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Full Length Paper.

Social Entrepreneurship Contribution to Community Development among Youth in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study determined the contribution of social entrepreneurship to community development among youth in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. The study was conducted in Lagos State, Southwest Nigeria. The target population comprised registered youth in the Ministry of Youth and Social Development of Lagos State. The population of registered youth in the four Local Government Areas (Amuwo-Odofin, Apapa, Badagry, and Oshodi-Isolo) was 5,173, which formed the population of the study. The sample size for the study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for sample size determination. A total of 358 respondents were selected as the sample size for the study. The study used a non-probability convenience and snowball sampling procedure. The questionnaire link was circulated electronically through WhatsApp and email to eligible respondents, who were also encouraged to share it with other persons relevant to the study. Participation was voluntary. A structured questionnaire titled "Social Entrepreneurship and Community Development among Youth in Lagos State" was used for data collection. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in management and the social sciences. The internal consistency of the multi-item instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. A reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The completed questionnaires were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions relating to the Likert-type items. Pearson's product–moment correlation and simple linear regression were used to test the hypotheses, as applicable, at the 0.05 level of significance. The overall result, with an average mean score of 3.38 and a standard deviation of 0.56, indicates a high level of agreement among respondents that social entrepreneurship significantly enhances community development. This suggests that social entrepreneurial activities are widely perceived as effective mechanisms for improving social and economic conditions within communities. respondents' perceptions of the relationship that exists between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation, as reflected by mean scores and standard deviations and perceptions of the relationship that exists between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation, as reflected by mean scores and standard deviations. The results indicate a generally high level of relationship, with an overall mean score of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.55. This suggests that respondents strongly perceive social entrepreneurship as a significant mechanism for empowering young people and enhancing their leadership and innovative capacities within the community. The study concludes that youth increasingly perceive social entrepreneurs as viable instruments, agents of hope, and channels of opportunity. Through their activities, several young people are exposed to novel ideas, equipped with relevant skills, connected to quality networks, and empowered to become active contributors to community development. The study therefore recommended that the Nigerian government should rise to its responsibility of ensuring that the basic needs of citizens are adequately provided, youths should be given purposeful platforms to participate in governance at the local, state, national, and global levels, and communities should be receptive to the activities of social entrepreneurs whose initiatives are directed toward community development.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship, Community Development, Youth Development, Entrepreneurship Initiatives

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INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship has attracted increasing scholarly and policy attention as an approach to addressing persistent social, economic, and environmental problems. It becomes particularly relevant where government, public institutions, and conventional businesses are unable to provide adequate responses to poverty, inequality, unemployment, environmental degradation, and limited access to essential services. Arejiogbe et al. (2023) observed that social entrepreneurship generates positive social value by developing solutions to socioeconomic and environmental challenges.

This study, titled “Social Entrepreneurship and Community Development among Youth in Lagos State, Nigeria", was motivated by the need to explore sustainable ways of engaging young people in productive activities that benefit both the individual and the wider community. Nigerian youth experience unemployment, underemployment, inadequate remuneration, limited access to capital, and other constraints that reduce their capacity to contribute fully to national and community development. Nigeria has 53% youth unemployment, ranking the second-highest country with unemployed youths in the world (Adeiye, 2023). These challenges make it necessary to examine alternatives that can create livelihoods while addressing pressing social needs.

Reliance on government employment programmes and public-sector interventions alone has not adequately addressed these challenges. Social entrepreneurship offers a possible alternative because it combines entrepreneurial initiative with the pursuit of social value. Through innovation, sustainability, and social impact, young people can establish ventures that generate income, create employment, and respond to community needs (Abiodun, 2022).

Although the term social entrepreneurship is relatively recent, practices associated with it have existed for centuries (Mathew, 2022). Historical examples include Florence Nightingale, whose work transformed nursing and hospital care; Maria Montessori, who developed an innovative approach to early childhood education; and Bill Drayton, who founded Ashoka and promoted the idea of individuals as agents of social change. In Nigeria, contemporary examples include Rita Idehai, founder of Ecobarter, whose enterprise links waste recovery with environmental and livelihood benefits (Kumar, 2023; Lionesses of Africa, 2023).

Social entrepreneurship is especially important in Nigeria, where individuals and communities often provide services that should ordinarily be made available by public institutions, including electricity, water, security, health care, housing, and so on. In such circumstances, social enterprises may provide innovative and sustainable responses where conventional market systems or governmental interventions are inadequate (Andow & Obamiro, 2017).

Innovation is central to social entrepreneurship. Abeysekera (2019) described social entrepreneurship as entrepreneurship pursued with a social goal. Social entrepreneurs identify unmet social needs and apply entrepreneurial knowledge, creativity, and persistence to develop workable solutions. Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, which typically focuses on profit maximisation as the principal objective, social entrepreneurship prioritises social value while also the principal objective, social entrepreneurship prioritises priority to social value while still recognising the importance of financial sustainability (Mathew, 2022).

Social entrepreneurship stands as a viable system to address social and economic challenges in Nigeria by fostering innovative solutions, creating jobs, and improving the well-being of communities. Community development refers to a process through which community members identify shared needs, take collective action, mobilise available resources, and improve their social and economic conditions. The Australian Institute of Family Studies (2023) explains that such action may occur with or without the support of professional development workers or agencies.

Community development therefore involves participation, empowerment, local ownership, improved livelihoods, and stronger social relationships. Social entrepreneurship and community development are distinct but closely related concepts. Social entrepreneurs respond to community needs by creating ventures that combine social impact with sustainable economic activity. Their interventions can create employment, strengthen local participation, expand access to services, build skills, and improve living conditions. Consequently, social entrepreneurship can serve as a catalyst for grassroots and sustainable community development (Andow & Obamiro, 2017; Jensen, Cochran, & Rodriguez, 2025).

Social entrepreneurship may be undertaken by individuals, groups, start-up organisations, nonprofit organisations, or businesses that develop and implement solutions to social, cultural, or environmental problems (Pearce & Elkington, 2020). By combining business competence with a social mission, social entrepreneurs can create value for individuals and communities while also supporting environmental sustainability (Abiodun, 2022).

Youth constitute an important population for social entrepreneurship because they are generally energetic, creative, receptive to new information, and willing to explore new opportunities (Anaeche, 2018). Youth is also understood as a transitional period between dependence in childhood and relative independence in adulthood (United Nations, 2013). Despite the challenges of establishing and sustaining enterprises, many young people consider social entrepreneurship attractive because it offers the possibility of generating income while producing meaningful social impact (United

Nations, 2020).

Lagos State provides an appropriate setting for examining this relationship. As Nigeria's major commercial centre, Lagos has a large and diverse youth population, expanding urban communities, active technology and entrepreneurial ecosystems, and significant social inequalities. It simultaneously presents opportunities for enterprise development and challenges such as unemployment, poverty, congestion, inadequate services, and unequal access to economic opportunities (Babalola, 2016; LBS, 2021).

Within this setting, youth-led social enterprises can contribute to community development by creating employment, promoting participation, developing innovative products and services, expanding the use of digital technologies, and addressing social problems. However, the extent of their contribution may be influenced by access to finance, infrastructure, skills, supportive policies, social networks, security, and the wider economic environment.

This study therefore examined the relationship between social entrepreneurship and community development among youth in Lagos State. Particular attention was given to the contribution of social entrepreneurship to community development and youth development, the challenges faced by social entrepreneurs, the role of social entrepreneurship in reducing involvement in social vices, and its contributions to youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the contribution of social entrepreneurship to community development among youth in Lagos State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

i. determine the extent to which social entrepreneurship contributes to community development;

ii. Assess the contribution of social entrepreneurship to youth development.

iii. Determine the relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

i. To what extent does social entrepreneurship contribute to community development?

ii. What does social entrepreneurship contribute to youth development?

iii. What relationship exists between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H01: There is no significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and community development.

H02: Social entrepreneurship has no significant influence on youth development.

H03: There is no significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. This design involves collecting data from a sample of respondents at a single point in time to describe their characteristics, opinions, and perceptions concerning the variables under investigation. The study was conducted in Lagos State, Southwest Nigeria. Lagos State is bounded by Ogun State to the north and east, the Republic of Benin to the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. Lagos State has a highly diverse population comprising people from different ethnic, cultural, educational, and occupational backgrounds. Its large youth population, concentration of businesses, technology-driven enterprises, civil-society organisations, and community-based initiatives make it an appropriate setting for examining social entrepreneurship and community development.

The target population comprised registered youth in the Ministry of Youth and Social Development of Lagos State who were relevant to the subject of social entrepreneurship and community development. The population of registered youth in the four Local Government Areas (Amuwo-Odofin, Apapa, Badagry, and Oshodi-Isolo) was 5,173, which formed the population of the study. The sample size for the study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for determining sample size. The formula is expressed as $s = X^2NP(1 - P) / d^2(N - 1) + X^2P(1 - P)$, giving 358 respondents as the sample size for the study. The study used a non-probability convenience and snowball sampling procedure. The questionnaire link was circulated electronically through WhatsApp and email to eligible respondents, who were also encouraged to share it with other individuals relevant to the study. Participation was voluntary. The use of online convenience and snowball sampling enabled broad and economical access to respondents. A structured questionnaire titled "Social Entrepreneurship and Community Development among Youth in Lagos State" was used for data collection. The instrument contained 35 substantive items organised into

seven sections, labelled A–G. Section A elicited respondents' demographic information, while Sections B–G addressed the six research objectives. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in management and the social sciences. They examined the instrument for clarity, relevance, adequacy of coverage, appropriateness of wording, and alignment with the objectives and research questions. Their observations and corrections were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. A pilot test was conducted among 26 persons who were not included in the main study. The internal consistency of the multi-item instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. A reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

The completed questionnaires were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions relating to the Likert-type items. Pearson's product–moment correlation and simple linear regression were used to test the hypotheses, as applicable, at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Item	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	193	53.9
	Male	165	46.1
	Total	**358**	**100**
Age Bracket	18–25	42	11.7
	26–33	76	21.2
	34–41	85	23.7
	42–50	155	43.3
	Total	**358**	**100**
Marital Status	Single	135	37.7
	Married	216	60.3
	Separated/Divorced	7	2.0
	Total	**358**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Results in Table 1 describe the demographic profile of the respondents and provide important contextual insights into the quality, representativeness, and credibility of the data used for the study. Regarding the gender of the respondents, the data indicates that females make up the gender of the respondents. It was observed that the gender distribution shows that females constitute a slightly higher proportion of the respondents (53.9%) compared to males (46.1%). This relatively balanced representation suggests that the perspectives captured in the study reflect both male and female viewpoints, reducing gender bias and enhancing the inclusiveness of the findings.

With respect to age, the respondents are predominantly adults in their economically active years. The largest proportion falls within the 42–50 age bracket (43.3%), followed by those aged 34–41 years (23.7%) and 26–33 years (21.2%). Only a small proportion of respondents are between 18 and 25 years old (11.7%). This age structure indicates that most respondents possess substantial life, work, and community experience, which strengthens the credibility of their assessments of social entrepreneurship, youth development, and community development dynamics.

The marital status distribution reveals that a majority of respondents are married (60.3%), while 37.7% are single and only 2.0% are separated or divorced. This pattern suggests a respondent pool with significant family and social responsibilities, which may enhance their awareness of community challenges, youth behaviour, and developmental needs.

Research Question One: To what extent does social entrepreneurship contribute to development in the community?

Table 2: Extent to which social entrepreneurship contributes to development in the community

S/N	Extent social entrepreneurship contributes to dev	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Social entrepreneurship empowers individuals and groups in the community.	3.51	0.52	Very high
2.	Social entrepreneurs activities in the community enhance wellbeing.	3.42	0.54	High
3.	Social entrepreneurs provide services for community where government did not.	3.41	0.57	High
4.	Social entrepreneurial activities improve communal standard of living.	3.28	0.59	High
5.	Social entrepreneurship creates sustainable enterprises in the community.	3.28	0.59	High
	Average Mean/SD	**3.38**	**0.56**	**High**

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Results in Table 2 reveal respondents' perceptions of the extent to which social entrepreneurship contributes to community development, using mean scores and standard deviations to determine the level of agreement. The overall result, with an average mean score of 3.38 and a standard deviation of 0.56, indicates a high level of agreement among respondents that social entrepreneurship significantly enhances community development. This suggests that social entrepreneurial activities are widely perceived as effective mechanisms for improving social and economic conditions within communities. Among the specific indicators, the statement that social entrepreneurship empowers individuals and groups in the community recorded the highest mean score of 3.51, which falls within the very high agreement category. This suggests that social entrepreneurship's most significant contribution to community development is empowerment through capacity building, inclusion, and opportunity creation.

Other indicators also recorded high mean values, ranging from 3.28 to 3.42. A large number of people who answered the survey agreed that social entrepreneurs improve the health of the community, fill gaps in government services, raise the standard of living for everyone, and start businesses that will last in the community. These results collectively show that social entrepreneurship is perceived not merely as a business activity but as a socially responsive approach that fills institutional gaps, improves quality of life, and promotes long-term economic sustainability. The relatively low and closely clustered standard deviation values (between 0.52 and 0.59) indicate minimal variation in respondents' opinions. This reflects a strong consensus across the sample regarding the positive role of social entrepreneurship in community development.

Research Question Two: what is the contribution of social entrepreneurship to youth development?

Table 3: Contribution of social entrepreneurship to youth development.

S/N	Contribution of social entrepreneurship to youth devpt	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Social entrepreneurship creates more jobs for the youth.	3.26	0.57	High
2.	Social entrepreneurship provides training to equip the youth for positive impact.	3.43	0.59	High
3.	Social entrepreneurs are models inspiring the youth to seek self-development.	3.48	0.53	High
4.	Issues like poverty illiteracy inequality affecting youth are addressed by social entrepreneurs.	3.43	0.52	High
5.	Social entrepreneurship provides platforms for youth to be active in the community.	3.59	0.51	Very High
	Average Mean	**3.44**	**0.54**	**High**

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 3 examines respondents' perceptions of how important social entrepreneurship is to youth development, using mean scores and standard deviations to determine the level of agreement. The results reveal a generally high level of agreement among respondents, with an overall mean score of 3.44 and a standard deviation of 0.54. This indicates that social entrepreneurship is widely regarded as an important driver of youth development, particularly in terms of empowerment, participation, and socio-economic inclusion.

The statement that social entrepreneurship provides platforms for youth to be active in the community recorded the highest mean score of 3.59, which falls within the very high agreement category. This suggests that respondents strongly perceive social entrepreneurship as creating opportunities for young people to engage meaningfully in community activities, decision-making, and problem-solving processes.

Other indicators also recorded high mean values, ranging from 3.26 to 3.48. Respondents agreed to a high extent that social entrepreneurship creates employment opportunities for youth, provides training that equips them for positive social impact, inspires self-development through role modelling, and addresses critical youth challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, and inequality. These findings highlight the multifaceted contribution of social entrepreneurship to youth development, extending beyond job creation to capacity building, mentorship, and social inclusion.

The relatively low standard deviation values, clustered around 0.52 to 0.59, indicate a high level of consistency in respondents' views. This suggests a shared understanding among participants regarding the significant role of social entrepreneurship in fostering youth development.

Research Question Three: What relationship exists between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation?

Table 4: The relationship that exists between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation.

S/N	Relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Social entrepreneurship enhances healthcare accessibility and affordability to communities.	3.63	0.52	Very high
2.	Social entrepreneurial activities reduce unemployment, poverty and dependency among youth.	3.59	0.49	Very high
3.	Social entrepreneurship fosters growth and innovativeness among the youth in the community.	3.17	0.62	High
4.	Social entrepreneurs solve youth-related societal problems.	3.33	0.58	High
5.	Social entrepreneurs include youth in their succession plan to ensure continuity.	3.54	0.56	Very high
	Average Mean	**3.45**	**0.55**	**High**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 examines respondents' perceptions of the relationship that exists between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation, as reflected by mean scores and standard deviations. The results indicate a generally high level of relationship, with an overall mean score of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.55. This suggests that respondents strongly perceive social entrepreneurship as a significant mechanism for empowering young people and enhancing their leadership and innovative capacities within the community.

Among the indicators, the statement that social entrepreneurship enhances healthcare accessibility and affordability in communities recorded the highest mean score of 3.63, which falls within the very high agreement category. This implies that respondents strongly recognise the social impact of entrepreneurial initiatives in addressing critical community needs, particularly in the health sector, which directly affects the youth and the broader community's wellbeing. Closely following is the view that social entrepreneurial activities reduce unemployment, poverty, and dependency among youth, with a mean score of 3.59, also rated very high. This finding underscores the perception that social entrepreneurship creates economic opportunities that promote self-reliance and reduce socio-economic vulnerability among young people.

Other indicators recorded high mean values, ranging from 3.17 to 3.54. Respondents agreed that social entrepreneurship fosters growth and innovativeness among youth, contributes to solving youth-related societal problems, and includes young people in succession planning to ensure continuity and sustainability. These responses highlight the role of social entrepreneurs not only as change agents but also as mentors who prepare

the next generation for leadership and long-term community development.

The relatively low standard deviation values indicate consistency in respondents' opinions, reflecting a shared understanding of the developmental role of social entrepreneurship. The clustering of responses suggests that respondents broadly agree on the cordial relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership and innovation. Finally, Table 4.6 shows that respondents perceive social entrepreneurship as a powerful pathway for fostering youth empowerment, leadership development, and innovation.

Hypothesis One ($H0_1$): There is no significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and community development.

Table 5: A Pearson Correlation table

Variables	N	Sig. (2-tailed)/ p-value	Pearson Correlation	Decision
Soc. entrepreneurship	358	0.000	0.540	Significant
Community Dev.	358	0.000	0.540	Significant

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis conducted to test the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and community development. The results show a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.540, indicating a moderate and positive relationship between social entrepreneurship and community development. This means that increases in social entrepreneurship activities are associated with corresponding improvements in community development outcomes.

The significance value (p = 0.000) is less than the 0.01 level of significance, indicating that the relationship observed is statistically significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance. With a sample size of 358 respondents, the strength and reliability of the relationship are further reinforced. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies that social entrepreneurship plays a meaningful role in promoting community development. As social entrepreneurs expand their activities, such as service provision, empowerment initiatives, and sustainable enterprise creation, communities are more likely to experience positive social and economic transformation.

In general, the findings in Table 5 provide empirical evidence that social entrepreneurship is a significant driver of community development. The moderate positive correlation suggests that while social entrepreneurship is not the sole determinant of community development, it is an important contributing factor that works alongside other social, economic, and institutional influences.

Hypothesis Two ($H0_2$)

Social entrepreneurship has no significant influence on youth development.

Table 6: The regression analysis table

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)	Interpretation
Constant	2.572	0.152	–	16.975	0.000	Baseline youth dev. level.
Social entrepreneurship	0.297	0.044	0.340	6.831	0.000	Positive and significant effect

a. Dependent Variable: Social entrepreneurship provides platforms for youth to be active in the community
R = 0.340, R – Square = 0.116, Adjusted R -Square = 0.113; F = 46.659, P-value = 0.0000

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Results in Table 6 present the regression analysis used to test the null hypothesis that social entrepreneurship has no significant influence on youth development. The model summary shows a correlation

coefficient (R) of 0.340, indicating a moderate positive relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth development. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.116) reveals that social entrepreneurship explains 11.6% of the variance in youth development. Although this proportion is modest, it is meaningful in social science research, where human behaviour and development outcomes are influenced by multiple factors.

The ANOVA results further confirm the validity of the model, with an F-value of 46.659 and a significance level of p = 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant and that social entrepreneurship is a reliable predictor of youth development.

The coefficients table shows that social entrepreneurship has a positive and significant effect on youth development. The unstandardised coefficient (B = 0.297) implies that a unit increase in social entrepreneurship activities leads to an increase in youth development outcomes. The standardised coefficient (β = 0.340) indicates the strength of this effect, while the t-value of 6.831 and p-value of 0.000 confirm that the relationship is statistically significant.

Based on these results, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that social entrepreneurship significantly impacts youth development by providing platforms for participation, training opportunities, role modelling, and socio-economic empowerment.

Hypothesis Three ($H0_3$)

There is no significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation.

Table 7: A Pearson Correlation table

Variables	N	Sig. (2-tailed)/ p-value	Pearson Correlation	Decision
Social entrepreneurship	358	0.000	0.320	Significant
youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation	358	0.000	0.320	Significant

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 7 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis conducted to test the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation.

The results show a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.320, indicating a moderate positive relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation. This implies that increases in social entrepreneurship activities are associated with corresponding improvements in young people's empowerment levels, leadership capacity, and innovative abilities.

The significance value (p = 0.000) is less than the 0.01 level of significance, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant and not due to chance. With a sample size of 358 respondents, the result demonstrates sufficient statistical power and reliability.

Based on this outcome, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that social entrepreneurship has a significant relationship with youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation. As social entrepreneurial initiatives expand, they tend to create environments that nurture leadership skills, encourage innovative problem-solving, and empower young people to take active roles in community development.

The findings in Table 7 provide empirical evidence that social entrepreneurship is an important driver of youth empowerment and innovation. Although the relationship is moderate, it underscores the role of socially driven enterprises in shaping leadership development and fostering innovative capacities among youth, thereby contributing to sustainable social and community transformation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from Table 2 indicate that social entrepreneurship contributes to community development to a high extent, particularly through empowerment, service provision, improved wellbeing, and sustainable enterprise creation. Respondents strongly perceived empowerment of individuals and groups as the most visible contribution of social entrepreneurship. This finding aligns with Akinyemi, Ojo, and Akinola (2018), who argue that social entrepreneurship in Nigeria thrives largely because it empowers communities that are underserved by government institutions, especially in areas of healthcare, education, and livelihood support.

The perception that social entrepreneurs provide services where government intervention is weak reflects

the Nigerian governance reality characterised by infrastructural deficits and uneven public service delivery. A study by Adeyeye (2016) has shown that community-based social enterprises often emerge in response to state failure, particularly in rural and peri-urban communities. Social entrepreneurs therefore act as alternative development agents, complementing government efforts and improving community resilience.

Further, the improvement in communal standards of living and creation of sustainable enterprises supports the argument by Felix (2025) that social entrepreneurship in Nigeria plays a dual role of addressing social problems while generating economic value. This confirms that social entrepreneurship is not merely philanthropic but constitutes a sustainable development strategy rooted in local needs and participation. The rejection of hypothesis one confirms a significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and community development, supporting Nigerian empirical studies that identify social enterprises as critical grassroots development actors (Felix, 2025; Egbedi, 2025).

The results in Table 3 revealed a high contribution of social entrepreneurship to youth development, particularly in providing platforms for participation, employment, training, and role modelling. This finding resonates strongly with Nigerian youth development literature, which consistently identifies unemployment and exclusion as major drivers of youth vulnerability (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). The emphasis on youth participation reflects the argument by Nnajieto et al. (2025) that youth development in Nigeria requires active engagement rather than passive welfare support. Social entrepreneurship provides avenues for young people to acquire skills, contribute to community problem-solving, and gain leadership experience. This supports the position of Onyekwelu and Eze (2017), who found that youth involvement in social ventures enhances self-efficacy, civic responsibility, and employability.

The recognition of social entrepreneurs as role models aligns with findings by Nicolai (2021), who emphasises the importance of mentorship and experiential learning in shaping youth aspirations in Nigeria. By addressing poverty, illiteracy, and inequality, social entrepreneurship directly targets structural constraints that limit youth advancement, reinforcing its relevance as a youth development strategy. The rejection of hypothesis two establishes social entrepreneurship as a significant predictor of youth development, reinforcing findings by Nicolai (2021) and Nnajieto et al. (2025) regarding the role of social entrepreneurship in youth empowerment.

The results in Table 4 indicate an affable relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation. The strong perception that social entrepreneurship enhances healthcare access and reduces poverty reflects Nigeria's reliance on non-state actors for social service delivery. According to Egbedi (2025), social enterprises in Nigeria play a critical role in delivering health, education, and social services to marginalised populations. The inclusion of youth in succession planning underscores the sustainability dimension of social entrepreneurship. As noted by Akanbi and Ofoegbu (2018), leadership continuity and mentorship are essential for sustaining development initiatives in Nigeria. Social entrepreneurship provides practical environments where young people learn leadership, innovation, and problem-solving through direct participation rather than theoretical instruction. These findings align with Alao and Gbolagade (2016), who argue that social entrepreneurship nurtures innovative thinking among Nigerian youth by exposing them to real-life social challenges that require creative solutions. Consequently, social entrepreneurship emerges as a viable pathway for building a new generation of socially responsible leaders. Hypothesis three was rejected, indicating that social entrepreneurship significantly influences youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation, consistent with Nigerian studies on social enterprise and leadership development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that every society requires active and committed social entrepreneurs to achieve meaningful progress, sustainable growth and development. Social entrepreneurs play a critical part in identifying persistent social problems and developing practical solutions that directly address the needs of the people. In contrast to traditional business owners whose activities are mainly profit-driven, social entrepreneurs integrate innovation, enterprise, and social mission to address community challenges such as poor basic amenities, unemployment, poverty, educational deprivation, inadequate skills development, and limited opportunities for young people.

While the efforts of the government in providing basic needs and reinforcing development are commendable, the impact of such efforts is yet to be adequately felt among many citizens, especially the youth. The everyday realities of young people in Lagos State still reflect unemployment, underemployment, poverty, inadequate access to funds, insufficient mentorship programmes, and limited platforms for productive engagement. These challenges underscore that government intervention alone is barely enough to address the complex socio-economic needs of the community. Therefore, development becomes more effective when governmental efforts are complemented by social entrepreneurs who understand grassroots realities and are willing to create practical, people-centred solutions.

Though traditional entrepreneurs, on one hand, have contributed to economic activity through cash flow, production, service delivery, and employment generation, their primary motive remains profit maximisation rather than social impact or community development. Profit-

orientated entrepreneurship enhances economic growth, yet it does not often explicitly resolve social exclusion, youth unemployment, poverty, or the needs of disadvantaged communities. This approach is where social entrepreneurship becomes uniquely relevant because, beyond establishing businesses, it employs business principles as mechanisms for solving social problems and improving the quality of life in communities.

Conclusively, the youth increasingly perceive social entrepreneurs as viable instruments, agents of hope, and channels of opportunity. Through their activities, several young people are exposed to novel ideas, equipped with relevant skills, connected to quality networks, and empowered to become active contributors to community development. Therefore, this study affirms that social entrepreneurship transcends economic activity to become a vital development strategy for promoting youth empowerment, social inclusion, and sustainable community development in Lagos State.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

i. The Nigerian government must fulfil its duty to adequately provide for the basic needs of its citizens. These include adequate roads, stable electricity, security of lives and property, access to good shelter, and food security. If these basic needs are not met, young people are exposed to hustling to survive rather than focus on creativity, invention, education, innovation, entrepreneurship, and other productive engagement. Providing these necessities will create an enabling environment for youths to maximise their potential and contribute significantly to society's development.

ii. The youth should be given purposeful platforms to participate in governance at the local, state, national, and global levels. Young people should not be treated as mere beneficiaries of policies but as dynamic contributors to decision-making processes. Social entrepreneurs are encouraged to remain committed and resilient in resolving societal problems, particularly those that affect youth development. Though they may face challenges such as insufficient funding, weak institutional support, poor infrastructure, and multiple taxation, their contributions are critical to advancing the community. Many young people therefore depend on the initiatives of social entrepreneurs for mentorship, empowerment, employment opportunities, and social support.

iii. Communities should embrace the activities of social entrepreneurs whose initiatives focus on community development. Social entrepreneurs essentially require cooperation, confidence and acceptance from the members of their communities to function effectively. It is easier to identify local problems, mobilise resources, implement solutions, and sustain development projects with the support of the community; otherwise, community resistance or indifference will weaken the impact of beneficial social entrepreneurial interventions.

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