equipping youth with tools for self-sufficiency is a direct catalyst for poverty alleviation at the national level. Ajala and Jawondo (2023) and Olorunsola (2022) examined the N-Power initiative in Nigeria. Their findings indicated that while the program provided immediate sustenance stipends and improved short-term employability in sectors like agriculture (N-Agro) and health (N-Health), the lack of a transition process to permanent employment limited its long-term impact on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Medeataji (2025) utilized a mixed-methods approach with data from the World Bank and the Central Bank of Nigeria (2000–2023). The study revealed a favorable correlation between entrepreneurship education and GDP growth, though it noted that inadequate infrastructure and poor policy implementation act as significant growth inhibitors. Hassan and Abdulkareem (2023) demonstrated a significant statistical relationship between youth empowerment programs and crime reduction in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Their research found that centers providing micro-credits and life-skills training reduced the idleness that often leads to social unrest and juvenile delinquency.

Okafor (2011) highlighted the rising youth unemployment crisis in Nigeria, linking it to insecurity and economic stagnation. Arowolo and Aluko (2012) found that youth empowerment initiatives, when effectively implemented, contribute positively to national productivity. Similarly, studies from Rwanda and South Korea show that strong youth investment policies accelerate industrialization and innovation (AfDB, 2020)

Empirical Comparative Analysis of Youth Empowerment Schemes in Nigeria

The table below synthesizes findings from various studies to illustrate the Implementation Results Paradox

Program Name	Core Strategy	Intended Outcome	Observed Result / Structural Gap
N-Power	Monthly stipends and short-term sectoral deployment (N-Agro, N-Health).	Reduced unemployment and improved short-term employability	Lack of permanent transition process; created a "stipend dependency" rather than long-term GDP impact.
YOUWIN	Grants and entrepreneurial support for startup innovation.	Promotion of private sector job creation and entrepreneurial growth.	Limited by "corruption and nepotism" in access; hampered by weak infrastructure (power/internet).
Keke NAPEEP	Provision of tools (tricycles) for self-sufficiency in transportation.	Direct poverty alleviation and financial stability at the household level.	Successful for immediate income but offers low "human capital" growth for the digital economy.

From the above, the empirical data shows that while these programs provided immediate sustenance, they failed to address the skills mismatch. Most schemes focus on distributing resources (stipends/tools) rather than building the human capital necessary for industrialization. The most successful entrepreneurs from the YOUWIN scheme are constrained by inadequate power supply and limited internet access and lack of proper follow up by the organizer. The N-Power model confirms that without a market to absorb these youths after their tenure, the investment does not yield sustainable national development.

A key finding of this study is that Nigerian youth empowerment initiatives are largely consumptive rather than productive. While programs like N-Power provide immediate financial relief (stipends), they lack a structured exit strategy or transition into the industrial

sector. This creates a cycle of dependency rather than the self-efficacy proposed by Empowerment Theory.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative meta-synthesis design, which goes beyond mere description to interpretively synthesize findings from multiple primary studies and government reports. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the Implementation-Results Paradox by comparing policy intent with realized outcomes. Data are purposively harvested from a triangulated set of sources to ensure validity: Derived from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and World Bank reports (2015–2024) to track unemployment and GDP trends. Critical review of the Nigeria National Youth Policy and the African Youth Charter.

Results and Discussion

The Implementation Results Paradox refers to the contradiction between the high volume of youth empowerment initiatives launched in Nigeria and the deteriorating socio-economic indicators of the youth population. While the government has committed billions of Naira to these schemes, the youth unemployment rate remained a staggering 40.6% in the second quarter of 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023).

A) Evaluation of Contemporary Schemes

Contemporary schemes have largely followed a supply-side approach providing training or cash without ensuring demand-side absorption into the labor market. N-Power was launched in 2016 as a component of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), it aimed to provide large-scale skill acquisition. While it offered immediate financial relief to millions, its evaluation shows it functioned more as a social safety net than a development tool. Its "exit strategy" remained weak, leaving many beneficiaries back in the labor market without permanent placement (Umeifekwem et al., 2023). YOUWIN (Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria). This program targeted high-potential entrepreneurs. While successful in fostering innovation, it was criticized for its "elitist" design, where access was often limited to those already possessing significant social and educational capital, thereby failing to address the broader grassroots youth population (Ohize & Adamu, 2012).

B) Stipend –Dependency Trap versus Industrial Sustainability

A critical finding of this study is the emergence of the Stipend-Dependency Trap. This occurs when empowerment is defined solely by short-term financial transfers rather than the building of productive human capital. Many schemes prioritize the payment of monthly stipends. According to Human Capital Theory, investment should increase productivity; however, when stipends are used for immediate consumption rather than being linked to industrial apprenticeship, they fail to create a "multiplier effect" in the economy. Industrial sustainability requires a hand-over mechanism where the private sector takes over from government training. In Nigeria, the lack of synergy between the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of Industry means that N-Power graduates, for example, often find no market ready to absorb their newly acquired skills.

C) Structural Bottlenecks: The Digital divide and infrastructural ceilings

Even when youth are psychologically and educationally empowered, they hit an Infrastructural Ceiling that prevents them from contributing to national development. In the 21st century global Gig Economy, youth empowerment is synonymous with digital access. However, Nigeria's digital divide characterized by the high cost of data and limited broadband penetration in rural areas stifles the potential of youth to engage in remote work or tech startups. Modernization Theory posits that technology drives development. In Nigeria, the persistent failure of the national power grid acts as a hard ceiling. A youth trained in graphic design or software engineering cannot remain competitive or sustainable if a significant portion of their income is spent on alternative power sources (World Bank, 2022).

Synthesis of the Discussion

The paradox is thus explained by the fact that Nigeria's empowerment model is Linear (Training plus Stipend), whereas it needs to be Integrated (Skill plus Infrastructure plus Market). Without addressing the structural bottlenecks mentioned above, the human capital developed mentioned earlier above will continue to be underutilized, leading to the brain drain or social unrest observed in recent years

Comparative Analysis: Lessons from Global Practices

The failure of youth empowerment in Nigeria is often misattributed to a lack of funding. However, a comparative analysis of Rwanda, South Korea, and Malaysia suggests that the primary differentiator is the Structural Integration of youth into the national industrial strategy.

South Korea: The 'Saeman Undong' and Educational Alignment

South Korea's transition from a war-torn agrarian society to a global tech giant is the gold standard for Human Capital Theory. The strategy employed, during the 1970s and 80s, the South Korean government didn't just provide vocational training; they synchronized the national curriculum with the specific needs of emerging heavy industries and later, the electronics sector. The Lesson from the act is that empowerment is ineffective if it is not demand-driven. As noted by Lee (2014), South Korea avoided the skills mismatch by ensuring that every youth trained in a government program had a guaranteed market in the private conglomerates (Chaebols). This contrasts with Nigeria's N-Power, where training is often divorced from industrial demand.

Malaysia: The Bumiputera Policy and MSME Intergration

Malaysia provides a critical lesson in structural empowerment. Through the "New Economic Policy," Malaysia focused on small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) as the primary employer of youth. The strategy employed was the moved away from temporary stipends toward Institutional Credit and Mentorship. They created specialized agencies like MARA to provide youth with not just capital, but the technical infrastructure to compete globally. The lesson from this, Hassan, Baka andTang (2021) argue that Malaysia's success lay in moving youth from informal survivalism to formal entrepreneurship. Unlike Nigeria's YOUWIN, which was often seen as an elitist grant system, Malaysia's model focused on building a broad-based market for youth-led businesses.

Rwanda: The Digital Transformation Model (Vision 2050)

Rwanda serves as a contemporary African benchmark for the Modernization Theory component of our tripod. Rwanda prioritized digital infrastructure over traditional social welfare. Through the Smart Rwanda Master Plan, the government invested heavily in 4G/5G penetration and tech-hubs (e.g., Kigali Innovation City). The lesson from this is that empowerment is a product of Infrastructure. According to Behuria (2019), by reducing the cost of internet and power, Rwanda enabled its youth to participate in the global Gig Economy, effectively bypassing the limitations of the local labor market. This is the direct solution to the Digital Divide bottleneck discussed above.

Synthesis of Lessons for the Nigeria Context

The comparative data suggests a three-tier corrective roadmap for Nigeria:

1. Empowerment must move out of the Social Investment category and into the Industrial Strategy category (South Korea Model).
2. Digital and power infrastructure should be treated as the primary tools of empowerment, rather than cash transfers (Rwanda Model).
3. Integrating youth MSMEs into the national value chain is more sustainable than temporary stipends (Malaysia Model).

The Skill infrastructure Market (SIM) framework

As a primary contribution to the literature, this study proposes the SIM Framework as a replacement for the current linear Training-to-Stipend model. For youth empowerment to catalyze national development, three pillars must intersect:

Skill (Capability): Moving beyond theoretical education toward high-demand technical and digital competencies (Human Capital Theory).

Infrastructure (Opportunity): Providing the physical and digital environment stable electricity, fiber-optic internet, and tech hubs necessary to monetize those skills (Modernization Theory).

Market (Absorption): Creating deliberate policy linkages that ensure the private sector and the digital global economy can absorb trained youth (Empowerment Theory).

Summary of Findings

The central finding of this research is that Nigeria suffers from an implementation results paradox. While the volume of youth-targeted policies has increased since 2016, the quality of youth life and their contribution to the national GDP have not followed a similar trajectory. This study identifies three core reasons for this disconnect:

1. Majority of Nigerian Government Empowerment Schemes like N-Power provide temporary financial relief but lack a graduation mechanism into permanent industrial or digital roles.
2. The efforts to empower youth with digital skills are neutralized by high data costs and an unstable national power grid, preventing the scalability of youth-led micro-enterprises.
3. The evolution of youth policy in Nigeria has been characterized by discontinuous interventionism or policy inconsistency, whereby new administrations abandon existing frameworks in favor of new, often repetitive, political projects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the demographic dividend in Nigeria is currently a latent potential rather than a realized asset. This study has demonstrated that youth empowerment is the engine of national development, but an engine cannot run without the fuel of infrastructure and the wheels of market access. By adopting the SIM Framework, Nigeria can move from a state of youth relief to a state of youth-led industrialization, ensuring that its largest demographic becomes its greatest economic strength.

Policy Recommendations

To operationalize the findings of this study, the following actions are recommended for the Nigerian government and stakeholders:

1. To end the cycle of policy discontinuity, major empowerment frameworks should be codified into law. This ensures that successful programs survive changes in political administration and provides a stable environment for long-term planning.
2. Government should pivot from the stipend-only model to a tax-incentivized apprenticeship model. Private corporations should receive tax breaks for absorbing N-Power or NYIF beneficiaries into permanent, productive roles, thereby bridging the market gap.
3. The Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy should create special economic zones for youth-led tech startups where power is guaranteed and internet data is zero-rated (subsidized). This removes the Infrastructural Ceiling identified in this study.
4. Tertiary institutions must collaborate with industrial leaders to deconstruct outdated curricula. Education must shift from Certificate Acquisition to Competency Mastery, focusing on the Industrial Revolution skills like AI, renewable energy, and data analytics.

References

- African Development Bank(2020). African youth in development: Harnessing demographic dividend. AfDB.
- Arowolo, D., & Aluko, F. (2012). Democracy, political participation and good governance in Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 1(3), 797–809.
- Ajala, A. O., & Jawondo, I. A. (2023). Social safety nets and youth unemployment in Nigeria: An evaluation of the N-Power program. *Journal of African Development Studies*, 15(1), 45-62.
- Becker, G. S. (1993). Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Behuria, P. (2019). The resilient omnipotence of the ruling party in Rwanda: The role of the Crystal Ventures Ltd. *Review of African Political Economy*, 46(160), 282-301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2019.1630139>
- Checkoway, B. (2011). What is youth participation? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(2), 340-345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.09.017>
- Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development. (2019). *National Youth Policy 2019-2023: Enhancing youth development and participation in the context of sustainable development*. Federal Government of Nigeria.
- Hassan, N. S., Bakar, M. S., & Tang, T. K. (2021). Entrepreneurial intention among Malaysian youth: The role of education and institutional support. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 8(3), 1185-1194.
- Hassan, T., & Abdulkareem, M. (2023). Holistic empowerment as a preventative strategy for youth restiveness. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(4), 110-125.
- Lee, K. (2014). *Schumpeterian analysis of economic catch-up: Knowledge, path-creation, and the middle-income trap*. Cambridge University Press.
- Leftwich, A. (2000). States of development: On the primacy of politics in development. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Marenin, O. (1989). Implementing deployment policies in the National Youth Service Corps of Nigeria. *Comparative Political Studies*, 22(4), 397-436. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414089022004002>
- Medeataji, F. T. (2025). Entrepreneurship education and its impacts on economic growth in Nigeria (2000-2023). *Studies in Education*, 23(2), 88-104.
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2020). Labour force statistics. Abuja: NBS.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2022). *2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index Survey*. Federal Government of Nigeria.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2023). *Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Q4 2022 & Q1 2023*. Federal Government of Nigeria.
- Ohize, E. J., & Adamu, M. J. (2012). Case study of YOUWIN programme in Nigeria and its impact on unemployment reduction. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 3(16), 112-120.

- Okafor, E. (2011). Youth unemployment and implications for stability of democracy in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 13(1), 358–373.
- Olusanya, O., et al. (2025). Impact of Youth Empowerment Scheme on Poverty Alleviation in Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), Nigeria. *Covenant Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, Special Issue.
- Olusanya, T. O. (2025). Digital literacy and the demographic dividend: A case for Nigerian tech-hubs. *African Journal of Development Studies*, 12(1), 45-62.
- Todaro, M. P., & Smith, S. C. (2020). *Economic development* (13th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Umeifekwem, U., Eme, O. I., & Okeke, C. (2023). Youth empowerment and the quest for sustainable development in Nigeria. *F1000Research*, 12, 850. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.134015.1>
- United Nations. (2021). *World youth report: Youth social entrepreneurship and the 2030 agenda*. UN.
- World Bank. (2007). *World Development Report 2007: Development and the next generation*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2018). *Investing in youth: An untapped resource for development*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2020). *Rwanda economic update: Accelerating digital transformation in Rwanda*. World Bank Group.
- World Bank. (2022). *Nigeria development update: The urgency for business unusual*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2022). *Nigeria development update: The urgency for business unusual*. World Bank Group. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/37525>
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational, and community levels of analysis. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 581–599.