INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR EFFECTIVE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN KANKIA L.G.A, KASTINA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of information technology (IT) has revolutionized various aspects of human life, including education, communication, healthcare and business. In developing countries like Nigeria, IT has the potential to serve as a powerful tool for youth empowerment by providing skills, knowledge and opportunities necessary for economic and social development. This demographic segment faces numerous challenges, including unemployment, poverty and limited access to quality education and training opportunities. The objectives of the study were to assess the current level of IT training programs for youth empowerment and to evaluate the impact of IT training programs for youth empowerment Descriptive survey research design was used. Questionnaires and interview were used for data collection and quantitative research method was adopted for the study. To ensure representativeness, a sample size of 300 respondents from 2,000 youths was determined by using Yamane's formula for finite populations. The findings revealed that while IT training programs exist in Kankia L.G.A, accessibility remains a major concern, with only 20% of respondents rating them as very accessible. A significant percentage (50%) found them moderately accessible, while 30% reported that they were not accessible. The impact of IT training on youth empowerment was evident, as 40% of respondents acknowledged an improvement in their digital skills, 30% applied their skills in employment and 15% used them for entrepreneurship and further education. The findings suggested that while these programs had a positive impact, their full potential is hindered by accessibility issues, limited training infrastructure and financial constraints. The study concludes by reaffirming that IT skills significantly enhance employment opportunities and promote entrepreneurship. However, for these benefits to be maximized, the paper recommended that IT training programs must be expanded and made more inclusive. Government intervention, public-private partnerships and community engagement are essential in ensuring the sustainability of these programmes.

Keywords: IT Trainings, Youth Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, employability and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Introduction

The rapid advancement of information technology (IT) has revolutionized various aspects of human life, including education, communication, healthcare and business. Youth is defined as individuals aged between 15 and 35 according to the National Youth Policy of Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019), they constitute a significant proportion of Nigeria's population. This demographic segment faces numerous challenges, including unemployment, poverty and limited access to quality education and training opportunities (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019; National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Before the advent of IT, training programs in Nigeria were predominantly manual and classroom-based, often relying on traditional vocational skills such as tailoring, carpentry and farming. These training methods, though effective in the past, lacked the technological integration necessary for modern economic demands. They were largely inaccessible to a significant number of youths, especially in rural areas, due to infrastructural and logistical constraints (Okonkwo & Adepoju, 2019).

In Nigeria, government initiatives like the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020-2030) aim to enhance access to IT training for underserved communities. Adedokun et al. (2020) argue that while these initiatives have increased awareness about IT training, infrastructural gaps such as unreliable electricity and poor internet penetration still persist. Kankia Local Government Area in Katsina State, predominantly rural, is no exception to these challenges. With limited employment opportunities and a high dependence on agriculture, many youths in Kankia L.G.A lack the skills required to participate effectively in the modern economy. IT training programs, such as computer literacy training, digital marketing, software development and networking, offer a pathway for bridging this gap by equipping youths with digital literacy and technical skills that can enhance their employability and entrepreneurial potential (Akinyemi & Yusuf, 2021).

Information Technologies are the application of computers, networks and software for storing, processing and sharing information. Youth empowerment refers to the process of equipping young people with the skills, knowledge and confidence to participate fully in economic and social activities. The Nigerian government has implemented several youth empowerments programs such as; N-Power Program, Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) Programs, Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Presidential Youth Empowerment Scheme (P-YES), TraderMoni & MarketMoni, Technology Incubation Centers (TICs) and Agricultural Youth Empowerment Scheme (AGYES)

Entrepreneurship is a critical pathway for youth empowerment and IT training facilitates entrepreneurial ventures by enabling youths to leverage digital tools and platforms. According to a study by Olowu (2022), IT-trained youths are more likely to identify innovative business opportunities and utilize technology to scale their enterprises. For instance, digital marketing, social media management and e-commerce platforms allow rural entrepreneurs to reach wider audiences.

According to UNESCO (2021), a lack of digital infrastructure and affordability are the primary barriers to IT training in rural areas. The digital divide is especially pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa, where only 28% of rural households have access to the internet compared

to 57% in urban areas (World Bank, 2022). This disparity creates challenges for rural youths in gaining essential digital skills.

While the benefits of IT training are well documented, several empirical studies have identified significant barriers to its successful implementation. Adebayo et al. (2021) explored the challenges faced by IT training initiatives in rural Nigeria. The study highlighted infrastructural deficits, such as unreliable electricity and poor internet connectivity, as major obstacles. The lack of qualified trainers and gender disparities were cited as critical issues that limit program participation.

Administered by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) is designed to extend telecommunications and digital services to underserved and rural areas. One of the core objectives of the USPF is to support IT training programs that enhance digital literacy and promote economic empowerment. The fund provides grants and resources for the establishment of digital learning centers, particularly in regions with limited access to IT infrastructure (NCC, 2020).

Globally, IT training has been recognized as a critical component of youth empowerment. For example, in Kenya, the "Ajira Digital Program" provides digital job training to youths, enhancing employment prospects (World Bank, 2022). Similarly, Google's "Digital Skills for Africa" has trained millions of youths across the continent, enabling them to access better job opportunities and start their businesses. Factors such as poor infrastructure, lack of qualified trainers and limited awareness about the importance of IT training contribute to this gap. Moreover, the absence of a structured approach to integrating IT training into existing youth empowerment initiatives exacerbates the problem.

Problem Statement

Before the introduction of IT, training programmes for youths in Kankia L.G.A were primarily vocational, focusing on manual skills such as carpentry, tailoring and welding. While these skills remain relevant, they do not fully align with the digital economy's demands. The traditional training approach had limitations in scalability, accessibility and adaptability to modern technological advancements. The introduction of IT training programs has significantly transformed youth empowerment by enhancing employability and promoting entrepreneurship. Digital literacy, coding, graphic design and other IT-related skills have enabled many youths to secure remote jobs, establish online businesses and participate in the global digital economy. However, the adoption of IT training in rural areas like Kankia L.G.A has been slow, raising concerns about its effectiveness in labeling youth unemployment. (Digital Youth Nigeria, 2022).

Youth unemployment is a pressing issue in Nigeria, with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reporting a youth unemployment rate of over 42% as of 2021. The lack of technical skills among youths has resulted in low employability and limited entrepreneurial opportunities, perpetuating poverty and social exclusion in the area (Digital Youth Nigeria, 2022). Without targeted interventions, the potential of IT training to transform the lives of youths in Kankia L.G.A may remain untapped.

This study aims to examine the impact of IT training programmes on youth empowerment in Kankia L.G.A. and to identify the specific needs of youths in the area, evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs and propose strategies for improving their implementation to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Research Objectives

The study objectives are to:

i. To assess the current level of IT training programmes for youth empowerment.
ii. To evaluate the impact of IT training programmes for youth empowerment.
iii. To establish challenges faced in the implementing IT training programmes for youth empowerment.
iv. To ascertain the strategies adopted for effective of IT programmes

Review of Related Literature

IT training programmes also promote social capital by building networks of collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Participants in these programmes often form professional communities that facilitate mentorship, innovation and resource exchange. This sense of community strengthens social cohesion and creates a supportive environment for collective growth (Chukwu & Nwachukwu, 2021).

In a similar vein, Alabi and Fakorede (2021) assessed the outcomes of IT training programmes in southwestern Nigeria. The study found that participants who received training in software development and digital content creation were more likely to establish successful tech startups.

Eze and Uzoamaka (2020) conducted a gender-focused analysis of IT training programmes in southeastern Nigeria. Their findings revealed that cultural norms and limited access to resources disproportionately affect young women, reducing their participation rates in IT training initiatives. Labeling these barriers is essential to achieving equitable outcomes and maximizing the impact of IT training programs.

Methodology

The study adopted quantitative research methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population comprises of 2,000 youths in Kankia L.G.A, Katsina State, who had participated in or are eligible to benefit from IT training programmes. To ensure representativeness, a sample size of 300 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula for finite populations. The study employed quantitative data collection instruments. The questionnaire was divided into sections based on the research objectives; Section A: Demographic Information, Section B: Access to IT Training Programmes, Section C: Impact of IT Training Programmes, Section D: Challenges in Implementing IT Training Programmes, Section E: Strategies for Effective IT Training Programmes. To ensure that the questionnaire accurately measures the research objectives, it was subjected to face and content validity checks. Data collection was conducted in two phases over a period of two weeks. The study employed both quantitative data analysis methods.

Data from questionnaires was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 25.0. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages was used to summarize the data.

Results and discussion of findings

Level of Access to IT Training Programmes

Table 4.1: Accessibility of IT Training Programmes

Accessibility Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very Accessible	60	20%
Moderately Accessible	150	50%
Not Accessible	90	30%
TOTAL	300	100%

The accessibility of IT training programmes is important in determining the extent of youth participation in digital skills development. The findings indicate that 50% of respondents consider IT training programmes moderately accessible, while 20% found them very accessible. However, a significant proportion (30%) reported that IT training programmes were not accessible. This finding aligns with previous studies that emphasize the digital divide in rural communities, where IT infrastructure and training centers are limited. Accessibility issues may stem from inadequate government policies, limited financial support and a lack of awareness regarding available training programmes.

Studies in similar rural settings have shown that increased access to IT training can significantly improve youth employability and entrepreneurship opportunities (Smith & Jones, 2020). However, challenges such as high costs, long distances to training centers and limited facilities hinder access. To improve accessibility, local authorities should collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private institutions to expand digital training initiatives. Community engagement and targeted awareness campaigns may also bridge the accessibility gap.

Impact of IT Training Programmes

Table 4.2: Impact of IT Training Programmes on Youth Empowerment

Impact Areas	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Improved Digital Skills	120	40%
Applied in Employment	90	30%
Used in Entrepreneurship	45	30%
Further Education	45	15%
Total	300	100%

The results indicate that IT training programmes have a positive impact on youth empowerment in Kankia L.G.A. About 40% of respondents reported improved digital skills, while 30% successfully applied these skills in employment. Furthermore, 15% of respondents utilized their IT knowledge in entrepreneurship and an additional 15% pursued further education.

These findings align with research by Johnson and Ahmed (2019), which highlighted that digital skills significantly enhance employability, particularly in sectors requiring IT proficiency. However, the relatively lower percentage of respondents who utilized IT training for entrepreneurship suggests that additional business support services, such as funding and mentorship programmes, may be necessary to maximize the economic benefits of IT skills.

Moreover, studies suggest that IT training programmes should include practical components such as internships and job placements to bridge the gap between training and employment opportunities (Nguyen, 2021). This can enhance the real-world applicability of digital skills, ensuring that more youths transition into gainful employment or entrepreneurial ventures.

Challenges in Implementing IT Training Programmes

Table 4.3: Challenges in Implementing IT Training

Challenges	**Frequency (N)**	**Percentage (%)**
Lack of Awareness	90	30%
Limited Training Center	120	40%
High Cost	60	20%
Poor Internet Connectivity	30	10%
Total	300	100%

Challenges in IT training implementation significantly impact program effectiveness. The most reported challenge (40%) was the limited number of training centers, followed by lack of awareness (30%) and high costs (20%). Poor internet connectivity was identified as a minor challenge, affecting only 10% of respondents.

Previous research by Smith et al. (2020) found similar limitations in rural IT training programmes, emphasizing the need for improved infrastructure and government support. Limited training centers restrict access for many youths, forcing them to travel long distances to acquire IT skills. The high cost of training further excludes disadvantaged groups, particularly those from low-income households. Labeling these challenges requires strategic interventions such as increased government funding, public-private partnerships and mobile training units to reach underserved areas. Digital literacy awareness campaigns can enhance programmes participation by informing more youths about available opportunities.

Strategies for Effective IT Training Programs

4.4: Strategies for Enhancing Effective IT Training Programmes

Strategy	**Frequency (N)**	**Percentage (%)**
Increased Funding	120	40%
Awareness Campaign	90	30%
Better Training Facilities	60	20%
Government Private Partnership	30	10%
Total	300	100%

Strategies for improving IT training effectiveness were explored, with increased funding emerging as the most preferred option (40%), followed by awareness campaigns (30%). Better training infrastructure and government-private partnerships accounted for 20% and 10% of responses, respectively. Funding constraints has been identified as a major barrier to IT skill acquisition in developing regions (Adeyemi & Ojo, 2018). Increased funding can enhance training accessibility, provide better resources and support the establishment of more IT training centers. Awareness campaigns are also essential, as many youths remain unaware of available IT training opportunities. A study by Okafor et al. (2021) found that social media

and community outreach programs significantly improved enrollment in IT training programmes.

Government-private partnerships play a critical role in IT training sustainability. By engaging private sector stakeholders, training programs can integrate industry-relevant skills, ensuring graduates meet market demands. Public-private collaborations have been successful in various countries and implementing similar models in Nigeria could enhance IT training effectiveness in Kankia L.G.A.

This study examined Information Technology (IT) training programmes and their role in youth empowerment in Kankia L.G.A, Katsina State, Nigeria. The study aimed to assess the accessibility of IT training programs, evaluate their impact, identify challenges in their implementation and explore strategies for improvement. The findings revealed that while IT training programmes exist in Kankia L.G.A, accessibility remains a major concern, with only 20% of respondents rating them as very accessible. A significant percentage (50%) found them moderately accessible, while 30% reported that they were not accessible. The impact of IT training on youth empowerment was evident, as 40% of respondents acknowledged an improvement in their digital skills, 30% applied their skills in employment and 15% used them for entrepreneurship and further education.

Challenges in implementing IT training programmes were also highlighted, with 40% of respondents citing limited training centers, 30% pointing to a lack of awareness and 20% mentioning high costs. Poor internet connectivity was a minor concern, affecting only 10% of respondents. The study also explored strategies to enhance IT training effectiveness, with 40% advocating for increased funding, 30% recommending awareness campaigns and 20% emphasizing the need for better training infrastructure.

Conclusion

IT training programmes are critical for youth empowerment, particularly in developing regions such as Kankia L.G.A. The findings suggest that while these programmes have a positive impact, their full potential is hindered by accessibility issues, limited training infrastructure and financial constraints. The study reaffirms that IT skills significantly enhance employment opportunities and promote entrepreneurship. However, for these benefits to be maximized, IT training programmes must be expanded and made more inclusive. Government intervention, public-private partnerships and community engagement are essential in ensuring the sustainability of these programmes.

Awareness campaigns should be strengthened to encourage more youths to participate in IT training. Strategic policy implementation focusing on funding, accessibility and skill applicability is important in bridging the digital divide and promoting economic growth through youth empowerment.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made to enhance IT training programmes in Kankia L.G.A:

1) The government and relevant stakeholders should allocate more funds to establish new training centers, upgrade existing infrastructure and provide free or subsidized IT training for youths.

2) Awareness campaigns through social media, local radio stations and community engagement initiatives could help inform more youths about available IT training opportunities.

3) Efforts should be made to enhance internet connectivity in training centers and rural communities to facilitate better learning experiences.

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