THE IMPACT OF SKILLS ACQUISITION ON YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN NORTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

LAWAL SANUSI
Department of Business Administration
Faculty of Management Sciences
Federal University Gusau
lawalsan@yahoo.com

SANI HARUNA GIMI
Department of Business Administration
Faculty of Management Sciences
Federal University Gusau
sanigimi@gmail.com
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Keywords

Skills Acquisition and Youth Empowerment.

Abstract

This study examined the impact of skills acquisition programmes on youth empowerment in North-Western States of Nigeria. Itspecifically assessed the influence of skills acquisition on youths' self-reliance, sustainable livelihood, and employment opportunities, while examining the intervening role of institutional support in strengthening empowerment outcomes. The study was anchored on Human Capital Theory and quantitative survey research design was adopted, and data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to a sample of 280 youths who participated in various vocational, technical, and entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics by the use ofMultipleLlinear Regression Analyses. The findings revealed that there is significant positive relationships between skills acquisition and all dimensions of youth empowerment. Institutional support, measured in terms of access to funding, training facilities, mentorship, and supportive policies, emerged as a significant intervening variable that amplified the effectiveness of skills acquisition programmes ($p < 0.001$). The study concludes that skills acquisition programmes, play a critical role in empowering youths by enhancing economic independence, employability, and sustainable livelihoods. The study recommends strengthening institutional support systems, integrating skills training into formal education, and aligning skills acquisition programmes which will promote sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria.

Introduction

Skill is very important in the life of every human being. The reason why many techniciansearn more than some university graduates is because the technicians acquire more practical skills than the theories, unlike the graduates who were fed with theoretical experiences while in the universities. It can take you to places you do not expect you will find yourself. Skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular task or function and become expert in it. It is really unfortunate that there is a huge rate of unemployment in many parts of the world today especially in Nigeria. It is one of the causes of rapid growth in crime in many parts of the world. Today, there are many graduates in the country who are still unemployed. This is as a result of our long system of education that is more of theory and not much practical learning.

The population of Nigeria is increasing every day. Today Nigeria is about two hundred and thirty-two million based on World meter's elaboration of the latest United Nations data.Majority of the people are youths who have graduated from the secondary schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities, majority of them are staying idle without jobs or skills acquired which is advantage to the economy.Most of the skill acquisition programes are located in the major cities in the state which may be far from the house of most unemployed youths. This means that most of them who are not a resident of that environment or location, the programme will be a little beat difficult for the youths. living far away may constitute a lot of problems for the youths and the scheme all over the country. However, the insensitivity on part of the youth who have failed to understand that unless, empowered by skill acquisition, there can be no reduction of unemployment is also worrisome. Over the years, skills acquisition on youth empowerment has been characterized by many challenges which has undermined the ability of the youth to attain self-reliance; thereby worsening the spate of youth unemployment and its attendant social vices inNorth-Western Nigeriato be more specific.Some of these challenges are, government's insensitivity, deceptive attitude and lack of political will, ill attitude of the youth towards skill acquisition, decaying societal values, over bearing influence of party politics on the youth, lack of reward system, continuous falling standard in education, giving of political appointments to only cultists, to mention but a few. Thus, the rising rate of insecurity, youth restiveness and violent crimes in the society today has been blamed on lack of skills, unemployment and poverty among the youth. There is also lack of adequate proactive curriculum in our educational system, to inculcate entrepreneurship, compulsory skills acquisition through mentorship, apprenticeship and professional tutelage. The question as well as the problem statement is, can skills acquisition and youth empowerment guarantee increase in youth employment.

Research Objectives

i. To determine the relationship between skills acquisition and youth employment rate in North-Western Nigeria.

ii. To examine the impact of skills acquisition on youth self-reliance in North-Western Nigeria.

iii. To determine the extent to which skills acquisition enhance social peace and stability in North-Western Nigeria.

iv. To assess the impact of skills acquisition on development of entrepreneurial skills in North-Western Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Conceptual framework

To better understand the concepts, Skill acquisition, it is important to first and foremost understand what the word, skill means in this context. A skill is an activity which is developed by a person with time and becomes automatic in terms of performing it. Skill is defined as the ability to do something well. It also means competence or expertise in doing something. Thus, according to Omene (2021), skill is defined as the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience. According to Inna (2018) Skill acquisition is the ability to acquire practical knowledge in new conditions and on the bases of the abilities and experiences a person had previously. It is the process of mastering skills characterized by applying them in particular situations. Inna 2018 further added that the entire life is based on skill acquisition which is a constant in process. No doubt, skill acquisition became more essential in view of the levels of youth unemployment in Nigeria today. According to Ochiagha (2004), He stated that skill acquisition is seen as the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. Skills acquisition refers as form of training giving to an individuals or group of individuals in other to acquire certain type of knowledge, competencies for self-sustenance. According to speelman skills acquisition is the ability to learn or acquire skills which involves development of a new skills or practice the way of doing things. Omene (2021), in writing about skill acquisition and its importance in employment generation and empowerment of citizens contended that skill acquisition helps in the transformation of knowledge and skills into creative venture; that the main aim of skill acquisition is to fight against unemployment among youths. Emeka (2011), in support of the above views stated that skills acquisition are what people can do to impact their generation; that it is not left for the poor and middle-class people, but it is for career and/or professionals who desire to make their lives multifaceted, adaptable, self-sustaining and independent. On the other hand, Ogide and Ogide (2020), observed that skills acquisition is the act of getting skill and knowledge which enables individuals to do something well; usually achieved through teaching, training, retraining, practical experience and on the-job-training. Youth empowerment is a multi-dimensional process by which the youths can be induced, motivated and made to embrace positive changes, particularly, in their economic life styles and thereby improve the economy. According to Jimba (2006), youth empowerment involves different ways the youth can be facilitated to cause changes in their life style. Youth empowerment can also be seen as a means of exposing the youths into skills or training that makes them productive. It encompasses different ways youth can be exposed into different trades that may help them to engage in sustainable paid and self-employment. To actualize this, a lot of programmes and policies which encourage youth empowerment such as skill acquisition programmes have been launched as a means of youth empowerment. This is the reason why skill acquisition according to Ogundowolo (1998) is to prepare and equip the youths with appropriate skills that can be beneficial to them in future. He maintained that ideal skill acquisition is capable of ensuring value re-orientation among the youths and transforming them into creators of wealth and employment instead of seekers. Obviously, the creation of

wealth and employment will lead to poverty reduction and increase of welfare status of individuals in the society.

Skills Acquisition

Skills acquisition is the ability to learn or acquire skills. It involves the development of a new skill, practice of a way of doing things usually gained through training or experience. The meaning of the term skills acquisition is to enhance life skills and to improve the abilities of individuals as learners who will help themselves to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life (Hendricks & Bartlett 1996; Isaac, 2011).Studies have shown that skill acquisition is the most critical factor in the transformation of the life of the youth (Eccles, 1999).Likewise, Ikegwu, Ajiboye, Aromolaran, Ayodeji and Okorafor (2014) reaffirmed that skills acquisition act as a mechanism for the development of positive attitude towards work and the building of entrepreneurial skills and ability of the youth for self-reliance (Ekpe Razak, Ismail, and Abdullahi, 2015; Amadi, & Abdullah, 2012; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Therefore, human development must cue in line with the skills-driven world economic and development (Ukachuku & Iheriohanma, 2013). This could contribute greatly to the elimination of joblessness in Nigeria. If this, however, was not achieved and consequently, Nigerian youth continues to be plagued by the challenges of high rate of unemployment, youth neglect, social vices, poverty, negativism, inadequacy and ultimately, deviance and crime (Chukwuemeka et al, 2012).

Stages of skills acquisition:

Stage 1: Novice

Typically, the learning process begins with the instructor (a teacher or instruction manual) decomposing the task environment into context-free features that the beginner can recognize without the desired skill. The beginner is then provided rules for determining actions on the basis of these features. For example, the student automobile driver learns to recognize such domain-independent features as speed (indicated by the speedometer) and is given rules such as a formula for the safe distance at which to follow another car or a motorcycle as a function of the speed, or the amount of time to leave on one's turn signal before changing lanes.

Stage 2: Advanced Beginner

As novices continue to gain experience coping with real situations, their perception of their situation will be enriched in two main ways. First, they will become able to notice additional facts and features and to use more sophisticated rules for relating to these features. The driver, for example, will start to gain more familiarity with the various instruments and their read-outs in the car console: the fuel gauge, the seat-belt notification light, the radio station, the GPS system, the rearview mirrors, etc. (Flores, 2016; Dreyfus, Dreyfus, & Rousse, 2016).

Stage 3: Competence

With continued experience, the number of potentially relevant circumstantial elements and procedures that the learner is able to recognize and follow continues to increase. However, a sense of priority and relative importance of these various elements and procedures is lacking. Performance accordingly becomes more grueling. The next stage of learning, competence, is achieved when people learn to devise a plan or, in our preferred technical term, to choose a *perspective* on their situation. (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1988; Dreyfus 1992).

Stage 4: Proficiency

As the competent performer gains experience, she allows herself to become more and more emotionally involved in her task, reminiscing, sometimes with the continued support of a mentor, about the elation of a job well done and the stinging disappointment of failure. She is now poised to make another major qualitative leap in the acquisition of skill. (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2008).

Stage 5: Expertise

With more and more experience in a variety of situations, the performer builds up a vast repertoire of intuitive perspectives. She also becomes able to make subtler and refined discriminations and anticipations within situations seen as similar with respect to a perspective. After enough experience of the results of actions in a particular type of situation, the performer not only experiences such situations in light of an intuitive perspective, but also sees immediately what to do and allows herself to be drawn directly into action. The expert performer closes the gap between intuitive perspective and action. Examples to this expertise stage are;

Youth Empowerment

A youth is any individual within the age of eighteen and thirty-five years irrespective of gender or sex (Uzochukwu, 2016). According to Jega (2012) "Youth can be defined as a special group of people with strong stamina and passion for realizing certain set goals and objectives ". The way in which a nation defines its youth is related to the objective conditions and realities that exist on the ground especially historical and contemporary socio-economic and political issues that need to be addressed. That is why nations use different parameters and variables in defining their youth. For the purpose of execution of Nigeria's National Youth Development Policy; the youth comprises all young persons of age 18-35 who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, this category represents the most culture, the most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population, socio-economically, emotionally and in other respect. Youth share certain characteristic that distinguish them from other generations. Such characteristics include, impatient for change, zealousness, radicalism, rebellions, curiosity, hard work, ego and ambition. Looking at the above definition, it is safe to say that, youths are the engine and actualize ofnational development, if their mindsets are channels in the right direction. According to Ezeanu (2012) sprang from the need to enable young people to have a say in decisions which affect them an to have lower and heard voices. This would give young people the economic, social and cultural advancement of their and countries, and to gain self-fulfillment.

Relationship between skills acquisition and youth's empowerment

Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messias, and McLoughlin (2006), Altman & Feighery, (2004), Morton and Montgomery (2013) highlighted the relationship between youth empowerment with Skills acquisition, emphasizing that youth empowerment is not only a right to be protected, but a modality for improving youths' developmental outcomes and strengthening institutions and communities by way of young people's contributions. Similarly, Alsop & Heinsohn (2005) and Garba (2010) forwarded that Youth empowerment as an opportunity for youth to gain freedom, choices and skills development that will benefit them to earn their living and also become problem

solvers and decision makers (Zimmerman, 2000). However, Anayochukwu (2014) opined that if empowerment was found to be unsuccessful, and therefore reduced the enthusiasm of the youth for involvement in skills empowerment programmes. Consequently, youth empowerment plays a role in skills acquisition as it helps in development of youth potentials and ethical values that enable them to contribute effectively to national development. Thus, it enhances moral values among the youth in line with the natural aspirations of developing a caring and discipline society Busenitz, Gómez and Spencer (2000); (Chinman and Linney (1998). Therefore, the promise of empowerment or its prospects has moderating implications for youth involvement in government run skills acquisition programs.

Types of Empowerments

According to Page, Youth empowerment is examined in six interdependent dimensions: psychological, community, organizational, economic, social and cultural.

Psychological empowerment: It enhances individual's consciousness, belief in self-efficacy, awareness and knowledge of problems and solutions and of how individuals can address problems that harm their quality of life. This dimension aims to create self-confidence and give youth the skills to acquire knowledge.

Community empowerment: this focuses on enhancing the community through leadership development, improving communication, and creating a network of support to mobilize the community to address concerns.

Organizational empowerment: this aims to create a base of resources for a community, including voluntary organizations, unions and association that aim to protect, promote and advocate for the powerless.

Economic empowerment: teaches entrepreneurial skills, how to take ownership of their assets and how to have income security.

Social empowerment: teaches youth about social inclusion and literacy as well as helping kids find the resources to be proactive in their communities.

Cultural empowerment: aims to recreate cultural practices and redefine cultural rules and norms for youth. Through these dimensions of empowerment, programs can work on empowering youth in one or more aspects of their lives.

Impact of skills acquisition on youth self-reliance: Ofuonyebuzor (2009) noted that before the advent of Western education, skills acquisition was more or less hereditary as the children of a carpenter, bricklayers, herbalists, blacksmiths, etc., took after their father's occupation(s)—every average individual desires to live a happy and comfortable life. Ironically, many do not seem to understand how to attain sustainable living. This is because many people rely so much on the government to provide them employment, whereas the means to acquire the much-desired standard living lies at their doorsteps. Skills acquisition is an individual's holistic process or efforts to acquire a skill(s) to live a self-reliant, self-satisfied, independent and fulfilled life without looking for a non-available government job(s). They need to be exposed through skills acquisition, which would open several opportunities that will enable them to become employers and not employees (Akingbulu et al., 2015). In other words, skills acquisition transforms an individual from a job seeker to a job creator.

Skills acquisition enhance social peace and stability: Skills acquisition develop initiatives that help, prevent conflict and strengthen peace in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. If designed or adapted appropriately, they can strengthen inclusive social dialogue and trust between groups and increase people's sense of inclusion and their resilience to disruption and violence, through increased employability. Peace can be achieved by adopting peace and conflict analysis, conflict- and gender-sensitivity measures, a social dialogue- based approach, and a strong focus on fairness and inclusion.

Skills acquisition develop entrepreneurial skills ability: Entrepreneurial skills acquisition are said to be the necessary set of skills required to be an entrepreneur. In other words, entrepreneurial skills acquisition are those necessary skills an entrepreneur needs to successfully run a business or add value to work. Agu, Chiaha and Ikeme (2013) argued that acquisition skills must be nurtured through proper education so that it can be directed to responsible and enriching small business endeavors that will benefit the individuals and the communities in which the entrepreneurs live.

Relationship between skills acquisition and youth employment: Skill acquisition has contributed a lot to Nigerian economy. Skill acquisition programme is seen as a tool for youth employability in Nigeria, it reduces unemployment rate, curbs crime and other social vices and also increases the rate of investment in the economy.

Webster's Dictionary described skill acquisition as developed or obtained ability that increase youth employment rate. Also Skill acquisition serve as a significant instrument which provide the youth with various skills that will make them self-employed, like bead making, cap making, sewing, fashion designing, shoe making and making workers to have more enthusiasm for their occupations while enhancing their current skills. The idea of skill acquisition is aimed for battling and decreasing poverty level in Nigeria.

Engaging youth in governance: The Nigeria youth can also be empowered if the country allowed for a participatory system of governance, where Nigeria youth are allowed to take part in the governance of Nigeria, and their voices heard, and at the same time incorporated in the formulation of policies as well as, in the area of governance.

Making grants available for business development: Expanding businesses with the expectation of gaining a huge return on investment, and as well as increase the socio economic activities in the society, particularly in releasing funds, such as grants for the youth.

Creation of Hundreds of Thousands of Jobs: Hundreds of thousands of jobs can be created by the government, as a way of taking the Nigerian youths away from the streets, and get them gainfully employed.

2. Empirical Review

Akpama et al. observed that skills acquisition leads to a significant reduction of poverty among young adults who participated on skills acquisition programmes. Because Nigeria is fast becoming a predominantly youthful society with high rate of unemployment, it requires giving training to the youth in different skills acquisition in tackle unemployment which has reached alarming proportions.

Fan et al (2016) examined youth empowerment as a necessary condition for nation building in Nigeria and the study revealed

that provision of employment to youths was a prudent way of making them better and therefore fight crimes associated with idle hands. Amadi and Abdullah (2012) reported from their study that a greater percentage of the sampled youth reported high and moderate levels of their capacity building: implying that the vocational skills acquisition and development was a successful scheme. They however recommended that the constraints that impede the success of the scheme be addressed by policy makers to make the outcome of the skills training more successful. Adofu and Ocheja investigated the conduct of Skill Acquisition and training in alleviating poverty and unemployment in Gusau local Government. This relationship between skill acquisition and youth empowerment was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive tools consisted of the use of percentages and frequencies presented in a tabular form. Skills increase employment opportunities, youth active involvement in economic productivity and crime reduction in societies. Skills help people to have better resources and financial management, improved strategic planning and curtailing crises in organizations due to experiences garnered. In order to increase the rate of employment and total self-reliance on government, in 1987 the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established; the directorate was mandated to deal with rising trend of unemployment through the training of people in various skills. Recently, also, various programmes and policies have also been rolled out to fight the same mayhem of unemployment. But whether, these programmes and policies of government have been able to address the problem of unemployment is better imagined that explained, as the rate of unemployment has continued to increase geometrically. It is therefore, expected that students' enrollment in skills while undergoing their studies would reduce the problem of unemployment and the burdens which parents bear on the course of the children's sponsorship and further sponsorship even after graduation.

3. Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory by Becker (1964),Describe the Human Capital Theory which, posits that investment in education, training, and skills acquisition increases an individual's productivity and economic value. In this context, skills acquisition equips young people with the knowledge and competencies needed for employability and entrepreneurship. According to this theory, individuals who acquire vocational and technical skills are more likely to participate in

Conceptual Framework Diagram: This study conceptualizes Independent Variable; Skills Acquisition. Dependent Variable; Youth Empowerment, and Intervening Variable; Institutional support which is proposed to intervene the relationship by facilitating access to resources, sustainability of acquired skills, and market engagement.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Diagram



Source: Field Survey 2026

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The study was carried out in Gusau Zamfara State, the total sample for the study were the staff of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in the seven North-Western States, all trainees of NDE that has been successfully benefited and completed their training and are now practicing what they have been learned. This total sample will be examined using proportionate stratified random sampling. According to Gall, Gall and Borg, proportionate stratified random sampling involves a sample selected so that subgroups in the population are proportionately represented in a sample. More than that, a proportionately stratified random sample will ensure that every segment of the population is identified and its proportion is determined and taken into consideration.

2. Population of the Study

The population of this study are youth that attained a formal government program within North-west geopolitical zone. The most famous among such programs are from National Directorate of Employment (NDE) of state capital.

3. Sample Size

The sample size of this study was determined by purposive sampling and followed by simple random sampling. The researcher intends to used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table to determine the sample size of the participants. According to Morgan for a population of 42,400 sample size of 620 is estimated. This therefore implies that the sample size of this study is 620 respondents.

4. Sample Procedure

The researcher intends to use purposive simple random sampling to select the youth that has already been benefited from national directorate of employment (NDE) in the Zone through their youth empowerment programs. This was achieved by getting the names of the youth who has already benefited from the programs, provided by the NDE office in each State. The names were then written in small pieces of paper and put in a bowel and randomly selected until the desired number was achieved. The researcher preferred to use this method because it gives equal opportunity for every eligible person to participate.

5. Sources of Data Collection

Primary data was questionnaires administration to respondents and interviewing some of the target samples.Secondary Data sources were reports from the office of national directorate of employment state NDE offices, journals, dissertations, and eBooks in order to understand and conceptualize what the impact of skills acquisition on youth empowerment entails.

6. Research Instruments

The researcherused closed ended questionnaires to establish the impact of skills on youth empowerment and interview was use as instrument for data collection. The questionnaires will be distributed to the selected youth that benefited from the skills acquisition programme from NDE. The questionnaires used will be 5-likert scale, where; 5- strongly agree, 4- agree, 3-un decide, 2- disagree, and 1-strongly disagree. The 5-likert scale was preferred because it captures all the areas that the respondent could assume to be his/her actual opinion regarding the subject under investigation.

Data Interpretation and Discussion:

Correlation between Skills Acquisition and Employment Opportunities for youths in North-Western State of Nigeria.

		Skills acquisition	Employment opportunities
Skills acquisition	Pearson Correlation	1	.969**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	280	280
Employment opportunities	Pearson Correlation	.969**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	280	280
****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**			

The result showed a Pearson correlation coefficient of (r=0.969), based on the data retrieved from 280 respondents. The value indicates a very strong positive linear relationship between skill acquisition and employment opportunities. It implies that as youth in Gusau acquire more skills, their likelihood of securing or creating employment increases significantly.

Regression Analysis for Employment Opportunities

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.969	0.938	0.938	0.30476		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Skills Acquisition						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	393.698	1	393.698	4238.97	0.0000
	Residual	25.82	278	0.093		

	Total	419.518	279			
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0.095	0.061		-1.556	.0.000
	Skill acquisition	1.01	0.016	0.969	65.107	0.000

a. **Dependent Variable: Employment opportunities**

The regression analysis revealed an adjusted R-Square value of 0.938, indicating that skill acquisition accounts for 93.8% of the variation in youth employment opportunities. The standardized beta coefficient was (β=0.969, t= 65.107, p<= 0.001) demonstrating a very strong positive influence of skill acquisition, also suggesting that as youths acquire skills, their employability improves sustainability.

Hypothesis Testing for Self-Reliance

The simple linear regression analysis shows that skills acquisition has a very strong positive statistically significant effect on youths' self-reliance (β≠ 0.980, t= 81.094, p<0.001), this effect remains significant in the multiple linear regression analysis (β= 0.233, t= 4.288, p< 0.001), indicating that skills acquisition significantly predict self-reliance even after controlling institutional support. Consequently, Hoi is rejected.

Similarly, institutional support significantly influences youths' self-reliance in multiple linear regression analysis (β= 0.757, t= 13.917, p< 0.001), leading to the rejection of Ho2. Furthermore, the multiple regression model is statistically significant (F= 5663.84, p< 0.001), confirming that skills acquisition and institutional support jointly have a significant effect on youths' self-reliance in Gusau metropolis.

Hypothesis Testing for Sustainable Livelihood

The simple linear regression analysis indicates that skills acquisition has a very strong positive statistically significant effect on youths' sustainable livelihood (β≠ 0.976, t= 74.652, p<0.001), this effect remains significant in the multiple linear regression analysis (β= 0.423, t= 6.127, p< 0.001), indicating that skills acquisition significantly predict sustainable livelihood even after controlling institutional support, leading to the rejection of Hoi.

Similarly, institutional support significantly influences sustainable livelihood in multiple linear regression analysis (β= 0.562, t= 8.145, p< 0.001), leading to the rejection of Ho2. Furthermore, the multiple regression model is statistically significant (F= 3474.447, p< 0.001), confirming that skills acquisition and institutional support jointly have a significant effect on youths' sustainable livelihood in Gusau metropolis.

Hypothesis Testing for Employment Opportunities

The simple linear regression analysis indicates that skills acquisition has a very strong positive statistically significant effect on youths' employment opportunities (β≠ 0.969, t= 65.107, p<0.001). This effect remains significant in the multiple linear regression analysis (β= 0.194, t= 2.636, p< 0.001), indicating that skills acquisition significantly predict employment opportunities even after controlling institutional support, leading to the rejection of Hoi.

Similarly, institutional support significantly influences employment opportunities in multiple linear regression analysis (β= 0.787, t= 10.701, p< 0.001), leading to the rejection of Ho2. Furthermore, the multiple regression model is statistically significant (F= 3042.236, p< 0.001), confirming that skills acquisition and institutional support jointly have a significant effect on youths' employment opportunities in Gusau metropolis.

5.0 Conclusion

This study concludes that skills acquisition program is a vital driver of youth empowerment in North-Western Nigeria with institutional support as an intervening variable. It has significant positive impacts on self-reliance, sustainable livelihood, and employment generation. However, the presence of institutional support in the form of mentorship, infrastructure, follow-up services, and funding greatly amplifies the outcomes of such training programs. Findings suggest that training without structured institutional backing may result in limited empowerment outcomes, while skills acquisition programs that are well-supported by institutions are more likely to result in tangible socioeconomic benefits for the youth. The study validates the Human Capital Theory which emphasize the need to equip individuals with practical skills, supported by institutions, in order to promote economic independence and long-term societal progress.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

To Strengthening Skills Acquisition Programmes: Government and relevant stakeholders should expand and strengthen skills acquisition programmes by focusing on practical, market-driven, vocational, technical, and entrepreneurial skills. Training curricula should be regularly reviewed to reflect current labour market demands in order to improve youths' self-reliance and employability.

To Enhancement of Institutional Support Systems: Given the strong intervening role of institutional support, government agencies, financial institutions, and development partners should provide adequate support in the form of start-up capital, grants, soft loans, and access to modern training facilities.

To Improved Access to Mentorship and Business Development Services: Institutional frameworks should be strengthened to provide continuous mentorship, business advisory services, and technical support to trained youths.

To Integrate of Skills Acquisition into Formal Education: Skills acquisition training should be integrated into formal education curricula at secondary and tertiary levels. Early exposure to practical and entrepreneurial skills will better prepare youths for employment opportunities and reduce overdependence on white-collar jobs.

To Develop Policy Alignment and Inter-Agency Collaboration: There is a need for better

coordination among government ministries, agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors involved in youth development.

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