



## ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DIGITAL SKILLS AS CORRELATES OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN AWKA METROPOLIS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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### Abstract

This study examined the relationship between entrepreneurship and digital skills on youth empowerment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. This study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study are 88,833 youths according to the 2006 National Population Census. Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine a sample size of 398. The study adopted three structured questionnaires for data collection. The questionnaires were titled: Entrepreneurship Questionnaire (EQ), Digital Skills Questionnaire (DSQ) and Youth Empowerment Questionnaire (YEQ). The questionnaires were subjected to trial tests to determine the internal consistency. The instruments EQ, DSQ and YEQ had reliability coefficients of 0.82, 0.85 and 0.84 which indicated that the instruments were reliable for the study. Direct face-to-face method was used for data collection. After the administration of 398 copies of the questionnaire, 382 correctly filled copies of the questionnaire were retrieved which indicated 95.98% return rate. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In testing the hypotheses, when the p-value is 0.05 and below, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. On the other hand, when p-value is above 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted while the alternative hypothesis is rejected. The study found that there is a very high positive significant relationship between both entrepreneurship and digital skills with youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. As a result, empowering youths through entrepreneurial and digital skill development is essential for reducing unemployment and curbing social vices, thereby promoting inclusive socio-economic growth in the region. The study recommended that government and stakeholders should intensify efforts in funding and supporting entrepreneurship training programs targeted at equipping youths in Awka South with practical business skills to foster job creation and innovation. Digital infrastructure should be improved and made more accessible to enable effective digital skill acquisition, especially in rural and semi-urban areas of Awka South Local Government Area.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Digital Skills, Youth Empowerment, Entrepreneur Introduction

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### Introduction

Youths constitute a vital national asset, serving as catalysts for innovation, economic advancement, and social transformation. With their energy, creativity, and adaptability, they significantly contribute to national development when adequately empowered (Egwuagu & Anikeze, 2024). Representing a large segment of the workforce in developing countries, youths are not only future leaders but also present change agents capable of driving socio-economic and political progress. Therefore, youth empowerment and capacity building are indispensable for sustainable development. Recognizing this, countries like Singapore, Germany, and Rwanda have prioritized youth-focused strategies. Singapore's SkillsFuture initiative prepares young people for future labour demands by equipping them with essential skills (El Amoud et al., 2025). Germany's dual vocational training system effectively merges theory with practical experience to enhance youth employability (Deissinger, 2015). Rwanda's programmes promote youth entrepreneurship and digital literacy, especially in agriculture (Dinika, 2024). These examples illustrate that investing in youth is a strategic imperative for long-term national prosperity.



Fortunately, in Nigeria, Anambra State government are also making frantic efforts to improve the youths of the nation. For instance, Anambra State has invested in the youths such as the establishment of the Solution Innovation District (SID) aimed at building the digital and entrepreneurial capacity of youths. According to Anambra State Government (2023), SID offers tech training, startup incubation, and funding opportunities for innovative youth-driven ideas. Additionally, initiatives such as the "One Youth, Two Skill" program and the support for community-based skill acquisition centers have created platforms for self-reliance among youths. These efforts are geared toward reducing youth unemployment, poverty, and restiveness while fostering economic development and social inclusion.

This is in line with World Bank on the youths such as the "Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy," which encourages nations to invest in youth education, entrepreneurship, and employment opportunities (African Development Bank (AfDB), 2017). The African Development Bank posited that youth empowerment is essential for poverty reduction, social cohesion, and long-term development. Through its Youth Employment Programs, the bank partners with national and subnational governments to scale up investment in education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship. It also supports digital and green economy initiatives to prepare youths for the demands of the global labor market.

It was for some of these reasons that educational stakeholders such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) have advocated for empowering the youths. For instance, the UNESCO (2025) stated that youth empowerment entails providing young people with the tools, resources, and opportunities to develop their skills and contribute meaningfully to society. Similarly, Jegede, et. al., (2019) emphasized that youth empowerment is a strategic development tool aimed at enhancing the capabilities and resilience of young people to actively participate in the socioeconomic and political domains of a country.

The importance of youth empowerment can never be underrated because it leads to reduced dependency, increased productivity, and social stability. Empowered youths are likely to become employers of labor rather than job seekers. They are also more likely to engage in civic duties and participate in governance. Youth empowerment facilitates innovation, drives economic growth, and strengthens democratic processes (Chow, et. al., 2024).

Youth empowerment in Nigeria has become imperative due to the widespread socio-economic challenges plaguing young people, including poverty, unemployment, and limited access to quality



education. These conditions have rendered many youths vulnerable to criminal activities such as cyber fraud, drug abuse, cultism, kidnapping, and political violence (Nwobodo, 2024), all of which threaten national stability. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), over 35% of Nigerian youths are unemployed, while Okoye (2021) reported that approximately 23% are involved in social vices, raising serious concerns for national development.

Anambra State, particularly Awka metropolis, reflects this troubling trend with rising incidences of cult-related violence, drug abuse, and cybercrime (Ovat, 2024). These issues have prompted increased advocacy for practical youth engagement initiatives. Entrepreneurship, as emphasized by Schumpeter (1934), serves as a vehicle for economic transformation through innovation and enterprise. It offers young people essential life skills such as self-sufficiency, financial literacy, and creativity. Nor (2024) affirmed that entrepreneurship enhances youth employment, income generation, and inclusion, while Njoku (2024) emphasized its transformative potential in developing youths' competencies and fostering sustainable empowerment.

Similar to entrepreneurship, digital skills are also necessary for youth empowerment. In today's global economy, digital skills are non-negotiable. According to Angelaki, et. al., (2024), youth empowerment is incomplete without integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) competencies, as most sectors now rely on digital tools. Similarly, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2024) stated that digital skills are the abilities required to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies.

Some of the digital skills that are believed to be used for youth empowerment include coding, data analysis, digital marketing, web development, graphic design, and cybersecurity. These skills are in high demand and can be harnessed for freelancing, remote work, and tech startups. These digital skills have been able to empower the youths through increased access to employment, improved innovation capacity, and global competitiveness. For instance, youths trained under the Anambra SID tech bootcamps have gone on to create solutions for fintech, health tech, and agritech sectors (Anambra State Government, 2023). These discussions have shown that entrepreneurship and digital skills have become necessary because they provide sustainable pathways for economic growth, and social stability youth empowerment.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

Despite various governmental efforts to promote entrepreneurship and digital skills, youth empowerment in Awka Metropolis remains hindered by systemic challenges. Inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, weak mentorship, and poor awareness restrict access to



empowerment opportunities. Consequently, unemployment persists, fostering social vices and highlighting the urgent need for evidence-based, context-specific interventions.

### ***Research Questions***

1. What is the relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between digital skills and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State?

### ***Hypotheses***

The hypotheses tested the following null hypotheses at 0.05 significant level.

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State?

H<sub>0</sub>2: There is no significant relationship between digital skills and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State?

### ***Materials and Methods***

This study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study are 88,833 youths according to the 2006 National Population Census. Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine a sample size of 398. The study adopted three structured questionnaires for data collection. The questionnaires were titled: Entrepreneurship Questionnaire (EQ), Digital Skills Questionnaire (DSQ) and Youth Empowerment Questionnaire (YEQ). Entrepreneurship Questionnaire (EQ) sought for information on entrepreneurship, Digital Skills Questionnaire (DSQ) for information on digital skills and Youth Empowerment Questionnaire (YEQ) sought for information on youth empowerment. EQ and DSQ had 10 items each and were structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) – 4, Agree (A) – 3, Disagree (D) – 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1. On the other hand, the YEQ had 15 items was structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) – 4, Agree (A) – 3, Disagree (D) – 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1. The questionnaires were subjected to trial tests to determine the internal consistency. The instruments EQ, DSQ and YEQ had reliability coefficients of 0.82, 0.85 and 0.84 which indicated that the instruments were reliable for the study. Direct face-to-face method was used for data collection. After the administration of 398 copies of the questionnaire, 382 correctly filled copies of the questionnaire were retrieved which indicated 95.98% return rate. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In testing the hypotheses, when the p-value is 0.05 and below, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. On the other hand, when p-value is above 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted while the alternative hypothesis is rejected. This study intentionally limited its scope to examine the correlation between entrepreneurship, digital skills, and youth



empowerment, and therefore did not analyze demographic variables such as gender or education level.

## RESULTS

**Research Question One:** What is the relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State?

**Table 1: Correlation Between Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship**

Variables	N	Youth Empowerment	Entrepreneurship
Youth Empowerment	382	1.00	0.83
Entrepreneurship	382	0.83	1

**Note:** N = 382. Correlation coefficient of 0.83 indicates a very high positive relationship

The results in Table 1 showed the summary of the results of the relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka, Anambra State. The results revealed that the Rvalue was 0.83. This indicated that there is a very high positive relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

**Research Question Two:** What is the relationship between digital skills and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State?

**Table 2: Summary of the relationship between digital skills and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State**

Variables	N	Youth Empowerment	Digital Skills
Youth Empowerment	382	1	0.89
Digital Skills	382	0.89	1

**Note.** N = 382. An R-value of 0.89 indicates a very high positive relationship between digital skills and youth empowerment within Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.



Table 2 presents a summary of the findings on the relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka, Anambra State. The analysis revealed an R-value of 0.89, indicating a very high positive relationship between digital skills and youth employment within Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

### Hypotheses

The hypotheses tested the following null hypotheses at 0.05 significant level.

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State?

**Table 3: Test of hypothesis of the relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State**

Variables	N	Youth Empowerment	Entrepreneurship	P-Value
Youth Empowerment	382	1	0.83	0.03
Entrepreneurship	382	0.83	1	

**Note.** N = 382. The p-value of .03 is less than .05, indicating a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between youth empowerment and entrepreneurship in Awka South LGA.

The results in Table 3 showed the test of hypothesis results of the relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka, Anambra State. The results revealed that the Rvalue was 0.83 and the p-value was 0.03. The p-value (0.03) was less than 0.05 which signifies that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

H<sub>0</sub>2: There is no significant relationship between digital skills and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State?



Table 4: Test of hypothesis of the relationship between digital skills and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State

Variables	N	Youth Empowerment	Digital Skills	P-Value	Remark
Youth Empowerment	382	1	0.89	0.02	Very Positive High Relationship
Digital Skills	382	0.89	1		

**Note.** N = 382. The correlation coefficient of 0.89 and p-value of .02 indicate a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship between youth empowerment and digital skills.

Table 4 presents the hypothesis testing results on the relationship between digital skills and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The analysis showed an R-value of 0.83 and a p-value of 0.02. Since the p-value (0.02) is less than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. This indicates a significant relationship between digital skills and youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

### Discussions of the Results

The findings reveal a highly significant positive correlation between entrepreneurship and youth employment in Awka South, indicating that increased entrepreneurial initiatives substantially boost job creation and youth self-reliance. In agreement with these findings, Newo et al., (2023) found that entrepreneurship is a catalyst for job creation, innovation, and economic diversification. With MSMEs contributing 49.8% to Nigeria's GDP and 85% of industrial employment (SMEDAN, 2022), their developmental relevance is clear. Omeje et al. (2020) further emphasized entrepreneurship's role in fostering youth self-reliance and reducing unemployment-related vices. More so, Findings from research question two and hypothesis two reveal a strong positive correlation between digital skills and youth employment, highlighting digital proficiency as crucial for enhancing youth employability in Awka South. In attestation to these findings, Idris and Maikomo (2024) confirmed that digital economy variables account for about 67.3% of the variation in youth unemployment in Nigeria. Similarly, Mayor-Olabiyitan and Awopegba (2023) stressed that digital skills enhance employability and entrepreneurial prospects. These insights underscore the urgency of embedding digital training in empowerment programmes (Adeleke, 2022).

### Conclusion



The study concluded that there is a very high positive significant relationship between both entrepreneurship and digital skills with youth employment in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. These underscore the vital role of entrepreneurship in fostering innovation, job creation, and self-reliance, while digital skills enhance employability in an increasingly technology-driven economy. As a result, empowering youths through entrepreneurial and digital skill development is essential for reducing unemployment and curbing social vices, thereby promoting inclusive socio-economic growth in the region.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government and stakeholders should intensify efforts in funding and supporting entrepreneurship training programs targeted at equipping youths in Awka South with practical business skills to foster job creation and innovation.
2. Digital infrastructure should be improved and made more accessible to enable effective digital skill acquisition, especially in rural and semi-urban areas of Awka South Local Government Area.
3. Partnerships between educational institutions, tech hubs, and industries should be encouraged to provide hands-on digital and entrepreneurial training, mentorship, and internship opportunities for youths.

Awareness campaigns and outreach programs should be conducted regularly to inform youths about available entrepreneurship and digital skill development initiatives, ensuring full participation and inclusiveness in empowerment schemes.

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