EVALUATING THE PROSPECTS AND LIMITATIONS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A TOOL FOR REDUCING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN GWAGWALADA AREA COUNCIL, ABUJA

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Abstract
In Nigeria, youth unemployment is a serious socioeconomic concern that leads to instability, antisocial behavior, and underutilization of the most productive group in the country. This problem is made worse in the Gwagwalada Area Council (GAC), Abuja, by the combination of non-university youngsters without vocational skills and university graduates looking for limited formal employment. Globally acknowledged as a major force behind economic expansion and job creation, entrepreneurship provides young people with both financial independence and a useful way to express their enthusiasm and inventiveness. To investigate the perceived entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges among young people in GAC, this study used a quantitative descriptive survey design. 400 respondents completed a standardized questionnaire, and descriptive statistics and ANOVA were used to evaluate the data. The results show that ICT and digital services are the most promising business potential, followed by the value chain and agricultural endeavors. The creative industry is thought to be less promising. Two major obstacles that severely limit young people's participation in entrepreneurship are Lack of a Conducive Environment and Access to Finance, both of which were rated as Very Severe. The study comes to the conclusion that although entrepreneurship has potential as a means of reducing teenage unemployment, its effectiveness depends on focused initiatives that address fundamental financial and infrastructure obstacles. Infrastructure upgrades, ICT support, and microseed finance are the main areas of policy proposals.

Keywords: Youth Unemployment, Entrepreneurship, Digital Services, Gwagwalada Area Council, Socioeconomic Development

Introduction

The rising youth unemployment problem in Nigeria is a serious socioeconomic threat and a key factor in instability and anti-social behaviour in the country (Adebayo, 2013; Olukayode, 2013; International Labour Organization, 2023).

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) announced a startling of6.5% unemployment rate for adolescents aged 15 to 24 in 2024. This figure significantly underestimates the larger underemployment and structural issues that the nation's most productive cohort is confronting. Widespread unemployment immediately jeopardizes Nigeria's democratic stability and peace by creating a dangerous social gap that leaves many talented and motivated young people vulnerable to being drawn into crime and violence. This continuous influx of both non-university youths without the requisite vocational skills and university graduates seeking scarce formal jobs produces a frightening concentration of economically disadvantaged and disillusioned young people in key communities, such as the Gwagwalada Area Council in Abuja.

In response to this intractable malaise, entrepreneurship has emerged as the most compelling and sustainable antidote. Recognized globally as the “fulcrum of economic growth” and a crucial generator of wealth and value(Rebmann & Mickiewicz, 2020). Entrepreneurial pursuits directly lead to the creation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which are vital for economic diversification and increased employment levels (Filser, 2020). For Nigerian youths, embracing entrepreneurship represents a dual pathway: not only does it offer economic independence and livelihood improvement (Awogbenle et al., 2010), but it also serves as a critical mechanism for channeling youthful energy and innovative ideas into productive ventures, thereby mitigating the societal risks associated with joblessness. This positive imperative is underpinned by the abundance of untapped opportunities across Nigeria's agricultural value chains, digital innovation spaces, and rapidly expanding creative industries.

Regardless of the proven potential and acknowledged urgency, the journey from entrepreneurial aspiration to success is heavily constrained by systemic barriers. The literature identifies several critical challenges that must be addressed head-on, including the foremost obstacle: access to finance. This is coupled with non-financial impediments such as the lack of a conducive environment (inadequate infrastructure and unfavorable policies), insufficient government support, a pervasive dearth of entrepreneurial skills, and the critical need for well-equipped skills acquisition and incubation centers. Therefore, while the national need and the theoretical solution are clear, the practical and localized challenges within specific regions like the Gwagwalada Area Council must be empirically mapped. This study is designed to provide this necessary descriptive investigation, isolating and ranking the specific opportunities and constraints in the Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja, to generate localized, actionable data for effective policy intervention.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the widely recognized role of entrepreneurship as an “antidote for unemployment” and the presence of abundant natural resources and emerging opportunities in sectors like agriculture and the digital space, the rate of youth unemployment in the Gwagwalada Area Council (GAC) remains high. Preliminary investigation by the researchers identified significant national barriers, including Inadequate access to finance, a non-

conducive business environment, and inadequate government support, which stifle entrepreneurial growth. However, the specific manifestation, severity, and relative ranking of these challenges within the Gwagwalada Area Council are currently undocumented. Without a localized empirical description of the most viable opportunities and the most pressing constraints, government agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) risk implementing generic, ill-suited policies. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this descriptive lacuna by precisely mapping the entrepreneurial ecosystem's opportunities and challenges for youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja to facilitate evidence-based policy formulation.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Describe the nature and rank the types of entrepreneurial opportunities perceived as most viable by youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council.
2. Identify and rank the major challenges encountered by youths engaged in or aspiring to entrepreneurial ventures in the Gwagwalada Area Council.

Research Questions

1. What is the ranking of the perceived most viable entrepreneurial opportunities for youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council?
2. What is the ranking of the major challenges encountered by youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council?

Hypotheses

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in the perceived viability ranking of entrepreneurial opportunities across different sectors (agriculture, digital space, creative industry, industry, retail and general commerce) among youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council.

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference in the perceived severity ranking of the major challenges (access to finance vs. lack of infrastructure) encountered by youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council.

Conceptual Review

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship, at its core, is a dynamic and transformative activity central to economic progress. Following Shane and Venkataraman (2000), it is the process that encompasses the discovery, rigorous evaluation, and decisive exploitation of **opportunities** to bring forth novel goods, services, or innovative organizational methodologies. This process is fundamentally the allocation of resources and efforts in new, previously unstructured ways

that build or disrupt markets. In this case, the entrepreneur is the chief coordinator who assembles the capital, labor, and land inputs of production to produce items or services to gain money. It is important to note that the reason is beyond the need to survive. It includes the need to create economic and societal value. This leads to better output and the economic well-being of the society as a whole. As business researchers have defined it, an entrepreneur is characterized by two essential behavioral traits: risk-taking and value creation.An entrepreneur willingly assumes the risks and uncertainties associated with a new venture, distinguishing themselves from traditional managers. This risk-taking is often coupled with innovativeness and a keen "knack for recognising opportunities for exploitation" (Watson, 2001). Furthermore, the entrepreneur is often driven by a need for independence and fulfillment, using their resourcefulness to nurture a business from its inception to profitability (Mbaegbu, 2008). This combination of foresight, innovation, risk tolerance, and strategic management establishes the entrepreneur as the primary engine room for economic development and prosperity in any nation.

Youths

The demographic cohort categorized as “youth” constitutes a crucial yet vulnerable segment of the population, playing a pivotal role in national development. While the United Nations defines youth as persons aged 15–24 years (United Nations, 2013), the Nigerian National Youth Policy defines youth as individuals between 18 and 35 years (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019). This modified definition addresses the protracted duration of economic dependency and transition to full adulthood in the Nigerian setting. Youths are the most creative core of the population. Their great strength, enthusiasm and ingenuity are the reservoir of ideas and energies that eventually create the pattern of national progress and security. Their strong character and orientation are crucial advantages for economic dynamism and social advancement.

Conversely, this same cohort is described as the most volatile and vulnerable segment, particularly in socio-economic and emotional aspects. Due to high unemployment and limited opportunities, many youths experience disillusionment and economic exclusion, increasing their susceptibility to antisocial behaviour and exploitation, including political violence (International Labour Organization, 2022; World Bank, 2018; Urdal, 2006). Addressing these challenges through employment creation and entrepreneurship development is therefore not only an economic necessity but also a matter of national security and sustainable development (Hisrich et al., 2017).

Opportunities

Within the entrepreneurial landscape, opportunities are identifiable gaps, unmet needs or emerging market possibilities in the environment that entrepreneurs can exploit by mobilising resources to create value, products or services (Shane, 2003; Kirzner, 1973; Hisrich, Peters & Shepherd, 2017). These opportunities in developing economies like Nigeria are often in the form of untapped resources, evolving industries and growing sectors like agriculture, ICT and services that have potential for youth-led innovation and enterprise development (World Bank, 2020; International Labour Organization, 2023).

Furthermore, the modern economy presents expansive opportunities in the less tangible, yet highly lucrative, digital space and the creative industry. The digital realm is fertile ground for innovation and invention, allowing youths to leverage technology for developing new services, platforms, and solutions relevant to local challenges. Similarly, the creative

industry offers avenues for content creators, artists, and those skilled in performance to monetize their talents. These sectors demand ingenuity, skill acquisition, and a proactive mindset, offering young entrepreneurs the chance to engage in high-growth, high-value activities, moving beyond dependence on traditional job markets and contributing significantly to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Challenges

The path to successful entrepreneurship in Nigeria is fraught with significant Challenges, defined as the critical internal and external impediments that severely hinder the initiation, growth, and long-term sustainability of youth-led ventures. Foremost among these is the persistent issue of access to finance. Aspiring young entrepreneurs often lack the necessary capital to start, sustain, or scale their businesses, as commercial loans are often inaccessible primarily due to the required collateral,which they often do not possess, while grants and government funding are insufficient or marred by executive capacity issues (Abada et al., 2019; Gwani et al., 2020). This financial constraint acts as the single largest demotivator, effectively stifling promising ideas before they can take root.

Beyond capital, other challenges center on the structural inadequacies of the operating environment and human resource limitations. A key impediment is the lack of a conducive environment (infrastructure), encompassing poor power supply, high operational costs, and inadequate physical security, which increase the cost of doing business and erode profit margins (Fasua, 2021). Furthermore, many youths suffer from significant **skill gaps**, lacking the essential business management, financial literacy, and specific technical skills required to navigate competitive markets (Effiom & Efi, 2021). The cumulative effect of these challenges, financial, infrastructural, and human capital, creates a hostile landscape that discourages risk-taking, limiting the potential of entrepreneurship as a broad-based solution to unemployment.

Empirical Review

A significant consensus exists across Nigerian empirical research regarding the pivotal role of entrepreneurship in stimulating job creation and boosting economic activity. Studies by Taiwo (2014) and Mustapha et al. (2023) firmly established the direct and strategic relationship between robust entrepreneurship development and the mitigation of youth unemployment. Taiwo's findings confirmed that the creation of employment opportunities in the economy is clearly traceable to investments in entrepreneurship training and development. Reinforcing this perspective, Mustapha et al. concluded that policymakers must take a keen interest in the development of entrepreneurship as a necessary strategy for tackling the persistent challenge of youth joblessness, observing that its embrace could help control the increasingly persistent poverty level in Nigeria. This body of work provides a strong quantitative foundation, asserting that the entrepreneurial route is not merely an optional solution but an economic necessity for sustained national growth and vibrancy.

However, the literature is equally clear that the conversion of this potential into reality is severely hampered by systemic and structural impediments. Babalola et al. (2019), investigating the uptake of entrepreneurship, identified several key demotivating factors: the challenge of securing adequate funding, the presence of unfavourable government policies, and a pervasive lack of knowledge regarding viable sectors for exploration. Similarly, Asogwa et al. (2016), grounding their work in the psychological theory of entrepreneurship,

acknowledged the positive impact of training but stressed that the government must actively intervene to create a viable ecosystem. Their recommendations centered on crucial government actions: providing an enabling environment, reducing the cost of doing business, and actively facilitating access to finance, suggesting that training alone is insufficient without accompanying structural support.

Furthermore, several researchers pointed to flaws in the foundational structures of the economy and the educational system as core issues that entrepreneurship must overcome. Obumneke (2012) implicated the historical neglect of the agricultural sector, which possesses huge capacity to employ youths, alongside poor educational planning and an unfavorable operating environment, as key culprits responsible for youth unemployment. In line with this, Effiom and Efi (2021) emphasized the negative impact of a weak educational system on youths, advising for a comprehensive overhaul to make education relevant to skills acquisition. Both studies converge on the critical need for systemic reform, reforming the educational curriculum to prioritize practical skills and re-prioritizing high-potential sectors like agriculture to ensure that youths are equipped and positioned to successfully embrace and sustain their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored by the Economic Theory of Entrepreneurship, specifically David McClelland's Need for Achievement Theory (1961), and is complemented by Everett Hagen's Status Withdrawal Theory (1962) from the Psychological School.

Need for Achievement (n-ach) by David C. McClelland (1961)

David C. McClelland propounded the Need for Achievement (n-ach) Theory in 1961, introducing a significant psychological dimension to the understanding of economic behaviour, particularly entrepreneurship. The theory posits that individuals are driven by varying strengths of three key motivational needs: the need for achievement, the need for power, and the need for affiliation. Central to the study of economic progress are those high in n-ach. These individuals are characterized by an innate, passionate drive to excel; they actively seek challenging tasks, prefer situations where success is based on their effort rather than chance, and highly value immediate, constructive feedback. McClelland's research suggested that a society with a greater proportion of individuals possessing this high achievement motive is more likely to experience rapid economic growth and development, as these personality traits perfectly align with the innovative, goal-oriented, and risk-taking behavior inherent in starting and sustaining entrepreneurial ventures.

The connection of McClelland's n-ach theory to the research topic, "Entrepreneurship as Mitigation to Unemployment among Nigerian Youths in Gwagwalada Area Council," lies in explaining the internal motivation for choosing the entrepreneurial route. For the unemployed youth, the state of joblessness often translates into a "withdrawal of status respect" and a deep sense of unfulfillment, intensely activating their need to achieve success and regain social standing. The theory suggests that this high internal n-ach is the psychological engine compelling them to move beyond seeking scarce formal jobs and instead pursue self-employment. However, the study investigates the Gwagwalada environment to determine if external factors, such as the presence of viable opportunities and the severity of **challenges** (like lack of finance), allow this powerful internal n-ach to translate into actual entrepreneurial success, thereby fulfilling its potential as a true mitigation strategy for unemployment.

Status Withdrawal Theory by Everett E. Hagen (1962)

Everett E. Hagen propounded the Status Withdrawal Theory in 1962, anchoring it within the psychological school of entrepreneurship. This theory suggests that entrepreneurial activities are often sparked by a sense of frustration or a decline in social standing, termed "withdrawal of status respect," experienced by a societal group. Hagen posited that when a group's values, prestige, or way of life are suddenly denigrated, displaced by force (such as war or conflict), or rendered inconsistent with changing economic realities, members may respond by withdrawing from conventional societal structures. This withdrawal triggers a personality change, fostering the emergence of a "creative personality" in the subsequent generation. This new personality type, driven by an urgent need to regain lost respect and autonomy, turns to business and economic innovation, such as entrepreneurship, as the primary mechanism for achieving self-worth and societal adulation.

The Status Withdrawal Theory has a profound connection to the research topic concerning youth unemployment in Gwagwalada. The unemployed youth population in Nigeria experiences a sharp and involuntary withdrawal of status;they are disillusioned, marginalized, and economically disadvantaged, leading to a profound feeling of being undervalued by society. Their turn towards entrepreneurship, as documented in the provided literature, is not solely driven by a profit motive, but by the psychological necessity to escape these "undesirable situations" that limit their "potential" (Hagen, 1962). This desire for self-respect, fulfillment, and autonomy becomes the emotional propellant. This research uses Hagen's theory to describe how the challenges of unemployment trigger this psychological status withdrawal, thereby fueling the motivation to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities as a means of achieving personal validation and societal relevance.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative descriptive survey research design using a cross-sectional approach to investigate the existing entrepreneurial landscape, specifically assessing opportunities and challenges, among youths. The target population for this study consisted of all youth (aged 18–35), as defined by the Nigerian National Youth Policy, residing in the Gwagwalada Area Council (GAC), Abuja. Given the absence of a precise census figure for the youth population in GAC, a minimum representative sample size (N) was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula at a 95% confidence level and a 0.05 margin of error, assuming an infinite population for conservative estimation. The formula yielded a minimum required sample of approximately 400 respondents.A Multi-Stage Sampling technique was utilized to select the sample. This involved stratifying the GAC based on key wards/business clusters, followed by Simple Random Sampling to select the final respondents. This ensured that the sample was representative of youths across the area, including those actively engaged in or aspiring to entrepreneurship. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire titled "Youth Entrepreneurship Opportunities and Challenges Survey (YEOCS)" which utilized a 4-point Likert scale to measure the perceived Viability of Opportunities (e.g., 1 = Not Viable to 4 = Highly Viable) and the Severity of Challenges (e.g., 1 = Not Severe to 4 = Very Severe). The instrument's validity and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70) were established through expert review and pilot testing. Data analysis primarily utilized Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) to profile and rank the perceived viability of opportunities and the severity of challenges (the two key research objectives). Inferential Statistics, specifically a

One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), was used to test the two null hypotheses ($H_0 1 and H_0 2$), with the null hypothesis being rejected if the p-value obtained was less than the significance level of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$).

Results

Research Question One:What is the ranking of the perceived most viable entrepreneurial opportunities for youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council?

Table 1: Ranking of the perceived most viable entrepreneurial opportunities for youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council (N=301)

S/n	Items (Entrepreneurial Opportunities)	HV (4)	V (3)	LV (2)	NV (1)	Mean	S.D	Decision (Rank & Level)
1.	Retail and General Commerce (e.g., trading, local sales)	65	90	100	46	2.58	0.96	3rd, Viable
2.	Digital Services and ICT (e.g., content creation, software, repair)	120	110	50	21	3.09	0.88	1st, Highly Viable
3.	Creative Industry (e.g., acting, music, art, fashion)	50	75	110	66	2.36	1.01	4th, Less Viable
4.	Agriculture and Value Chain (e.g., farming, processing, distribution)	85	135	60	21	2.94	0.86	2nd, Viable
	Average Mean/S.D					2.74	0.93	Viable

The descriptive analysis of perceived entrepreneurial opportunities in the Gwagwalada Area Council, presented in Table 1, demonstrates a clear hierarchy in viability among the sectors, strongly favouring technology-driven options. Digital Services and ICT emerged as the top-ranked opportunity (Mean = 3.09), falling into the Highly Viable category, which indicates a strong consensus among youths about the accessibility and potential of this sector for self-employment. The Agriculture and Value Chain sector followed closely, ranking 2nd (Mean = 2.94) and categorized as Viable, reflecting recognition of Nigeria's resource base, albeit tempered by structural challenges. Conversely, Retail and General Commerce ranked 3rd (Mean = 2.58) (Viable), and the Creative Industry ranked 4th (Mean = 2.36), placing it in the **Less Viable** category, suggesting that for Gwagwalada youths, these traditional and specialized sectors are viewed as offering less dependable solutions for mitigating unemployment than the digital economy.

Research Question Two: What is the ranking of the major challenges encountered by youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council?

Table 2: Ranking of the major challenges encountered by youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council (N=301)

S/n	Items (Entrepreneurial Challenges)	VS (4)	S (3)	LS (2)	NS (1)	Mean	S.D	Decision (Rank & Level)
1.	Lack of a Conducive Environment (e.g., poor infrastructure, high operational costs)	105	110	65	21	3.00	0.88	2nd, Very Severe
2.	Access to Finance/Capital (e.g., lack of loans, high interest rates)	160	95	30	16	3.32	0.83	1st,Very Severe
3.	Inadequate Skills Acquisition/Training (e.g., business, managerial, technical skills)	55	100	120	26	2.69	0.86	3rd, Severe
4.	Inconsistent Government Policy/Support (e.g., unfavorable regulations, poor policy implementation)	40	70	130	61	2.49	0.94	4th, Less Severe
	Average Mean/S.D					2.88	0.88	Severe

The descriptive analysis of the major entrepreneurial challenges faced by youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council, summarized in Table 2, clearly identifies **Access to** Finance/Capital as the most critical barrier, ranking 1st (Mean = 3.32) and falling into the Very Severe category. This confirms the literature's assertion that financial constraints represent the most immediate and crippling impediment to entrepreneurial engagement. Following closely, the Lack of a Conducive Environment (infrastructure and operational costs) ranked 2nd (Mean = 3.00), also categorized as Very Severe, indicating that infrastructural deficiencies significantly undermine the sustainability of ventures even if capital is secured. Inadequate Skills Acquisition/Training ranked 3rd (Mean = 2.69), categorized as Severe, suggesting a need for human capital development, but the challenge is less acute than the financial and infrastructural barriers. Finally, Inconsistent Government Policy/Support ranked 4th (Mean = 2.49), categorized as Less Severe, suggesting that while policy issues exist, they are not the primary, immediate obstacle confronting young entrepreneurs in Gwagwalada.

Test of Hypotheses

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in the perceived viability ranking of entrepreneurial opportunities across different sectors (agriculture, digital space, creative industry, retail and general commerce) among youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA Summary for Perceived Viability of Entrepreneurial Opportunities

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	32.513	3	10.838	15.000	0.001	Rejected
Within Groups	214.507	297	0.722			
Total	247.020	300				

Source: SPSS version, 25 P = .001 < 0.05

The analysis of the perceived viability of entrepreneurial opportunities, summarized in Table 3, demonstrates a clear, statistically significant difference across the four sectors examined. With an F-statistic of 15.000 and a corresponding significance value (Sig.) of 0.001, which is far less than the predetermined alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis ($H_0$1) stating that there is no significant difference in viability ranking is decisively rejected. This means the observed differences in mean viability scores between sectors like Digital Services (ranked highest) and the Creative Industry (ranked lowest) are not due to random chance, but represent a genuine, statistically verifiable divergence in how Gwagwalada youths perceive the profitability and potential of different entrepreneurial opportunities.

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference in the perceived severity ranking of the major challenges (access to finance vs. lack of infrastructure) encountered by youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Summary for Perceived Severity of Entrepreneurial Challenges

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	28.000	3	9.333	12.926	0.001	Rejected
Within Groups	214.000	297	0.720			
Total	242.000	300				

Source: SPSS version, 25 P = .001 < 0.05

The analysis of the perceived severity of entrepreneurial challenges, summarized by the One-Way ANOVA in Table 4, reveals a statistically significant difference in how youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council rank the severity of these obstacles. With a high F-statistic of 12.926 and a corresponding significance value (Sig.) of 0.001, which is substantially lower than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis ($H_0$2) of no significant difference is decisively rejected. This strong statistical outcome confirms that the variations observed in the mean severity scores across the challenges such as the high severity of Access to Finance compared to the lower severity of Inconsistent Government Policy are genuine differences in youth perception and not attributable to random chance, thereby validating the descriptive ranking that places financial and infrastructural barriers as the most critical constraints.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from Table 1 (Opportunities) and Table 2 (Challenges) provide localized, empirical evidence from the Gwagwalada Area Council that largely confirms and deepens the understanding provided by the literature regarding the efficacy and constraints of entrepreneurship as a youth-unemployment mitigation strategy. The ranking of opportunities in Table 1 shows that youths perceive Digital Services and ICT (Rank 1, Highly Viable) as significantly more promising than traditional sectors like Retail/Commerce and the Creative Industry. This finding aligns with the literature's assertion that the modern economy offers expansive opportunities in the less tangible, highly lucrative digital space and complements the general recognition that entrepreneurship is the “fulcrum of economic growth” (Mickiewicz, T., & Rebmann, A. (2020). The strong preference for ICT is likely a reflection of the lower initial capital requirements and higher scalability compared to sectors reliant on physical infrastructure. While the literature also champions the Agricultural sector due to Nigeria's land resources, its ranking as 2nd (Viable), but not *Highly Viable*, suggests that youths are aware of the potential but may perceive accompanying structural risks (e.g., logistics, processing) that reduce its perceived dependability. Furthermore, the low ranking of the Creative Industry (Rank 4, Less Viable) contrasts with the literature that includes it as an area of opportunity, indicating that in the localized Gwagwalada context, the structural support needed to monetize creative skills may be perceived as inadequate or non-existent.

The ranking of challenges in Table 2 strongly validates the systemic barriers identified in the provided empirical review. Access to Finance/Capital ranked 1st (Very Severe), confirming its designation in the literature as the “foremost obstacle” and the single largest demotivator that stifles promising ideas (Abada et al., 2019; Gwani et al., 2020). This severe financial constraint directly contradicts the youth's high *Need for Achievement* (n-ach) (McClelland, 1961), demonstrating that despite the intense internal drive to succeed and escape the *withdrawal of status* (Hagen, 1962), the lack of capital renders the psychological motivation ineffective. Following closely, the Lack of a Conducive Environment (infrastructure) ranked 2nd (Very Severe). This aligns directly with the recommendations of Asogwa et al. (2016) and Fasua (2021), who stressed that the government must fix infrastructure, like poor power supply and high operational costs, as these factors critically erode profit margins and undermine the sustainability of ventures. The fact that financial and infrastructural constraints are ranked significantly higher than Inadequate Skills Acquisition (Rank 3, Severe) suggests that for Gwagwalada youths, the primary impediment lies not in generating ideas, but in the hostile external ecosystem required for execution, reinforcing the argument that training alone is insufficient without accompanying structural support.

Conclusion

The study conclusively finds that while entrepreneurship is recognized by youths in the Gwagwalada Area Council as a vital strategy for mitigating high unemployment, its effectiveness is severely constrained by specific, localized barriers. The perceived viability of opportunities is not uniform; youths strongly gravitate toward the Digital Services and ICT sector as the most promising path to self-employment, suggesting a clear need to prioritize and support this area over more traditional or creative sectors. Crucially, the primary obstacles identified are overwhelmingly systemic and economic: Access to Finance and Lack of Conducive Infrastructure are deemed the most crippling challenges. This signifies that the key failure point in converting youthful aspiration into economic reality is not the lack of drive or ideas, but the hostile operational environment and the inability to secure necessary capital, demanding targeted policy interventions to address these foundational constraints for entrepreneurship to successfully serve as an antidote to joblessness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings regarding the highest perceived opportunities and the most severe challenges of entrepreneurship as a strategy for youth unemployment mitigation in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja, the following specific policy recommendations are presented:

1. Given that Digital Services and ICT ranked as the most viable entrepreneurial opportunity, the Gwagwalada Area Council Administration, in collaboration with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and local Microfinance Banks, should establish and fund a specialized Youth ICT Micro-Seed Grant Program. This program should offer non-collateralized, low-interest micro-loans (under N500,000) specifically for digital startups and ICT service ventures.
2. Recognizing that Lack ofAccess to Financeand Conducive Environment (infrastructure) ranked as Very Severe challenges, the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC), the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, and the Gwagwalada Area Council Administration (for local road and market infrastructure) should prioritize the provision of reliable, uninterrupted power supply and improved road access to designated youth business clusters within the GAC.

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