

**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: A PATHWAY TO UNLOCKING EMPLOYABILITY AND  
ENTREPRENUERIAL SKILLS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

This study delved into youth's empowerment pathway to unlocking entrepreneurial skills and employability in Enugu state, Nigeria. The purpose of the study is to ascertain the effect of youth joblessness in Enugu State. Two research questions guided the study, and two null hypotheses, which were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance, were used for the analysis. A descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The population for the study consisted of 103 male and female youths in Enugu state, who were randomly sampled among youths as respondents. A structured questionnaire which was developed by researchers and titled 'Youth Empowerment a Pathway to Unlocking Entrepreneurial Skills and Employability (YEPUESEQ)', was used to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts, one from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation and two from the Department of Continuing Education and Development Studies, all from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani (ESUT). Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument with a reliability index of 0.74, indicating that the instrument is highly reliable and suitable to elicit information from the respondent. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the two research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using a t-test. The findings of the study indicated that when the youths are jobless, they tend to join bad gangs in as much as they can get money, but when they are empowered, they tend towards supporting themselves, the community, and the nation as a whole in bringing in human, economic and social development to society. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended, among others, that the government should establish skill acquisition centers while the youths can enroll for a particular skill of their choice with good facilities, infrastructures and qualified facilitators.

Keywords: Youth, Empowerment, Entrepreneurial skill, Employability skill

## INTRODUCTION

Youths refers to young people between the ages of 15 and 30 years. This stage is critical for personal and professional development as it sets the foundation for future success. The youths have enough energy to carry out any duty assigned to them at this stage. Empowerment on the other hand is the process of enabling individuals to take control of their lives, make informed decisions, and develop the skills and confidence needed to achieve their goals. This can drive the youths to bring out their full potential to achieve self-reliance and self-actualization in life. Youth empowerment is a vital investment in the future of individuals, communities, and societies. Youth empowerment therefore refers to the process of enabling young people to take control of their lives, make informed decisions, and become active contributors to their communities. It involves providing them with skills, knowledge, and support necessary to achieve human development, economic growth and overcome challenges (YARHU, 2024 and Refined NG, 2020).

Empowering youths is crucial for building a vibrant, inclusion, and prosperous society. By investing in their development can unlock

their potential, foster positive change, and create a brighter future. The benefits of youth empowerment in society are numerous and far-reaching. Some of the most significant advantages according to (Refined NG, 2020, Romer and Hansen, 2021, Tiffany, 2021) includes: Improved Decision-Making, Enhanced leadership, reduced unemployment, Increased Civic Engagement, Better Health Outcome, Reduced crime and violence, Promoting Social Justice, Fostering Creativity and Innovation, Community Development, and Improved Mental Health.

Failure to empower youths in society can have severe consequences impacting individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole. Some of the implications includes: Disillusionment and Apathy, Unemployment and Underemployment, Increased Poverty and Inequality, Social Unrest and Conflict, Decreased Civic Engagement (Onyekwere, 2021, and Onwudiwe, 2017). Therefore empowering youths is crucial for building a vibrant, inclusion, and prosperous society. Thus by investing in their development can unlock their potential, foster positive change, and create a brighter future. By empowering the youths, people are investing in the future of

their society, unlocking their potential to drive positive changes and create a brighter tomorrow and driving progress which will lead to Entrepreneurial skills among the youths in the society. The youths can achieve their full potential through entrepreneurial Skills Development. Entrepreneurial Skills is the abilities and knowledge necessary to start and run a successful business, able to take risk, display leadership roles, and be able to management finance. They can form their own enterprise and contribute to economic growth of the society [United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), 2024 and International Labor Organization, (ILO) 2024].

By empowering youths, people are investing in the future of their society, unlocking their potential to drive positive changes and create a brighter tomorrow by unlocking their potential and driving progress which will lead to Entrepreneurial and Employability Skills among the youths in the society. Employability skills is the quality that make an individual attractive to employers and able to source and maintain employment, these qualities can be seen in communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. It is when the youths are empowered either through receiving training, education,

mentorship or others that they can be employable. Entrepreneurial and employability skills are essential for youths to thrive in today's fast-paced, ever-changing world. Equipping young people with entrepreneurial and employability skills can unlock their potential, foster innovation, and drive economic growth. By developing these skills, young people can unlock their potential, drive innovation, and contribute to societal progress [ILO, 2024, UNICEF, 2020, Larsen and Holsen, 2021].

Hence, Investing in the entrepreneurial skills and employability of youths is crucial for building a vibrant, inclusion, and prosperous society. The outcome of youths' inability to Acquire Entrepreneurial and employability skills in the society can have severe consequences on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Some of the outcomes as stated by (Onyekwere, 2021, and Onwudiwe, 2017, Mateusez ,2024), includes: Poverty and Economic Dependence, Limited innovation and progress, Brain Drain and Talent Loss, Mental Health Concerns, Increased Dependence on Government support, Reduced Economic growth and Development, Decreased Civic Engagement and participation, Reduced Competitiveness and Global Relevance. Youth without

entrepreneurial skills and employability skills struggle to compete in the global economy, reducing their country's competitiveness and relevance. It is therefore essential to address the inability of the youths to acquire entrepreneurial skills and employability skills in order to ensure a brighter future for individuals, communities, and society.

### **Benefits of Empowering youths to acquire Entrepreneurial skills and employability skills in the society.**

Empowering youths to acquire entrepreneurial and employability skills have numerous benefits for individuals, communities, and society as a whole. The benefits are as follows according to (Romer and Hansen, 2021, ILO, 2024, Lansen and Holsen, 2021, and Lindsay et al, 2021),

**Economic Benefits:** Job Creation and Employment, Innovation and Economic Growth, Increased productivity, Reduced Unemployment and Poverty.

**Social Benefits:** Improved Mental Health and Well-being, Social cohesion and stability, Community Development and Engagement

**Personal Benefits:** Increased Confidence and self-Esteem, Personal Growth and Development, Autonomy and Independence, Improved Decision-making and problem-solving

**Society Benefits:** Community Development projects, Reduced Crime and violence, Improved Education and Skills Development.

### **Statement of the problem**

The statement of the problem was to examine youth empowerment as a pathway to unlocking entrepreneurial skills and employability. Many youths being unemployed or being jobless will always lead to increased criminality in the society. In the society today, kidnapping, robbing, money rituals, yahoo yahoo, sexual assault, stealing, and so on are on the increase due to the fact that many of the youths are jobless. Many of them are graduates while others are not but in all, so many of them are jobless, unemployed and don't even have any means of surviving as things are so costly and many cannot afford even two square meals a day. Most of them when faced with this frustration and unable to fend for oneself will join the bad gangs which are on the increase as far as Nigeria society is concerned this period. To

find possible solutions and even cheaper ways of establishing these youths in their numbers and in different places so as not be involved in criminality, the researchers deem it necessary to research into empowering the youths . Thus, this study is to ascertain how empowering the youths could help to reduce or totally eliminate criminality in the society.

### **Objective of the study**

The purpose of this study includes:

1. To ascertain the effect of youth joblessness in Enugu State, Nigeria
2. To examine the effect of youth empowerment in Enugu State

### **Research questions**

## **METHODOLOGY**

The design of this study was descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 103 this comprises 42 males and 61 female youths who were drawn through random sampling techniques in Enugu city. Instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled youth empowerment a pathway to entrepreneurial skill and employability (YEPESQ). Validation of the instrument was done by three experts, one from measurement and

1. To what extent does youth Joblessness affect the society in Enugu State, Nigeria
2. To what extent is the effect of youth empowerment on the society in Enugu State, Nigeria

### **Hypotheses**

HO1: There is no significance difference between the mean response score of male youth and female youths on the extent to which youth Joblessness affects the society in Enugu State

HO2: There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female youths on the extent to which youth empowerment affects the society in Enugu State

evaluation department and two from continuing Education and development studies of Enugu State University of science and technology (ESUT) of the instrument was Alpha reliability. Data analysis was by deviation to test the hypotheses was analyzed using t-test. Reliability 0.71 using cronbach using mean and standard research questions while at 0.05 level of significance. The questionnaire items were designed on a four point scale rating of very high (VHE), High extent (HE) Low Extent (LE) and very Low

Extent (VLE). The mean scores are from 3.50-4.49 VHE, mean score from 2.50-3.49

(HE) mean score from 1.50-2.49 (LE), while mean score from 0.50- 1.49 (VLE)

## RESULTS

Research question 1. To what extent is the effect of youth Joblessness on the society in Enugu State?

Table1: mean response score of male and female youths on the extent of the effect of youth Joblessness in the society of Enugu State.

Data presented in table 1 below indicates that items have an overall item mean ratings for item 10, 11 and 12 were 1.48, 1.33 and 1.43 indicating very low extent. The remaining items mean score ranges from 1.52 to 2.19, which were below the cut off part of 2.50 as indicated in the decision rule. The standard

deviation values are small indicating that the respondent's responses are closely clustered around the mean signifying that responses are homogenous. The overall cluster mean rating 1.76 indicated low extent. This implies that effect of youth Joblessness is of low extent, meaning that when youths are Jobless, they cannot add value to the society. They will not be able to bring positive situation to the society.

Sn	The following can impact positively on the society	Male X	SD	Female X	SD	Overall 103 X	SD	Decision
1	Increase in poverty and inequality in the society	2.19	0.51	2.18	0.50	2.18	0.50	LE

2	Social unrest, conflict and frustration which can lead to violence, crime or extremism which can threaten social stability and security	1.95	0.58	1.95	0.59	1.95	0.58	LE
3	Poor healthcare among the youths	2.00	0.62	2.02	0.62	2.01	0.62	LE
4	Inability for the youths to acquire entrepreneurial skills needed to make ends meet in life	1.81	0.67	1.82	0.67	1.82	0.67	LE
5	Brain drain that may lead to talent loss which can cause cycles of disadvantages that may affect future generation	1.90	0.69	1.90	0.70	1.90	0.69	LE
6	Inability of the youths to acquire employable skills can lead to low self-esteem and depression	1.95	0.66	1.97	0.66	1.96	0.66	LE
7	Political hooliganism and touting in the society	1.81	0.74	1.82	0.74	1.82	0.74	LE
8	Inability to compete with other youths worldwide	1.76	0.76	1.77	0.76	1.77	0.76	LE
9	Inability to bring in fresh ideas, creativity and innovation	1.52	0.67	1.52	0.67	1.52	0.67	LE
10	Relying on others for decision-making self- sufficiency	1.48	0.67	1.49	0.69	1.49	0.67	VLE
11	Unemployment which can make them purposeless in life	1.33	0.48	1.34	0.48	1.34	0.48	VLE
12	lack of interest in personal and community development programs	1.43	0.50	1.44	0.50	1.44	0.50	VLE
13	Seeking opportunities anywhere, even if it involves killing, kidnapping, yahoo yahoo or money ritual	1.67	0.72	1.67	0.72	1.67	0.72	LE
	Cluster mean/SD	1.75	0.58	1.76	0.64	1.76	0.64	LE

Note: X= mean, SD=standard deviation. LE= Low Extent, VLE= Very low Extent.

**Research question 2:** To what extent is the effect of youth empowerment in Enugu, State?

In Table 2 below, the results of data analysis for research question 2 indicated that male and female youths agreed that all the items are of high extent, which had mean responses of between 2.85 to 3.43. The standard deviation values are small indicating that respondent's responses are closely clustered around the mean, signifying that their responses are homogenous. The overall cluster mean of 3.14 in table 2 indicated that the items are of high extent on the effect of youth empowerment in Enugu State. This implies that when the youths are empowered there will be positive effect on the youths and people of Enugu State. They will attract positive development to the society

**Table 2:** mean response score of male and female youths on the extent of the effect of youth empowerment in Enugu State.

S/n	Youth empowerment can help the youths to!	Male X1	SD1	Female X2	SD2	Overall XG	SDG	Decision
14	improve in entrepreneurial skills development	3.14	0.90	3.15	0.89	3.15	0.89	HE
15	increase vocational training opportunities among them	3.43	0.67	3.42	0.67	3.43	0.67	HE
16	reduce poverty level in the society	3.10	0.62	3.11	0.61	3.11	0.61	HE
17	Provide quality education for community members	3.14	0.57	3.16	0.55	3.16	0.56	HE
18	foster connections among the young investors	3.00	0.62	3.02	0.61	3.01	0.62	HE
19	encourage creativity among the youths	3.05	0.58	3.04	0.59	3.05	0.58	HE
20	accelerate seed funding for them in terms of sourcing resources and finance	3.24	0.76	3.23	0.76	3.23	0.76	HE
21	equip themselves with digital marketing	2.95	0.85	2.95	0.86	2.95	0.85	HE
22	reduce hooliganism and touting in the society	2.86	0.78	2.85	0.79	2.85	0.78	HE
23	bring in economic growth and development to the society	3.14	0.78	3.15	0.79	3.15	0.78	HE
24	improve the rate of employment and job creation	3.33	0.68	3.34	0.66	3.34	0.65	HE
25	become effective leaders who will guild their peers and the communities	3.10	0.82	3.13	0.81	3.12	0.81	HE
26	help to sustain community Development projects in the communities	3.19	0.59	3.23	0.56	3.21	0.57	HE
	Cluster mean/SD	3.13	0.71	3.14	0.70	3.14	0.70	HE

Note: X= mean, SD= standard deviation HE= High extent

## Hypothesis 1

There is no significant different between the mean response scores of male youths and the female youths on the extent to which youth Joblessness have affected the society in Enugu State.

**Table 3:** Summary of t-test Analysis of mean response scores of male and female youths on to which extent has youth Joblessness affected the society in Enugu State.

Variables	N	T	Df	Sig.	Mean S	Std	Decision
Male Youths	42	.091	101	.928	.092	.914	NS
Female Youths	61						

NS= Not Significant

The data obtained from the t-test analysis in Table 3 above shows that the t-value at 0.05 level of significant and 101 degree of freedom for the items is 0.091 with significant value of 0.928. Since the significant value 0.928 is more than 0.05 level of significant the null hypothesis is not significant. This means that there is no significant difference with respect to the

items on the mean response score of male and female youths regarding effect of youth Joblessness on the society in Enugu State.

**Hypothesis 2**

There is no Significant difference in the mean response scores of male and female youths on the extent to which youth empowerment affects the society in Enugu state.

**Table 4:** Summary of t-test Analysis of mean response scores of male and female youths on the extent to which youth empowerment affects the society in Enugu state.

Variable	N	T	Df	Sig.	Mean	Std	Decision
Male Youths	42	.137	101	.891	.134	.996	
Female Youths	61						NS

NS= Not significant

The result of the t-test in table 4 shows that the t- value at 0.05 level of significant and 101 degree of freedom for items is 0.137 with a significant value of 0.891. Since the significant value of 0.891 is higher than 0.05 level of significant, the null hypotheses is not significant. This means that there is no significant different in the mean response scores of male and female youths on the extent youth empowerment affects the society in Enugu State.

## **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

The findings from the study have been quite instrumental and informative. In research question1 the study revealed that youth unemployment can have many negative side effect on the society such as increased poverty and inequality in the society, poor healthcare which can make them more vulnerable to substance of abuse, inability to acquire entrepreneurial skills needed to make ends meet in life, can make youth to join political hooligans and tout, inability to bring in fresh ideas, creativity and innovation in their communities among others. This study supports the study by (Onyekwere, 2021, and Onwudiwe, 2017, Mateusez ,2024) who worked on the implication of youth unemployment in Nigeria, the effects of youth unemployment on the Nigeria society

and their impact on the society. They have identified the effect of empowering youths and the negative effects of youths being jobless in the society. The result revealed that the youths can be very vulnerable to criminalities, violence, hooliganism and they can easily be useful in carrying out any other crime in as much as money will be given to them. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significant and the result showed that there is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female respondents on the extent to which youth Joblessness, affects Enugu State.

Research question 2 indicates that provision of effective employment, empowerment, or entrepreneurial skills can equip the youths and that they can be very useful in bringing out their full potential positively in the society. The study revealed that when the youths are gainfully empowered, there will be positive side effect on the society such as improve in entrepreneurial skills development, reduce poverty level in the society, provision of quality education for the community members, Foster connections among the young investors, encourage creativity among the youths, equip the youths with digital marketing, reduce hooliganism and touting in the society, bring in economic

growth and development, improve the rate of employment and job creation among others. This study is in agreement with (Romer and Hansen, 2021, Tiffany, 2021) who stated respectively about the positive youth development activities and training. They both explained that empowering the youths will pave way for positive development in the society and will foster cohesion and inculcation. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significant and the mean response of male and female respondents on the extent to which youth empowerment affects the society in Enugu State positively.

## **CONCLUSION**

Empowering the youths with good skills can assist in reducing poverty in the society. If the youths are engaged in meaningful skills, be it vocational training skills or learning a professional work like carpentry, hair dressing, barbing, sewing, driving, mechanic, painting, typing and so on, they will not have time to be looking for where to commit atrocities to survive because they will have hope of getting something good from what they are doing. More so, if they are engaged and they are doing well in their businesses, they will have mind of expanding and also involve other youths who are not employed. With the above, there will be many youths

that will be employable and functional too in the society. This will also help the society to be free of insurgency and other criminalities because many of the youths would have been engaged in one skill or the other. They will be thinking of how to bring in community development projects as a team. In conclusion, this will drive the youths to bring in demographic dividend that leads to economic growth and development because they constitute a significant part in the population. There will be innovation and creativity which will bring in progress from the fresh ideas and perspectives they will display. Also in leadership development, empowered youths will become effective leaders who will guide others and their peers in the communities' towards gaining entrepreneurial and employability skills.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The government should establish skill acquisition centres where the youths can easily go and enroll to acquire any skill of their choice.
2. After the training period they should be empowered by establishing those ones that will be engaged in one skill or other.
3. The government officials, the sponsors and trusted community

leaders should monitor the training and all the facilities. Due to increase in the rate of corruption in the society, the facilities and the financial assistance given by monitored and

supervised until all the graduated participants in skill acquisition programmes are given their entitlement as stipulated by the government or the sponsor.

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