

Exploring The Challenges and Opportunities For Youth Entrepreneurship: A Field Study of Selected Rural Areas in Suru Local Government, Kebbi State

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this field survey is to examine the opportunities and challenges available for youth entrepreneurs in some selected rural areas in Suru local Government of Kebbi State Nigeria, in order to drive economic and showcase untapped opportunities

Design/methodology/approach: Several successful young entrepreneurs were interviewed. The principles of case study design and method were followed. Data collection involved the use of structured questionnaire

Findings: The analysis shows that although in the areas of youth participation, significant progress has been recorded in the number of youths now engaged in entrepreneurship in rural areas of Suru Local government especially among different genders. Limited access to finance, information, mentorship, training and poor infrastructural facilities remains the major challenges. Agricultural related entrepreneurial business, vehicle mechanic, phone repairs/accessories still remain untapped business opportunities in the area. The findings also revealed that availability of local resources in the area, growing local market, youth access to digital technology is a prospect for the future of entrepreneurial opportunity in the area.

Conclusion: we therefore concluded that access to finance and improve infrastructure and access to information and training can bring youth entrepreneurship potentials in the area.

Recommendation: Government improve access to infrastructure in rural area such as electricity. Government entrepreneurship program should well implement to reach to the real beneficiaries. Community program to support youth entrepreneurs should be established.

I. INTRODUCTION

Youth entrepreneurship is increasingly acknowledged as a pivotal mechanism for driving economic growth, particularly in developing regions where traditional employment opportunities are limited. Across Africa, and specifically in Nigeria, the need to empower the youth through entrepreneurship has gained significant attention in both academic and policy-making circles. This focus stems from the growing recognition that fostering entrepreneurial activities among young people can lead to job creation, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development (Brixiová&Kangoye, 2016).

In Kebbi State, a predominantly rural region in northwestern Nigeria, the challenges of youth unemployment and underemployment are particularly acute. The state, like many others in Nigeria, is characterized by a high proportion of youth, with limited access to formal employment opportunities. Despite the state's rich agricultural potential and the presence of several natural resources, the local economy has struggled to provide adequate employment for its young population. This scenario has compelled many young people to seek alternative livelihood strategies, with entrepreneurship emerging as a viable option (Adeoye&Elegbeleye, 2019).

However, youth entrepreneurship in rural areas of Kebbi State faces numerous obstacles. These include a lack of access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, poor access to markets, limited entrepreneurial education, and a challenging business environment. For instance, the financial sector in these areas is often underdeveloped, with limited access to credit facilities for young entrepreneurs. This lack of capital severely hampers the ability of youth to start or scale their businesses (Nwosu&Ohia, 2018). Additionally, poor infrastructure, such as inadequate road networks and unreliable electricity supply, further constrains entrepreneurial activities by increasing operational costs and reducing the competitiveness of local businesses.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for youth entrepreneurship in Kebbi State, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, agro-processing, and small-scale manufacturing. The state's abundant agricultural resources offer a strong foundation for value-added activities that could generate income and create jobs for the youth. Furthermore, the rise of digital technologies presents new opportunities for young entrepreneurs to access broader markets and streamline their business operations (World Bank, 2020).

Government initiatives and policies aimed at promoting youth entrepreneurship have also been introduced in recent years. These include programs focused on providing vocational training, financial support, and mentorship to young entrepreneurs. However, the effectiveness of these interventions remains a subject of debate, with some studies indicating that the impact has been limited by factors such as poor implementation, lack of continuity, and insufficient alignment with the specific needs of rural youth (Brixiová&Kangoye, 2016).

Given the importance of youth entrepreneurship for the economic development of rural areas, and the unique challenges faced by young entrepreneurs in Kebbi State, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive study that explores these issues in detail. This research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing an in-depth analysis of the challenges and opportunities for youth entrepreneurship in selected rural areas of Kebbi State. By doing so, it aims to inform policy-making and provide practical recommendations for supporting young entrepreneurs in the region.

This study will also fill a gap in the literature by focusing specifically on the rural context of Kebbi State, which has been underrepresented in previous research. While much of the existing literature on youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria has focused on urban areas, where access to resources and opportunities is relatively better, this study will highlight the unique conditions of rural youth and the specific interventions needed to support them. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on rural development and youth empowerment in Nigeria, offering insights that could be applicable to other rural regions facing similar challenges.

In summary, this study is grounded in the recognition that youth entrepreneurship is a critical component of rural development, particularly in regions like Kebbi State, where traditional employment options are limited. By exploring both the challenges and opportunities faced by young entrepreneurs in these areas, this research aims to provide actionable insights that can help in the formulation of effective policies and programs to support youth entrepreneurship, thereby contributing to the economic development of rural Kebbi State.

II. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The study employed descriptive research design in order to explore opportunities and challenges of youth entrepreneurship in some selected rural areas in Kebbi state particularly in Suru local Government area. Purposive sampling strategy was used for the convenience in the data collection. Only the respondents who were accessible within the selected areas were chosen for the study. The survey employed the use of questionnaires as an instrument for data collection. 200 questionnaires were administered to young entrepreneurs at random from various industries and trades but only 145 questionnaires were retrieved back out of which 120 were analyzed because of some damages and improper filling and lack of clarity in the responses. The questionnaire is divided into four sections A-D. Section A covers the socio-economic attributes of the respondents. Sections B-C covers the main objectives of the research study to explore the main challenges and opportunities of youth entrepreneurship in the selected rural areas in Kebbi State particularly Suru local Government area. While section D focuses on government support to youth entrepreneurship and application of modern digital technology by young entrepreneurs in rural areas. In order to analyse the data collected through questionnaire administration, descriptive statistics such as tables, frequency, and simple percentage was employed.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 lists the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents who take part in this survey. Part of the group of interviewed youth entrepreneurs, 18.33 percent belong to the age group between 15 to 20 years, 68.33 percent belong to the age group 21-25 years, and 6.66 percent belong to the age group 26 to 30 while 6.66 also belong to the age group from 30 years above. This suggests that the majority of young adults who are mature are involved in business to further their careers. Further, among the group of respondents 56.6 percent are male and 43.3 percent are female. This percentage shows that an appreciable number of female were involved in entrepreneurship activities mostly petty trading associated with sale of prepared and unprepared food stuffs. Most of the local food vendors in the area were female. The higher percentage number of male involved in business activities may be due to the family responsibility.

TABLE 1. Demographic/socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic characteristics	Age of the respondents	Respondent	Percentages
Age	15-20	22	18.33
	21-25	82	68.33
	26-30	8	6.66
	31 and above	8	6.66
	Total	120	100
Gender	Male	68	56.66
	Female	52	43.33
	Total	120	100
Marital status	Single	78	65
	Married	42	35
	Total	120	100
Educational level	Primary	0	0
	Secondary	71	59
	Tertiary	49	41
	None	0	0
	Total	120	100
Sources of income	Self income	87	72.5
	Community support	0	0
	Loan	13	10.83
	Others	20	16.66
	Total	120	100
Occupation	Self employed	82	68.33
	Civil servant	6	5
	Private	8	6.66
	Other	24	20
	Total	120	100

The field survey shows that the educational qualifications of the youth entrepreneurs have satisfactory. 59 percent respondents are literate and have attained secondary education, 41 percent respondents have reach tertiary level of education spread across colleges, polytechnic and or Universities which is sufficient for effective business. In the context of marital status 65 percent youth entrepreneurs are single and 35 percent are unmarried. From this, it can be said that, unmarried youth are sincere with their business activities despite having little family responsibility. Hence, even having little family engagement youth organizations are becoming more and more interested in carrying on with their business. The survey result shows that most of the respondents 68.3 rely on self income as a source of capital for running of their business activities. 0 percent of the respondent believed that there is no funding from the community for youth entrepreneurship in the area. Only 11 percent see loan as a source of funding for their entrepreneurship activities and 20 percent believed to have their sources of capital for business activities from other sources not mentioned. The occupational status of the respondents shows that 82 percent of the youth in all the study location were self employed and only 6 and 8 percent were employed as civil servants by government and other private individuals respectively. This also indicated that youth in the rural has less chance of getting salary base employment from government and other private individuals or companies.

Table2 Entrepreneurship Motivation among youth in the Area

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
i. Financial independence	120	62.17
ii. Passion for a particular industry or activity	9	4.66
iii. Desire to create employment opportunities for others	12	6.21
iv. To be Skill expertise	18	9.32
v. To become wealthier	9	4.66
vi. To support family	20	10.36
vii. others	5	2.59
Total	193	100

The table above shows the distribution of the respondents on the motives for setting of entrepreneurship in the area. Among all the reasons for starting business (the desire for self-dependent, the urge to create employment opportunity, for being skill expertise, to become wealthy, to support family life and others) the desire to be self-dependent is found to be one of the significant factor. 62.17 percent of the youth entrepreneurs are motivated by this reason. 10.36 and 9.32 percent were inspired by the will to support the family life and to be skill expertise respectively. The overall result indicated the significance of entrepreneurship opportunity in rural areas in making an individual to financially independents rather than relying for anybody in the society. This motive has been the major driving factor that interest many business owners in setting of a business in Nigeria especially in rural areas. Isidore et,al 2024 also reported similar findings that the desire to set an entrepreneurial activity was led by the desire to have financial independence. This factor has been the major driving force for many entrepreneurs over the the globe. Ghanshyam et al 2024 also revealed that the desire to be financially independent draws many entrepreneurs in to the system. The findings here is also in consistent with work of many authors in Nigeria such the work of Isidore *et al*, (2024), Adeola (2024). Table

Table3 Opportunities for Youth Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas

Access to local resources (e.g., land, raw materials)	66	55
Growing local markets	22	18.33
Support from government programs	11	9.16
Use of digital technology and social media	9	7.5
Community support and networks	0	0
Other	12	10
Total	120	100

Table4 Business opportunities for youth entrepreneurship in rural areas

Agribusiness	Animal Husbandry	23	19.16
	Crop Production	6	5
	Feed processing	2	1.66
	Others	7	7.5
Local manufacturing	Shoe making	1	0.83
	Soap making	0	0
	Welding	0	0
	Furniture making	2	1.66
	Others	3	2.5
Buying and selling	Provision stores	17	11.66
	Agro inputs stores	4	3.33
	Electronic store	1	0.83
	Building Materials	7	5.83
	Food vendor /food stuffs	9	7.5
	Others	4	3.33
Technical Service	Vehicle mechanic	15	12.5
	Phone repairs/accessories/POS	14	11.66
	Building & Carpentry	2	1.66
	Others	0	0
	Total	120	100

The table above indicated a number of available entrepreneurship opportunities in rural areas existing from different sectors. Out of these sectors and sub sectors of the entrepreneurship 19.3 percent of the respondents believed that Agricultural sector and subsector of the animal husbandry remained the most important and most profitable entrepreneurial business opportunity in rural areas. The higher percentage of people who see animal husbandry as most important entrepreneurial opportunity in rural areas may be due to the presence of available land and farm products for feeding the animal. Animal husbandry is simple to operate and less capital intensive as well as easy to disburse when the need arise. 12.5 percent of the respondent also indicated that vehicle mechanic or repairs is one the valuable entrepreneurship opportunity for youth in the rural areas. 11.66 percent of the respondents also agreed that mobile phone repairs/ accessories/POS and provision store also form a serious part of youth entrepreneurial opportunity in

rural areas. The growing used and fragile nature of the mobile phone will definitely call for the need for more mobile phone repair services in rural areas even for immediate maintenance. Provision store (11.66%) is also one of entrepreneurial opportunity for rural youth in the study area. The growing number of vehicle owners and generators users can also prove that vehicle repairs can be an entrepreneurial opportunity for rural dwellers. Other aspects of consideration for youth entrepreneurship in rural areas includes sales of building materials which accounts for (5.8%), food vendor and food stuffs which also accounts for (7.5%), crop production (5%) and some other ones with 3-0% not mentioned in this discussion. For example Isodore *et al*, (2024) reported that plastic waste and electronic waste was positively related to entrepreneurial opportunity of Nigerian youths. The study also revealed that there are still a number of untapped business opportunities in Nigerian rural communities and large concentration of youth on a single business opportunity creating a very linear entrepreneurship and economic development in the area.

Table5 Challenges Faced by Youth Entrepreneurs in Rural Areas

Responses	Frequency l	Percentage
Lack of capital/funding	120	26.37
Limited access to market	0	0
Lack of business skills/training	61	13.40
Limited access to information and technology	22	4.83
Poor infrastructure	97	21.31
Social stigma and cultural barriers	0	0
Business incubators or accelerators	82	18.02
Mentorship program	73	16
Reskilling	0	0
Networking events and conferences	0	0
Total	455	100

The table above (table 4) shows that youth entrepreneurs in rural areas in Nigeria are face with a number of challenges known to affect entrepreneurship and economic development in Nigeria especially in rural areas. 26.37 percent reported that access to funding or limited access to startup capital pose a serious set challenge for entrepreneurship development in rural areas. Access to capital is the major driving force entrepreneurship development. Adeola *et,al* (2024) also reported that, the unique challenges faced by African entrepreneurs, including limited access to capital and infrastructure constraints. This show that increase funding is necessary to driving entrepreneurship and economic growth among rural youth entrepreneurs in Nigeria. 21.31 percent also reported that poor infrastructural facilities are among the major challenge of rural entrepreneurship opportunity in the area. Gabriela *et,al*, 2024 and Adeola *et,al*, 2024 also reported that access to finance and poor infrastructural facilities are the main challenges affecting youth entrepreneurs in rural areas in Nigeria. The table also revealed lack of business incubators or accelerators (18%), absence of mentorship program (16%), Lack of business skills/training (13%) and limited access to information (3%) are among the main challenges affecting youth entrepreneurship in the area. The table also indicated that Social stigma and cultural barriers, limited access to market and networking events and conferences (0%) are not among the challenges for the youth entrepreneurs in the study area. Ekoye-Nebo 2023 reported that increase of corruption, inadequate and inefficient infrastructural facilities and maladministration as well entrepreneurship innovation and diversity pose significant challenges to the youth entrepreneurship opportunity in Nigeria. Isaac K.B 2019 also reported that youth in the rural areas have plans to innovate and grow businesses, but the high cost of credit is a barrier. Lack of collateral for credits negatively affect their motives.

Table6 Application of Digital technology in the areas

Respondent	Frequency	Percentages
YouTube	0	0
Face book	32	11
whatApps	120	41.23
Online market	15	5.15
POS	120	41.23
Others	0	0
Total	291	100

Table 5 show that 41. 23 percent of respondents reported that they apply the use WhatsApp and POS respectively and a digital tool in their entrepreneurial business. Digital tools such as e-commerce provide access to information, market

and finance to entrepreneurs for improved knowledge, skills and funding. WhatsApp for example is one commonly social media platforms widely use to enhance business transaction even among illiterate in the area. This study revealed digital tools such as social media platforms play an important role youth entrepreneurship in rural area. 11 percent of the respondent also reported the application of Face book as social media tool in their business transaction. However, only 5.15% reported to have accessed the application online marketing for entrepreneurial transactions. This findings revealed that the is need for awareness and training on the available digital tools for youth entrepreneurs in order to enhance entrepreneurship development among youth in the rural areas.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of youth entrepreneurship is a current call for engagement in Nigeria especially among rural dwellers. This is due to the fact that young people in rural areas are becoming more prone to adverse effect of unemployment poverty and the need for financial independent. Unlocking the potentials of untapped entrepreneurship and opening up new businesses opportunity can provide positive entrepreneurial competence. The fact that youth are likely to be leading change agents and most certainly the future leaders who are expected to make significant contribution in societal development and establish entrepreneurial opportunities for more jobs creation essential company operations into profitable ventures. Youth in the area has strong entrepreneurial motives and courageous to run businesses but lack capital and community encouragement and therefore supporting them will bring push to their success. Sufficient funding is one of the biggest challenges affecting young entrepreneurs in the area which discouraged many youth startup. Many of them may end up joining illegal ways for economic benefits which saw today in Nigeria.

We therefore recommended community support and encouragement for youth entrepreneurs in the area. Government implementation should be well implemented to meet the actual youth beneficiaries. Youth access to entrepreneurial mentorship program should be extended to rural areas.

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