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Role of the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in Niger Delta (PIND) in Youth Empowerment in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed the role of the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) in youth empowerment in the Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, in light of the region's growing unemployment rate. The objectives of the study were to: assess the nature of the empowerment programme initiated by the PIND; investigate the impact of the organisation's empowerment programmes on youth employability; and examine the challenges faced by the organisation in implementing youth empowerment initiatives in the study area. Primary data for the study were collected through the administration of 330 copies of the questionnaire, while secondary data were collected through the organisation's reports and official records as well as published articles. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data, while mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The study adopted empowerment theory as a theoretical framework. From the findings, the organisation's empowerment initiatives included vocational training, entrepreneurship development, financial literacy, ICT skills, mentorship, and trades training. Also, findings revealed that the organisation's empowerment initiatives were positive, reflecting perceived improvements in employment opportunities, skills acquisition, and job-market alignment. Nevertheless, findings showed that socio-economic conditions and political dynamics relatively hindered the organisation's youth employment initiatives in the study area. Based on the findings, the paper recommended that the organisation consider extending the time of its vocational training programmes to ensure that participants have sufficient time to develop the necessary skills for long-term employability.

Keywords: *PIND, Non-Governmental Organisations, Unemployment, Youth Empowerment*

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Background to the Study

The persistent inability of successive governments to adequately address the socio-economic needs of the citizens necessitated the intervention and proliferation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Nigeria. NGOs operate as voluntary, non-profit entities that function independently of government, focusing on social welfare, empowerment, and community development. Their growing relevance indicates that development is a shared responsibility involving government, the private sector, and civil society, particularly in improving living standards and harnessing human potential. Youth empowerment is central to national development, as the youth represents a vital human capital capable of driving economic growth, innovation, and productivity. Empowerment extends beyond formal education to include skills acquisition, value orientation, competence building, and the creation of enabling environments for sustainable livelihoods. Scholars like Okojie (2019) emphasize youth empowerment as a process that enhances young people's capacity to make informed decisions, take responsibility, and actively contribute to social and economic development through structured empowerment programmes.

In the Niger Delta, deep-seated economic, social, and political challenges, such as unemployment, poverty, environmental degradation, youth restiveness, and insecurity, underscore the urgency of youth empowerment initiatives. In response, the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) was established to promote socio-economic development through targeted programmes like the Youth Employment Pathways (YEP). By addressing youth unemployment and skills deficits, PIND plays a critical role in fostering employability, peace, and sustainable development, thereby justifying this study's focus on its impact on youth empowerment in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State. The problem addressed in this study stems from the persistent neglect of youth development in Nigeria despite global and national recognition of youth empowerment as a catalyst for sustainable growth. Years of inadequate investment in human capital have contributed to widespread unemployment, poverty, social unrest, and youth-related crises across the country. In the Niger Delta, particularly the Warri South Local Government Area, these challenges persist despite the region's abundant natural resources, leaving the youth marginalized and underutilized. Although the Foundation has introduced various empowerment programmes to address these issues, there is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness, reach, and sustainability of its interventions. Consequently, this study had sought to examine the role of the PIND in youth empowerment in Warri South, with a view to determining its impact on youth employment opportunities and to provide evidence-based insights for policy and programme improvement.

Objectives of the Study

The study examined the role of the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) in youth empowerment in the Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

i. Identify the nature of empowerment programmes carried out by the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) on the employment opportunities available to youths in the Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State.

ii. Examine the impact of the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta's (PIND's) empowerment programmes on youth employment opportunities in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State.
iii. Ascertain the challenges faced by the PIND in implementing its youth empowerment initiatives in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to systematically examine the role of the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) in youth empowerment in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, as the design is suitable for collecting data from a large population and describing existing conditions and programme outcomes (Creswell, 2014; Fowler, 2014). The study was conducted in Warri South LGA, a major economic hub in the Niger Delta with significant oil and gas activities and a growing population exceeding 400,000 (Delta State Bureau of Statistics, 2024), where the organisation operates a branch office coordinating youth empowerment initiative (PIND Handbook, 2024).

The population comprised 1,919 youths trained by PIND between 2021 and 2023, from which a sample of 331 respondents was selected using the Yaro Yamane formula and snowball sampling due to accessibility challenges (Adeleke, 2018; Goodman, 1961). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Role of Foundation for PIND on Youth Empowerment Questionnaire (RFPYEQ), supported by secondary data sourced from PIND reports and official records, with responses measured on a five-point Likert scale (Osuala, 2007; Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014). The instrument was validated by experts to ensure content and face validity (Asika, 2010), while reliability was ensured through consistent administration procedures. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, the mean and standard deviation, and a one-sample t-test at the 0.05 level of significance to answer the research questions.

Theoretical Framework: Empowerment Theory

This study adopted empowerment theory to interrogate the role of PIND in youth empowerment and development in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State. Empowerment theory, as developed by Perkins and Zimmerman (1995), emphasizes enabling individuals to gain control over their lives and develop their environment through participation, have access to resources, and awareness of social, political, and economic contexts (Langer & Lietz, 2015). The theory highlights self-efficacy, personal responsibility, and collective action, making it relevant for understanding how youth can be motivated to engage in social change. While its strengths lie in promoting resilience and stakeholder participation, criticisms include difficulties in measuring empowerment outcomes and the time required to achieve communal goals. Nonetheless, empowerment theory provides a solid foundation for interventions to enhance youth development and community engagement.

Conceptual Clarifications

The section clarifies three concepts in this paper. They include empowerment, youth empowerment, and non-governmental organisations.

Empowerment

Empowerment is conceptualized as a multidimensional process that strengthens individuals' capacity to overcome barriers, make informed decisions, and gain control over their lives. It involves economic, social, psychological, and political transformation, particularly for disadvantaged populations (Kabeer, 2015; Ibrahim & Alkire, 2017). In the context of development, empowerment enhances self-efficacy, access to resources, and participation in decision-making processes (Sen, 2016). There are four types of empowerments. They are economic empowerment which motivates individuals to be productive and self-reliant by teaching entrepreneurship and business development skills, enabling self-fulfillment and personal growth (Ogbe, 1996); production empowerment that focuses on training individuals to decide what to produce, how to produce it, and for whom, using available resources and market strategies to maximize efficiency (Idachaba, 2006); marketing empowerment which equips entrepreneurs with marketing skills, communication, self-confidence, and strategies to promote products effectively and attract customers (Magbagbeola, 2004); skill development empowerment which provides training to develop practical and creative skills, fostering craftsmanship and entrepreneurship, enabling youths to become job creators rather than job seekers (Ochiagha, 1995).

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment refers to structured programmes and interventions designed to equip young people with relevant knowledge, skills, values, and opportunities to improve their socio-economic status and quality of life (UNDP, 2019). Unarguably, youth empowerment promotes self-reliance, innovation, civic participation, and sustainable development while reducing poverty, unemployment, and social vices through skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development (Akinwale, 2020; Gribble, 2018). Youth empowerment programmes in Nigeria face several critical challenges that limit their effectiveness. First, lack of government commitment has left many graduates unemployed, with policy frameworks on youth empowerment often unrealistic, contributing to rising poverty, crime, and social unrest. Secondly, corruption undermines poverty alleviation efforts, with public funds misappropriated by leaders for personal gain, worsening inequality, and high crime rates. Thirdly, widespread laziness, especially among youth from wealthy households, discourages self-reliance and participation in empowerment initiatives. Fourthly, poor educational system in Nigeria limits access to quality education, particularly for females, reducing the capacity of youth to benefit from empowerment programmes and stunting national development (World Bank, 2018). Finally, frequent changes in governmental policies, especially those targeting poverty alleviation and youth development, disrupt programme continuity, hindering long-term success and reducing the impact of empowerment efforts (Ahmed & Potter, 2016). These challenges collectively constrain the effectiveness of youth empowerment schemes in Nigeria.

Notwithstanding the challenges, youth empowerment and development are essential for societal growth, peace, and stability. Empowered youths reduce social unrest, militancy, and political or religious crises, while improving productivity and contributing to the Gross National Product (GNP). Empowerment helps youths develop interpersonal, decision-making, and communication skills, promotes self-determination, and fosters positive social behaviours, including reproductive health awareness (Undie & Edinyang, 2015; Akpunonu, 2019).

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Non-Governmental Organizations are described as independent, voluntary, non-profit entities that play critical roles in development, advocacy, and service delivery. They complement government efforts by targeting marginalized groups, promoting community participation, and fostering accountability and social justice (Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Anheier, 2017). Despite challenges such as donor dependence and accountability constraints, NGOs remain vital actors in grassroots development and youth empowerment, thanks to their flexibility, community-based approach, and people-centred development strategies (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2014; Okafor, 2022). The NGOs pursue diverse goals that broadly include humanitarian relief, socio-economic development, and advocacy roles (Ahmed & Potter, 2016). Their activities are most visible during emergencies such as natural disasters, where they often respond faster than governments. Notable examples include NGO interventions during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2010 Haiti earthquake, where they provided food, shelter, and medical aid (Wagona, 2017). These responses underscore NGOs' critical role in humanitarian relief delivery.

Beyond emergency interventions, NGOs are actively involved in long-term social and economic development projects in developing countries. These projects span education, health, agriculture, water and sanitation, and community development, with some lasting over two decades (Ahmed & Potter, 2016). Organizations such as Catholic Relief Services illustrate this sustained commitment through integrated programmes targeting poverty reduction, food security, and public health, thereby strengthening human capital development. Many NGOs also function as advocacy and lobbying bodies organized to influence government policies and promote human rights and environmental protection. Early human rights faced resistance due to weak global standards, but over time, their roles in education, monitoring, and enforcement gained acceptance (Yusuf, 2012; Smith, Pagnucco, & Lopez, 2015). Similarly, environmental NGOs have pressured governments to adopt sustainable practices, as demonstrated in the protest over the Narmada Dam, which led to the withdrawal of World Bank funding (United Nations, 2025).

Despite their relevance, NGOs face several operational challenges that limit their effectiveness. These include weak inter-organizational collaboration, donor pressure for quick results, limited financial and managerial capacity, and dependence on external funding (World Bank, 2019; Zacharia & Georges, 2018). The issue of "double accountability" often makes NGOs more accountable to donors than beneficiaries, reducing participatory development outcomes (Vij & Dhingra, 2015).

An Overview of the PIND's Youth Empowerment Programme in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State

The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta is a Nigerian non-profit social enterprise established in 2010 by Chevron Corporation to address the root causes of poverty, unemployment, and conflict in the Niger Delta through integrated economic development and peace-building strategies. The organisation operates by building partnerships with local and international stakeholders to design and implement innovative programmes that promote income generation, employment, and regional stability. Its intervention framework is anchored on two core programmes, economic development and peace-building, supported by cross-cutting enablers such as capacity building, advocacy, gender and social inclusion, and effective communication (PIND, 2024).

Within the framework, the organisation initiated the Niger Delta Youth Employment Pathways (NDYEP) Programme in 2017 to address youth unemployment and underemployment among young people aged 16–30 years. The programme, later expanded and rebranded as the Youth Employment Pathways (YEP) Programme, focuses on skills mapping, job readiness, workforce development, and job creation through market-driven training in agriculture, building construction, ICT, and services. Through the programme, at least 3,000 youth were equipped with sector-specific and soft skills in ICT, construction, and agriculture in the target States. In Delta State, between 2021 and 2023, when the programme commenced, the Youth Employment Pathways trained a total of 1,919 youths across several locations, including Warri South. Here is the breakdown.

Table 1: Breakdown of Training Outcomes of YEP Programme in Delta State (2021–2023)

Year	Total Trained	Male	Female	Work	Enterprise	Internship	Persons with Disability
2021	614	285	329	34	197	263	5
2022	833	437	396	86	100	260	11
2023	472	265	207	58	196	59	4
Total	**1,919**	**987**	**932**	**178**	**493**	**582**	**20**

Source: PIND, 2025

The programme combined training with post-training support for employment, enterprise development, and internships, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to inclusive youth empowerment, including the participation of persons with disabilities (PIND, 2024).

Presentation and Analysis of Data

This research used 3.00 as the mean, also known as the decision mean. The instrument was structured alongside a modified five-point Likert scale to decide whether to accept or reject the research question after comparing it with the cumulative mean. Therefore, a mean score of 3.00 indicates a positive response to the research question and is accepted. Conversely, a mean

score below 3.00 indicates a negative response to the question and is rejected. This is shown below:

SA = 5point
A = 4point
UD = 3point
SD = 2point
D = 1point

$\frac{5+4+3+2+1}{5} = \frac{15}{5} = 3.00$ (Decision mean)

The descriptive analysis was tailored to the research questions raised. Responses to these questions, as presented in the questionnaire, were interpreted based on frequencies, percentages, and mean scores in the respective tables below.

The Nature of the Empowerment Programmes carried out by the PIND in the Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State

This section identified the nature of empowerment programmes carried out by the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) on the employment opportunities available to youths in the Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State. The below table consisted of different items on the nature of empowerment programmes carried out by the organisation on the employment opportunities available to youths, and the respondents' opinions on each of the items were tabulated in frequencies and percentages using mean and standard deviation. The mean score for each item is indicated on the left-hand side of the table.

Table 2: Respondents' opinion on the nature of empowerment programme carried out by Foundation for Partnership Initiative in Niger Delta (PIND) in Warri Local Government Area of Delta State

S/No	Item Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	St.D
1.	The vocational skills training provided by the empowerment programme is effective in enhancing youth employment opportunities	120	140	25	30	15	3.88	1.05
2.	The entrepreneurship training offered by the programme equips youth with the skills to start their own businesses.	130	125	35	25	15	3.92	1.02
3.	The financial literacy training in the empowerment programme helps youth manage their finances effectively for employment or business ventures.	110	130	30	35	25	3.75	1.08
4.	The internship placements offered through the empowerment programme provide valuable work experience for youth	125	135	25	30	15	3.89	0.99
5.	The agricultural development training provided by the programme has increased youth involvement in the agricultural sector.	120	120	40	30	20	3.81	1.06
6.	The ICT and digital skills training offered by the empowerment programme prepares youth for employment in the technology sector.	105	130	35	40	20	3.70	1.10
7.	The mentorship and coaching aspects of the empowerment programme are effective in helping youth build long-term career paths.	130	125	35	20	20	3.91	1.03
8.	The empowerment programme's focus on trades such as carpentry, welding, and plumbing has contributed to increased employment opportunities for youth.	115	140	30	25	20	3.87	1.00
9.	The business start -up funding provided by the empowerment programme has helped youth establish small-scale businesses.	120	135	30	25	20	3.85	1.03

Source: Filed survey (2026)

Table 2 shows the respondents' opinion on the nature of the empowerment programme carried out by the PIND in Warri Local Government Area of Delta State. In the table, item 1

shows that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that vocational skills training provided by the empowerment programme is effective in enhancing youth employment opportunities. This could be seen in the mean scores of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 1.05, which moderated the variability, suggesting some divergence in opinions, with a minority of respondents either undecided (25), disagreed (30), or strongly disagreed (15). In item 2, which shows the highest mean score of 3.92, indicating very strong agreement among respondents that entrepreneurship training offered by the programme equipped the youth with the skills to start their own businesses, and the standard deviation of 1.02 shows that responses are quite consistent, with some respondents agreed (125) and strongly agreed (130). This demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with the entrepreneurship component of the empowerment programme. For item 3, the mean score of 3.75 reflects positive but slightly more mixed opinions that the financial literacy training in the empowerment programme helped the youth to manage their finances effectively for employment or business ventures. A slightly higher standard deviation (1.08) points to a variability in responses, with a notable number of respondents disagreeing or remaining undecided.

Item 4 shows a mean score of 3.89, indicating that the respondents accepted the statement that internship placements offered through the empowerment programme provide valuable work experience for youth, and a standard deviation of 0.99. Item 5 shows a mean score of 3.81, revealing that agricultural development training provided by the programme has increased youth involvement in the agricultural sector, and a standard deviation score of 1.06. Item 6 reveals that the majority of the respondents accepted the statement that ICT and digital skills training offered by the empowerment programme prepares youth for employment in the technology sector. Item 7 presents one of the highest mean scores (3.91), reflecting strong agreement that mentorship and coaching aspects of the empowerment programme are effective in helping youth build long-term career paths, while the standard deviation of 1.03 shows a relatively consistent agreement among respondents. Item 8 shows a high mean (3.87) and standard deviation of 1.00, indicating that the empowerment programme's focus on trades such as carpentry, welding, and plumbing has contributed to increased employment opportunities for youth. Item 9 shows a high mean score of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 1.03, revealing that business start-up funding provided by the empowerment programme has helped youth establish small-scale businesses. The final item on the table shows a mean score of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 1.06. Soft skills development (e.g., communication, teamwork, leadership) was said to have enhanced youth employability.

The Impact of the PIND's Empowerment Programmes on Youth Employment Opportunities in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State

This section investigated the impact of the organisation's empowerment programmes on youth employability in the study area. This is presented in the table below:

Table 3: Respondents' opinion on the impact of the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) on employment opportunities for youths in the Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State

S/No	Item	SA	A	D	UD	SD	Mean	St.d
1.	PIND's initiatives have significantly increased employment opportunities for youths in Warri South LGA.	130	120	40	20	20	4.2	0.85
2.	The training programmes provided by PIND have equipped me with the skills necessary to secure employment.	140	110	30	30	20	4.1	0.88
3.	PIND's efforts have effectively linked youths in Warri South LGA to job opportunities in the local economy.	120	130	40	20	20	4.0	0.87
4.	The entrepreneurship training received from PIND has enabled me to start my own business.	150	100	30	30	20	4.2	0.89
5.	PIND's programmes have improved my chances of gaining meaningful employment compared to before the training.	130	120	40	20	20	4.1	0.86
6.	The job placement support provided by PIND has been effective in helping youths find employment in Warri South LGA.	140	110	40	20	20	4.1	0.88
7.	PIND's vocational training programmes are well -aligned with the demands of the local job market in Warri South LGA.	130	120	40	20	20	4.0	0.87
8.	The mentorship and guidance provided by PIND have been crucial in helping me navigate the job market.	140	110	40	20	20	4.1	0.86
9.	PIND has successfully created awareness about employment opportunities among youths in Warri South LGA.	150	100	30	30	20	4.2	0.88
10.	PIND's programmes have positively impacted my financial independence through increased employment opportunities.	130	120	40	20	20	4.1	0.85

Source: Field Survey (2026)

The data presented in Table 4 reflects respondents' opinions on the impact of the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) on youth employment opportunities in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State. The table reveals that the overall

perception of PIND's initiatives is positive, as evidenced by the mean scores ranging from 4.0 to 4.2, with most items hovering around 4.2, indicating a general agreement among respondents. Most items recorded high levels of agreement, with mean scores ranging from 4.0 to 4.2, indicating that a significant portion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the positive statements regarding the impact of PIND on employment opportunities. For instance, the statement that "PIND's initiatives have significantly increased employment opportunities for youths" has a mean of 4.2, where respondents largely recognized the positive influence of the organisation's initiatives. Similarly, the mean score of 4.2 for the item on entrepreneurship training enabling business start-ups reflects strong agreement about the effectiveness of PIND's training programmes. The standard deviation values ranged from 0.85 to 0.89, indicating a relatively low level of dispersion in responses, meaning that participants generally held similar views on the positive impact of PIND's efforts. Thus, it could be deduced that PIND has had a significant positive impact on youth employment opportunities in Warri South LGA, particularly through its training and mentorship programme. However, there are areas, such as job placements and linkage to local job opportunities, where perceptions vary, indicating potential areas for further improvement.

Challenges faced by the PIND in Implementing Youth Empowerment Initiatives in the Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State.

This section examined the challenges faced by the PIND in implementing youth empowerment initiatives in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State. This is presented in the table below:

Table 4: Respondents' opinion on challenges faced by PIND in implementing youth employment initiatives in the Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State.

S/No	Item	SA	A	D	UD	SD	Mean	St.d
1.	The socio -economic conditions in Warri have significantly hindered the success of PIND's youth employment initiatives.	120	140	30	25	15	4.07	0.91
2	The level of education and skills among the youth in Warri has been a barrier to the effectiveness of PIND's programme.	100	130	40	40	20	3.85	0.97
3	Local government support has been sufficient in facilitating the implementation of PIND's youth employment initiatives.	40	60	70	90	70	2.60	1.20
4	Political dynamics and instability in Warri have negatively impacted PIND's youth employment initiatives.	110	125	30	35	30	3.87	1.08
5	Cultural attitudes towards employment and gender roles have presented significant challenges to PIND's efforts in Warri.	105	115	50	30	30	3.88	1.04
6	Inadequate infrastructure and logistical issues have hindered the effective delivery of PIND's youth employment programme.	120	130	40	25	15	4.07	0.91
7	Access to technology and digital resources has been a major obstacle in implementing PIND's initiatives in Warri.	95	110	40	50	35	3.64	1.16
8	PIND has faced significant challenges in securing sufficient funding to sustain its youth employment programme in Warri.	100	120	50	30	30	3.76	1.07
9	Partnerships with local businesses and organizations have been effective in supporting PIND's youth employment initiatives.	75	130	45	50	30	3.55	1.08
10	The communication and outreach efforts of PIND have been effective in engaging the youth of Warri in employment initiatives.	85	135	35	40	35	3.68	1.11

Source: Field survey (2026)

Table 4 provides insights into the challenges encountered by PIND in implementing youth employment initiatives in Warri South Local Government Area. The responses highlighted several key issues that may be affecting the success of these initiatives. From the Table the socio-economic and educational barriers items 1 and 6, which deal with socio-economic conditions and inadequate infrastructure and logistical issues, have relatively high mean scores (4.07 each, respectively). This indicates that respondents largely agreed that these factors have significantly hindered the effectiveness of PIND's programmes. The standard deviations for these items (0.91 each) suggested some variability in opinions, with a portion of respondents perceiving these challenges as more significant than others. In cultural attitudes towards employment and gender roles, item 4 affirms this as a challenge, with a mean score of 3.88. Item 3 indicates the negative impact of political dynamics and instability, with a mean score of 3.87, showing that this is also a significant challenge; meanwhile, there is more variation in the responses (St.d = 1.08). As for the level of education and skills, which has a mean score of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.97, results indicate youths' education in Warri has been a barrier to the effectiveness of PIND's programme.

As for local government support and political dynamics, the highest mean score (3.87) is associated with item 4, which discusses local government support. This suggests that respondents believed local government has been sufficiently supportive, although the lower standard deviation (1.08) indicates strong agreement. The higher standard deviations (1.08) reflect a diversity of views, indicating that while some respondents see these as significant obstacles, others may not perceive them as strongly. On technology and funding issues, items 7 and 10, addressing access to technology and communication challenges, have high mean scores (3.68 and 3.64), indicating that these are challenges facing PIND officers in implementing youth empowerment initiatives in Warri South Local Government Area. However, the moderate standard deviations (1.16 and 1.11) show some variability in how these issues are perceived, with a portion of respondents viewing them as significant barriers. Finally, on the effectiveness of partnerships and communication, item 29, which discusses the effectiveness of partnerships with local businesses, has a moderately high mean score (3.58), suggesting that respondents generally view these partnerships as beneficial. However, the effectiveness of communication and outreach (item 30) is perceived as less effective, with the lowest mean score (2.40) and a relatively high standard deviation (1.41). This indicates that many respondents feel that PIND's communication strategies could be improved to better engage the youth. Thus, it could be deduced that while PIND faces several challenges in implementing its youth employment initiatives in Warri South LGA, issues related to socio-economic conditions, education levels, political dynamics, and cultural attitudes are particularly prominent. While there is some support from local government and partnerships with businesses, improvements in communication, infrastructure, and access to technology could enhance the overall effectiveness of these initiatives.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study identified that the empowerment programmes implemented by the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) in Warri South Local

Government Area of Delta State. They include vocational training, entrepreneurship development, financial literacy, ICT skills, mentorship, and trades training, among others. While the programmes were generally well-received, some scholars argue that factors such as limited follow-up support, inadequate business climate, and financial challenges may hinder long-term success (Okeke, 2020; Adebanjo, 2021), suggesting that broader structural issues could influence the sustained impact of these initiatives. Nevertheless, PIND's programmes equipped the youths with skills relevant to local and regional economic demands.

The study showed the impact of PIND on employment opportunities in the Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State. Arising from skills acquisition, mentorship, and entrepreneurship programmes, the study showed notable improvements in youth employability, job readiness, and self-reliance in the local government. These findings corroborated earlier studies in other Nigerian states that highlight the positive effects of tailored skill development on youth employment and business creation (Okojie, 2019; Muhammad, 2020; Adeyemi & Bello, 2020; Etim & Inyang, 2016). This is in line with empowerment theory, which emphasizes enabling individuals to gain control over their lives and develop their environment through participation, have access to resources, and awareness of social, political, and economic contexts (Langer & Lietz, 2015). However, contrasting studies indicate that without strong linkages to local job markets, adequate funding, and continuous post-training support, such programmes may have limited long-term effects on financial independence and sustainable employment (Olatunji, 2017; Mohammed, 2019; Ogundele & Akinbode, 2017; Ebong & Udoh, 2018). These insights underscore the need for a holistic approach that combines skill acquisition with ongoing mentorship, market alignment, and supportive infrastructure to maximize the effectiveness of youth empowerment initiatives.

The study also highlights several challenges that hinder the successful implementation of PIND's programmes in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State. Respondents identified poor socio-economic conditions and inadequate infrastructure as some of the challenges faced by PIND in the implementation of its empowerment programmes. Limited local government support was also noted, reflecting insufficient institutional collaboration and engagement in sustaining youth empowerment efforts (Akinyele, 2016; Okafor, 2019; Nwosu, 2017; Nduka, 2018; Oghenekohwo, 2015). Comparatively, international studies suggest that political and cultural challenges are less impactful in regions where community-driven approaches and effective government policies are in place (Anderson, 2017; Wang, 2018). Addressing these infrastructural, socio-political, and institutional challenges is therefore critical for enhancing the success and sustainability of PIND's youth employment initiatives in the Niger Delta.

Conclusion

No doubt, the Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) has played a significant role in youth empowerment in Warri South Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria. Its key initiatives, such as entrepreneurship development, ICT and digital skills

training, and vocational skills training, have been remarkable in meeting job market demands and enhancing youth employability and have positively impacted the beneficiaries' lives. Also, PIND's peace-building efforts, job placement support, and mentorship programmes have positively impacted employment opportunities and financial independence for youths in the area. However, socio-economic conditions, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient local government support remain significant challenges to the full realization of its objectives in the local government. Despite these challenges, PIND's programmes have made notable strides in empowering the youth and creating pathways capable of enhancing sustainable employment in the local government.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made: first, given the concerns about the adequacy of training duration, PIND should consider extending the length of its vocational training programmes to ensure participants have sufficient time to fully develop the necessary skills for long-term employability. To address the moderate support for the programmes' impact on financial independence and job placement, PIND should strengthen partnerships with local businesses and organizations to create more job placement opportunities and provide ongoing support for financial empowerment post-training. Finally, PIND should develop strategies to better navigate the socio-economic and political challenges identified in the study, such as advocating for improved infrastructure and access to technology, as well as fostering stronger local government and community support to enhance the effectiveness of their youth employment initiatives.

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