



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Empowerment programmes and employment opportunities as panacea for youth migration in Nigeria

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2024, 24(03), 1876-1890

Publication history: Received on 03 November 2024; revised on 17 December 2024; accepted on 19 December 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.24.3.3856>

Abstract

Youth migration in Nigeria has emerged as a significant socio-economic issue, with many young individuals leaving their rural or urban localities in search of better opportunities elsewhere. This study therefore examined the impact of empowerment programs and employment opportunities on youth migration in Nigeria. This study adopted a survey research design, the population of the study comprised of literate youth in the six geopolitical regions in Nigeria and the sample size was determined using Cochran (1977) sample size determination formula. The study utilized adapted questionnaire to collect data. The data was analyzed using partial least square structural equation modeling. The study found that empowerment programs and employment opportunities have positive but statistically insignificant impact on youth migration in Nigeria. The study therefore concludes that despite the potential benefits of these programs and opportunities, they are currently inadequate in significantly influencing or curbing youth migration in Nigeria. The study recommends that Government at all levels and relevant stakeholders in Nigeria should revamp existing empowerment initiatives to align them more closely with the needs of the youth. This could involve increasing the scope and scale of such programs, ensuring they are more accessible to marginalized communities, and incorporating skill-building components that are relevant to the modern labor market.

Keywords: Empowerment; Employment; Migration; Opportunities; Programmes; Youth

1. Introduction

Youth Migration in Nigeria Youth migration in Nigeria has become a pressing concern in recent years, as a large number of young people continue to migrate from rural to urban areas or seek opportunities abroad in search of better livelihoods (Ojedokun, 2020). This migration is driven by various socio-economic factors, including high unemployment rates, poor living conditions, lack of educational opportunities, and insecurity. Nigeria's youth population, which makes up a significant portion of the total population, faces numerous challenges that make it difficult for them to thrive within the country (Akinyemi & Omoniyi, 2021). The migration of young Nigerians to foreign countries or urban centers not only depletes the labor force in rural areas but also contributes to brain drain, further exacerbating underdevelopment.

Many young Nigerians, faced with limited access to quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, view migration as a viable solution to improve their socio-economic conditions (Onyekwena & Ekeruche, 2019). However, migration has significant consequences for both individuals and the nation. On the one hand, it may provide better economic prospects for migrants; on the other hand, it disrupts family structures, increases the pressure on urban infrastructure, and depletes the rural workforce (Adepoju, 2020).

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Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) highlights the gravity of the youth unemployment situation, with unemployment among those aged 15–35 years standing at 42.5% in 2020. This alarming statistic has contributed significantly to internal migration from rural to urban areas, as well as international migration to Europe, North America, and other regions (NBS, 2020). In terms of international migration, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that over 1.3 million Nigerians were living abroad by 2019, a large percentage of whom are youths (IOM, 2019).

This movement of young people away from rural areas has further led to challenges in agricultural productivity and rural development, as the workforce in these regions continues to shrink. Youth migration has also placed immense pressure on urban centers, contributing to overcrowding, housing shortages, and strains on public services (Adepoju, 2020).

One of the proposed solutions to the issue of youth migration is the implementation of empowerment programmes and employment opportunities aimed at providing sustainable livelihoods for young people within Nigeria. Empowerment programmes are designed to equip young individuals with the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to improve their socio-economic status (Nwosu & Onyekwena, 2019). These programmes often include vocational training, entrepreneurship development, and financial support, all of which aim to create job opportunities and foster economic independence among youths.

Employment opportunities, on the other hand, are critical in curbing migration by addressing the primary motivation behind it unemployment (Amoo & Ogunrinola, 2020). When young people have access to decent employment that provides a steady income, they are less likely to seek greener pastures elsewhere. Therefore, by combining empowerment initiatives with targeted employment generation schemes, the government and relevant stakeholders can create a conducive environment for young people to thrive and discourage the need for migration.

Despite various government interventions, including empowerment programs and employment initiatives, migration rates continue to rise, indicating a disconnect between policy efforts and their impact on youth. Empowerment programs, such as skill acquisition schemes and entrepreneurship initiatives, are designed to create sustainable livelihoods for youths; however, the effectiveness of these programs in curbing migration has not been thoroughly examined, particularly in the Nigerian context (Adesina, 2021). In addition, The Nigerian government and various non-governmental organizations have initiated several empowerment programmes aimed at addressing youth unemployment and curbing migration. Programmes like the N-Power scheme, Youth Empowerment and Social Support Operations (YESSO), and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) have been introduced to equip young people with skills, resources, and opportunities for self-employment and career growth (Oluwatobi & Ogunrinola, 2021). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives in reducing youth migration is still questionable.

The literature reveals that while several studies have addressed the drivers of youth migration, few have systematically explored the role of empowerment programs and employment opportunities as solutions to this issue. For instance, Adebayo (2020) focused on the socioeconomic determinants of migration but did not assess the effectiveness of intervention programs in mitigating the problem. This creates a significant gap in understanding how empowerment and employment initiatives influence the migration decision-making process among youths. Additionally, existing studies tend to focus on international migration (Oladokun & Ojo, 2019), neglecting internal migration patterns from rural to urban areas, which are equally important for national development.

From a methodological perspective, there is a gap in the use of empirical data to measure the specific impacts of these programs on youth migration. Many studies rely on descriptive or qualitative methods without utilizing rigorous statistical techniques to determine the causal relationships between empowerment programs, employment opportunities, and migration trends (Uche, 2020). This limits the ability to generalize findings and make evidence-based policy recommendations. A quantitative approach, such as structural equation modeling (SEM), could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of these initiatives, yet this has been underutilized in the literature.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill both the literature and methodological gaps by empirically assessing the impact of empowerment programs and employment opportunities on youth migration in Nigeria. It aims to determine whether these interventions can serve as effective strategies for reducing migration and provide actionable insights for policymakers.

Based on these objectives, the study addresses the following hypotheses

- **H₀₁:** Empowerment programmes have no significant impact on youth migration in, Nigeria.

- **H₀₂:** Employment opportunities have no significant impact on youth migration in, Nigeria.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents a comprehensive review of the literature on empowerment programmes, employment opportunities and youth migration in Nigeria. Section 3 outlines the research methodology, including the study design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques employed. Section 4 presents the empirical findings of the study, examining the impact of empowerment programmes and employment opportunities on youth migration in Nigeria. It also discusses these findings and their implications for policy and practice. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper by summarizing the key findings and providing recommendations for the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Empowerment Programmes

Empowerment programs are designed to enhance individuals' capacities, skills, and opportunities to gain control over their lives and improve their socioeconomic conditions. These programs focus on increasing access to resources such as education, skills training, financial support, and employment opportunities, with the aim of fostering self-reliance and economic independence (Okeke & Adesina, 2021). Empowerment, in the context of these programs, involves creating an enabling environment where individuals, especially marginalized groups like youths and women, can actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities (Nwosu, 2020).

In Nigeria, youth empowerment programs have been implemented to address the challenges of unemployment, poverty, and economic disempowerment. These programs include government-led initiatives such as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), N-Power, and various entrepreneurship schemes, which provide training, financial grants, and mentorship opportunities to equip young people with the skills needed to become self-sufficient (Adebayo & Fakorede, 2022). Empowerment programs also encompass non-governmental efforts aimed at fostering social inclusion, reducing crime, and promoting sustainable livelihoods by offering vocational training, access to credit, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2021).

Empirical studies have demonstrated the significance of empowerment programs in promoting economic development and reducing poverty. However, their effectiveness in addressing youth migration, particularly in rural areas, remains underexplored (Obasi & Olusegun, 2021). While some scholars argue that empowerment programs have the potential to reduce rural-urban migration by creating local employment opportunities, others suggest that the absence of sustained policy support and the lack of infrastructure undermine the long-term impact of these programs (Ogunleye, 2020).

Thus, empowerment programs, when properly designed and implemented, can be pivotal in mitigating the socioeconomic factors that drive youth migration and unemployment. However, the success of these initiatives depends on the extent to which they are accessible, sustainable, and aligned with the needs of the target population.

2.2. Employment Opportunities

According to Akinyemi and Ola (2023), employment opportunities refer to the availability of jobs that provide individuals with decent wages, job security, and favorable working conditions. These opportunities are crucial for economic stability and social development, as they enable individuals to meet their basic needs and contribute meaningfully to the economy. Decent employment goes beyond mere job availability and emphasizes the quality of work provided. This definition highlights employment opportunities not only in terms of job availability but also the quality of those jobs. It underscores the importance of decent wages and job security, which are necessary for economic stability and social well-being, making employment opportunities a vital element of development.

According to Eze and Okafor (2022), employment opportunities are defined as avenues through which individuals can engage in economic activities, either in formal or informal sectors, to earn a livelihood. These opportunities are seen as critical in reducing unemployment rates, alleviating poverty, and fostering economic growth. The authors argue that increasing access to employment opportunities is key to addressing economic disparities and fostering social cohesion. This definition focuses on employment opportunities as channels for economic participation, emphasizing the role of both formal and informal sectors. It suggests that creating more opportunities for employment is vital for addressing unemployment and reducing poverty, thus contributing to a more equitable society.

2.3. Youth Migration

Youth migration refers to the movement of young individuals, typically between the ages of 15 and 35, from one location to another in search of better living conditions, education, employment, or other opportunities. This phenomenon has become increasingly prevalent, particularly in developing countries, as young people migrate from rural to urban areas or to other countries in pursuit of better socio-economic conditions.

According to Ojedokun and Adebayo (2022), youth migration is defined as the relocation of young individuals driven primarily by economic factors, such as the pursuit of better job opportunities, higher wages, or improved living conditions. The authors highlight that economic disparities between rural and urban areas or between countries play a significant role in youth migration, with many young people leaving regions with limited economic prospects in search of more prosperous destinations. This definition emphasizes the economic motivations behind youth migration, particularly the search for employment and better economic conditions. It suggests that economic inequality and the lack of opportunities in certain regions drive young people to migrate, whether internally or internationally.

According to Okeke and Nwosu (2021), youth migration is the movement of young individuals aimed at improving their social status or gaining access to better education and skills. The authors argue that while economic factors are important, the quest for education, skill acquisition, and social mobility are increasingly becoming key drivers of youth migration, especially in developing countries. This definition broadens the concept of youth migration by including educational and social mobility as significant motivations. It underscores the importance of education and skill development, suggesting that many young people migrate not just for economic gains, but also to improve their social status and access to opportunities for personal growth.

2.4. Youth Migration in Nigeria

Youth migration in Nigeria has become a critical issue, with a growing number of young people migrating from rural areas to urban centers or seeking opportunities abroad. The primary causes of youth migration include limited employment opportunities, poverty, inadequate access to quality education, and the allure of better living conditions in urban areas or foreign countries (Akinyemi & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2020). Economic disparities between rural and urban regions, coupled with weak infrastructural development in rural areas, push young individuals to migrate in search of better livelihoods. Additionally, social factors such as insecurity, political instability, and the desire for improved social status drive many young Nigerians to migrate. The consequences of this migration are multifaceted. While migration can offer opportunities for economic improvement and skills acquisition, it also leads to significant challenges such as brain drain, increased urban congestion, and the depopulation of rural areas (Ojedokun & Adebayo, 2022). The loss of a productive workforce in rural areas further exacerbates economic stagnation and contributes to rural underdevelopment.

2.5. Empowerment Programmes and Youth Migration

Eke et al. (2024) conducted a study on the impact of robotic technology empowerment in mitigating youth migration and promoting Nigerian prosperity. The study aimed to assess how robotic technology training affects the skills and employability of Nigerian youth. The researchers used a documentary research methodology, reviewing scholarly articles, books, and research papers to form a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between youth migration, robotic technology, and Nigerian economic development. Using Google Scholar, they identified 355 relevant references, which they analyzed to uncover key themes. The findings revealed that robotic technology training equips Nigerian youth with essential skills that are increasingly in demand in the modern job market. The study concluded that empowering youth through robotic technology can significantly reduce youth migration by fostering employment opportunities and enhancing local skills development.

Ajie et al. (2024) conducted a study on curbing youth migration through sustainable industrialization and economic empowerment in Rivers State, focusing on the role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs. The study aimed to investigate the causes of youth migration, examine the economic empowerment role of TVET, and identify its industrial contribution to curbing youth migration in Rivers State. Using a descriptive survey design, the study involved 100 technical education lecturers and 144 final-year technical education students from three tertiary institutions offering TVET in the state. The reliability of the study instrument was confirmed with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.74. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and z-test. The findings revealed that factors like high poverty, low economic performance, and poor governance drive youth migration. However, TVET programs play a critical role in improving living conditions, providing employment in both rural and urban areas, equipping youth with necessary skills, transforming the economy, and promoting local production.

2.6. Employment Opportunities and Youth Migration

Aliyu et al. (2024) examined the impact of intra-African migration on both total and youth unemployment, with a focus on gender-specific effects. Utilizing a two-level estimation approach with Poisson pseudo-maximum likelihood techniques and a 2-stage least squares approach to address endogeneity bias, the study found that factors such as income per capita and the population size of origin and destination countries significantly influence intra-African migration. The study also highlighted that regional trade agreements, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), are key drivers of migration within Africa. Results showed a negative and statistically significant relationship between migration and both youth and overall unemployment in Africa, though total unemployment decreased faster than youth unemployment. This suggests that more experienced workers benefit more from the employment opportunities created by the AfCFTA than younger individuals. Additionally, the study observed that intra-African migration tends to reduce female youth unemployment more effectively than male youth unemployment.

Ola-David et al. (2013) explored the challenge of youth employment in the Nigerian context with a bid to demonstrate interconnections among socio-economic characteristics and incessant youth migration. Univariate and multivariate analysis were carried out with the use of youth data (N=1353) culled from a survey of street traders in urban centres of Nigeria. The analysis results indicate gender, employment status, marital commitments, migrant status and mode of trading as statistically significant determinants of youth migration in search of better opportunities. Owing to the non-availability of desirable jobs for the educated youths, majority seek further migration from their current business locations in search of better job opportunities: both at home and abroad. In order to reduce the incidence of skilled migration

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study on Empowerment Programmes and Employment Opportunities as Panacea for Youth Migration in Nigeria', is grounded on integration of Human Capital Theory and Push-Pull Theory of Migration. Therefore, this study relied on human capita theory and Push-Pull Theory of Migration.

3.1. Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, initially developed by economists Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz in the 1960s, posits that individuals' investments in education and skills are crucial for enhancing their productivity and economic value (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). The theory suggests that human capital encompassing education, training, and health significantly contributes to economic growth and individual earning potential. By equipping individuals with relevant skills and knowledge, societies can boost economic development and reduce poverty. However, the theory has faced criticism for its tendency to overlook structural inequalities and the unequal distribution of resources. Critics argue that it may oversimplify the complex factors influencing economic outcomes and neglect the role of socio-economic conditions and systemic barriers (Bourdieu, 1986; Ball & Bowe, 1992).

In the context of the study on empowerment programs and employment opportunities as a panacea for youth migration in Nigeria, Human Capital Theory is highly relevant. Empowerment programs and employment opportunities are often designed to enhance the skills and employability of youth, which aligns with the core tenets of Human Capital Theory. By investing in education and vocational training, these initiatives aim to improve the human capital of Nigerian youth, potentially reducing migration driven by the search for better economic prospects. However, understanding the limitations of Human Capital Theory, such as its potential oversight of broader socio-economic factors, is crucial for developing effective policies and programs that address not only skill deficits but also structural barriers to economic advancement (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961; Bourdieu, 1986).

The justification for adopting this theory is based on the fact the theory aligns with the focus on how empowerment programmes (such as vocational training, education, and entrepreneurship support) and employment opportunities can enhance the productivity and employability of youths, potentially reducing the need for migration. It emphasizes that investment in human capital (through education and empowerment) can lead to improved economic outcomes, supporting the idea that effective empowerment and employment initiatives could curb youth migration. The theory suggests that providing youths with the means to improve their skills and access to employment can lead to upward social and economic mobility, making migration less necessary.

3.2. The Push-Pull Theory of Migration

The Push-Pull Theory of Migration, developed by Everett Lee in 1966, is a foundational concept in migration studies that explains the factors influencing individuals' decision to migrate. The theory posits that migration is driven by 'push'

factors in the origin location, such as economic hardship, political instability, or lack of opportunities, and 'pull' factors in the destination location, such as better job prospects, higher living standards, or improved security (Lee, 1966). While the theory provides a useful framework for understanding migration dynamics, it has been criticized for its oversimplification and for not accounting for the complexity of individual decision-making processes and the broader socio-economic and political contexts (Massey et al., 1993). In the context of empowerment programs and employment opportunities as a panacea for youth migration in Nigeria, the Push-Pull Theory is relevant as it helps to explain how inadequate local opportunities (push factors) and the allure of better prospects elsewhere (pull factors) drive youth migration. Understanding these factors can inform the design of targeted empowerment programs and job creation initiatives to address the root causes of migration and improve local conditions (Lee, 1966; Massey et al., 1993).

4. Research Methodology

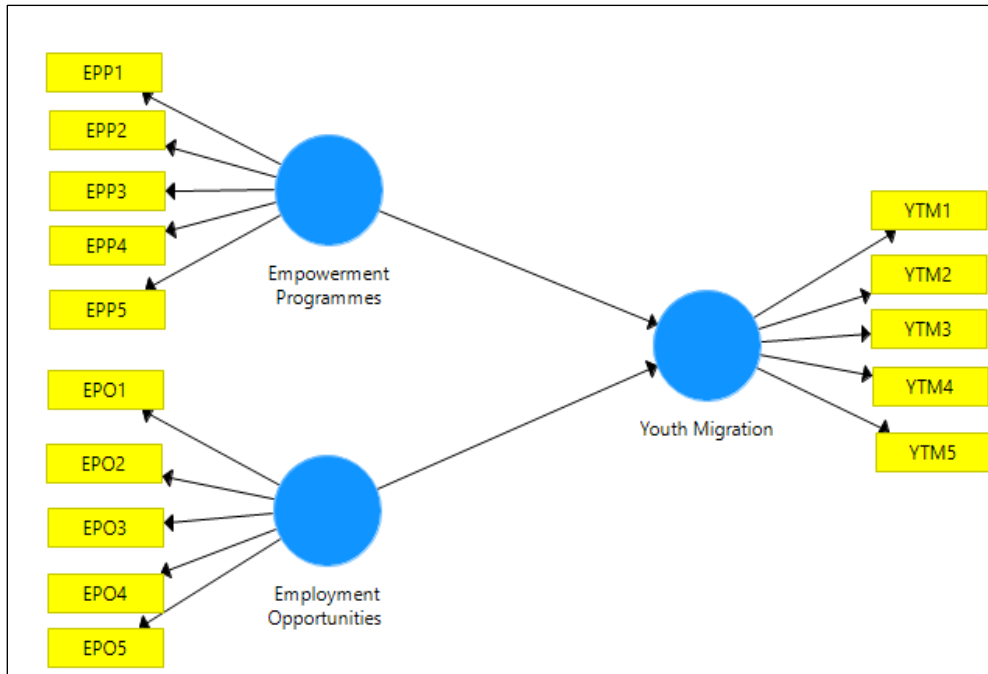
This study on empowerment programs and employment opportunities as a panacea for youth migration in Nigeria, employs a quantitative research design. This approach allows for a systematic examination of the relationship between empowerment programs, employment opportunities and youth migration in Nigeria. This study used a survey research design and a logical approach to develop and test hypotheses. In this study, a quantitative technique based on the deductive strategy was used to assess the relationship between the research variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Survey instruments, such as questionnaires with closed-ended questions on the variables under investigation, were used to collect the quantitative data for this study.

The population for this study comprises of all literate youth (both men and women that have attained the age of 20 years to 35 years) in Nigeria. The concentration on literate youth was justified by the fact that they are better suited to respond to the research instrument utilized in this study. However, due to the difficulties associated with conducting research among all subjects of a population and the difficulties in obtaining the exact population of all literate adults in Nigeria, the sample size was determined using Cochran (1977) sample size determination formula for calculating an infinite or unknown population. The sample size determination formula proposed by Cochran (1977) is $n = Z^2 \times P(1 - P) / C^2$, where n is the sample size for the study, Z^2 is the Z value at the 95% confidence interval, C is the margin of error (5%), P is the population proportion, 0.6, and $1 - P$ is 0.4. A sample size of 369 was obtained using this formula. However, a 25% attrition rate was applied to the determined sample size, resulting in a revised sample size of 461.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire, and respondents were chosen using the purposive sampling technique. The questionnaire was distributed evenly across all the six geopolitical regions (North Central, North East, North West, South East, South South and South West) in Nigeria. To ensure uniform distribution of the questionnaire, the sample size was increased to 468; thus, 78 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to each geopolitical region. The questionnaires were administered through a combination of in-person visits and, where necessary, telephone or online surveys to ensure maximum response rate. Trained research assistants, fluent in both English were employed to assist with data collection

The questionnaire utilised for employment opportunity was adapted from the work of Ola-David et al. (2013), the questionnaire for empowerment programmes was adapted from the work of Aminu, (2023). And the questionnaire for youth migration was adapted from the work of Ajie et al. (2024) with a higher Cronbach alpha values greater than 0.7 as recommended (Hair, et al., 2019). The reliability of the instrument used was accessed using Cronbach alpha of 0.944. Cronbach alpha value of greater than 0.7 is appropriate (Hair, et al., 2022). The questionnaire was designed to capture the variables used in this study (empowerment programmes, employment opportunities and youth migration). Prior to full-scale administration, the questionnaire was pilot tested with a small group of youth from each of the six geopolitical regions to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for the local context. Any necessary adjustments were made based on the feedback from the pilot test.

out of 468 copies of questionnaire, 341 copies which account for 72% of the total questionnaire administered were valid and useful for data analysis. The collected data was examined using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (Smart PLS-SEM) in defining measurement, structural models, and hypothesis testing via SmartPLS 3.0 software as recommended by Hair, et al. (2021). Smart PLS-SEM is a powerful statistical technique widely used in the social sciences, and various other fields for modeling and analyzing complex relationships among variables. Smart PLS is a popular software tool specifically designed for structural equation modeling analysis. It is a variance-based SEM technique that is widely applied in business and social sciences and has gained prominence for several reasons, including its ability to handle complex, non-normally distributed data and its suitability for exploratory and predictive modeling (Hair et al., 2021; Henseler, et al., 2015; Sarstedt, et al., 2022). Below is the model designed for this study:



4.1. Measurement Model for Reliability and Validity

The PLS-SEM analysis was carried out using SmartPLS software, following a two-step process. First, the measurement model was assessed to confirm the reliability and validity of the constructs. Next, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships between empowerment programs, employment opportunities, and youth migration in Nigeria. This method enables a thorough examination of both direct and indirect effects, offering a detailed understanding of how these factors influence youth migration in Nigeria.

To maintain research integrity, ethical considerations were carefully followed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the confidentiality of their responses was ensured. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Additionally, all collected data was anonymized and securely stored to safeguard respondents' privacy.

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Assessment of Measurement Model

5.1.1. Indicators' Loadings

Table 1 Factor Loadings

Items	Loadings
EPP1	0.922
EPP2	0.959
EPP3	0.954
EPP4	0.920
EPP5	0.856
EPO1	0.946
EPO2	0.930
EPO3	0.864
EPO4	0.938

EPO5	0.919
YTM1	0.918
YTM2	0.895
YTM3	0.854
YTM4	0.792
YTM5	0.912

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

The factor loadings presented in table 1 shows the measurement model's quality for the study on empowerment programs, employment opportunities, and youth migration in Nigeria. These loadings represent the correlations between each indicator and its respective construct, offering a measure of how well each item represents its underlying concept.

For the empowerment programs (EPP) construct, the factor loadings range from 0.856 to 0.959. Four out of the five items (EPP1, EPP2, EPP3, EPP4 and EPP5) show strong loadings above 0.8, indicating that these items are robust indicators of the EPP construct. This shows that the loadings for EPP are above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7, this suggesting that it is an acceptable indicator. The particularly high loadings of EPP1, EPP2, EPP3, EPP4 and EPP5 (0.922, 0.959, 0.954, 0.920 and 0.856 respectively) implies that these items are especially representative of the empowerment programs concept in this study.

The employment opportunities (EPO) construct demonstrates consistently high factor loadings across all five items, ranging from 0.864 to 0.946. This suggests that all items are strong indicators of the employment opportunities construct. The notably high loadings for EPO1 (0.946), EPO4 (0.938), EPO2 (0.930), and EPO5 (0.919) indicate that these items are particularly strong indicators of the underlying construct. This suggests that they have a high level of correlation with the factor they are intended to measure, contributing significantly to the construct's reliability and validity in the measurement model. High factor loadings reflect the items' importance in capturing the essence of the employment opportunities construct within the analysis. The relatively lower, but still strong, loading of EPO3 (0.864) suggests that while this item is a good indicator, it may capture a slightly different aspect of employment opportunities compared to the other items.

The youth migration (YTM) construct also exhibits strong factor loadings across all five items, ranging from 0.792 to 0.918. These consistently high loadings indicate that all items are good indicators of the YTM construct. The particularly high loadings for ytm1 (0.918) and YTM5 (0.912) suggest that these items are especially representative of youth migration in Nigeria. The uniformly high loadings across all YTM items imply a high degree of internal consistency within this construct.

The factor loadings across all three constructs demonstrate excellent measurement quality. With most values exceeding 0.7 and many nearing or surpassing 0.9, the indicators selected are highly relevant and accurately represent their respective constructs within the study. This strong measurement model establishes a reliable basis for further examination of the relationships between empowerment programs, employment opportunities, and youth migration in Nigeria.

5.1.2. Validity and Reliability of the Constructs

The results presented in Table 2 provide information about the reliability and validity of the constructs used in the study. For the empowerment programmes construct, the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.956 indicates very high internal consistency among the items measuring empowerment programs. This is supported by the rho_A (0.964) and composite reliability (0.966) values, both exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7, further demonstrating the reliability of the construct. The average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.852, suggesting that a substantial amount of variance (85.2%) in the construct is explained by the selected indicators, which shows excellent convergent validity.

The reliability and validity of the employment opportunities construct are similarly strong. The Cronbach's Alpha of 0.954 shows a high level of internal consistency, meaning the items are well-correlated. The rho_A (0.957) and composite reliability (0.965) values reinforce this, indicating the construct is reliable. The AVE of 0.846 demonstrates that 84.6% of the variance in the indicators is captured by the construct, reflecting excellent convergent validity, confirming that the selected indicators are well-suited to measure the employment opportunities construct.

Table 2 Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Empowerment Programmes	0.956	0.964	0.966	0.852
Employment Opportunities	0.954	0.957	0.965	0.846
Youth Migration	0.923	0.941	0.942	0.766

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

The Usage of Financial Services construct exhibits exceptional reliability and validity. Its Cronbach's Alpha of 0.952 and composite reliability of 0.963 are remarkably high, indicating near-perfect internal consistency. The AVE of 0.839 is outstanding, suggesting that the construct explains a very large proportion of the variance in its indicators.

The youth migration construct also shows good reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.923, signifying strong internal consistency. The rho_A value of 0.941 and composite reliability of 0.942 both exceed 0.9, indicating that the indicators are reliably measuring the construct. The AVE of 0.766 suggests that 76.6% of the variance is explained by the indicators, which is above the acceptable level of 0.5, demonstrating good convergent validity. This indicates that the measurement of youth migration is robust and dependable.

All three constructs demonstrate robust measurement quality, with Empowerment Programmes performing slightly better in terms of explained variance, while Youth Migration is slightly lower in comparison but still well within acceptable thresholds. This provides confidence in the constructs' ability to measure their respective factors effectively.

5.1.3. Discriminant Validity

Table 3 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Youth Migration	Empowerment Programs	Employment Opportunities
Youth Migration			
Empowerment Programs	0.383		
Employment Opportunities	0.019	0.389	

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

Table 3 presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) results, which are crucial for assessing the discriminant validity of the constructs in the study. The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is used to assess discriminant validity, ensuring that constructs are distinct from each other. Typically, an HTMT value below 0.85 indicates good discriminant validity.

Youth Migration and Empowerment Programs (HTMT = 0.383): The HTMT value of 0.383 is well below the threshold of 0.85, indicating strong discriminant validity between these two constructs. This suggests that Youth Migration and Empowerment Programs are distinct concepts, and the indicators used to measure them are not overlapping.

Youth Migration and Employment Opportunities (HTMT = 0.019): The HTMT value of 0.019 is very low, further confirming excellent discriminant validity between these two constructs. This suggests that Youth Migration and Employment Opportunities are highly distinct, with very little overlap in the way they are measured.

Empowerment Programs and Employment Opportunities (HTMT = 0.389): The HTMT value of 0.389 is also well below 0.85, indicating good discriminant validity between Empowerment Programs and Employment Opportunities. This means that these constructs are distinct, and their respective indicators do not measure the same underlying concept.

Overall, the low HTMT values across all constructs demonstrate that the constructs Youth Migration, Empowerment Programs, and Employment Opportunities are well differentiated from each other, ensuring the constructs' validity in this study

5.2. Assessment of the Structural Model

5.2.1. Path Coefficients

Table 4 Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Empowerment Programs -> Youth Migration	0.336	0.398	0.280	1.198	0.232
Employment Opportunities-> Youth Migration	0.042	0.017	0.284	0.148	0.882

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

The results presented in the path coefficient table 4 shows the relationships between Empowerment Programmes, Employment Opportunities and Youth Migration in Nigeria. These findings allow us to evaluate the study's hypotheses and draw conclusions about the Empowerment Programs, Employment and Opportunities on Youth Migration in Nigeria.

- **Hypothesis 1:** Empowerment Programms has no significant impact on Youth Migration in Nigeria

Regarding the first hypothesis, the result of this hypothesis revealed that empowerment programs have positive but insignificant impact on youth migration in Nigeria. This was arrived at from the values of Original Sample (O) which is 0.336 indicating a positive relationship between empowerment programs and youth migration, suggesting that as empowerment programs increase, youth migration may also increase slightly. T Statistics (|O/STDEV|): 1.198 shows that the effect is not statistically significant because the value is below the critical threshold of 1.96 for significance at a 5% level. And P Values: 0.232 further confirms that the relationship is statistically insignificant (as a p-value above 0.05 suggests no significant impact). Empowerment programs, although positively associated with youth migration, do not have a statistically significant impact in this model. This suggests that while these programs may be present, they are not effective enough to significantly reduce youth migration in Nigeria.

The fact that empowerment programs are positively associated with youth migration, but not significantly so, implies that while these programs might provide some benefits, they are not substantial enough to directly influence youth migration patterns. The programs may not be targeting the core reasons for migration, such as lack of employment opportunities, socio-economic challenges, or poor living conditions. The positive but weak impact signals that the current empowerment initiatives may require a thorough review and restructuring. There could be gaps in implementation, insufficient resources, or misalignment with the actual needs of the youth. The programs may not be effectively designed to address the critical factors driving youth to migrate, such as better job opportunities, education, or living conditions elsewhere.

Also, this finding suggests that merely increasing the number of empowerment programs might not reduce youth migration. Instead, there is a need to enhance the quality, relevance, and targeting of these programs to ensure they effectively tackle the root causes of migration, such as lack of skills, unemployment, and economic disparity. Moreso, The result also implies that youth migration in Nigeria is likely influenced by a complex set of factors beyond what the current empowerment programs can address. Other socio-economic drivers, such as inadequate employment opportunities, poor infrastructure, and regional insecurity, may overshadow the potential benefits of these programs.

- **Hypothesis 2:** Employment opportunities have no significant impact on Youth Migration in Nigeria

Regarding the second hypothesis, the result of this hypothesis revealed that employment opportunities have positive but insignificant impact on youth migration in Nigeria. This was arrived at from the values of Original Sample (O) which is 0.042 indicates a very weak positive relationship between employment opportunities and youth migration. T Statistics (|O/STDEV|): 0.148 shows an even lower T-statistic, which is far below the 1.96 threshold, indicating no statistical significance. P Values: 0.882, which is much higher than 0.05, confirms that employment opportunities have an insignificant effect on youth migration. Employment opportunities, in their current form in Nigeria, appear to have no significant influence on youth migration. The weak positive association suggests that existing employment initiatives are not sufficiently robust or widespread enough to deter youth migration in Nigeria.

The very weak positive relationship between employment opportunities and youth migration suggests that while job creation efforts exist, they are not strong enough to influence the decision of youth to stay in Nigeria. This indicates that the current employment initiatives are either not creating enough jobs, not providing the right kinds of jobs, or are not reaching the youths in the areas most affected by migration. The insignificance of the relationship means that employment opportunities, as they are currently structured, are not a sufficient deterrent to youth migration. This implies that young people may still choose to migrate even if they are offered employment locally, perhaps due to factors such as poor job quality, low wages, or better opportunities abroad.

The result suggests that simply providing employment opportunities is not enough. The quality of jobs, including factors like salary, job security, career growth potential, and work conditions, might not be attractive or competitive enough to discourage youth from seeking better prospects elsewhere. The mismatch between available jobs and the expectations or aspirations of the youth might contribute to this outcome. More so, The insignificance of employment opportunities in reducing youth migration also highlights that migration is driven by broader socio-economic challenges beyond job availability alone. Issues like political instability, regional insecurity, lack of access to basic services, and better educational opportunities abroad might be more compelling drivers for youth migration. The findings call for a rethinking of employment policies in Nigeria. To significantly influence youth migration, employment initiatives must be enhanced, not just in terms of quantity but also in quality. Comprehensive approaches that integrate skill development, entrepreneurship support, and the creation of sustainable and rewarding jobs are necessary to meaningfully address the migration issue. In a null shall, the result suggests that the current employment opportunities in Nigeria are not effectively preventing youth migration. Addressing this issue requires a more holistic approach to job creation, improving the quality of work, and addressing the underlying socio-economic factors driving migration.

Overall, both empowerment programs and employment opportunities show a positive but statistically insignificant impact on youth migration in Nigeria, implying that these initiatives are either not reaching enough youths or are not adequately structured to address the root causes of youth migration

5.2.2. *Multicollinearity Test*

Table 5 presents the Inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for the structural model of the study and it shows the VIF values for the two predictor constructs – empowerment programmes and employment opportunity - in relation to the outcome variable, youth migration. Both predictor constructs have closely VIF values of 2.030 and 2.032.

Table 5 Inner VIF Values

	Youth Migration
Empowerment Programmes	2.030
Employment Opportunities	2.032

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

The values provided (Empowerment Programmes = 2.030, Employment Opportunities = 2.032) suggest that these represent Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. VIF is used to detect multicollinearity in regression analysis, which occurs when independent variables are highly correlated, leading to issues with estimating the coefficients.

Empowerment Programmes (VIF = 2.030): This VIF value is slightly above 2, which indicates a low to moderate level of multicollinearity. While multicollinearity is not a major concern at this level, it suggests some degree of correlation between Empowerment Programmes and other independent variables (possibly Employment Opportunities), but it does not warrant concern as it remains below the commonly accepted threshold of 5.

Employment Opportunities (VIF = 2.032): Similarly, this VIF value indicates a low to moderate level of multicollinearity. While there is some correlation between Employment Opportunities and other variables, it is not strong enough to affect the reliability of the results.

Both VIF values are below the critical threshold of 5, which means that multicollinearity is not a significant issue in this analysis. The independent variables (Empowerment Programmes and Employment Opportunities) are not excessively correlated with each other, allowing the PLS model to provide reliable estimates of their respective impact on the dependent variable (Youth Migration).

5.2.3. R Square

Table 6 R Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Youth Migration	0.142	0.136

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

Table 6 presents the R Square values for the structural model, specifically focusing on the endogenous variable youth migration. R Square (0.142): This indicates that 14.2% of the variance in youth migration is explained by the independent variables (likely Empowerment Programmes and Employment Opportunities). In other words, the model accounts for 14.2% of the changes or variations in youth migration based on these factors. Although this value is relatively low, it still shows that there is some relationship between the independent variables and youth migration.

R Square Adjusted (0.136): The adjusted R Square, which is slightly lower at 13.6%, takes into account the number of predictors in the model and adjusts the R Square value accordingly. This value gives a more accurate estimate of the explanatory power of the model, particularly when there are multiple predictors involved. The small difference between R Square and Adjusted R Square suggests that the model does not suffer from overfitting, as the performance of the model does not drastically change when adjusting for the number of variables.

The R Square and Adjusted R Square values indicate that the independent variables in the model explain a modest portion of the variance in youth migration, with most of the variance being influenced by factors outside the model. This suggests that while Empowerment Programmes and Employment Opportunities have influence on youth migration, there are other factors not captured by the model that also play a significant role in influencing youth migration in Nigeria.

5.2.4. Effect Size

Table 7 F Square

	Youth Migration
Empowerment Programmes	0.012
Employment Opportunities	0.015

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

Table 7 presents the f-square values, which are essential for assessing the effect size of the predictor variables (Empowerment Programmes and Employment Opportunities) on the endogenous variable (Youth Migration) in Nigeria. These f-square values provide insight into the practical significance of each predictor in explaining youth migration. The values provided are F-square values, which indicate the effect size of independent variables (in this case, Empowerment Programmes and Employment Opportunities) on the dependent variable (Youth Migration)

Empowerment Programmes (0.012): The F-square value of 0.012 suggests a small effect size of empowerment programmes on youth migration. In statistical terms, an F-square value between 0.02 and 0.15 is typically considered a small effect, and values below 0.02, such as this, indicate that the effect is very minimal.

Employment Opportunities (0.015): Similarly, the F-square value of 0.015 indicates a small effect size of employment opportunities on youth migration. While it's marginally higher than empowerment programmes, it still reflects a minimal contribution to explaining the variance in youth migration.

Both Empowerment Programmes and Employment Opportunities have very small effect sizes on youth migration. This implies that these variables only make a minimal contribution to explaining changes in youth migration. The low effect sizes suggest that these factors alone are not sufficient to significantly influence youth migration, and other factors likely play a more prominent role in driving migration trends in Nigeria.

5.2.5. Model Fit

Table 8 provides the Fit Summary for both the saturated and estimated models, offering valuable insights into the model's overall quality and its ability to represent the observed data. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

(SRMR) value of 0.059 for both models is a strong indicator of good fit. Generally, SRMR values below 0.08 are considered to reflect an acceptable fit, implying that the difference between the observed correlations and the model-implied correlations is minimal. This suggests that the model effectively captures the relationships within the data.

Table 8 Fit Summary

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.059	0.059
d_ULS	0.424	0.424
d_G	3.989	3.989
Chi-Square	3,561.911	3,561.911
NFI	0.597	0.597

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2024

SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual): The SRMR value of 0.059 for both the saturated and estimated models is below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.08, indicating a good fit. This means that the differences between observed and model-implied correlations are relatively small, suggesting the model represents the data well. **d_ULS (Squared Euclidean Distance):** The value of 0.424 for both models is a measure of fit based on the difference between the empirical and model-implied covariance matrices. Lower values, as seen here, suggest a good fit. **d_G (Geodesic Distance):** The value of 3.989 for both models provides an alternative distance measure for assessing model fit. While there is no strict threshold for d_G, lower values generally indicate better model fit, but this depends on context.

Chi-Square: A value of 3,561.911 is reported for both models. The Chi-Square statistic tests whether the model's predictions significantly differ from the observed data. However, large sample sizes can inflate this statistic, making it less reliable in isolation. **NFI (Normed Fit Index):** The NFI value of 0.597 falls below the conventional cutoff of 0.90 for good fit. This suggests that the model may not be an excellent fit based on NFI, indicating room for improvement in model specification or structure. In summary, the SRMR and d_ULS values suggest a reasonable fit for the model, though the NFI and Chi-Square indicate potential areas where the model could be refined to better align with the data

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the empowerment programmes and employment opportunities as a panacea for youth migration in Nigeria. The findings of this study reveal that while empowerment programs have a positive impact on youth migration in Nigeria, the effect is statistically insignificant. This suggests that while these programs may provide some benefits in reducing youth migration, they are not sufficient on their own to address the underlying factors driving youth to migrate. The limited impact could be attributed to various challenges such as inadequate implementation, limited reach, or misalignment with the actual needs and aspirations of the youth population.

Similarly, the analysis shows that employment opportunities have a positive but insignificant effect on youth migration. Although job creation is essential in curbing migration, the current employment initiatives in Nigeria may not be robust or sustainable enough to make a significant difference in migration patterns. Structural issues in the labor market, such as job quality, security, and alignment with the skills of the youth, likely undermine the effectiveness of these employment opportunities in reducing migration.

Recommendations

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

- Government at all levels and relevant stakeholders in Nigeria should revamp existing empowerment initiatives to align them more closely with the needs of the youth. This could involve increasing the scope and scale of such programs, ensuring they are more accessible to marginalized communities, and incorporating skill-building components that are relevant to the modern labor market. Furthermore, continuous monitoring and evaluation should be implemented to assess the effectiveness of these programs and make necessary adjustments to increase their impact.
- Government at all levels and relevant stakeholders focus on creating quality and sustainable jobs that match the skills of young people. Enhancing vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and access to capital for

small businesses could help empower youth economically and reduce the need for migration. Additionally, government and private sector collaboration is crucial in promoting sectors with high growth potential, such as technology, agriculture, and renewable energy, to provide long-term employment prospects for young people in Nigeria.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

There is No conflict of interest to be disclosed. This study did not access funds from any quarters of interest

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