



ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AMONG YOUTHS IN NIGERIA: ANALYTICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: Rising youth unemployment and fragile livelihoods in Nigeria have sustained policy interest in entrepreneurship as a pathway to economic stability, prompting a critical examination of entrepreneurship education and economic sustainability among youths in Nigeria: an analytical review. The paper interrogated how entrepreneurship education shapes entrepreneurial skills and capacities, evaluates its contribution to income generation and employment creation, and examined the constraints limiting sustainable outcomes. The analysis was anchored on Human Capital Theory, which explains how investment in knowledge and skills enhances productive capacity and economic returns. An analytical review methodology was adopted, drawing on recent peer-reviewed studies (2020–2026) and subjecting them to systematic comparison, evaluation, and synthesis in line with the study objectives. The findings showed that entrepreneurship education strengthens competencies such as opportunity recognition, innovation, and business management, thereby improving youths' readiness for enterprise creation. Evidence further indicated that youth entrepreneurship contributes to income generation and modest employment creation, particularly within micro and small-scale enterprises, including agribusiness and digital ventures. However, the review identified persistent constraints including limited access to finance, infrastructure deficits, weak programme design, and policy inconsistency which restrict the translation of acquired skills into sustainable economic outcomes. The paper concluded that while entrepreneurship education is essential for enhancing youth economic participation, it is insufficient without a supportive ecosystem. It therefore recommended strengthening experiential learning and incubation, improving access to targeted financing, and addressing structural barriers to enable youth enterprises to achieve long-term sustainability.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship Education, Economic Sustainability, Youth Employment, Human Capital Theory, Nigeria, Analytical Review

Introduction

Across both advanced and developing economies, entrepreneurship education has increasingly been positioned as a policy tool for addressing youth unemployment, stimulating innovation, and supporting long-term economic stability. Global labour market reports show that young people continue to face higher unemployment rates than adults, with the International Labour Organization noting persistent gaps in access to decent work opportunities despite post-pandemic recovery trends (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022). In

response, countries have expanded entrepreneurship education within formal and informal learning systems to equip young people with business creation skills, financial literacy, and adaptive capacities necessary for self-employment and enterprise growth (OECD, 2021).

In emerging economies, the relevance of entrepreneurship education is more pronounced due to structural constraints in formal job creation. Sub-Saharan Africa records one of the fastest-growing youth populations globally, yet economic systems have struggled to absorb this demographic into productive employment (World Bank,

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2023). Nigeria reflects this reality, where youth unemployment and underemployment remain significant despite various policy interventions. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, youth unemployment stood at notable levels prior to the recent rebasing of labour data, with a substantial proportion of young people engaged in informal or precarious work (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). This context has led to the institutionalization of entrepreneurship education across Nigerian tertiary institutions, particularly following directives by the National Universities Commission to integrate entrepreneurial studies into undergraduate curricula.

Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria has evolved from theoretical instruction to more practice-oriented approaches, including business incubation, skill acquisition programmes, and industry partnerships. Empirical studies indicate that exposure to entrepreneurship education can improve entrepreneurial intentions, enhance opportunity recognition, and increase the likelihood of venture creation among graduates (Acs et al., 2021; Oviawe, 2020). For instance, university-based entrepreneurship programmes in Nigeria have produced small-scale enterprises in sectors such as agriculture, digital services, and retail, contributing modestly to local economic activities. However, the extent to which these initiatives translate into sustained economic outcomes remains contested.

Economic sustainability, in this context, refers to the ability of entrepreneurial activities to generate stable income, create employment, and support long-term economic resilience without reliance on unstable external support. While entrepreneurship education is expected to drive such outcomes, challenges including limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, policy inconsistencies, and weak institutional support systems often constrain the growth and survival of youth-led enterprises (World Bank, 2023; ILO, 2022). Moreover, there is ongoing debate about whether current entrepreneurship education frameworks sufficiently address the realities of Nigeria's economic environment or merely promote self-employment as a coping mechanism for unemployment.

Recent scholarly discussions emphasize the need to critically assess not just the presence of entrepreneurship education, but its quality, relevance, and measurable contributions to economic sustainability. This analytical review is therefore situated within ongoing efforts to understand how entrepreneurship education shapes youth economic outcomes in Nigeria, particularly in terms of sustainable livelihoods, enterprise survival, and broader economic contributions.

Statement of the Problem

Despite sustained investment in entrepreneurship education in Nigeria over the past decade, youth unemployment and economic vulnerability remain pressing concerns. While universities and other institutions have embedded entrepreneurship courses into their curricula, evidence on their effectiveness in fostering sustainable economic outcomes is inconsistent. Many graduates who have undergone entrepreneurship training continue to face difficulties in establishing viable businesses, and a significant number of youth-led enterprises fail within the early stages of operation due to structural and financial constraints (NBS, 2023; World Bank, 2023).

Existing studies often focus on entrepreneurial intentions rather than actual business performance or long-term sustainability. This creates a gap in understanding whether entrepreneurship education translates into enduring economic benefits such as stable income generation, job creation, and resilience against economic shocks. In Nigeria, where access to credit remains limited and infrastructure challenges persist, the transition from entrepreneurial knowledge to successful enterprise development is not straightforward. The persistence of informal and subsistence-level businesses among trained youths raises questions about the depth and practical relevance of the education provided (ILO, 2022).

Furthermore, there is limited synthesis of recent empirical evidence that critically evaluates the linkage between entrepreneurship education and economic sustainability within the Nigerian context. Policies continue to emphasize entrepreneurship as a solution to unemployment without sufficient analytical examination



of outcomes across different sectors and regions. This gap is particularly important given the scale of public and institutional resources committed to entrepreneurship education programmes.

An analytical review is therefore necessary to examine current evidence, identify inconsistencies, and clarify the extent to which entrepreneurship education contributes to sustainable economic outcomes among Nigerian youths. Such a review will provide a basis for improving programme design, aligning educational content with market realities, and informing policy decisions aimed at achieving meaningful and lasting economic impact.

Aim of the Paper

The aim of this paper was to examine the relationship between entrepreneurship education and economic sustainability among youths in Nigeria through an analytical review of existing empirical and theoretical literature.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess how entrepreneurship education influences the development of entrepreneurial skills and capacities among youths in Nigeria.
2. To examine the contribution of youth entrepreneurship, driven by entrepreneurship education, to income generation and employment creation in Nigeria.
3. To identify the challenges affecting the translation of entrepreneurship education into sustainable economic outcomes among youths in Nigeria.

Methodology

This paper adopted an analytical review approach to examine the relationship between entrepreneurship education and economic sustainability among youths in Nigeria. The analytical review method involves a systematic and critical examination of existing empirical and theoretical studies with the aim of synthesizing evidence, identifying patterns, interrogating divergent findings, and drawing informed conclusions on a given subject. Unlike a traditional narrative review that merely summarizes literature, this approach emphasizes comparison, evaluation, and interpretation of studies to

establish relationships among key variables and to highlight gaps requiring further attention. It is particularly suitable for studies that seek to integrate findings from multiple sources in order to provide a deeper understanding of a phenomenon that has been widely researched but remains inconclusive in certain aspects.

In applying this approach, the study relied on recent scholarly publications produced between 2020 and 2026, with a focus on peer-reviewed journal articles and academic texts that address entrepreneurship education, youth entrepreneurship, and economic sustainability. Relevant studies were identified through academic databases and were selected based on their relevance to the study objectives, methodological rigor, and clarity of findings. Priority was given to empirical works conducted within Nigeria and comparable developing economies to ensure contextual relevance. The review process involved careful reading, extraction of key information, and thematic organization of findings in line with the objectives of the study. This allowed for a structured analysis of how entrepreneurship education influences skill development, contributes to income generation and employment, and is affected by contextual constraints.

The analytical procedure entailed comparing the positions of different authors, examining consistencies and inconsistencies in their findings, and evaluating the strength of evidence presented in each study. Particular attention was given to research design, sample characteristics, and methodological approaches in order to assess the reliability of conclusions drawn in the reviewed studies. Through this process, the paper was able to move beyond isolated findings and provide a coherent interpretation of the collective evidence. The approach also facilitated the identification of gaps, especially in relation to the limited focus on long-term economic sustainability in existing studies, thereby justifying the relevance of the present review.

The adoption of the analytical review approach is justified by the nature of the research problem. The relationship between entrepreneurship education and economic sustainability is not adequately explained by single empirical studies due to variations in context, methodology, and scope. An analytical review allows for



the integration of diverse findings to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. It also provides a basis for theoretical reflection, particularly in assessing the applicability of Human Capital Theory in explaining observed outcomes. Furthermore, this approach is appropriate for informing policy and practice, as it synthesizes evidence from multiple sources to offer well-grounded insights and recommendations. By systematically examining existing knowledge, the study contributes to clarifying the role of entrepreneurship education in addressing youth economic challenges in Nigeria and highlights the conditions necessary for achieving sustainable outcomes.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education has been widely examined in recent scholarship as a structured learning process aimed at developing entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours necessary for venture creation and innovation. Recent studies describe it as an educational intervention that equips individuals with competencies such as opportunity recognition, creativity, risk management, and business planning through both theoretical and experiential learning approaches (Iwu et al., 2025; Syed et al., 2024) . Thomas (2022) views entrepreneurship education as a key mechanism for stimulating entrepreneurial intention and activity, emphasizing its role in shaping behavioural outcomes rather than merely transmitting knowledge . Similarly, Amaral et al. (2024) argue that it contributes to entrepreneurial orientation and empowers individuals to respond to economic challenges through enterprise development . However, debates persist regarding its scope, with some scholars stressing venture creation while others highlight broader employability and mindset development (Tiberius & Weyland, 2023; Amani et al., 2024) . Drawing from these positions, this paper adopts a definition that views entrepreneurship education as a structured and practice-oriented learning process that develops the competencies, mindset, and capabilities

required for opportunity identification, venture creation, and sustainable economic participation.

Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability is commonly defined within the broader sustainability discourse as the capacity of an economic system to generate continuous value while preserving resources and opportunities for future generations. Recent literature emphasizes intergenerational equity and efficient resource utilization as central elements of the concept (Elsawy & Marwan, 2023; Jeronen, 2023) . Kahraman (2023) further explains that economic sustainability involves maintaining long-term economic growth without undermining social and environmental systems, highlighting its multidimensional nature . Other scholars frame it in terms of productive efficiency, profitability, and resilience, stressing that economic systems must remain viable over time while adapting to changing conditions (Omoloso et al., 2021; Abdulrahim et al., 2025). Despite variations in emphasis, there is agreement that economic sustainability goes beyond short-term income generation to include stability, continuity, and equitable distribution of economic benefits. Based on these perspectives, this study adopts economic sustainability as the ability of economic activities to generate stable income, maintain productivity, and support long-term economic well-being without depleting resources or undermining future economic opportunities.

Youth Employment

Youth employment refers to the engagement of young people in productive economic activities that provide income, skills development, and social inclusion. Recent scholarly discussions link youth employment to the broader agenda of decent work and sustainable development, emphasizing not only job availability but also job quality and security (Mustapha et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2026) . Studies on labour markets in developing economies highlight that youth employment includes both formal and informal work, often shaped by structural constraints such as limited industrial capacity and skills mismatch (Alzate et al., 2024). There is also growing attention to sustainable employability, which focuses on



the capacity of young people to secure and retain productive work over time through continuous skill development and adaptability (Abdulrahim et al., 2025) . While some authors define youth employment narrowly as labour force participation, others extend it to include self-employment and entrepreneurial engagement as viable pathways. Anchoring on these perspectives, this paper adopts youth employment as the involvement of young people in gainful and productive activities, including wage and self-employment, that provide income, enhance skills, and support long-term economic stability.

How Entrepreneurship Education Influences the Development of Entrepreneurial Skills and Capacities among youths in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria has increasingly been structured to build specific competencies that support venture creation and self-employment among young people. Empirical literature from 2020 onward identifies core skill domains shaped through such education to include opportunity recognition, business planning, financial literacy, innovation, risk management, and networking capacity. Oviawe (2020) explains that entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions has shifted from theory-based instruction to experiential learning through business simulations, practical workshops, and student enterprise projects. This transition is significant because skill acquisition in entrepreneurship is strongly tied to learning-by-doing rather than abstract instruction.

Recent studies show that exposure to entrepreneurship courses improves entrepreneurial intention and perceived behavioural control among students, which are critical predictors of entrepreneurial action. An investigation by Neneh (2020) found that entrepreneurship education enhances opportunity identification and risk-taking propensity among university students, while also strengthening self-efficacy. In the Nigerian context, Ogunidipe et al. (2021) report that students who participated in structured entrepreneurship programmes demonstrated stronger competencies in feasibility analysis and business model development compared to those without such exposure. These findings align with the

human capital theory, which suggests that investment in education increases individuals' productive capacities.

The integration of entrepreneurship centres in Nigerian universities has further strengthened skill acquisition. Institutions such as the University of Nigeria and Covenant University have established entrepreneurship hubs where students engage in real-life business development processes, including product design, marketing, and financial management. This practical orientation has been shown to improve innovation capacity and problem-solving abilities among youths. According to Afolabi et al. (2021), entrepreneurship education programmes that incorporate mentorship and incubation significantly enhance students' readiness to start businesses by providing exposure to real market conditions.

Digital entrepreneurship skills have also become an important outcome of recent entrepreneurship education initiatives. With the growth of Nigeria's digital economy, young people trained in entrepreneurship programmes are increasingly leveraging digital platforms for business operations. Studies indicate that entrepreneurship education that integrates digital competencies improves adaptability and competitiveness in emerging markets (Olanrewaju et al. 2020). For example, youth-led startups in e-commerce and digital services have emerged from university entrepreneurship programmes, demonstrating the role of education in aligning skills with contemporary economic demands.

However, while entrepreneurship education contributes significantly to skill development, some studies highlight gaps in the depth and applicability of these skills. Igwe et al. (2022) argue that many programmes still emphasize theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical competence, limiting their effectiveness in preparing students for real business environments. Despite this limitation, the overall evidence suggests that entrepreneurship education plays a critical role in building entrepreneurial capacities among Nigerian youths by equipping them with both cognitive and practical skills necessary for enterprise development. This study therefore views entrepreneurship education as a key driver of skill formation that supports youth participation in productive economic activities.



The Contribution of Youth Entrepreneurship, Driven by Entrepreneurship Education, to Income Generation and Employment Creation in Nigeria

Youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria has emerged as an important mechanism for income generation and employment creation, particularly in the context of limited formal job opportunities. Entrepreneurship education has contributed to this trend by equipping young people with the competencies required to initiate and manage businesses. Empirical evidence indicates that youth-led enterprises, although often small in scale, play a measurable role in local economic development. According to Nwankwo and Kanyangale (2020), entrepreneurship education significantly increases the likelihood of business start-up among graduates, thereby contributing to self-employment and income generation.

Statistical evidence supports the growing role of youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria's labour market. While unemployment remains a challenge, a substantial proportion of Nigerian youths are engaged in self-employment and informal business activities. A study by Adegbite and Machethe (2020) shows that youth-owned micro and small enterprises contribute to household income stability and serve as a buffer against poverty. These enterprises are particularly prominent in sectors such as agriculture, retail trade, fashion, and digital services. The rise of agribusiness startups among graduates of agricultural entrepreneurship programmes is a notable example, where young entrepreneurs engage in poultry farming, crop production, and food processing, generating both income and employment for others.

Practical examples further illustrate this contribution. In southwestern Nigeria, graduates of entrepreneurship programmes have established small manufacturing businesses producing items such as soaps, beverages, and clothing, employing apprentices and contributing to local supply chains. Similarly, digital entrepreneurship ventures, including social media marketing agencies and software development startups, have created employment opportunities for other youths. Olanrewaju et al. (2020) highlight that digital platforms have lowered entry barriers

for young entrepreneurs, enabling them to scale their businesses and reach wider markets.

Entrepreneurship education has also contributed indirectly to employment creation by fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems within universities and communities. Business incubation centres and innovation hubs have supported the growth of startups that employ multiple individuals. For instance, technology hubs in Lagos and Abuja, often linked to university programmes, have produced startups that employ young professionals in areas such as fintech and e-commerce. These developments demonstrate how entrepreneurship education can extend beyond individual self-employment to broader job creation.

Despite these contributions, the scale of impact remains constrained by structural challenges. Many youth-led enterprises operate at subsistence levels and struggle to expand due to limited access to finance and infrastructure. Igwe et al. (2022) note that while entrepreneurship education increases business formation rates, it does not automatically guarantee business growth or sustainability. Nonetheless, the available evidence indicates that youth entrepreneurship, supported by entrepreneurship education, contributes meaningfully to income generation and employment creation in Nigeria, even if its full potential has yet to be realized.

The Challenges Affecting the Translation of Entrepreneurship Education into Sustainable Economic Outcomes among Youths in Nigeria

Although entrepreneurship education has been widely promoted in Nigeria, its translation into sustainable economic outcomes remains constrained by several interrelated challenges. One major issue is limited access to finance, which restricts the ability of young entrepreneurs to start and expand businesses. Empirical studies show that many graduates lack the collateral and credit history required to secure loans from formal financial institutions (Nwankwo & Kanyangale, 2020). As a result, businesses established after entrepreneurship training often remain small and vulnerable to failure. Infrastructure deficits also pose significant barriers. Unreliable electricity supply, poor transportation networks, and limited access to digital infrastructure



increase the cost of doing business and reduce profitability. For example, small-scale manufacturing businesses initiated by young entrepreneurs frequently rely on generators, which raises operational costs and affects sustainability. Adebite and Machehe (2020) note that such structural constraints limit the long-term viability of youth-led enterprises, even when the entrepreneurs possess adequate skills.

Another challenge relates to gaps in the design and delivery of entrepreneurship education programmes. While many institutions have introduced entrepreneurship courses, the quality and relevance of these programmes vary widely. Some programmes lack practical components such as mentorship, incubation, and industry linkage, which are essential for translating knowledge into business success. Igwe et al. (2022) argue that the disconnect between classroom instruction and real market conditions reduces the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in fostering sustainable enterprises.

Policy inconsistency and weak institutional support further undermine outcomes. Government initiatives aimed at supporting youth entrepreneurship, such as funding schemes and training programmes, are often characterized by irregular implementation and limited reach. Case studies of programmes like youth enterprise funds indicate that while initial support may be provided, follow-up mechanisms such as monitoring, mentorship, and market access are often inadequate. This limits the ability of beneficiaries to sustain their businesses over time.

Practical examples illustrate these challenges clearly. Many graduates who establish small businesses after entrepreneurship training are unable to survive beyond the first few years due to financial and operational constraints. In the agricultural sector, youth entrepreneurs engaged in farming often face challenges related to market access, price fluctuations, and post-harvest losses, which affect income stability. Similarly, digital entrepreneurs may struggle with inconsistent internet connectivity and regulatory uncertainties, limiting business growth.

Social and cultural factors also play a role. In some cases, societal expectations and risk aversion discourage young people from pursuing entrepreneurship as a long-term career. Family pressure to seek stable salaried employment

can reduce commitment to business ventures, especially during the early stages when profits are uncertain. Neneh (2020) highlights that entrepreneurial intention does not always translate into action due to such external influences. Meanwhile, these challenges indicate that while entrepreneurship education provides a foundation for enterprise development, its impact on economic sustainability depends on broader systemic conditions. Addressing these barriers requires coordinated efforts involving educational institutions, financial systems, and policy frameworks to create an environment where youth entrepreneurship can thrive and contribute meaningfully to long-term economic stability.

Empirical Reviews

Iweh et al. (2021) conducted an empirical study of entrepreneurship education program in Nigerian public universities within selected federal universities across the South-East, South-South, and South-West regions of Nigeria. The study was anchored on human capital theory, emphasizing that investment in education enhances productive capacities and entrepreneurial outcomes. A mixed-method research design was adopted, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The sample size consisted of 705 respondents drawn through purposive and stratified sampling techniques, including students, graduates, instructors, entrepreneurs, and policymakers. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, while analysis involved regression techniques and weighted average index. The findings revealed that over 90% of student participants reported improved entrepreneurial competencies such as opportunity identification, financial literacy, and business management skills, while about 42% of graduates had established businesses and 5% of students were already operating micro-enterprises. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education contributes significantly to skill acquisition and entrepreneurial orientation but is constrained by weak institutional support systems and environmental factors. A critical observation from this study is its strong emphasis on competency development and venture creation without adequately examining whether these enterprises achieve long-term economic



stability. This leaves a gap in understanding the sustainability dimension of entrepreneurship outcomes, which the current paper addressed by linking education to economic sustainability among youths in Nigeria.

Otache et al. (2021) carried out a study on *The effects of entrepreneurship education on students' entrepreneurial intentions: A longitudinal approach* focusing on polytechnics in North-Central Nigeria. The research was grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which explains how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence entrepreneurial intentions. The study employed a longitudinal experimental design using a one-group pretest–posttest approach. A sample of 250 National Diploma students was selected through random sampling. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires administered before and after exposure to entrepreneurship education, while analysis involved paired-sample t-tests and structural equation modelling. The results indicated a statistically significant increase in students' entrepreneurial attitudes, perceived behavioural control, and intentions after participation in entrepreneurship education programmes. The structural model further showed that attitude played a mediating role between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention, while subjective norms and perceived behavioural control were not significant mediators. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education positively shapes behavioural intentions toward business creation among students. However, the study focused primarily on psychological outcomes rather than actual enterprise performance or economic contributions. The limitation lies in its inability to connect increased intentions with measurable economic outcomes such as income generation or employment creation. This creates a gap that the present study addressed by examining how entrepreneurship education translates beyond intention into sustainable economic realities among Nigerian youths.

Inegbedion (2022) examined *Entrepreneurial design thinking and business success: Empirical evidence from Nigeria* with a focus on entrepreneurs operating within Nigeria. The study adopted the design thinking framework as its theoretical foundation, emphasizing problem-solving, innovation, and user-centred business

development. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was employed, with a sample of 224 respondents selected randomly from a larger pool of 350 participants. Data collection was carried out using structured questionnaires, and analysis was conducted using statistical techniques to determine relationships between variables. The findings demonstrated that entrepreneurial design thinking significantly influences business success by enhancing innovation, adaptability, and customer-oriented strategies among entrepreneurs. The study concluded that entrepreneurial competencies derived from structured learning processes contribute to improved business performance. Despite its relevance, the study concentrated on existing entrepreneurs rather than youths undergoing entrepreneurship education, thereby limiting its applicability to educational outcomes. Furthermore, it did not explicitly examine the role of formal entrepreneurship education in shaping these competencies or how such competencies translate into sustainable economic outcomes over time. This reveals a gap concerning the linkage between entrepreneurship education, youth enterprise development, and long-term economic sustainability, which the current paper addressed through an analytical review of education-driven entrepreneurial outcomes among Nigerian youths.

Theoretical Framework

This paper was anchored on the theoretical foundation of Human Capital Theory as discussed below:

Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory, originally advanced by Gary Becker in 1964 and further developed in later works, provides the most appropriate and relevant framework for examining entrepreneurship education and economic sustainability among youths in Nigeria. The theory assumes that investments in education, training, and skill acquisition enhance the productive capacity of individuals, thereby improving their ability to generate income and contribute to economic development. In its contemporary application, the theory has been extended to include entrepreneurial competencies, innovation skills, and adaptability as forms of capital that can influence labour



market outcomes and enterprise performance. Recent studies build on this foundation by arguing that entrepreneurship education constitutes a deliberate investment in human capabilities that prepares individuals for self-employment and value creation (Unger et al., 2021; Marvel, Davis, & Sproul, 2020).

The central assumption of the theory is that education increases knowledge, skills, and competencies, which in turn raise productivity and economic returns at both individual and societal levels. Within the context of entrepreneurship, this implies that individuals exposed to entrepreneurship education are more likely to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, and sustain business ventures. The theory also presumes a direct relationship between acquired skills and economic outcomes such as income generation and employment creation. This assumption aligns with empirical findings that link entrepreneurial training to improved business performance and employability among youths (Neneh, 2020; Iweh, Yukongdi, & Bhujel, 2021).

One major strength of Human Capital Theory lies in its strong explanatory power regarding the role of education in economic advancement. It provides a clear basis for understanding how entrepreneurship education can translate into tangible economic benefits by enhancing individual capabilities. The framework is also flexible enough to accommodate different forms of learning, including formal education, vocational training, and experiential learning, all of which are relevant to entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. Furthermore, it supports policy justification for investing in entrepreneurship education as a means of addressing youth unemployment and promoting sustainable economic growth.

However, the theory is not without limitations. It tends to assume that the acquisition of skills automatically leads to productive outcomes, without adequately accounting for external constraints such as limited access to finance, weak infrastructure, and unfavourable business environments. In the Nigerian context, these structural challenges often hinder the ability of youths to translate acquired entrepreneurial skills into successful and sustainable enterprises. Additionally, the theory places greater

emphasis on individual capacity while giving less attention to institutional and environmental factors that influence economic performance. This limitation suggests that while human capital is necessary, it is not sufficient on its own to guarantee economic sustainability.

In applying Human Capital Theory to this study, entrepreneurship education is conceptualized as a form of investment that equips Nigerian youths with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for productive engagement in economic activities. The theory provides a logical basis for examining how such educational investments influence entrepreneurial capacity, income generation, and employment creation. At the same time, the study acknowledges the limitations of the theory by situating entrepreneurship education within the broader socio-economic environment that shapes outcomes. This makes the framework suitable for analyzing not only the potential of entrepreneurship education but also the conditions under which it can effectively contribute to sustainable economic outcomes among youths in Nigeria.

Results and Discussions

The discussion begins with the finding that entrepreneurship education contributes to the development of entrepreneurial skills and capacities among youths in Nigeria. Evidence reviewed indicates that structured exposure to entrepreneurial training enhances competencies such as opportunity identification, financial literacy, and business planning. This aligns with the position of Oviawe (2020), who emphasizes the shift from theory-driven instruction to experiential learning in Nigerian institutions, and with Neneh (2020), who links entrepreneurship education to improved self-efficacy and behavioural readiness for venture creation. The outcome is further reinforced by findings from Iweh et al. (2021), where a significant proportion of students reported improved entrepreneurial capabilities after participation in entrepreneurship programmes. In practical terms, university-based incubation centres have enabled students to develop small-scale enterprises in agriculture, fashion, and digital services, demonstrating that skill acquisition is not merely theoretical but can translate into productive



engagement. However, Igwe et al. (2022) caution that uneven programme quality continues to limit the depth of competence acquired, suggesting that skill development is contingent on the structure and delivery of entrepreneurship education.

The second objective focused on the contribution of youth entrepreneurship, driven by entrepreneurship education, to income generation and employment creation. The findings show that youth-led enterprises contribute to household income and provide employment opportunities, albeit at modest levels. This supports the argument by Nwankwo and Kanyangale (2020) that entrepreneurship education increases the likelihood of business start-ups and self-employment. Empirical observations across Nigeria reveal that graduates establish micro and small enterprises in sectors such as agribusiness, retail, and digital services, often employing apprentices or peers. For instance, youth-driven poultry farms and agro-processing ventures in parts of southwestern and north-central Nigeria have created local employment while contributing to food supply chains. Similarly, digital enterprises, including social media marketing and software development, illustrate how entrepreneurship education aligns with emerging economic opportunities, as noted by Olanrewaju et al. (2020). Despite these contributions, the scale of employment generation remains constrained, as many enterprises operate at subsistence levels and struggle to expand. This reflects the observation by Adegbite and Machethe (2020) that while small businesses stabilize income, their growth potential is often limited by structural barriers.

The third objective examined the challenges affecting the translation of entrepreneurship education into sustainable economic outcomes. The findings indicate that access to finance, infrastructure deficits, policy inconsistency, and gaps in programme implementation significantly hinder the sustainability of youth-led enterprises. This is consistent with Nwankwo and Kanyangale (2020), who identify financial exclusion as a major barrier to enterprise growth, and with Adegbite and Machethe (2020), who highlight the impact of structural constraints on business viability. Practical examples across Nigeria show that many young entrepreneurs rely on personal savings or

informal funding, which limits business expansion and resilience. In addition, unreliable electricity supply and high operational costs reduce profitability, particularly for small manufacturing ventures. The findings also resonate with Igwe et al. (2022), who argue that the disconnect between classroom instruction and market realities weakens the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education. Social expectations and risk aversion further complicate the transition from training to sustained enterprise development, as some youths abandon business ventures due to uncertainty and pressure to secure salaried employment.

Furthermore, the Human Capital Theory adopted provides a strong explanatory basis for these findings by linking educational investment to productive capacity and economic outcomes. The evidence that entrepreneurship education enhances skills and entrepreneurial orientation supports the theory's assumption that knowledge acquisition improves individual productivity. The observed contributions of youth entrepreneurship to income and employment further validate the expectation that enhanced human capital can generate economic returns. However, the challenges identified in the study highlight the limitations of the theory, particularly its assumption that skills automatically translate into economic success. In the Nigerian context, external constraints such as limited access to finance and weak infrastructure mediate the relationship between education and outcomes, indicating that human capital alone is insufficient for achieving economic sustainability. This suggests that while entrepreneurship education is a necessary condition for youth economic participation, it must be complemented by supportive institutional and economic environments.

Conclusions

This analytical review has examined the role of entrepreneurship education in shaping economic sustainability among youths in Nigeria by focusing on skill development, income generation, and the constraints affecting outcomes. The evidence showed that entrepreneurship education has made measurable contributions to the development of entrepreneurial



competencies, particularly in areas such as opportunity recognition, innovation, and business management. These capacities have enabled many young people to initiate small-scale enterprises and participate in economic activities outside the formal labour market. The review also establishes that youth entrepreneurship contributes to income generation and, to a limited degree, employment creation, especially within micro and small enterprise sectors such as agriculture, retail, and digital services. However, these contributions remain constrained in scale and sustainability. The paper concluded that entrepreneurship education remains a necessary but insufficient condition for achieving economic sustainability among youths in Nigeria unless complemented by broader institutional and economic support systems.

Recommendations

1. There is a need to strengthen the practical components of entrepreneurship education by integrating compulsory incubation, mentorship, and industry-based training into tertiary institution programmes. This will ensure that students not only acquire theoretical knowledge but also gain hands-on experience in business development, market engagement, and financial management before graduation.
2. Access to finance for young entrepreneurs should be improved through targeted credit schemes, low-interest loans, and grant programmes that are specifically designed for graduates of entrepreneurship education. These financial interventions should be accompanied by transparent monitoring and support mechanisms to ensure that funds are effectively utilized for business growth and sustainability.
3. Government and relevant stakeholders should prioritize the development of a supportive business environment by addressing infrastructure deficits, ensuring policy consistency, and strengthening institutional support systems. This includes improving electricity supply, enhancing digital infrastructure, and creating stable regulatory frameworks that enable youth-led enterprises to grow, compete, and contribute meaningfully to long-term economic development.

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