Youth Unemployment and Community Development: A Study of Selected Local Governments in Ebonyi State

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Abstract

The study focused on youth unemployment and community development: a study of selected local government areas in Ebonyi State. The study was anchored on Human Capital Theory and descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of study was 975, 538 resident of the selected local government areas while the sample size was 400 respondents determined from the total population of the study using Taro Yameni's formula. Simple random sampling technique was also employed while structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and frequency table while the hypothesis was tested using Chi-Square statistical tools. The findings of the study revealed that lack of employment opportunities among youths affect community participation community development activities and inadequate skill among youths affect local economic activities in selected Local Government Area in Ebonyi state. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the government, local government authorities and relevant stakeholders should create sustainable employment opportunities for youths through job-creation programmes, community-based enterprises, public works and entrepreneurship initiatives, in order to reduce unemployment, discourage youth migration and encourage greater participation in community development activities etc.

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1. Introduction

Youth unemployment remains a pressing global issue with far-reaching implications for economic development, social cohesion, community development and political stability. Across both developed and developing nations, rising unemployment among young people continues to undermine productivity and the prospects of future generations. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021), global youth unemployment stood at 13.6% in 2020, significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate. The resulting job losses and limited access to decent employment have heightened vulnerabilities among young people, contributing to increased social unrest, migration and weakened civic engagement. These challenges have implications for community development because unemployed youths may have limited capacity to participate meaningfully in economic, social and community-based activities.

In Africa, youth unemployment is particularly alarming, as over 60% of the continent's population is under the age of 25 (African Development Bank, 2020). Despite this large youthful population, many African countries face immense challenges in absorbing young people into productive sectors of the economy. Structural weaknesses, including limited industrialization, poor access to credit and inadequate entrepreneurial support, continue to restrict employment opportunities for young people. Many young Africans, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa, remain trapped in low-income informal employment or remain completely unemployed, thereby creating serious challenges for development at the community level (World Bank, 2021). When youths are excluded from productive economic activities, their potential contribution to local economic growth, community participation and social improvement becomes significantly reduced.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, mirrors this continental challenge. Youth unemployment has continued to constitute a major national problem, reaching 42.5% in 2020, a situation aggravated by poor policy implementation, corruption and a mismatch between education and labour market demands (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The growing rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria has been associated with increased crime, drug abuse and mass migration, often with serious consequences for individuals, families and communities. The socioeconomic consequences of this crisis are particularly evident in communities where unemployment interacts with poverty, inadequate infrastructure and limited economic opportunities (Adewumi & Akinyemi, 2021). Such conditions can weaken community participation, increase dependency and make it difficult for communities to mobilize the human and material resources required for development.

In Ebonyi State, youth unemployment remains a significant challenge despite the state's agricultural potential, human resources and other economic opportunities. The predominantly agrarian nature of many communities in the state provides opportunities for agriculture, entrepreneurship and other productive activities, but inadequate access to finance, modern skills, infrastructure and sustainable markets may limit the ability of young people to take advantage of these opportunities. As a result, many youths may remain unemployed or underemployed, thereby limiting their contribution to community development. The consequences may include poverty, dependency, migration and involvement in social vices, which can negatively affect peace, social cohesion and the capacity of communities to implement development initiatives.

The persistence of youth unemployment in selected local government areas of Ebonyi State reflects not only broader national trends but also specific challenges at the grassroots level. Many young people face limited access to quality education, vocational training, entrepreneurial opportunities and digital skills, all of which are increasingly important in a competitive labour market.

Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure, limited private-sector participation and weaknesses in local economic planning may constrain the creation of employment opportunities. These conditions can create a cycle of poverty, dependency and frustration among youths, thereby reducing their willingness and capacity to participate actively in community affairs. The increasing incidence of youth-related social problems may also undermine peace, security and community development (Okafor & Umeh, 2021).

Community development refers to a process through which members of a community collectively identify their needs, mobilize available resources and participate in activities aimed at improving their social, economic and physical conditions. Effective community development depends significantly on the availability of a productive and engaged population. Youths constitute an important segment of the population because they possess the energy, creativity, skills and innovative capacity required to contribute to community transformation. However, when a large proportion of youths remain unemployed, their potential contribution to community development may be undermined. Instead of participating productively in local economic activities, community projects and entrepreneurship, unemployed youths may experience poverty, frustration, dependency and social exclusion.

The relationship between youth unemployment and community development is therefore important because youths constitute a major human resource for community transformation. Gainfully employed youths are more likely to contribute to household income, support local businesses, participate in community associations and contribute financially and physically to community development projects. Employment also provides young people with opportunities to acquire skills, build productive relationships and develop a sense of responsibility towards their communities. Conversely, prolonged unemployment may deprive communities of the productive contribution of their youthful population and may increase poverty, social exclusion, crime and migration. Community development involves the collective efforts of people, government institutions, community organizations and other stakeholders to identify community needs, mobilize resources and implement programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of community members. Youth participation is particularly important to this process because young people constitute a significant proportion of the population and possess the energy, creativity and innovative capacity necessary for community transformation. Consequently, addressing youth unemployment is not only an employment concern but also an important strategy for strengthening community development.

Despite various government interventions and youth empowerment programmes aimed at reducing unemployment, the problem continues to persist. The limited effectiveness of some interventions may be associated with inadequate implementation, poor access to funding, corruption, insufficient monitoring and the failure to adequately address the specific needs of young people at the local level. This situation makes it necessary to examine youth unemployment from a community-based perspective and determine how the problem affects the ability of communities to achieve meaningful development. Understanding the relationship between youth unemployment and community development in Ebonyi State is therefore critical to formulating effective and context-specific policy responses. Attention to selected local government areas can provide a clearer understanding of the ways in which unemployment affects community participation, local economic activities, social cohesion and the provision of community development initiatives. It can also provide evidence on the measures required to improve employment opportunities and harness the potential of young people for grassroots development. Against this background, this

study examines youth unemployment and community development in selected local government areas of Ebonyi State.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment has emerged as one of the most critical challenges confronting communities across the world in the 21st century. The problem is particularly acute in developing countries, where economic growth has not generated sufficient employment opportunities for the rapidly increasing youth population. Young people often face barriers such as inadequate skills, lack of work experience, limited access to finance and insufficient productive opportunities. The resulting unemployment can create social discontent, reduce productivity and increase the feeling of marginalization among youths, with serious implications for community development.

In Nigeria, youth unemployment continues to pose a major challenge despite various government interventions and policy measures designed to promote employment and youth empowerment. Factors such as a weak industrial base, poor linkage between education and employment, inadequate infrastructure, corruption and governance inefficiencies have continued to limit employment opportunities for young people. Although federal and state governments have introduced different programmes aimed at empowering youths, the impact of these initiatives has not been sufficient to substantially address the problem. The persistence of youth unemployment can consequently affect the ability of young people to participate productively in community development activities.

In Ebonyi State, the situation is of particular concern because a significant proportion of the population comprises young people whose productive capacities are essential to the development of local communities. Many youths in selected local government areas remain unemployed or underemployed despite possessing educational qualifications, vocational abilities and other forms of human capital. Limited employment opportunities, inadequate access to credit, poor infrastructure, insufficient entrepreneurial support and skills mismatches may prevent these youths from fully utilizing their potentials. Consequently, unemployment may contribute to poverty, dependency, migration, drug abuse, criminal activities and other social problems that can undermine peace and community development. The problem extends beyond the individual unemployed youth to the wider community. When a considerable proportion of young people are economically inactive, communities may lose valuable human resources that could otherwise contribute to local businesses, agricultural production, community projects and social development. Youth unemployment may also reduce household income, increase dependence on relatives and community support systems and weaken participation in community development initiatives. In addition, the frustration associated with prolonged unemployment can contribute to social unrest and insecurity, thereby creating an environment that is unfavourable to community development (Okafor & Umeh, 2021). The persistence of youth unemployment despite various government employment and empowerment programmes therefore raises questions about the adequacy and effectiveness of existing measures. It becomes necessary to determine whether these interventions are sufficiently addressing the employment needs of young people and enabling them to contribute meaningfully to community development. This study is therefore designed to examine youth unemployment and community development in selected local government areas of Ebonyi State.

1.3 Research Questions

1. To what extent does lack of employment opportunities among youths affect community participation in selected Local Government Area in Ebonyi state?

2. To what extent does inadequate skill among youths affect local economic activities in selected Local Government Area in Ebonyi state?

1.4 Objectives of the studyto;

1. Determine the extent to which lack of employment opportunities among youths affects community participation in selected communities in Ebonyi State.

2. Examine the extent to which inadequate skills among youths affect local economic activities in selected communities in Ebonyi State.

1.5 Hypotheses

H_{01}: Lack of employment opportunities among youths has no significant effect on community participation in selected communities in Ebonyi State.

H_{02}: Inadequate skills among youths have no significant effect on local economic activities in selected communities in Ebonyi State.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Youth Unemployment

The United Nations has defined youth as a period of transition between the dependence childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community and for statistical consistency across regions. It defines 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by member states (UNESCO, 2016). According to Louize and Dhruv (2021), youth is defined as a time of transition from dependent childhood to independent adulthood and the important aspect of this transition which is economic independence is often achieved through employment. National Youth Policy (2001) cited in Emerole, Chikwe & Joel (2018) viewed youths as individuals between the age brackets of 18–35. Youth unemployment refers to the situation where individuals within this age bracket are actively seeking employment but are unable to secure suitable jobs.

An unemployed person as defined by the International Labour Organization is a person aged 15 or over who simultaneously meets three conditions: being unemployed for a given week, being available to take a job within two weeks; having actively sought a job in the last four weeks or having found one starting in less three weeks (International Labour Organization, 2024). In Nigeria, the labour force participation level is measured in terms of the country's working-age population such as those above 15 years that engage actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work. It indicates the size of the supply of labour available to engage in the production of goods and services, relative to the population of working age (NBS, 2020). Abdullahi, Ogu and Abdulsalam (2019) defined unemployment as unemployed workers who are currently not working but are willing and able to work for pay, are currently available to work and have actively searched for work. Wayas, Selvadurai & Awang (2019) "a situation in which persons capable and willing to work are unable to find suitable paid employment", while Ejo-Orusa (2020) defines unemployment as "the facts of some people not having a job; the number of people without a job; the state of not having a job". Unemployment may also be defined as a condition that exists when there is an individual who can work, is wishing to work, and is dependent on work for survival but is unable to obtain employment.

2.1.2 Causes of Youth Unemployment

Empirical studies have revealed multiple and interconnected causes of youth unemployment, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. Economic stagnation, poor governance, lack of industrialization, and weak educational systems are among the key factors identified in both qualitative and quantitative research. In a national study, Nwoko and Uche (2021) found that youth

unemployment is primarily driven by structural deficiencies in the Nigerian economy, including the overdependence on oil revenues and the failure to diversify into other productive sectors. This economic monoculture limits the scope for job creation, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.
In Ebonyi State, these national challenges are magnified by regional disparities and infrastructural deficiencies. Yakubu and Salihu (2023) noted that the predominantly agrarian economy of the state fails to provide year-round employment, leaving many youths underemployed or jobless during off-seasons. The lack of functional vocational training centers and poor integration between education and the labor market are further barriers. Most educational institutions in the region are focused on theoretical knowledge with little emphasis on entrepreneurship or technical skills, leading to a workforce that is ill-prepared for self-employment or industrial work (Adewumi & Akinyemi, 2021).
Corruption and policy inconsistency have also been identified as contributors to the unemployment crisis. Several youth empowerment schemes initiated at both federal and state levels suffer from poor implementation and limited reach. For instance, programs such as N-Power, Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN), Renewed Hope Conditional Cash Transfer have not been sustainable and are often plagued by political favoritism and mismanagement (Okafor & Umeh, 2021). This has created a trust deficit among youths and discouraged participation in government-led interventions. Social norms and cultural expectations further contribute to youth unemployment. In many local governments, white-collar jobs are often valued more than vocational or technical roles. This mindset discourages young people from exploring non-traditional employment paths, such as agriculture or crafts, even when these sectors hold potential for sustainable livelihoods (World Bank, 2021). The lack of role models and mentorship opportunities within the local environment further compounds this issue, leaving many youths without guidance or inspiration to pursue alternative career paths.
Empirical evidence also points to the gendered nature of youth unemployment. Female youths, in particular, face multiple layers of disadvantage, including early marriage, limited access to education, and cultural restrictions on mobility and career choices. These challenges are especially pronounced in northern Nigeria, including Ebonyi State, where patriarchal norms often limit young women's participation in economic activities (African Development Bank, 2020). Collectively, these empirical insights underscore the need for an integrated and context-specific approach to tackling youth unemployment. A one-size-fits-all strategy is unlikely to succeed without addressing the unique socio-economic and cultural realities at the grassroots level.

2.1.3 Implications of Youth Unemployment on Community Development

The consequences of youth unemployment extend beyond the economic dimension, posing significant threats to social cohesion, political stability, and national development. At the core, unemployed youth represent not just wasted human capital but also a growing population vulnerable to social vices and negative coping mechanisms. Prolonged joblessness often leads to feelings of frustration, hopelessness, and disengagement from constructive societal roles, particularly among urban and semi-urban youth. Studies have consistently shown that high rates of youth unemployment correlate strongly with increased crime rates, political instability, and violent extremism, especially in fragile regions (World Bank, 2021).
In the Nigerian context, the implications are even more severe. Youth unemployment has contributed to the rise in insecurity, banditry, cybercrime, drug abuse, and cultism across several states. Unemployed young people, especially those in urban centers, are often recruited into political thuggery during election periods, further undermining democratic processes and governance (Okafor & Umeh, 2021). The economic costs are also substantial. A large unemployed

youth population means a higher dependency ratio, lost productivity, and increased social welfare burden on already overstretched government resources. In the long run, the country's ability to leverage its demographic advantage commonly referred to as the "youth dividend" is diminished (Nwoko & Uche, 2021).

Ebonyi State is not immune to these realities. As the administrative capital of Ebonyi State, it attracts youth from surrounding rural areas in search of better opportunities. However, the limited absorption capacity of the urban economy has led to the clustering of idle youth with minimal prospects. Yakubu and Salihu (2023) observed that the growing concentration of unemployed young people in Ebonyi state contributes to increasing rates of petty theft, drug addiction, and unregulated commercial motorcycling, often leading to fatal accidents and insecurity. These outcomes hinder local businesses, discourage investment, and create a climate of instability detrimental to sustainable development. Furthermore, the socio-economic effects extend into the education and health sectors. Unemployed youth are less likely to pursue further education or vocational training due to financial constraints and lack of motivation. Similarly, poor mental health and stress-related illnesses are more prevalent among unemployed populations, straining local healthcare systems (Adewumi & Akinyemi, 2021). The long-term developmental implications include intergenerational poverty, skill erosion, and increased inequality, all of which are major barriers to achieving inclusive growth. Despite the magnitude of the problem, there remains a significant literature gap in terms of localized studies that examine the direct link between youth unemployment and socioeconomic outcomes in specific settings like Ebonyi. Most existing studies focus on national or state-wide assessments, leaving local governments under-researched.

2.2 Empirical Review

Bashir, Labajirge and Ibrahim (2026) in their study examined the menace of youth unemployment in Nigeria by focusing on factors responsible for the menace as well as its destructive consequences on Nigeria's existence and development. The study relied on the secondary data while content analysis was employed in analyzing the gathered data. Marxist Theory of Unemployment was used as a framework of analysis in this study. The study discovered that the menace of unemployment among youths in Nigeria has significantly affected Youth population psychologically with severe consequences on Nigeria's survival as a country as well as retarding her development aspiration. Youth Unemployment led to Youth involving in Destructive activities such as militancy, insurgency, banditry, political thuggery and other crimes in the society.

Auwal, Yahaya and Ali (2025) carried out a study to investigate the implications of youth unemployment on socio-economic development in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. Anchored on the Human Capital Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample size of 400 respondents drawn from the projected population of Jalingo Local Government Area using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed with SPSS through frequency distribution, chi-square tests, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability test ($\alpha = 0.87$). The results showed a significant relationship between educational attainment and employability ($\chi^2 = 12.45$, df = 3, $p < 0.05$), with higher education levels increasing employment opportunities. Analysis of government interventions revealed mixed perceptions, as only 35% of respondents rated them effective, while 49% considered them ineffective or very ineffective ($\chi^2 = 15.32$, df = 4, $p < 0.05$). The study also established that youth unemployment has severe socio-economic consequences, including rising poverty, crime, and social exclusion, which undermine community development. The findings align with the Human Capital Theory, demonstrating that education and skill acquisition are critical to labor market

success. The study concludes that unless government interventions are restructured and educational reforms are implemented, youth unemployment will continue to hinder development in Jalingo.

Eze, Chikeleze and Okwueze (2024) explores the multifaceted implications of youth unemployment on various aspects of society, including drug abuse, life expectancy, illiteracy, poverty, and criminality. Through an empirical investigation, the study examines the socio-economic impact of unemployment on young people in South East Nigeria, highlighting the region's unique cultural, economic, and political dynamics. The findings revealed that youth unemployment hampers economic growth, exacerbates social inequalities, perpetuates poverty, and fosters socio unrest. The study concludes with policy recommendations to address the root causes of youth unemployment and foster inclusive socio-economic development in the region.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Human Capital Theory, propounded by economist Theodore Schultz in the 1960s, posits that investments in education, training, and health are essential for enhancing individuals' productivity and increasing their economic output. The theory emphasizes that individuals are not only passive recipients of education and training but also active agents who can invest in themselves to improve their skills and knowledge, thereby increasing their human capital. This theory posits that investments in education, skills training, and health among the youth population can enhance their productivity and employability, leading to higher incomes and overall economic growth. Human capital theory suggests that reducing youth unemployment requires improving access to quality education, vocational training, and healthcare services to equip young people with the skills and capabilities needed to contribute effectively to the economy.

The application of Human Capital Theory provides valuable insights into understanding the effect of youth unemployment on community development in selected local government areas of Ebonyi State. According to Schultz (1961), Human Capital Theory emphasizes the importance of investing in education, training, and health to enhance individuals' productivity and economic outcomes. In the context of the South East region, where youth unemployment rates are significant, Human Capital Theory suggests that addressing unemployment requires investments in human capital development initiatives.

High levels of youth unemployment can hinder socio-economic development by limiting young people's access to employment opportunities, income generation, and social mobility. According to World Bank (2020), youth unemployment in Nigeria has been attributed to factors such as inadequate educational attainment, mismatch between skills acquired and labor market demands, and limited access to vocational training programs.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research shall employ the descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research design according to Abonyi, Okereke, Omebe, Anugwo and Nnachi (2022) consist of those studies in which data are collected from a small sample of a large population to enable a researcher describe in a systematic manner and facts about things that exist. The research will be technically designed to solicit information from the residents of the selected local government areas in Ebonyi State.

3.2 Area of the Study

The area of the state is Ebonyi State. Ebonyi State is in southeastern Nigeria. It is inhabited and populated primarily by the Igbos. Its capital is Abakaliki. Other major townships include Afikpo, Onueke, Edda, Unwana, Ụbụrụ, Onicha, etc. It was one of the six states created in 1st October

1996 by the then federal military government of General Sani Abacha. The State of Ebonyi was created from parts of both Enugu State and Abia State, which were the Abakaliki division from Enugu State and the Afikpo division from Abia State. Politically, the state has three senatorial zones, the Abakaliki division make up Ebonyi North and Ebonyi Central senatorial zone, while the Afikpo division makes up the Ebonyi South senatorial zone. Ebonyi has thirteen local government areas which includes; Abakaliki, Afikpo North, Edda, Ebonyi, Ezza North, Ezza South, Ikwo, Ishielu, Ivo, Izzi, Ohaozara, Ohaukwu, Onicha; as well as 64 development centres created by the state government. Due to the large nature of the area of the study, special attention shall be given to three local government areas selected from the three senatorial zones in the state.

3.3 Population of the Study

The total population of the study is five hundred and fifty two thousand, four hundred (552,400) which is the total population of the three selected local government areas from the three senatorial zones in the state. Specifically, the populations of the three selected local government areas according to National Population Census (2006) are as follows; Ezza South 176,800; Afikpo North 207,300 and Ebonyi LGA 168,300. But since census is supposed to be conducted in Nigeria in every ten years, the researcher applied the National Population Projection calculation formula to determine the current population of the selected three local government areas which is projected at 2.83% rate per annum. The formula is stated thus;

$$Pp = p\,(1+r)\,n$$

Where pp = population projection.

P = Population of the base year = 552,400

1= Constant

r = Expected annual growth rate 2.83%

n = Expected number of years. (2006-2026) = 20

Therefore; $P\,(2024) = \frac{552{,}400\,(1+2.83)20}{100}$

$$P\,(2024) = \frac{552{,}400\,(3.83)20}{100}$$

$$= \frac{42{,}313{,}840}{100}$$

$$= 423{,}138.4$$

$$= 423{,}138$$

Therefore, in 2026, the total population of Ezza South, Afikpo North and Ebonyi local government areas is expected to be 552,400 + 423,138 = 975,538. So, 975,538 is the total population of the study.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size is seen as a small group of elements or subjects drawn through a definite procedure from a specific population which is meant to represent the population when it cannot be wholly studied. As a result of the large nature of the population, the researcher applied Taro Yameni's Formula to get the sample size from the total population.

Sample size (n) = $\frac{N}{}$

$1+N\,(e)^2$

Where
n = sample size

N = Total population

e = level of significant or degree of freedom 0.05

Solution

Thus, $n = \frac{N}{1+ N\,(e)^2}$

$n = \frac{975{,}538}{1 + 975{,}538\,(0.05)^2}$

$n = \frac{975{,}538}{1 + 975{,}538 \times 0.0025}$

$n = \frac{975{,}538}{1 + 2438.845}$

$n = \frac{975{,}538}{2439.845}$

$n = 399.83$

$n = 400$

Therefore, the sample size is 400

For the purpose of this study, simple random sampling technique will be employed. This is to ensure that every member of the population (staff) stand the equal chance of being selected in the sample study.

3.5 Sources of Data Collection

Data used in carrying out this research were gathered from two major sources. These are the secondary and primary sources.

The secondary data were sourced from relevant existing literature on the topic under study from libraries with intent of eliciting information. Similarly, unpublished theses, Journals, conference proceedings, seminars, workshops, newspapers, journals, magazines articles, officials, publications and through relevant documents of Ebonyi State Government were utilized for the study.

The primary Data on the other hand were sourced from the use of structured questionnaire and personal interviews from respondents in the three selected local government areas from the three senatorial zones that make up the state.

3.6 Instrument for Data Collection

The main instrument for this study is structured questionnaire, which is designed to obtain the required information that would be used to examine the effect of youth unemployment on community development in selected local government areas of Ebonyi State. The questionnaire contains part A and B, where part A seeks to get information on the personal data of the respondents while part B is structured to obtain information from the research questions of the study.

3.7 Methods of Data Collection

The researcher personally visited the selected local government areas in the state and administered the questionnaires to the residents in the area. As a result of the pressure of work, they were allowed to complete the questionnaires within two days. After the two days, the researcher went back and retrieved the ready copies.

3.8 Method of Data Analyses

The copies of the instruments, when returned, will be cross-checked. Mean and Standard Deviation shall be used for the analysis. Then hypotheses shall be tested using t-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significant.

4. Results

This chapter focuses on data analysis and presentation. The data is collected through questionnaires. Effort is therefore made to present them in a tabular form. The data are further simplified in a percentage form for easier analysis and manipulation of data. In addition, hypotheses earlier formulated in chapter one were carefully tested using chi-square (X^2) goodness of fit test to see their validity or otherwise.

4.1 Questionnaire Administration

The total of three hundred and ninety nine (400) copies of questionnaires was administered to the respondents within the three selected local government areas of Ebonyi State. Only three hundred and fifty (350) copies of questionnaire were filled correctly and returned successfully by the researcher while forty nine (50) copies of questionnaire were not returned due to mutilations and damages. Frequency percentage tables were used to present and analyze the data in each of the tables to ascertain the percentage and below each of the tables, the researcher interprets what is in the table

Table I: Distribution According to Sex.

Sex	**Number**	**Percentage**
Male	230	66%
Female	120	34%
Total	**350**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

From the above table, male were more than male counterparts. The male were 230 respondents representing 66% while the female were 120 representing 34%.

Table 2: Distribution According to Age

SEX	**Age**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	18 and above	226	65%
Female	18 and above	119	35%
Total		**350**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The results presented in Table 2 show that a significant of 226 respondents with a percentage of 65% of male had attained ages from 18 and above years, while the female counterpart consisting of 119 with a percentage of 35%. Thus, it implies that male have more population than female in the selected three local government areas.

Table 3: Distribution according to Level of Education

Sex	Education	Frequency	Percent
Female	Basic Education and above	165	48%
Male	Basic Education and above	185	52%
Total		**350**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

From the Table 3, female respondents with a percentage of 48% said they had basic education and above while male respondents with a percentage of 52% had their basic education and above. This shows those males are more educated than female counterpart.

Table 4: Distribution According to Marital Status.

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	165	48%
Single	185	52%
Total	**350**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

From the above, it shows that 185 (52%) of the respondents are single while 165(48) are married.

4.2 Analysis of Respondents

This study was designed to provide answers according to research questions that were formulated earlier in chapter one.

Research Question One: Research Question 1: To what extent does lack of employment opportunities among youths affect community participation in selected Local Government Areas in Ebonyi State?

Table 5: Lack of employment opportunities discourages youths from participating in community development activities in the selected Local Government Areas.

Opinion	No of frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Strong Agreed	252	72	72
Agreed	78	22	92
Undecided	0	0	
Disagreed	20	5	
Strongly disagreed	0	0	100
Total	350		

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table above able shows that 252 respondents representing 72% strongly agreed, 78 respondents representing 22% agreed while 20 respondents representing 5% disagreed with the opinion. This simply indicates that lack of employment opportunities discourages youths from participating in community development activities in the selected Local Government Areas.

Table 6: Unemployed youths are less likely to attend community meetings and development programmes.

Opinion	No of frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Strong Agreed	190	54	54
Agreed	100	28	82
Undecided	0	0	
Disagreed	15	4	86
Strongly disagreed	45	12	100
Total	350		

Source: Survey, 2026

The table above shows that 190 respondents representing 54% strongly agreed that, 100 respondents representing 28% agreed, 45 respondents representing 12% strongly disagreed while 15 respondents representing 4% strongly disagreed with the opinion. This simply means that unemployed youths are less likely to attend community meetings and development programmes

Table 7: Youth unemployment reduces the willingness of youths to contribute their time and labour to community projects

Opinion	No of frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Strong Agreed	175	52	54
Agreed	75	21	79
Undecided	0	0	
Disagreed	25	7	
Strongly disagreed	75	21	100
Total	350		

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table above shows that 175 respondents representing 52% strongly agreed, 75 respondents representing 21% agreed, 75 respondents representing 21% strongly disagreed while 25 respondents representing 7% disagreed with the opinion. This simply indicates that the majority of the respondents were of the view that youth unemployment reduces the willingness of youths to contribute their time and labour to community projects.

Table 8: Lack of employment opportunities causes youths to migrate from their communities, thereby reducing their participation in local affairs

Opinion	No of frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Strong Agreed	252	72	72
Agreed	128	20	92
Undecided	0	0	
Disagreed	0	0	
Strongly disagreed	70	8	100
Total	350		

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The above table shows that 252 respondents representing 72% strongly agreed; 128 respondents representing 20% agreed while 70 respondents representing 8% disagreed with the opinion. This result simply shows that the majority of the respondent upheld the view that lack of employment

opportunities causes youths to migrate from their communities, thereby reducing their participation in local affairs

Table 9: Youth unemployment reduces youths' involvement in community-based organizations and voluntary activities

Opinion	No of frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Strong Agreed	190	54	54
Agreed	100	28	82
Undecided	0	0	
Disagreed	15	4	86
Strongly disagreed	45	12	100
Total	350		

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The above table indicates that190 respondents representing 54% strongly agreed; 100 respondents representing 28% agreed; 45 respondents representing 12% strongly disagreed while 15 respondents representing 4% strongly disagreed with the opinion. This is an indication that majority of the respondents believe that youth unemployment reduces youths' involvement in community-based organizations and voluntary activities.

Research Question Two: To what extent does inadequate skill among youths affect local economic activities in selected Local Government Areas in Ebonyi State?

Table 10: Inadequate vocational and entrepreneurial skills among youths limit their ability to establish businesses in the community

Opinion	No of frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Strong Agreed	170	54	54
Agreed	100	28	82
Undecided	0	0	
Disagreed	15	4	86
Strongly disagreed	45	12	100
Total	350		

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table above indicates that out of the 350 copies of questionnaires distributed by the researcher to the respondents, 170 respondents representing 54% strongly agreed, 100 respondents representing 28% agreed; 15 respondents representing 4% disagreed while 45 respondents representing 12% strongly disagreed with the opinion. The result simply indicates that greater majority of the respondents were of the view that inadequate vocational and entrepreneurial skills among youths limit their ability to establish businesses in the community

Table 11: Lack of relevant skills among youths reduces their involvement in productive economic activities

Opinion	No of frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Strong Agreed	185	52	54
Agreed	75	21	79
Undecided	0	0	
Disagreed	25	7	

Strongly disagreed	75	21	100
Total	350		

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The above table shows that 185 respondents representing 52% strongly agreed**,** 75 respondents representing 21% agreed, 25 respondents with 7% disagreed while 75 respondents with 21% strongly agreed with the opinion. The result indicates that greater percentage of the respondents upheld the view that lack of relevant skills among youths reduces their involvement in productive economic activities

Table 12: Inadequate skills among youths contribute to low productivity in local businesses and enterprises

Opinion	**No of frequency**	**Percentage (%)**	**Cumulative Percentage (%)**
Strong Agreed	185	52	54
Agreed	75	21	79
Undecided	0	0	
Disagreed	25	7	
Strongly disagreed	75	21	100
Total	350		

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table above shows that shows that 185 respondents representing 52% strongly agreed; 75 respondents representing 21% greed; 25 respondents with 7% disagreed while 75 respondents with 21% strongly agreed with the opinion. The result indicates that majority of the respondents upheld the view that inadequate skills among youths contribute to low productivity in local businesses and enterprises

Table 13: Youths without employable skills find it difficult to secure jobs or engage in sustainable self-employment

Opinion	**No of frequency**	**Percentage (%)**	**Cumulative Percentage (%)**
Strong Agreed	170	54	54
Agreed	100	28	82
Undecided	0	0	
Disagreed	15	4	86
Strongly disagreed	45	12	100
Total	350		

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table above shows that 170 respondents representing 54% strongly agreed; 100 respondents representing 28% agreed, 15 respondents representing 4% disagreed while 45 respondents representing 12% strongly disagreed with the opinion. The result indicates that majority of the respondents upheld the view that youths without employable skills find it difficult to secure jobs or engage in sustainable self-employment

Table 14: Inadequate skills among youths discourage the development of small-scale enterprises in the selected communities

Opinion	**No of frequency**	**Percentage (%)**	**Cumulative Percentage (%)**
Strong Agreed	185	52	54

Agreed	75	21	79
Undecided	0	0	
Disagreed	25	7	
Strongly disagreed	75	21	100
Total	350		

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table above shows that 185 respondents representing 52% strongly agreed, 75 respondents representing 21% agreed; 25 respondents with 7% disagreed while 75 respondents with 21% strongly disagreed with the opinion. The result indicates that majority of the respondents upheld the view that inadequate skills among youths discourage the development of small-scale enterprises in the selected communities

4.3 Testing of Hypotheses

In the course of our hypothesis, testing one hypothesis will be used to test others as cited in chapter one of this study

Hypothesis One

H_{01}: Lack of employment opportunities among youths has no significant effect on community participation in selected communities in Ebonyi State.

Table 15: Contingency table for Chi- Square Computations

Table	**Frequency**			**Total**
	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**	
T5	252(72)	70(20)	128(8)	350
T6	190(34)	100(28)	45(12)	350
	442	170	57	
Observed Responses OR	Expected Responses ER	Residuals (OR-ER)	Square of residuals (OR-ER)2	Ratio of Square Residuals to expected value (OR-ER)2/ER
252	72	180	32400	450
70	20	50	2500	125
128	8	120	14400	1800
190	54	136	18496	342
100	28	72	5184	185
45	12	33	1089	90
				X^2=2992

$X^2 = 2992$

Df = (C-1) (R-1)

(2-1) (3-1)

(1) (2)

= 2

Chi-square (X^2) critical table value at 0.05 is 9.925

Decision Rule

If the calculated X^2 is greater than the critical value, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative and if the calculated X^2 is less than the critical value the alternative hypothesis will be rejected and the null hypothesis accepted. From the table above, X^2=2992 while the Chi-square

(x^2) critical value at 0.05 is 9.925. This means that lack of employment opportunities among youths has significant effect on community participation in selected communities in Ebonyi State

Research Hypotheses Two

H_{02}: Inadequate skills among youths have no significant effect on local economic activities in selected communities in Ebonyi State.

Table 16: Contingency table for Chi- Square Computations

Table	**Frequency**			**Total**
	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**	
T9	170(54)	100(28)	45(12)	350
T10	185(52)	75(21)	75(21)	350
	355	175	120	
Observed Responses OR	Expected Responses ER	Residuals (OR-ER)	Square of residuals (OR-ER)2	Ratio of Square Residuals to expected value (OR-ER)2/ER
170	54	116	13456	249
100	28	72	5184	185
45	12	33	1089	90
185	52	133	17689	340
75	21	54	2916	138
75	21	54	2916	138
				X^2=1140

$X^2 = 1140$

Df = (C-1) (R-1)

(2-1) (3-1)

(1) (2)

= 2

Chi-square (X^2) critical table value at 0.05 is 9.925

Decision rule

If the calculated X^2 is greater than the critical value, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative and if the calculated X^2 is less than the critical value the alternative hypothesis will be rejected and the null hypothesis accepted. From the table above, X^2=1140 while the chi-square (x^2) critical value at 0.05 is 9.925. This means that inadequate skills among youths have no significant effect on local economic activities in selected communities in Ebonyi State.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that lack of employment opportunities among youths has a considerable effect on their participation in community development activities in the selected Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State**.** The responses showed that unemployed youths are less likely to attend community meetings and development programmes and are also less willing to contribute their time and labour to community projects. The findings further indicated that unemployment encourages some youths to migrate from their communities in search of better employment opportunities, thereby reducing their physical presence and participation in local affairs. In addition, the findings established that youth unemployment limits youths' involvement in community-based organizations, voluntary activities and other collective initiatives. Taken

together, these findings suggest that unemployment does not only constitute an economic problem for individual youths but also has social consequences for the communities in which they live. When youths lack stable employment and sources of livelihood, their attention may shift from voluntary community participation to the search for personal economic survival. Similarly, migration of unemployed youths reduces the pool of young people available to participate in community meetings, self-help projects, youth associations and other development activities. Thus, persistent youth unemployment can weaken the active participation of youths, which is an important human resource for community development.

This finding is consistent with Onyekwere (2021)**,** who noted that unemployment among youths can limit their participation in productive social activities and weaken their contribution to community development. The present finding also agrees with Kayode (2014)**,** who associated unemployment with economic hardship and movement of individuals in search of better livelihood opportunities. Such movement can reduce the availability of able-bodied youths within their communities for local development activities. The finding also corresponds with the broader human-capital and social-participation argument that individuals' economic circumstances influence their capacity to engage in collective activities. However, the present study extends this argument by showing that the effect of unemployment in the selected Local Government Areas is manifested through several interconnected dimensions: reduced attendance at community programmes, reduced willingness to contribute labour and time, migration, and declining involvement in community-based and voluntary organizations. Therefore, the findings demonstrate that addressing youth unemployment may have implications beyond income generation, as improved employment opportunities could provide youths with greater economic stability and potentially strengthen their ability to participate in community affairs.

The findings of the study also revealed that inadequate skills among youths considerably constrain local economic activities in the selected Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State**.** The responses showed that the lack of vocational and entrepreneurial skills limits youths' ability to establish businesses and reduces their participation in productive economic activities. The findings further established that inadequate skills contribute to low productivity in local businesses and enterprises, while youths without employable skills experience difficulties in securing jobs or engaging in sustainable self-employment. The study also found that inadequate skills discourage the development of small-scale enterprises within the selected communities. These findings, when considered together, indicate that the problem of inadequate youth skills operates through a chain of related effects. Where youths do not possess relevant vocational, technical and entrepreneurial competencies, they are less able to establish businesses, less competitive in the labour market and less capable of contributing effectively to existing enterprises. This subsequently limits productivity, weakens entrepreneurship and constrains the growth of small-scale businesses that could otherwise provide employment and income within the communities.

The finding is in line with the human-capital perspective**,** which emphasizes that the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills improves individuals' productive capacity and enhances their contribution to economic development. It also agrees with Onyekwere (2021), whose work emphasizes the importance of productive opportunities and youth capacity in addressing the socioeconomic consequences of unemployment. The finding further supports the position of Kayode (2014) that employment and productive engagement are closely associated with the capacity of individuals to participate meaningfully in economic activities. The present study, however, demonstrates that employment opportunities alone may not adequately address youth unemployment where young people lack the practical skills required by employers and the skills

necessary for self-employment. The inability to establish and sustain businesses, low productivity in existing enterprises, difficulty securing employment and limited development of small-scale businesses all point to the importance of vocational and entrepreneurial capacity. Therefore, the findings suggest that youth skills development is closely connected with the strengthening of local economic activities because skilled youths can participate more effectively in existing enterprises, establish new businesses and contribute to employment creation within their communities.

5. Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Findings

Based on the objectives of the study, the findings were summarized below;

1. The study revealed that lack of employment opportunities among youths affect community participation in selected Local Government Area in Ebonyi state

2. The study also revealed that inadequate skill among youths affect local economic activities in selected Local Government Area in Ebonyi state

5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that youth unemployment significantly and negatively affects the community development in Ebonyi state in particular and Nigeria in general, presenting a multifaceted challenge that impedes progress and stability. The lack of job opportunities for young people results in economic hardship, driving many into poverty and limiting their access to essential services such as education and healthcare. This economic instability fosters a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break. Moreover, youth unemployment contributes to higher crime rates and social unrest, undermining community safety and deterring investment. The psychological impact of unemployment, including feelings of hopelessness and frustration, exacerbates these issues, leading to greater social instability. Educational attainment and literacy rates are also negatively impacted, as economic pressures force many youths to abandon their studies, perpetuating illiteracy and limiting future opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. The overall economic output of the region suffers as a significant portion of the population remains unproductive, hindering growth and development. Addressing youth unemployment through targeted job creation, education, and skills development initiatives is crucial for fostering a more prosperous, stable, and resilient Ebonyi State and Nigeria.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommended;

1. The government, local government authorities and relevant stakeholders should create sustainable employment opportunities for youths through job-creation programmes, community-based enterprises, public works and entrepreneurship initiatives, in order to reduce unemployment, discourage youth migration and encourage greater participation in community development activities.
2. The government and relevant stakeholders should strengthen vocational, technical and entrepreneurial skills-acquisition programmes for youths through practical training, apprenticeships, start-up support and mentorship, so as to improve their employability, promote self-employment, increase productivity and encourage the growth of small-scale enterprises in the selected communities.

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