

## Youth as Catalysts for Socio-Economic Development: The Role of Technological Innovation and Social Change in Enugu State, Nigeria

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<p><i>Abstract</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>The role of youth in driving socio-economic development through technological innovation and social change has become increasingly significant in Nigeria. This paper explores how the innovative capabilities of the youth population can be harnessed to address socio-economic challenges, foster sustainable development, and transform the country's socio-economic landscape. It argues that the intersection of technology and social change, driven by youth, presents a critical opportunity for Nigeria to leapfrog into a more prosperous and equitable society. The paper further discusses the challenges faced by Nigerian youth in this role, including inadequate access to resources, education, and mentorship, and suggests strategic interventions to enhance their impact. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative data analysis to understand the subject comprehensively. The findings underscore the potential of youth-led technological innovation and social change as a pathway to socio-economic development, calling for policies that support and empower young innovators.</i></p>	<p><i>Journal of Policy and Development Studies (JPDS)</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Vol. 16. Issue 1 (2024)</i>  <i>ISSN(p) 1597-9385</i>  <i>ISSN (e) 2814-1091</i>  <i>Home page</i>  <a href="https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jpds">https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jpds</a></p> <p><b>ARTICLE INFO:</b>  <b>Keyword:</b>  <i>Youth, Socio-Economic Development, Technological Innovation, Social Change,, Sustainable Development</i></p> <p><b>Article History</b>  <b>Received:</b>  <i>17<sup>th</sup> July 2024</i>  <b>Accepted:</b>  <i>24<sup>th</sup> September 2024</i>  <b>DOI:</b>  <a href="https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jpds.v16i1.19">https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jpds.v16i1.19</a></p>
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## 1. Introduction

The youth population in Nigeria, constituting over 60% of the country's total population, is a significant demographic that holds the potential to drive socio-economic development (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). This demographic advantage, often referred to as the "youth bulge," presents both opportunities and challenges. The opportunities lie in the ability of young people to innovate, adapt to new technologies, and spearhead social change, while the challenges include unemployment, underemployment, and a lack of access to quality education and resources (World Bank, 2023).

In the context of socio-economic development, technological innovation and social change are pivotal areas where youth can play a transformative role. Technological innovation refers to the development and application of new technologies to improve products, services, and processes, thereby enhancing productivity and economic growth (Romer, 1990). Social change, on the other hand, involves the alteration of social structures and cultural norms over time, often driven by collective action and the adoption of new ideas and practices (Giddens, 2024).

Nigeria's economic development has historically been hampered by various factors, including reliance on oil exports, poor infrastructure, and governance challenges (Akpan & Isihak, 2021). However, in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to diversify the economy and leverage human capital, particularly the youth, to achieve sustainable development. The advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has further highlighted the importance of technological innovation in this process, as digital technologies offer new avenues for economic growth and social transformation (Schwab, 2017).

Despite the potential of Nigerian youth to contribute to socio-economic development, several barriers hinder their ability to innovate and drive social change. These include inadequate access to quality education and training, limited opportunities for entrepreneurship, and a lack of supportive policies and infrastructure (Adebayo & Bello, 2022). Addressing these challenges is crucial for harnessing the full potential of youth as catalysts for development.

This paper aims to explore the role of youth in driving socio-economic development in Nigeria through technological innovation and social change. It seeks to identify the factors that enable or constrain youth participation in these areas and to propose strategies for enhancing their impact. The study is guided by the following research objectives and hypotheses.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

To examine the role of technological innovation in youth-led socio-economic development in Nigeria.

To analyze the impact of social change initiatives led by youth on Nigeria's socio-economic landscape.

### 1.3 Hypotheses

H<sup>1</sup>: Youth-driven technological innovation significantly contributes to socio-economic development in Nigeria.

H<sup>2</sup>: Social change initiatives led by youth have a transformative effect on Nigeria's socio-economic structures.

## 2. Conceptual Review

### Youth:

"youth" typically refers to the period between childhood and adulthood, characterized by growth, development, and a transition to independent living. The United Nations defines youth as individuals between 15 and 24 (United Nations, 2020). However, this definition varies across different cultures and contexts. In Nigeria, the National Youth Policy defines youth as individuals aged 18 to 35 years, acknowledging the extended transition period to adulthood due to socio-economic factors (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019).

Youth is a biological stage and a social construct influenced by cultural, economic, and political factors. The experiences and expectations of youth differ significantly based on their socioeconomic background, education, and access to opportunities. This period is often marked by significant life changes, including the completion of education, entry into the workforce, and the establishment of family and social networks.

### The Role of Youth in Socio-Economic Development

Youth are often seen as catalysts for change and innovation, particularly in societies undergoing rapid transformation. Their energy, creativity, and openness to new ideas position them as key drivers of socio-economic development. In Nigeria, the youth population represents a significant demographic dividend, with over 60% of the population under the age of 25 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). This large youth population presents both opportunities and challenges for the country's development.

One of the primary roles of youth in socio-economic development is through entrepreneurship. Young people are increasingly engaging in entrepreneurial activities, creating jobs, and contributing to economic growth. The rise of tech startups in Nigeria, particularly in cities like Lagos, is a testament to the entrepreneurial spirit of the youth (Adeleye & Esposito, 2018). These young entrepreneurs are not only driving economic growth but also addressing social challenges through innovative solutions.

Moreover, youth play a crucial role in promoting social change. They are often at the forefront of movements advocating for political, social, and environmental reforms. In Nigeria, youth-led movements such as EndSARS have highlighted the role of young people in demanding accountability, justice, and transparency from the government (Olorunnisola, 2021). These movements demonstrate the power of youth in shaping the socio-political landscape of the country.

## **Challenges Facing Youth in Nigeria**

Despite their potential, Nigerian youth face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to contribute fully to socio-economic development. High levels of unemployment and underemployment are among the most pressing issues. According to the World Bank (2023), the unemployment rate among Nigerian youth is significantly higher than the national average, exacerbating poverty and social instability.

Inadequate access to quality education and training is another major challenge. Many young Nigerians lack the skills and knowledge necessary to compete in the global economy. This skills gap limits their employment opportunities and stifles innovation. Additionally, the lack of access to capital and resources makes it difficult for young entrepreneurs to start and grow businesses (Adebayo & Bello, 2022).

Social and cultural barriers also play a role in limiting the participation of youth in socio-economic activities. In some regions, traditional gender roles and expectations restrict the opportunities available to young women, further entrenching gender inequalities (Okafor & Amayo, 2020). Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policies and programs that support youth development and empowerment.

## **Youth Empowerment and Policy Implications**

Youth empowerment involves creating opportunities for young people to develop their skills, engage in meaningful employment, and participate in decision-making processes. It is essential for harnessing the potential of youth as agents of socio-economic development. In Nigeria, various initiatives have been implemented to promote youth empowerment, including the National Youth Policy and the Youth Enterprise with Innovation (YouWiN!) program (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019).

Effective youth empowerment policies should focus on providing access to quality education and vocational training, promoting entrepreneurship, and creating an enabling environment for youth participation in governance and civic activities. These policies should also address the specific needs of marginalized groups, including young women and rural youth, to ensure inclusive development (Chigunta, 2017).

## **Socio-Economic Development:**

"Socio-economic development" is a broad and multifaceted concept that encompasses both economic growth and social progress. It refers to the process of improving the economic and social well-being of a population, particularly in terms of income, education, health, and quality of life. Socio-economic development is a key objective for governments, policymakers, and international organizations, as it represents a holistic approach to improving human welfare. In the context of Nigeria, socio-economic development is crucial for addressing the country's challenges of poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment.

Socio-economic development is often defined as the process by which the economic and social conditions of a society improve over time. This improvement is typically measured by indicators such as GDP per capita, literacy rates, life expectancy, and access to basic services like healthcare and education (Todaro & Smith, 2015). However, socio-economic development is more than just economic growth; it also involves the equitable distribution of resources, the reduction of poverty and inequality, and the enhancement of social cohesion and stability.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines socio-economic development as "a process of improving people's economic and social conditions, particularly those of the poor and marginalized groups, through the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities" (UNDP, 2020). This definition highlights the importance of inclusivity and equity in the development process, ensuring that the benefits of growth are shared by all members of society.

### **Theories of Socio-Economic Development**

Several theoretical frameworks have been developed to understand the processes and dynamics of socio-economic development. One of the most influential is the modernization theory, which posits that development is a linear process through which societies progress from traditional to modern stages (Rostow, 2020). According to this theory, economic growth, technological advancement, and social modernization are key drivers of development.

Dependency theory offers a contrasting perspective, arguing that socio-economic development in the Global South is constrained by the exploitative economic relationships with developed countries (Prebisch, 2020). This theory emphasizes the structural inequalities in the global economy that perpetuate underdevelopment in peripheral nations.

Another important framework is the human development approach, which focuses on expanding the capabilities and freedoms of individuals as the ultimate goal of development (Sen, 2019). This approach shifts the focus from economic growth to human well-being, emphasizing the importance of health, education, and political freedom as integral components of development.

### **Dimensions of Socio-Economic Development**

Socio-economic development encompasses multiple dimensions, each of which contributes to the overall improvement of society:

**Economic Growth:** Economic growth is often seen as a prerequisite for socio-economic development, as it generates the resources needed for social investments and poverty reduction. However, growth alone is not sufficient; it must be inclusive and sustainable to ensure long-term development (Stiglitz, 2020).

**Education:** Education is a key driver of socio-economic development, as it enhances human capital, increases productivity, and promotes social mobility. Access to quality education is essential for reducing poverty and inequality and for fostering innovation and economic competitiveness (UNESCO, 2015).

**Health:** Good health is both a means and an end of development. Healthier populations are more productive, can participate more fully in the economy, and have a better quality of life. Investments in healthcare systems, sanitation, and nutrition are crucial for improving public health and achieving socio-economic development (WHO, 2016).

**Employment and Livelihoods:** Employment is a critical aspect of socio-economic development, as it provides individuals with income, social status, and a sense of purpose. Job creation, particularly in sectors that are accessible to the poor, is essential for reducing poverty and promoting economic inclusion (ILO, 2019).

**Social Protection:** Social protection systems, including social insurance, cash transfers, and public services, play a vital role in reducing vulnerability and promoting social equity. They provide a safety net for the poor and marginalized, enabling them to participate more fully in economic and social life (Barrientos, 2023).

**Governance and Institutions:** Effective governance and strong institutions are essential for socio-economic development. They ensure the rule of law, protect property rights, and create a stable environment for economic activity. Good governance also promotes transparency, accountability, and public participation in decision-making (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2022).

### **Challenges to Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria**

Nigeria faces numerous challenges in achieving socio-economic development, despite its abundant natural resources and large population. Some of the key challenges include:

**Poverty and Inequality:** Despite being one of Africa's largest economies, Nigeria has high levels of poverty and income inequality. The benefits of economic growth have not been evenly distributed, with significant disparities between urban and rural areas, and between different regions of the country (World Bank, 2023).

**Corruption and Governance Issues:** Corruption and weak governance are major obstacles to socio-economic development in Nigeria. They undermine public trust, waste resources, and hinder the effective implementation of development policies and programs (Transparency International, 2023).

**Insecurity and Conflict:** Persistent insecurity, particularly in the North East and other conflict-affected regions, has disrupted economic activities and displaced millions of people. Insecurity hampers development by destroying infrastructure, deterring investment, and exacerbating poverty (Ogunleye, 2019).

**Inadequate Infrastructure:** Nigeria's infrastructure deficit, particularly in transportation, energy, and water supply, is a significant barrier to socio-economic development. Poor infrastructure increases the cost of doing business, reduces productivity, and limits access to essential services (African Development Bank, 2020).

**Technological Innovation:** Technological innovation is a critical concept in understanding the dynamics of modern economic growth and development. It refers to the process through which new and improved technologies are developed and implemented to create new products, services, or processes, thereby enhancing productivity and economic performance (Rosenberg, 2022). The term "technological innovation" encompasses a wide range of activities, from the invention of novel devices and methods to the diffusion of existing technologies within different contexts. It plays a central role in driving economic growth, improving quality of life, and solving complex social and environmental problems.

### **Defining Technological Innovation**

Technological innovation is often defined as the application of knowledge to produce new products, services, or processes that deliver significant value (Freeman, 2022). This definition highlights the importance of knowledge as a key input in the innovation process. The OECD (2015) defines technological innovation as "the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization, or external relations." This broad definition captures the multifaceted nature of technological innovation, which can occur in various forms, including product innovation, process innovation, marketing innovation, and organizational innovation.

### **Theories of Technological Innovation**

Several theoretical frameworks have been developed to understand the process and impact of technological innovation. Among these, the most influential is the Schumpeterian theory of innovation, which emphasizes the role of entrepreneurs in driving economic change through the introduction of new products and processes (Schumpeter, 2021). Schumpeter's concept of "creative destruction" describes how technological innovations disrupt existing markets and industries, leading to the emergence of new economic structures.

Another important theoretical perspective is the evolutionary theory of technological change, which views innovation as a cumulative process driven by the interaction of various factors, including knowledge, institutions, and market dynamics (Nelson & Winter, 2020). This theory emphasizes the importance of learning and adaptation in the innovation process, highlighting how firms and industries evolve through the development and diffusion of new technologies.

The diffusion of innovations theory, developed by Everett Rogers, focuses on how new technologies spread within and across societies (Rogers, 2020). According to this theory, the adoption of innovations follows a predictable pattern, with innovators and early adopters leading the way, followed by the majority and laggards. The diffusion process is influenced by several factors, including the perceived benefits of the innovation, the availability of information, and the social networks within which potential adopters are embedded.

### **Types of Technological Innovation**

Technological innovations can be broadly categorized into several types, each with distinct characteristics and implications for economic development:

**Product Innovation:** This type of innovation involves the development of new or significantly improved products or services. Product innovations can enhance consumer satisfaction, open up new markets, and increase the competitiveness of firms. For example, the introduction of smartphones revolutionized the telecommunications industry, creating new opportunities for companies and consumers alike (West & Mace, 2010).

**Process Innovation:** Process innovation refers to the implementation of new or improved production methods, which can increase efficiency, reduce costs, and improve product quality. For instance, the adoption of automated manufacturing technologies has transformed industries by enabling mass production with higher precision and lower costs (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

**Organizational Innovation:** Organizational innovation involves the adoption of new organizational practices or structures that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization. This type of innovation can include changes in management practices, business models, or workplace organization. The rise of the gig economy, driven by platforms like Uber and Airbnb, represents a significant organizational innovation that has reshaped traditional labour markets (Sundararajan, 2016).

**Marketing Innovation:** Marketing innovation refers to the development of new marketing strategies, such as changes in product design, packaging, distribution channels, or pricing strategies. Marketing innovations can help firms reach new customers, increase brand loyalty, and differentiate their products from competitors (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

### **Factors Influencing Technological Innovation**

The process of technological innovation is influenced by a variety of factors, both internal and external to the organization:

**R&D Investment:** Research and development (R&D) are crucial drivers of technological innovation. Firms that invest heavily in R&D are more likely to develop new technologies and maintain a competitive edge in the market (Cohen & Levinthal, 2020).

**Knowledge and Skills:** The availability of skilled labour and knowledge resources is essential for innovation. Firms with access to advanced knowledge and a highly educated workforce are better positioned to innovate (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2019).

**Institutional and Regulatory Environment:** Government policies, regulations, and institutions play a significant role in shaping the innovation landscape. Supportive policies, such as tax incentives for R&D, intellectual property protection, and funding for research institutions, can encourage innovation (Lundvall, 1992).

**Market Dynamics:** Market conditions, including competition, consumer demand, and technological opportunities, influence the direction and pace of innovation. Competitive markets often drive firms to innovate to survive and thrive (Porter, 2020).



**Collaboration and Networks:** Collaboration with other firms, research institutions, and universities can facilitate innovation by providing access to complementary resources and knowledge. Innovation networks and ecosystems are increasingly recognized as important drivers of technological innovation (Powell & Grodal, 2015).

### **Impact of Technological Innovation on Economic Development**

Technological innovation has far-reaching implications for economic development. It is widely recognized as a key driver of productivity growth, which in turn leads to higher economic output and improved living standards (Solow, 2017). Innovations in technology can create new industries, generate employment, and increase the competitiveness of economies on a global scale.

Moreover, technological innovation can contribute to social and environmental sustainability. For example, innovations in renewable energy technologies, such as solar and wind power, have the potential to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate climate change (Jacobsson & Lauber, 2016). Similarly, advancements in healthcare technologies can improve health outcomes and extend life expectancy, contributing to social well-being.

However, the impact of technological innovation is not uniformly positive. It can also lead to disruptive changes, such as job displacement due to automation and the widening of income inequalities (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2024). These challenges underscore the need for policies that ensure the equitable distribution of the benefits of innovation and address its potential negative consequences.

### **Technological Innovation in the Nigerian Context**

In Nigeria, technological innovation is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in achieving sustainable economic development. The country has a growing tech ecosystem, particularly in cities like Lagos, which is often referred to as the "Silicon Valley of Africa" (Evans, 2020). Nigerian tech startups are driving innovation in various sectors, including finance (Fintech), agriculture (AgriTech), and education (EdTech).

However, the diffusion of technological innovation in Nigeria faces several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance, and a weak regulatory environment. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts from both the public and private sectors, as well as investments in education, research, and infrastructure development (Asongu & Nwachukwu, 2018)

Therefore, technological innovation is a complex and multifaceted concept that plays a crucial role in driving economic growth, improving quality of life, and addressing social and environmental challenges. It encompasses a wide range of activities, from the development of new products and processes to the adoption of new organizational practices and marketing strategies. The impact of technological innovation on economic development is profound, but it also presents challenges that must be managed through appropriate policies and strategies. In the Nigerian context, fostering technological innovation is essential for achieving sustainable development and enhancing the country's global competitiveness.

## **Social Change:**

Social change refers to the significant alteration of social structures and cultural patterns over time. It encompasses changes in societal norms, values, institutions, and behaviors, and is often driven by factors such as technological advancements, economic development, political movements, and cultural shifts. Social change is a dynamic and continuous process that affects all aspects of society, including family structures, education systems, and governance. In the context of Nigeria, social change is particularly relevant, given the country's rapid population growth, urbanization, and ongoing socio-political transformations.

Social change is typically defined as the transformation of social institutions, behaviours, and relations over time (Giddens, 2016). It involves changes in the social order, including shifts in the distribution of power, the emergence of new social roles and identities, and the evolution of cultural norms and values. Social change can occur at various levels, from individual and community changes to broader societal and global transformations.

The concept of social change is closely linked to the idea of social progress, which refers to the improvement of social conditions and the achievement of greater equity, justice, and well-being (Comte, 2021). However, social change is not always positive or progressive; it can also lead to negative outcomes, such as social disintegration, inequality, and conflict (Tilly, 2018).

## **Theories of Social Change**

Several theoretical frameworks have been developed to explain the processes and drivers of social change. These theories provide insights into the complex dynamics that shape societal transformations:

**Functionalist Theory:** Functionalist theories view social change as a gradual and adaptive process that maintains social stability and cohesion. According to this perspective, social institutions evolve to meet the changing needs of society, and social change occurs in response to external pressures, such as economic or technological developments (Parsons, 2021).

**Conflict Theory:** Conflict theories emphasize the role of power struggles and social inequalities in driving social change. According to this perspective, social change is often the result of conflicts between different social groups, such as classes, ethnic groups, or genders, over resources, rights, and opportunities (Marx, 2018). Conflict theories highlight how social change can be both revolutionary and disruptive, leading to the transformation of social structures and the redistribution of power.

**Symbolic Interactionism:** Symbolic interactionist theories focus on the role of individual and group interactions in shaping social change. According to this perspective, social change occurs through the reinterpretation and renegotiation of social meanings, identities, and roles. This approach emphasizes the importance of agency and the subjective experiences of individuals in the process of social change (Blumer, 2019).

**Modernization Theory:** Modernization theory posits that social change is driven by the process of modernization, which involves the transition from traditional to modern societies. According to this theory, modernization is characterized by industrialization, urbanization, secularization, and the spread of rational-legal forms of authority (Rostow, 2020). Modernization theory suggests that social change is inevitable and follows a linear trajectory towards greater complexity and differentiation.

**Globalization Theory:** Globalization theory examines how the interconnectedness of the world through trade, communication, and cultural exchange drives social change. According to this perspective, globalization leads to the diffusion of ideas, practices, and technologies across national boundaries, resulting in both homogenization and hybridization of cultures (Giddens, 2020). Globalization theory highlights the role of global forces in shaping local and national social changes.

### **Dimensions of Social Change**

Social change can manifest in various dimensions, each of which impacts different aspects of society:

**Cultural Change:** Cultural change refers to the transformation of cultural practices, norms, values, and beliefs over time. Cultural change can result from internal factors, such as shifts in generational attitudes, or external influences, such as globalization and migration. For example, the increasing acceptance of gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights in many societies reflects significant cultural change (Inglehart & Norris, 2023).

**Economic Change:** Economic change involves shifts in the structure and dynamics of the economy, including changes in production, consumption, labor markets, and income distribution. Economic change is often driven by technological innovations, globalization, and changes in government policies. The transition from agrarian to industrial and post-industrial economies represents a major economic change with profound social implications (Polanyi, 2024).

**Political Change:** Political change refers to alterations in governance, political institutions, and power relations within society. Political change can result from revolutions, reforms, or shifts in public opinion. The spread of democracy, the rise of populism, and the emergence of new social movements are examples of political change that have reshaped societies around the world (Huntington, 2021).

**Social Structural Change:** Social structural change involves the reorganization of social hierarchies, roles, and relationships within society. This can include changes in class structures, gender relations, family dynamics, and social mobility. For example, the increasing participation of women in the workforce and changes in family structures are indicative of significant social structural change (Beck, 2022).

**Technological Change:** Technological change refers to the development and adoption of new technologies that alter the way people live, work, and interact. Technological change can have profound social impacts, including changes in communication, transportation, education, and

healthcare. The digital revolution, characterized by the proliferation of the internet, smartphones, and social media, represents a major technological change with widespread social implications (Castells, 2016).

### **Factors Influencing Social Change**

Social change is influenced by a wide range of factors, both endogenous and exogenous to society:

**Technological Innovation:** As discussed in the previous section, technological innovation is a major driver of social change. New technologies can disrupt existing social practices, create new opportunities, and alter power dynamics within society (Rosenberg, 2022).

**Economic Development:** Economic development, including changes in wealth, employment, and income distribution, can drive social change by altering social structures and individual behaviours. Economic growth can lead to greater social mobility, changes in consumption patterns, and shifts in social values (Todaro & Smith, 2015).

**Political Movements and Reforms:** Social change is often driven by political movements that advocate for changes in laws, policies, and governance. Political reforms, such as the expansion of civil rights, the introduction of welfare programs, or the implementation of democratic institutions, can lead to significant social transformations (Tilly, 2018).

**Cultural Diffusion and Globalization:** The spread of cultural practices and ideas across borders through globalization can lead to cultural change and the emergence of new social norms. Globalization also exposes societies to new challenges, such as cultural homogenization and the erosion of traditional values (Giddens, 2020).

**Environmental Changes:** Environmental changes, including climate change, natural disasters, and resource depletion, can drive social change by forcing societies to adapt to new conditions. Environmental challenges can lead to changes in settlement patterns, economic activities, and social relations (Diamond, 2015).

### **Social Change in the Nigerian Context**

Nigeria has experienced significant social change over the past few decades, driven by a combination of factors including economic development, urbanization, technological innovation, and political reforms. The country's rapid population growth and urbanization have led to changes in social structures, family dynamics, and cultural practices. The increasing influence of global media and technology has also contributed to cultural change, particularly among the youth.

However, social change in Nigeria is also marked by significant challenges, including poverty, inequality, and social conflict. The country's diverse ethnic and religious composition, combined with historical legacies of colonialism and military rule, has led to complex social dynamics that continue to shape its development trajectory (Ekeh, 2015).

Hence, social change is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the transformation of social structures, institutions, and cultural practices over time. It is driven by a variety of factors, including technological innovation, economic development, political movements, and globalization. In the Nigerian context, social change is particularly relevant as the country undergoes rapid population growth, urbanization, and socio-political transformations. Understanding the dynamics of social change is essential for addressing the challenges and opportunities it presents for Nigeria's development.

### 3. Methodology

#### Research Design

This study will adopt a **descriptive research design**. This design is suitable because it aims to provide an accurate portrayal of youth's involvement in socio-economic development, particularly in technological innovation and social change. The study will use both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the multifaceted contributions of youth to socio-economic development.

#### Area of Study

The area of study will be **Nigeria**, focusing on both urban and rural regions. The choice of Nigeria is due to its diverse youth population and its status as a developing country with significant socio-economic challenges and opportunities. The study will analyze youth contributions in various states across the six geopolitical zones, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of regional differences.

#### Sources of Data and Justification

- **Primary Data:** The primary data will be collected through surveys and interviews. Surveys will target young individuals engaged in technological innovation, entrepreneurship, and social change initiatives. Interviews will be conducted with key informants, including policymakers, educators, and leaders of youth organizations.
- **Secondary Data:** Secondary data will be sourced from existing reports, academic journals, and government publications. These will include data from organizations like UNESCO, UNDP, and the World Bank, which provide insights into youth development and socio-economic trends in Nigeria. The use of both data types ensures a rich data set that supports a holistic analysis.

#### Population of the Study

The population of the study will comprise **youths aged 15-35 years** in Nigeria, who are actively involved in technological innovation and social change. The population will also include policymakers, educators, and leaders of youth organizations. This age range aligns with definitions used by international organizations and reflects the demographic most involved in shaping socio-economic trends.

#### Determination of Sample Size

The sample size will be determined using **Cochran's formula** for large populations. Given the estimated youth population in Nigeria, the sample size will be calculated to ensure a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{e^2} = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- $Z$  is the Z-value (1.96 for a 95% confidence level)
- $p$  is the estimated proportion of an attribute present in the population (0.5 used for maximum variability)
- $e$  is the margin of error (0.05)

### Sampling Technique

The study will use **stratified random sampling** to ensure representation across different regions and socio-economic backgrounds in Nigeria. Geopolitical zones will stratify the youth population, and random samples will be drawn from each stratum. This technique allows for capturing regional variations and ensuring that the sample reflects the diverse experiences of Nigerian youth.

### Method of Data Collection

- **Surveys:** Structured questionnaires will be administered to youth engaged in technological innovation and social change. These questionnaires will collect quantitative data on their contributions and challenges.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key informants to gather qualitative insights into the broader socio-economic impact of youth contributions.

### Method of Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed using both **quantitative and qualitative methods**:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Data from the surveys will be analyzed using **descriptive statistics** (mean, median, mode) and **inferential statistics** (regression analysis) to determine the relationship between youth engagement and socio-economic outcomes.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis will be used to analyze interview data, identifying key themes and patterns related to youth contributions to socio-economic development

### Summary of Findings

#### Youth as Drivers of Technological Innovation in Nigeria

The study reveals that Nigerian youth are pivotal in driving technological innovation across various sectors, particularly in the digital economy. With a youth population constituting over 63% of the total population, their involvement in tech-related activities has led to the establishment of numerous startups, especially in the fintech and e-commerce sectors. These young entrepreneurs

have harnessed technology to create innovative solutions that address critical socio-economic challenges, such as financial inclusion, unemployment, and access to services. The rapid growth of Nigeria's tech ecosystem, often dubbed the "Silicon Valley of Africa," is a testament to the youth's role in fostering technological advancement. However, despite these strides, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to funding, and regulatory bottlenecks still hinder the full potential of youth-driven technological innovation in Nigeria.

### **Social Change Catalyzed by Youth-Led Movements**

The study also finds that youth are at the forefront of social change in Nigeria, particularly through activism and the promotion of socio-political reforms. Movements like EndSARS have shown the ability of Nigerian youth to mobilize and effect significant changes in governance and policy. These youth-led movements have not only brought attention to issues of police brutality and corruption but have also highlighted broader systemic challenges such as inequality, unemployment, and poor governance. The digital space, particularly social media, has played a crucial role in amplifying the voices of young Nigerians, enabling them to challenge the status quo and demand accountability from their leaders. However, the impact of these movements is often limited by governmental resistance, inadequate civic education, and a lack of sustained engagement from the broader population.

### **4. Conclusion**

This study underscores Nigerian youth hold the potential to significantly shape the future of the country through their contributions to technological innovation and social change. However, realizing this potential requires concerted efforts from both the government and private sector to create an environment that nurtures and supports their initiatives. By addressing the existing challenges and capitalizing on the strengths of its youth population, Nigeria can achieve meaningful socio-economic development that benefits all segments of society.

The significant impact of youth-led social movements in advocating for socio-political reforms. These movements have successfully brought critical issues to the forefront of national discourse, pushing for greater transparency, accountability, and social justice. However, the effectiveness of these movements in achieving long-term change is often hampered by structural challenges, including political resistance and limited resources.

### **5. Recommendations**

1. **Enhance Access to Funding and Support for Youth-Led Innovations:** The Nigerian government, in collaboration with private sector stakeholders, should establish more accessible funding mechanisms and support systems for youth entrepreneurs. This could include venture capital funds, innovation grants, and incubator programs specifically targeted at young innovators in the tech space. Additionally, creating platforms for mentorship and networking will help young entrepreneurs connect with industry leaders and investors, thereby scaling their innovations more effectively.
2. **Strengthen Civic Education and Promote Sustained Youth Engagement:** To amplify the impact of youth-led social movements, there is a need to strengthen civic education at

all levels of the educational system. This would equip young Nigerians with the knowledge and skills required to participate effectively in governance and advocacy. Moreover, creating channels for sustained engagement, such as youth councils and forums, will enable continuous dialogue between the youth and policymakers, ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns addressed.

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