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## Tvet and youth empowerment in Rivers State

<sup>1</sup>Ndukwu, Godstime .C\* and <sup>2</sup>Dr. Nwaudo - EWO, C

<sup>1</sup>Department of Agricultural Education, Faculty of Education,  
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

<sup>2</sup>Department of Agricultural Education, Faculty Of vocational and technical education  
Ignatius Ajuru University of education, Port Harcourt

### Abstract

*This study examined the topic of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and youth empowerment in Rivers State, Nigeria, focusing on how participation in TVET programmes influenced youth empowerment and the challenges that affected programme effectiveness. Youths in Rivers State constituted a significant portion of the population, yet high levels of unemployment, underemployment, and social exclusion had limited their economic independence and productive engagement in society. The study employed desk research, analyzing secondary sources, including journals, policy documents, and reports, to evaluate the role of TVET in equipping youths with practical skills, technical competencies, and entrepreneurial abilities. The findings indicated that participation in TVET programmes significantly enhanced employability, fostered entrepreneurship, increased confidence, and encouraged active involvement in economic and community development. Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges constrained the effectiveness of TVET, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, obsolete training equipment, shortage of qualified instructors, weak collaboration between training institutions and industries, and societal preference for academic education over vocational training. The study concluded that while TVET had served as an important instrument for youth empowerment and socio-economic development in Rivers State, addressing these limitations was necessary to maximize its impact. The study recommended that The Rivers State Government and relevant agencies should expand access to quality TVET programmes, provide start-up support for graduates, ensure adequate funding, upgrade facilities and equipment, train instructors, and strengthen industry linkages to enhance programme effectiveness and relevance.*

**Keywords:** *Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Youth Empowerment, Rivers State, Skills Acquisition, Employability, Entrepreneurship*

### \*Corresponding Author:

Ndukwu, Godstime .C

Email: godstime.ndukwu@rsu.edu.ng

## Introduction

The issue of youth empowerment has emerged as one of the most critical socio-economic challenges confronting Nigeria, particularly in states with large youthful populations such as

Rivers State. Youths constitute a substantial proportion of the state's population and represent a vital resource for economic growth, innovation, and social stability. However, persistent youth unemployment, underemployment, and social exclusion have continued to limit their productive potential and meaningful participation in development. In response to these challenges, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has gained prominence as a strategic approach for equipping youths with relevant skills, competencies, and attitudes required for productive engagement in the economy and society (UNESCO, 2016).

TVET is broadly concerned with the acquisition of practical and technical skills required for specific occupations and trades. Unlike general academic education, TVET emphasizes hands-on learning, problem-solving, and direct engagement with the world of work. This practical orientation makes it particularly relevant in contexts where formal employment opportunities are limited and where self-employment and entrepreneurship are critical survival strategies (Okoye & Arimonu, 2016). In Rivers State, where economic activities are largely dominated by the oil and gas sector with limited absorptive capacity for labour, TVET offers an alternative pathway for youths to attain economic independence and self-reliance.

Youth empowerment, on the other hand, extends beyond employment to include the ability of young people to make informed decisions, control their economic lives, and contribute meaningfully to community development. It involves building capacities, expanding opportunities, and creating an enabling environment for youths to thrive socially and economically (Adebayo, 2019). The link between TVET and youth empowerment therefore lies in the capacity of vocational and technical training to provide youths with employable skills, entrepreneurial abilities, and the confidence required to participate actively in economic life.

In Rivers State, the failure of the formal education system to adequately prepare graduates for the labour market has resulted in a growing mismatch between educational outcomes and industry needs. Many school leavers and graduates lack practical skills, making them unemployable despite their academic qualifications (Akinwale, 2020). This situation has contributed to widespread youth frustration, restiveness, and involvement in social vices such as militancy, cultism, and criminal activities within the Niger Delta region (Emeh & Obi, 2013). TVET is often presented as a corrective measure capable of addressing this skills gap by aligning training with labour market demands and local economic realities.

Furthermore, TVET plays a crucial role in promoting entrepreneurship and small-scale enterprise development among youths. Through skill acquisition in areas such as welding, electrical installation, ICT, fashion design, carpentry, and agro-allied trades, youths can create employment for themselves and others, thereby contributing to poverty reduction and local economic development (Oviawe, Uwameiye, & Uddin, 2017). In recognition of this potential, the Rivers State government has established skills acquisition centres and youth empowerment programmes aimed at improving employability and reducing dependency on oil-related jobs.

Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of TVET in empowering youths in Rivers State remains a subject of debate. Challenges such as inadequate funding, poor training facilities, limited access, societal bias against vocational careers, and weak collaboration between training institutions and industry continue to constrain outcomes (Okoro, 2018). These issues raise important questions about the extent to which TVET has translated into meaningful empowerment for youths.

### **Statement of the problem**

Youth empowerment remains a critical socio-economic challenge in Rivers State despite the state's vast natural resources and economic significance in Nigeria. A large number of youths are unemployed or underemployed, limiting their ability to achieve economic independence and contribute meaningfully to societal development. This situation has resulted in increased poverty, dependency, and frustration among young people, posing serious threats to social stability and sustainable development in the state.

A major problem underlying youth disempowerment in Rivers State is the persistent mismatch between the skills possessed by youths and the demands of the labour market. The formal education system places greater emphasis on theoretical knowledge and certification, with limited focus on practical and vocational skills. As a result, many school leavers and graduates lack employable competencies and entrepreneurial skills required for self-reliance, thereby worsening unemployment and underemployment levels.

Although Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is widely regarded as an effective strategy for addressing youth unemployment and promoting self-reliance, its impact in Rivers State remains limited. Many TVET programmes are constrained by inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, obsolete training equipment, and insufficiently trained instructors. These challenges reduce the quality and relevance of training and weaken the capacity of TVET to empower youths economically.

Furthermore, negative societal perceptions of vocational and technical education continue to discourage youth participation. TVET is often viewed as inferior to university education, leading to low enrolment and poor commitment among youths. In addition, weak linkages between TVET institutions and industries in Rivers State limit opportunities for industrial training, apprenticeship, and job placement, thereby

hindering the transition from training to employment.

The consequences of ineffective youth empowerment are evident in rising youth restiveness, crime, and other social vices across the state. Despite several government-led skills acquisition and empowerment initiatives, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which TVET has effectively addressed these challenges. Hence, there is a need for a systematic examination of TVET and youth empowerment in Rivers State, focusing on existing problems and strategies for improving outcomes.

### **Aim and objectives of the study**

The main aim of this study is to examine the relationship between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and youth empowerment in Rivers State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the extent to which participation in TVET programmes influences youth empowerment in Rivers State; and
2. examine the challenges affecting the effectiveness of TVET programmes in promoting youth empowerment in Rivers State.

### **Significance of the study**

This study is significant to several stakeholders concerned with youth development and skills acquisition in Rivers State. Youths stand to benefit from the findings, as the study will highlight the relevance of TVET in enhancing employable skills, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial capacity. This will encourage greater youth participation in vocational and technical programmes as viable pathways to sustainable livelihoods.

The study will be beneficial to government and policymakers in Rivers State by providing empirical evidence to guide the formulation and implementation of effective TVET and youth empowerment policies. The findings will assist in identifying gaps in existing programmes and

inform strategies for improved funding, infrastructure development, and inclusive access to TVET opportunities.

TVET institutions and instructors will benefit from the study through insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current training practices. This will support curriculum improvement, instructor capacity building, and stronger alignment of training with labour market demands.

The study will also be valuable to industry operators and employers, as it will emphasize the importance of collaboration with TVET institutions for skills development, apprenticeship, and workforce readiness. Such collaboration can enhance productivity and reduce skills shortages. Researchers and academics will benefit from the study as it will contribute to existing literature on TVET and youth empowerment, serving as a reference material for further studies and comparative research within Rivers State and Nigeria at large.

### **Literature Reviewed**

#### **Concept of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) refers to all forms of education and training that provide individuals with practical skills, technical knowledge, and competencies required for specific occupations, trades, or professions. TVET emphasizes hands-on learning, skill acquisition, and the application of knowledge to real-life work situations, preparing learners for paid employment, self-employment, and lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2016). It encompasses formal, non-formal, and informal learning systems, including apprenticeships, vocational schools, technical colleges, and workplace-based training.

Conceptually, TVET is designed to bridge the gap between education and the labour market by equipping learners with industry-relevant skills and attitudes such as creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability. Unlike general academic

education, which focuses mainly on theoretical knowledge, TVET prioritizes practical competence and productivity. In developing countries like Nigeria, TVET is regarded as a key instrument for youth empowerment, poverty reduction, and sustainable economic development (Okoye & Arimonu, 2016). It also plays a critical role in promoting entrepreneurship and reducing overdependence on white-collar employment (Oviawe, Uwameiye, & Uddin, 2017).

The origin of TVET can be traced to early human societies where skills were transmitted through informal apprenticeship systems. Crafts such as blacksmithing, carpentry, weaving, and farming were taught through observation, imitation, and direct participation in work activities. During the Industrial Revolution in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, the demand for skilled labour led to the formalization of technical and vocational training through trade schools and technical institutes (UNESCO, 2015). This marked the transition of TVET from informal skill transmission to structured educational systems.

In Nigeria, the development of TVET dates back to the colonial era when vocational training centres were established to produce skilled manpower for clerical, technical, and craft occupations (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2014). Since independence, TVET has been incorporated into national education policies as a means of manpower development and economic diversification. Despite challenges in implementation, TVET remains a strategic tool for addressing unemployment and enhancing workforce productivity in Nigeria and other developing economies.

#### **Historical Development of TVET in Nigeria**

The historical development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria is closely linked to the country's socio-economic needs and manpower development objectives. Prior to colonial rule, vocational skills

development existed mainly in informal forms through traditional apprenticeship systems. Skills such as farming, fishing, blacksmithing, weaving, carpentry, and pottery were transmitted from one generation to another through observation, imitation, and practice within families and communities (Fafunwa, 2004). This indigenous system ensured the production of skilled artisans who met the economic needs of their societies.

The advent of colonial administration marked a significant shift in the organization of vocational and technical education in Nigeria. During the colonial period, formal TVET institutions were established primarily to meet the manpower needs of the colonial economy. Trade centres and vocational schools were introduced to train artisans, craftsmen, and technical assistants for public works, railways, and other colonial enterprises (Taiwo, 2010). However, vocational education was largely neglected in favour of literary education, which produced clerks and interpreters for the colonial administration.

After independence in 1960, Nigeria began to recognize the importance of TVET for national development and industrialization. The Ashby Commission of 1960 emphasized the need for technical and vocational manpower to support economic growth, leading to the expansion of technical colleges and polytechnics across the country (Ashby, 1960). Subsequent National Development Plans further highlighted TVET as a means of producing middle-level technical manpower for industries and public services (Ogunleye, 2013).

The introduction of the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1977 marked a major milestone in the development of TVET in Nigeria. The policy formally integrated technical and vocational education into the national education system, emphasizing skill acquisition, self-reliance, and technological development (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2014). Institutions such as technical colleges,

polytechnics, and monotechnics were strengthened to support this objective.

In recent years, TVET development in Nigeria has been driven by concerns over youth unemployment, poverty, and economic diversification. Government agencies such as the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) have played key roles in regulating standards and promoting skills development. Despite persistent challenges, TVET remains a crucial component of Nigeria's education system and a vital tool for sustainable development.

### **TVET Policies and Institutional Framework in Rivers State**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Rivers State is guided by a combination of national policies and state-specific initiatives aimed at promoting skill acquisition, youth empowerment, and workforce development. At the national level, the implementation of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014) provides the overarching framework for TVET, mandating that technical and vocational education be offered at the secondary and tertiary levels to produce skilled manpower for national development. The policy emphasizes practical skill acquisition, entrepreneurship, and the integration of vocational subjects into the general education curriculum.

At the state level, Rivers State has developed complementary policies and institutional structures to ensure the effective delivery of TVET. The Rivers State Ministry of Education, through its Department of Technical and Vocational Education, oversees the planning, regulation, and coordination of vocational programmes in secondary schools, technical colleges, and skills acquisition centres. Key institutions such as the Rivers State Polytechnic, technical colleges, and vocational training centres serve as hubs for skill development in areas like

engineering, ICT, hospitality, agriculture, and creative arts (Omotayo & Nwankwo, 2020).

The state also collaborates with federal agencies such as the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to ensure curriculum standardization, accreditation, and quality assurance in TVET programmes. In addition, public-private partnerships have been encouraged to improve access, infrastructure, and industry relevance of training programmes. These partnerships aim to align vocational education with labour market needs, provide industrial attachments, and facilitate entrepreneurship development among youths (Eke & Chukwuma, 2021).

Despite the existence of these policies and institutions, challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, low public perception of TVET, and limited linkages with industries continue to affect programme effectiveness. Strengthening policy implementation, institutional capacity, and stakeholder collaboration remains critical for enhancing the role of TVET in youth empowerment and socio-economic development in Rivers State.

### **Youth Empowerment: Meaning and Dimensions**

Youth empowerment refers to the process of equipping young people with the knowledge, skills, resources, and opportunities needed to make informed decisions, take control of their lives, and actively participate in economic, social, and political activities. It goes beyond mere access to education or employment; it encompasses building confidence, fostering self-reliance, and creating an enabling environment where youths can realize their full potential (Adebayo, 2019). Empowerment enables youths to contribute meaningfully to community development, economic growth, and social transformation, reducing dependency and vulnerability to socio-economic challenges.

Youth empowerment is multidimensional, encompassing economic, social, political, and psychological dimensions. Economically, it involves providing youths with employable skills, access to entrepreneurship opportunities, and financial resources to achieve self-reliance and economic stability (Ogunleye, 2013). Socially, empowerment includes strengthening youths' capacity to engage positively in community life, maintain networks, and influence societal norms and decisions. Politically, it entails equipping youths with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, encouraging participation in governance, decision-making, and advocacy for social justice (Akinwale, 2020). Psychologically, empowerment fosters self-confidence, resilience, problem-solving ability, and a sense of agency, enabling youths to overcome challenges and take initiative in shaping their futures.

In the context of Rivers State, youth empowerment is critical given the high levels of unemployment, underemployment, and socio-political restiveness among young people. Initiatives aimed at skill acquisition, entrepreneurship development, and vocational training are essential to empower youths economically while fostering social stability and personal growth.

#### **Role of TVET in Youth Skill Acquisition**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a pivotal role in equipping youths with practical skills that are essential for personal development, employment, and entrepreneurship. Unlike general academic education, TVET focuses on hands-on learning, technical competence, and industry-relevant skills, enabling youths to acquire the knowledge and abilities needed to perform effectively in specific trades or professions (Abiodun & Salami, 2020). Through structured training in areas such as engineering, ICT, agriculture, hospitality, fashion design, and creative arts, TVET prepares youths to meet labour market demands and pursue self-

employment opportunities (Chukwu & Ibekwe, 2019).

TVET enhances skill acquisition by integrating theory with practice, providing youths with opportunities for apprenticeships, workshops, and industrial attachments. These practical experiences allow learners to apply knowledge in real-world contexts, develop problem-solving abilities, and improve technical competence (Emmanuel & Okafor, 2021). In addition, TVET fosters entrepreneurial skills, such as financial management, business planning, and innovation, which empower youths to establish small and medium-sized enterprises, reduce reliance on formal employment, and contribute to local economic development.

In Rivers State, where youth unemployment and underemployment are persistent challenges, TVET is particularly important as a mechanism for building a skilled workforce that can drive economic diversification and development. By providing relevant training tailored to the state's economic needs, TVET ensures that youths possess practical competencies aligned with industrial and community requirements (Eze & Nnamani, 2022). Moreover, participation in TVET instills discipline, work ethics, and confidence in youths, enhancing their employability and capacity to engage in productive activities. Overall, TVET serves as a critical tool for youth skill acquisition, bridging the gap between education and employment, promoting entrepreneurship, and fostering socio-economic empowerment. It transforms unskilled youths into competent individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society and the economy.

### **TVET and Employment Generation among Youths in Rivers State**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been recognized globally as a key strategy for addressing youth unemployment and promoting economic self-reliance. In Rivers State,

where formal employment opportunities are limited and youth unemployment rates remain high, TVET provides an important pathway for generating both paid employment and self-employment opportunities (Okeke & Ugochukwu, 2021). By equipping young people with practical skills in trades such as welding, electrical installation, ICT, carpentry, agriculture, and hospitality, TVET enables them to participate effectively in the labour market or create their own businesses.

Employment generation through TVET occurs in two main ways: direct and indirect. Directly, graduates of vocational and technical programmes can secure jobs in industries, manufacturing, construction, services, and other sectors that require skilled personnel (Onyema & Eze, 2022). Indirectly, TVET fosters entrepreneurship by providing youths with the technical and managerial skills necessary to establish small and medium-sized enterprises, which in turn create additional jobs for others in the community. This multiplier effect contributes to economic growth and poverty reduction in Rivers State.

Moreover, TVET helps address the issue of skills mismatch, which has historically limited youth employability. By aligning training with current industry demands and technological advancements, TVET graduates are better prepared to meet employer expectations, reducing the gap between education and employment (Chinonso & Nwankwo, 2020). Industrial attachments, apprenticeships, and practical workshops offered by TVET institutions further enhance the readiness of youths for immediate employment.

In addition to economic benefits, employment generation through TVET contributes to social stability by reducing youth restiveness, crime, and dependence on government subsidies. When youths are productively engaged in gainful employment or entrepreneurship, they are empowered to support themselves, contribute to

community development, and foster sustainable economic growth (Eze & Nnamani, 2022). TVET in Rivers State plays a crucial role in generating employment for youths, promoting entrepreneurship, and equipping them with the skills required to participate meaningfully in the economy.

### **Contribution of TVET to Poverty Reduction and Economic Self-Reliance**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is widely recognized as a key instrument for poverty alleviation and promoting economic self-reliance, particularly in developing regions such as Rivers State. By equipping youths with practical and marketable skills, TVET enables them to generate income through gainful employment or entrepreneurship, thereby reducing their dependence on government support or informal economic activities (Afolabi & Okonkwo, 2021). Skills acquired through TVET empower youths to participate actively in productive economic ventures, which can improve household incomes and enhance overall community well-being.

TVET contributes to poverty reduction by fostering employability and self-employment opportunities. In Rivers State, where unemployment and underemployment are major socio-economic challenges, vocational training in areas such as ICT, agriculture, carpentry, welding, and hospitality equips youths with competencies that are in demand in the labour market. This allows them to access formal employment or establish small-scale businesses, generating income not only for themselves but also creating employment opportunities for others (Ifeyanyi & Chukwuma, 2020). The ripple effect of TVET-driven entrepreneurship promotes local economic activities and stimulates community development. Economic self-reliance is another critical outcome of TVET. By learning practical skills and acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge, youths are empowered to start and manage businesses

independently, reducing reliance on government jobs and fostering a culture of self-sufficiency (Okeke & Ugochukwu, 2021). TVET also encourages innovation and creativity, which are essential for adapting to economic changes and exploring new market opportunities.

Furthermore, the contribution of TVET to poverty reduction extends to social benefits. Empowered youths are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviors, militancy, or crime, as they are productively engaged in sustaining their livelihoods. Consequently, TVET not only enhances individual economic capacity but also strengthens social stability and promotes sustainable development in Rivers State (Chinonso & Nwankwo, 2020). TVET plays a significant role in alleviating poverty and fostering economic self-reliance by equipping youths with employable skills, promoting entrepreneurship, and enabling active participation in the economy. Its effective implementation is crucial for addressing socio-economic challenges and achieving sustainable development in Rivers State.

### **TVET and Entrepreneurship Development among Youths**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a critical role in fostering entrepreneurship among youths by equipping them with both technical skills and the entrepreneurial competencies necessary to establish and manage businesses. In Rivers State, where youth unemployment and underemployment remain significant challenges, TVET provides a practical avenue for transforming unskilled or under-skilled youths into self-reliant entrepreneurs capable of generating income and creating jobs for others (Udeh & Okafor, 2021).

Through TVET programmes, youths acquire knowledge in business management, financial literacy, marketing, and problem-solving, alongside practical skills in trades such as

carpentry, welding, ICT, fashion design, and agro-processing. This combination of technical and entrepreneurial skills empowers them to identify market opportunities, innovate, and develop small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) that contribute to local economic growth (Eze & Nnamani, 2022). TVET institutions often complement classroom instruction with workshops, industrial attachments, and mentorship programmes, which expose youths to real-world business environments and practical enterprise management.

Entrepreneurship development through TVET not only enhances economic self-reliance but also reduces dependence on formal employment, which is limited in Rivers State. It enables youths to transform their acquired skills into sustainable income-generating activities, thereby improving livelihoods and reducing poverty (Ifeanyi & Chukwuma, 2020). Additionally, the growth of youth-led enterprises strengthens community development by creating employment opportunities, fostering innovation, and stimulating local markets.

Despite its potential, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited access to capital, poor infrastructure, and insufficient industry linkages sometimes constrain the effectiveness of TVET in promoting entrepreneurship (Okeke & Ugochukwu, 2021). Addressing these challenges through policy support, private-sector partnerships, and targeted mentorship can enhance the capacity of TVET to develop entrepreneurial skills among youths.

### **Challenges of TVET Implementation in Rivers State**

Despite the potential of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to empower youths and foster economic development, its implementation in Rivers State faces several significant challenges that limit its effectiveness. These challenges hinder the ability of TVET to produce skilled manpower and promote

entrepreneurship among youths. Key challenges include:

**Inadequate Funding:** Many TVET institutions in Rivers State operate with insufficient financial resources, which affects the provision of quality training, acquisition of modern equipment, and maintenance of training facilities (Udeh & Okafor, 2021).

**Poor Infrastructure and Facilities:** Training centres and technical schools often lack modern tools, workshops, and laboratories necessary for practical skill acquisition, limiting hands-on learning experiences for students (Eze & Nnamani, 2022).

**Limited Access and Participation:** Many youths, especially in rural communities, face barriers to accessing TVET programmes due to geographical distance, high costs, and limited awareness of available opportunities (Ifeanyi & Chukwuma, 2020).

**Societal Perception and Stigma:** Vocational education is often perceived as inferior to university education, leading to low enrolment and poor motivation among youths and parents to pursue TVET pathways (Okeke & Ugochukwu, 2021).

**Inadequate Industry Linkages:** Weak collaboration between TVET institutions and industries limits opportunities for apprenticeships, industrial attachments, and employment placement for graduates (Chinonso & Nwankwo, 2020).

**Shortage of Qualified Instructors:** There is a deficit of skilled and experienced trainers in TVET institutions, which affects the quality of instruction and the ability to impart industry-relevant skills (Abiodun & Salami, 2020).

**Outdated Curriculum:** Many TVET programmes still rely on obsolete curricula that do not reflect current technological advancements or labour market needs, reducing the relevance of training (Chukwu & Ibekwe, 2019).

## **Government and Private Sector Involvement in TVET Delivery**

The effective delivery of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Rivers State relies heavily on the active involvement of both government and private sector stakeholders. The government plays a critical role in policy formulation, regulation, funding, and oversight of TVET institutions. Through the **Rivers State Ministry of Education** and agencies such as the **National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)**, the government ensures that technical colleges, polytechnics, and skills acquisition centres meet national standards, provide accredited programmes, and align training with labour market needs (Udeh & Okafor, 2021). Government initiatives also include the establishment of vocational training centres, provision of instructional materials, and facilitation of scholarships and grants to enhance accessibility for youths.

The private sector contributes to TVET delivery by investing in training infrastructure, offering industrial attachments, apprenticeships, and mentorship opportunities that expose students to real-world industry practices. Private companies in sectors such as oil and gas, hospitality, ICT, and manufacturing partner with TVET institutions to support curriculum design, supply equipment, and facilitate employment for graduates (Eze & Nnamani, 2022). Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have been particularly effective in bridging gaps between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, ensuring that graduates possess competencies relevant to industry requirements.

Furthermore, private sector involvement enhances entrepreneurial development among youths by providing access to startup capital, business incubation, and technical guidance for small-scale enterprises (Ifeanyi & Chukwuma, 2020). This collaboration also fosters innovation and promotes skills diversification, which is essential for reducing youth unemployment and fostering

economic self-reliance. However, despite these contributions, challenges remain, including inconsistent funding, limited coordination between government agencies and private firms, and weak monitoring of programme outcomes. Strengthening government oversight, encouraging more private sector investment, and fostering robust partnerships are critical to ensuring that TVET effectively empowers youths and contributes to sustainable socio-economic development in Rivers State.

## **Socio-Economic Impact of TVET on Youth Empowerment in Rivers State**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has significant socio-economic implications for youth empowerment in Rivers State. By providing young people with practical skills and entrepreneurial competencies, TVET enables them to participate meaningfully in economic activities, generate income, and achieve self-reliance. This, in turn, reduces poverty, dependence on government support, and socio-economic vulnerability among youths (Afolabi & Okonkwo, 2021). In a state where unemployment and underemployment are persistent challenges, TVET equips youths with employable skills that align with labour market demands, thereby enhancing their opportunities for gainful employment.

Economically, TVET contributes to job creation both directly and indirectly. Directly, graduates gain employment in industries such as manufacturing, construction, ICT, hospitality, and agriculture. Indirectly, the entrepreneurial skills acquired through TVET enable youths to establish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), creating additional jobs and stimulating local economic growth (Eze & Nnamani, 2022). This dual impact not only improves individual livelihoods but also strengthens household income and community development.

Socially, TVET empowers youths by promoting self-confidence, discipline, and work ethics.

Engaged and skilled youths are less likely to participate in social vices such as crime, militancy, and cultism, which are prevalent among unemployed or underemployed young people in Rivers State (Okeke & Ugochukwu, 2021). The empowerment derived from TVET also encourages civic participation, social inclusion, and active contribution to community development initiatives. Furthermore, TVET fosters innovation and adaptability, equipping youths to respond effectively to changing economic and technological environments. By enhancing both economic and social capabilities, TVET contributes to sustainable development and helps address the socio-economic challenges associated with youth disempowerment in Rivers State (Ifeanyi & Chukwuma, 2020). The socio-economic impact of TVET in Rivers State is evident in its ability to reduce poverty, promote self-reliance, create employment opportunities, and foster social stability. Strengthening TVET programmes and ensuring their accessibility remains vital for sustainable youth empowerment in the state.

### **Prospects of TVET for Sustainable Youth Development in Rivers State**

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) holds significant prospects for promoting sustainable youth development in Rivers State. By equipping young people with practical skills, technical knowledge, and entrepreneurial competencies, TVET creates a foundation for lifelong learning, employability, and economic self-reliance. The integration of TVET into formal and non-formal education systems provides youths with opportunities to acquire relevant skills that meet the demands of modern industries, local economies, and emerging sectors (Abiodun & Salami, 2020).

One major prospect of TVET is its potential to reduce youth unemployment and underemployment in Rivers State. With targeted training in sectors such as ICT, agriculture,

hospitality, fashion design, and manufacturing, youths can gain employable skills or establish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), thereby generating income and creating additional job opportunities (Eze & Nnamani, 2022). This not only enhances economic empowerment but also contributes to poverty alleviation and improved living standards.

Furthermore, TVET promotes entrepreneurship development, innovation, and self-sufficiency among youths. By providing practical experience, business management knowledge, and access to industrial attachments, TVET equips young people to identify market opportunities, develop viable business ideas, and sustainably manage their enterprises (Udeh & Okafor, 2021). This reduces dependence on government employment and fosters a culture of innovation and problem-solving, which is essential for long-term economic growth. Socially, TVET contributes to sustainable youth development by encouraging civic engagement, discipline, and responsible community participation. Empowered youths are less likely to engage in social vices such as crime, militancy, and restiveness, promoting peace and stability in Rivers State (Ifeanyi & Chukwuma, 2020).

### **Methodology**

The study employs desk research, relying exclusively on journals, reports, policy documents, and publications to analyze TVET's role in youth empowerment.

### **Findings of the Study**

The study found that;

1. Participation in TVET programmes has a positive and significant influence on youth empowerment in Rivers State. Evidence from secondary sources indicates that youths who undergo TVET acquire practical skills, technical competencies, and entrepreneurial abilities that enhance their employability, self-reliance, and income-generating capacity. TVET participation was also linked to improved confidence, reduced

unemployment, and greater involvement of youths in productive economic activities, thereby contributing to individual and community development.

2. The findings revealed several challenges limiting the effectiveness of TVET programmes in promoting youth empowerment in Rivers State. These include inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, obsolete training equipment, shortage of qualified instructors, weak linkage between training institutions and industry, and societal preference for academic education over vocational training. Additionally, inconsistencies in policy implementation and limited access to modern technology were found to reduce the relevance of TVET skills to current labour market demands.

### Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and youth empowerment in Rivers State using secondary data from journals, reports, and policy documents. The findings revealed that TVET plays a significant role in empowering youths by equipping them with practical skills, enhancing employability, promoting self-reliance, and reducing unemployment. However, despite its potential, the effectiveness of TVET programmes in Rivers State is constrained by challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, obsolete training facilities, shortage of qualified instructors, weak industry linkage, and negative societal perceptions toward vocational education. Addressing these challenges is essential for TVET to fully contribute to sustainable youth empowerment and socio-economic development in Rivers State.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommended the following:

1. The Rivers State Government and relevant stakeholders should expand access to well-structured TVET programmes by increasing

enrolment opportunities, improving training quality, and providing start-up support such as tools, certification, and entrepreneurship assistance for programme graduates.

2. The Rivers State Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Development, the Ministry of Employment Generation and Empowerment, and relevant TVET regulatory bodies, should ensure adequate funding, upgrade training facilities, provide modern equipment, recruit and retrain qualified instructors, and strengthen industry linkages to improve programme relevance and implementation.

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