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ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS AN ETHICAL IMPERATIVE: ALLEVIATING YOUTH RESTIVENESS IN COMMUNITIES DEVASTATED BY EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES IN THE NIGER DELTA, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria, rich in oil and gas, epitomizes the paradox of the resource curse, where immense natural wealth coexists with severe community impoverishment and social unrest. The operations of multinational corporations (MNCs) have led to profound environmental degradation, destroying traditional livelihoods and fuelling a cycle of youth restiveness, crime, and militancy. This study posits entrepreneurship not merely as an economic intervention, but as a fundamental ethical obligation for corporate and governmental stakeholders to redress systemic injustices and foster sustainable peace. Adopting a descriptive survey design, data were purposively collected from 348 youths in oil-impacted communities. Results, analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Chi-square tests, reveal that entrepreneurship significantly

contributes to economic empowerment (χ^2=39.424, p=.002), reduces idleness and reliance on crime (χ^2=43.841, p=.000), and redirects youth creativity into productive ventures (χ^2=41.236, p=.000). The study concludes that fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem is a critical, ethics-driven strategy for restorative justice, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and sustainable development in the Niger Delta. We recommend that MNCs, in partnership with government, move beyond peripheral CSR to implement comprehensive, ethically grounded entrepreneurship programs that empower youth, thereby fulfilling a duty to repair and empower host communities.

Keywords: **Entrepreneurship Ethical Imperative, Alleviating Youth Restiveness and Communities Devastate**

1.0 Introduction

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria, comprising nine states in the southern part of the country, is endowed with abundant natural resources, particularly crude oil and natural gas. Since the discovery of oil in Oloibiri in 1956, the region has been the hub of Nigeria's oil and gas industry, contributing significantly to national revenue and foreign exchange earnings (Okonkwo, Kumar & Taylor, 2023). However, despite its resource wealth, the Niger Delta has experienced chronic underdevelopment, environmental degradation, and social instability. Oil and gas exploration, while economically lucrative for the nation, has caused severe environmental challenges, including oil spills, gas flaring, destruction of farmlands, deforestation, and water pollution (Owualah & Obokoh, 2008). The operations of multinational oil companies have devastated traditional sources of livelihood for communities in the region. These activities have devastated the traditional means of livelihood for communities in the region, particularly agriculture and fishing, leaving a large proportion of the population economically marginalized (Epem & Ekpotuatin, 2025). Consequently, unemployment and poverty have become widespread, particularly among the youth population.

Youth restiveness has become a pronounced problem in the Niger Delta, manifesting through militancy, vandalism of oil pipelines, armed robbery, kidnapping, and other forms

of criminal behavior (Watts, 2024). Many youths, confronted with limited opportunities for education, skills acquisition, and meaningful employment, resort to destructive activities as a survival strategy. This not only exacerbates insecurity in the region but also hinders sustainable development and economic growth (Osuji & Onojake, 2022). Efforts by the government and multinational oil companies, including the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, have often been fragmented, inadequately targeted, and unsustainable, failing to provide lasting solutions to youth unemployment and restiveness.

In response to these challenges, entrepreneurship has been increasingly recognized as a strategic solution for addressing youth unemployment and restiveness. Entrepreneurship has been recognized globally as a powerful instrument for economic development, employment creation, and social transformation (Egbe, Amimi & Ndifon, 2011). It provides a platform for self-reliance, wealth creation, and the productive utilization of human resources (Ajayi, 2016). In the context of the Niger Delta, entrepreneurship has the potential to address the socio-economic challenges facing youths by equipping them with practical skills, fostering innovative thinking, and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities. Through entrepreneurship, youths can channel their energy and creativity into productive ventures, reduce idleness, and disengage from activities that fuel social unrest (Okechukwu & Nwekwo, 2020).

Several studies like Obasi, Ohaebo, Nwodo and Onwubiko (2025), Owualah and Obokoh (2008) and Okechukwu and Nwekwo (2020) have highlighted the positive role of entrepreneurship in reducing poverty, creating employment, and fostering social cohesion. However, there is limited empirical research focusing specifically on the Niger Delta and the potential of entrepreneurship to address youth restiveness in communities affected by oil and gas exploration. Most interventions to date, including government and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, have been inadequate, poorly coordinated, or unsustainable, failing to provide lasting solutions to the socio-economic challenges facing

the youth (Edozie & Ukeje, 2022). Given the persistent restiveness among youths and the socio-economic disruptions caused by oil and gas activities, there is a critical need to examine entrepreneurship as a panacea for youth restiveness in the Niger Delta. The study therefore sought to understand how entrepreneurship can help to creates jobs, economic empowerment and opportunities for youths in communities devastated oil and gas exploration; how it can help in reducing idleness and reliance on crime as a source of livelihood; how the inculcation of successful entrepreneurship culture can redirect the energy and creativity of restless youth into productive activities.

Communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have suffered severe social, economic, and environmental setbacks as a result of prolonged oil and gas exploration activities. Over the years, widespread environmental degradation including oil spills, gas flaring, destruction of farmlands, and pollution of water bodies has eroded the traditional means of livelihood such as fishing, farming, and petty trading (Nath, 2014). As a result, thousands of youths in these communities are left unemployed, economically disempowered, and socially frustrated. This situation has contributed significantly to the rise of youth restiveness, manifesting in various forms such as militancy, kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, cultism, and violent protests against the government and oil companies. Despite several government interventions and corporate social responsibility initiatives by multinational oil firms, youth restiveness persists due to inadequate economic opportunities, poor skills acquisition, and limited access to sustainable livelihood alternatives.

Entrepreneurship has been widely acknowledged as a viable tool for wealth creation, employment generation, and social stability (Agwu & Luke, 2014). However, in the Niger Delta, the extent to which entrepreneurial initiatives have been effectively harnessed to address youth restiveness remains unclear. Many existing empowerment programmes are poorly targeted, lack continuity, or fail to equip youths with the practical skills and resources required for meaningful self-reliance (Ohakam, 2018). It is against this backdrop

that this study seeks to examine whether entrepreneurship can serve as a panacea for youth restiveness in oil-impacted communities of the Niger Delta. The critical problem, therefore, lies in determining whether entrepreneurship has been effectively utilized as a strategic response to the persistent challenge of youth restiveness in the region.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. To ascertain the extent to which entrepreneurship has helped in economic empowerment and employment creation for the youths.
2. Investigate the role of entrepreneurship in reducing idleness and reliance on crime as a source of livelihood among youths.
3. To ascertain the extent to which entrepreneurship culture can help in redirecting the energy and creativity of restless youth into productive activities.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses stated in null form guided this study.

1. Entrepreneurship has not helped in economic empowerment and employment creation for the youths.
2. Entrepreneurship has not help in reducing idleness and reliance on crime as a source of livelihood among youths.
3. Entrepreneurship culture has not help in redirecting the energy and creativity of restless youth into productive activities.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERTURE

Entrepreneurship Ethical Imperative

The ethical core of entrepreneurship involves creating a moral basis upon which we conduct our business, with integrity, accountability, and social responsibility at the core. It involves honesty, fairness, environmental awareness, and respect for all our stakeholders. For us to remain legitimate and create sustainability, we must build our ethical muscles,

which involve trust, honesty, and justice (Harris et al., 2009). Ethical entrepreneurship involves our pursuit of profit with our moral principles of honesty, fairness, and accountability, and striking a balance between our pursuit of profit and our social responsibility (Babula et al., 2020).

Ethics in entrepreneurship refer to the set of moral principles that guide the decisions of the entrepreneur (Vallaster et al., 2019). These are essential not only for our legal obligation but also for our moral obligation. The ethical basis involves our honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, transparency, and accountability. We must conduct our business with our moral principles and live by our values as we pursue our goals, and our pursuit must benefit our stakeholders and the community at large.

Alleviating Youth Restiveness

Youth restiveness is a term that combines two concepts: youth and restiveness. The term youth has been viewed by some people as having a fluid meaning. According to Uriah, Egbezor, and Ololube (2014), youth refers to young men and women who are no longer children but not yet adults. UNESCO (2017) elaborates on this to mean that it is a transition from childhood dependence to adulthood independence, a stage in which we become aware of our mutual relationship with others in a community. Though people may vary in their definitions, we all seem to agree with UNESCO that age remains the simplest way to define youth, especially when we consider education and work. We can therefore conclude that the term youth has no single chronological, legal, psychological, and physiological age at which we can categorize people as being young or belonging to a certain age group. Many people still see themselves as belonging to a youthful age group.

Restiveness has been viewed by various authors in different ways and does not have a universal definition. Soannes and Stevenson (2010) viewed restiveness as an inability to stay still or a desire to resist being controlled and can result from boredom or dissatisfaction. It can also mean a stubborn resistance to being controlled or a sense of

impatience or uneasiness. For Agina-Obu (2008), restiveness can be viewed as a human behavior that aims at meeting the needs of individuals or groups and arises from failures or gaps in institutions that fail to satisfy such needs, leading to youth restiveness.

Communities Devastate

Communities that are often devastated by the effects of climatic changes, such as floods and wars, require immediate humanitarian assistance and rebuilding efforts. Recently, in Nigeria, Mokwa and Bauchi have been victims of floods that have displaced thousands of people, and globally, the Japan tsunami in 2011 and the Asian floods in 2025 are examples of the effects on mental health and the resilience of communities.

THEORTICAL FRAMEWORK

Resource-Based View

The Resource-Based View (RBV) of entrepreneurship identifies internal resources and capabilities as the major drivers of long-lasting competitive advantage. Rather than pursuing external market forces, RBV examines the microfoundings of how one-of-a-kind internal resources allow entrepreneurs to overcome their rivals (Barney, 1991). Resource heterogeneity is the most fundamental assumption of RBV theory, which posits that, at least for some resources and capabilities, firms are not equal in terms of what they are able to produce (Barney, 1991). The theory asserts that entrepreneurship, as an ethical obligation to reduce youth unrest and community devastation, is necessary but insufficient on its own to produce long-lasting competitive advantage. For example, an ethical entrepreneurship approach to reducing youth unrest and community devastation can be accompanied by various resources, yet in the absence of the other RBV conditions, it will only produce a fleeting competitive advantage. RBV is a foundational approach to understanding entrepreneurship as an ethical obligation to reduce unrest and restore devastated communities (Kirzner, 1997).

Entrepreneurship opportunities are instances where various actors perceive the value of resources that others have not, and where actors acting on this perception seek to exploit the unexploited potential (Kirzner, 1979). If their perception is valid, they receive an entrepreneurial rent; if their perception is false, they suffer an opportunity cost (Alvarez and Barney, 2000).

METHOD

The design that the researcher adopted for the study is the descriptive survey design. In this design, data is collected using various tools like surveys, questionnaires, and interviews about a given group or situation with the aim of scientifically describing phenomena and their relationships in a real-world setting over time. The researcher targeted communities in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria that have been adversely affected by oil exploration by multinational corporations. The specific areas targeted by the researcher include Ogoni, Eleme, and Bodo in Rivers State; Gbaramatu Kingdom and Ogulagha in Delta State; Odioma, Oloibiri, Gbarain, Biseni, Brass Island, and Ekeremor in Bayelsa State; and Ibeno and Eket in Akwa Ibom State. The target population for the study comprised youths from the aforementioned areas. The researcher could not establish the exact number of youths in the area; hence, the researcher adopted purposive sampling to sample 400 participants for the study. Questionnaires were used in the data collection process for the study. The researcher distributed 400 questionnaires but only 367 were returned and 348 were properly filled out for analysis.

RESULT

In this section, the demographic features of the respondents such as gender, age, marital status and state of origin were presented and analyzed. Thereafter, the research questions were analyzed using frequency tables and percentages while the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Chi-Square. The analyses are presented in the tables below.

Demographic Analysis

The demographic features of the respondents were presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic Features of the Respondents

Variables	Category	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender	Male	204	58.6
	Female	144	41.4
	Total	348	100
Age	18 - 25	142	40.8
	26 – 30	115	33.0
	31 – 35	91	26.2
	Total	348	100
Marital Status	Single	201	57.8
	Married	147	42.2
	Divorced/separated	-	-
	Total	348	100
State of Origin	Delta State	94	27.0
	Bayelsa State	80	23.0
	Rivers State	86	24.7
	Akwa Ibom State	88	25.3
	Total	348	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The table presents the demographic characteristics of youths in communities affected by oil and gas exploration. The gender distribution shows that 204 respondents, representing 58.6% of the total sample, were female, while 144 respondents (41.4%) were male. This indicates that the majority of the sampled youths were female. The age distribution reveals that 142 respondents (40.8%) were between 18 and 25 years, 115 respondents (33%) fell within the 26–30-year age group, and the remaining 91 respondents (26.2%) were between

31 and 35 years. This suggests that most respondents were within the 18–25-year age bracket.

Regarding marital status, 201 respondents (57.8%) were single, while 147 respondents (42.2%) were married. None of the respondents reported being separated or divorced. This implies that the majority of the youths were single. The table further shows the state of origin of the respondents: 27% were from communities affected by oil and gas exploration in Delta State, 23% were from Bayelsa State, 24.7% were from Rivers State, and 25.3% were from Akwa Ibom State.

Analysis of Research Question

The research questions are analyzed in table 2, 3 and 4 below.

Table 2: Response on the Extent Entrepreneurship has Helped in Economic Empowerment and Employment Creation for the Youths in Communities Devastated by Oil and Gas Explorations in Niger Delta

s/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Entrepreneurship provides job opportunities for unemployed youths	135 (39%)	113 (32.4%)	59 (16.9%)	41 (11.7%)
2	Youth entrepreneurship contributes to poverty reduction in the community	86 (24.9%)	168 (48.1%)	67 (19.2%)	27 (7.7%)
3	Self-employment through entrepreneurship enhances financial independence among youths.	80 (23.3%)	224 (64.1%)	37 (10.5%)	7 (2%)
4	Government entrepreneurship programs have empowered youths economically	86 (24.9%)	172 (49.3%)	42 (12%)	48 (13.8%)
5	Access to entrepreneurial training has improved youth employability and income generation.	67 (19.5%)	220 (63%)	45 (12.9%)	16 (4.6%)

6	Government and NGOs' support for entrepreneurs boosts youth economic empowerment	109 (31.5%)	208 (59.6%)	23 (6.6%)	8 (2.3%)
7	Entrepreneurship skills training equips youths with employable and self-sustaining skills	106 (30.7%)	156 (44.7%)	79 (22.6%)	7 (2%)
8	Youth entrepreneurship contributes significantly to the local economy	71 (20.6%)	173 (49.6%)	65 (18.6%)	39 (11.2%)
9	Entrepreneurship serves as a platform for wealth creation among youths	125 (36.1%)	145 (41.5%)	46 (13.2%)	32 (9.2%)
10	Successful youth entrepreneurs inspire others to start their own businesses	70 (20.3%)	261 (74.8%)	5 (1.4%)	12 (3.4%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The table shows that 135 respondents (39%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurship provides job opportunities for unemployed youths, while 113 respondents (32.4%) agreed. In contrast, 59 respondents (16.9%) disagreed and 41 respondents (11.7%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that a majority of the respondents believe entrepreneurship offers significant employment opportunities for unemployed youths.

Furthermore, the table reveals that 86 respondents (24.9%) strongly agreed that youth entrepreneurship contributes to poverty reduction in the community, while 48.1% agreed. However, 19.2% disagreed and 7.7% strongly disagreed. This suggests that youth entrepreneurship plays an important role in reducing poverty in communities affected by oil and gas explorations.

The table shows that 80 respondents (23.2%) strongly agreed that self-employment through entrepreneurship enhances financial independence among youths, while 224 respondents (64.1%) agreed. In contrast, 37 respondents (10.6%) disagreed and 7 respondents (2%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that self-employment through entrepreneurship significantly enhances financial independence among youths.

Furthermore, the table reveals that 86 respondents (24.9%) strongly agreed that government entrepreneurship programs have empowered youths economically, while 49.3% agreed. However, 12% of the respondents disagreed and 13.8% strongly disagreed. This implies that the majority of respondents believe that government entrepreneurship programs have contributed to the economic empowerment of youths.

The table also indicates that 67 respondents (19.5%) strongly agreed that access to entrepreneurial training has improved youth employability and income generation, while 220 respondents (63%) agreed. Meanwhile, 45 respondents (12.9%) disagreed and 16 respondents (4.6%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that access to entrepreneurial training has positively influenced youth employability and income generation.

The table shows that 109 respondents (31.5%) strongly agreed that government and NGO support for entrepreneurs enhances youth economic empowerment, while 208 respondents (59.6%) agreed. In contrast, 23 respondents (6.6%) disagreed and 8 respondents (2.3%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that government and NGO support plays a significant role in boosting youth economic empowerment.

The table further reveals that 106 respondents (30.7%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurship skills training equips youths with employable and self-sustaining skills, while 156 respondents (44.7%) agreed. However, 79 respondents (22.6%) disagreed and 7 respondents (2.0%) strongly disagreed. This shows that entrepreneurship skills training effectively equips youths—particularly in communities affected by oil and gas activities—with essential employable and self-sustaining skills.

Additionally, the table indicates that 20.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that youth entrepreneurship contributes significantly to the local economy, while 49.6% agreed. Meanwhile, 18.6% disagreed and 11.2% strongly disagreed. This suggests that youth entrepreneurship plays an important role in enhancing the local economy.

The table also shows that 36.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that entrepreneurship serves as a platform for wealth creation among youths, while 41.5% agreed. However,

13.2% disagreed and 9.2% strongly disagreed. This implies that most respondents believe entrepreneurship serves as a viable platform for wealth creation, especially in communities devastated by oil and gas explorations.

Furthermore, the table indicates that 20.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that successful youth entrepreneurs inspire others to start their own businesses, while 74.8% agreed. Only 1.4% disagreed and 3.4% strongly disagreed. This shows that the majority of respondents believe successful youth entrepreneurs motivate others to embark on their own entrepreneurial journeys.

Table 3: The Role of Entrepreneurship in Reducing Idleness and Reliance on Crime as a Source of Livelihood Among Youths in Communities Devastated by Oil and Gas Explorations in Niger Delta

s/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Entrepreneurship helps to reduce youth idleness.	41 (12%)	260 (74.5%)	25 (7.2%)	22 (6.3%)
2	Youths engaged in entrepreneurship are less likely to engage in criminal activities	79 (22.5%)	211 (60.6%)	31 (9.1%)	27 (7.8%)
3	Entrepreneurship provides a legal alternative source of livelihood for youth	121 (35%)	128 (36.7%)	91 (26.1%)	8 (2.3%)
4	Government support for entrepreneurship can reduce youth restiveness.	155 (44.7%)	159 (45.6%)	24 (6.9%)	10 (2.9%)
5	Entrepreneurship reduces social vices among young people	120 (34.7%)	161 (46.1%)	54 (15.5%)	13 (3.7%)
6	Government entrepreneurship programs can reduce youth reliance on crime	58 (16.9%)	257 (73.6%)	28 (8.1%)	5 (1.4%)
7	Youths with entrepreneurial opportunities are more focused and responsible	177 (51%)	142 (40.7%)	23 (6.6%)	6 (1.7%)

8	Entrepreneurial engagement provides an alternative source of livelihood for idle youths	60 (17.5%)	179 (51.3%)	84 (24.1%)	25 (7.2%)
9	Entrepreneurship reduces peer pressure that leads youths into criminal behavior	80 (23.2%)	164 (47%)	83 (23.8%)	21 (6%)
10	Communities with active youth entrepreneurs experience less insecurity	78 (22.6%)	166 (47.6%)	77 (22%)	27 (7.7%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 shows that 41 respondents (12%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurship helps reduce youth idleness, while 74.5% agreed. Meanwhile, 7.2% disagreed and 6.3% strongly disagreed. This indicates that entrepreneurship plays a significant role in reducing youth idleness in communities affected by oil and gas exploration.

The table also reveals that 79 respondents (22.9%) strongly agreed that youths engaged in entrepreneurship are less likely to participate in criminal activities, while 211 respondents (60.6%) agreed. However, 31 respondents (9.1%) disagreed and 27 respondents (7.8%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that entrepreneurial engagement reduces the likelihood of youths engaging in criminal behavior in areas impacted by oil and gas exploration.

Furthermore, the table indicates that 121 respondents (35%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurship provides a legal alternative source of livelihood for youths, while 128 respondents (36.7%) agreed. In contrast, 91 respondents (26.1%) disagreed and 8 respondents (2.3%) strongly disagreed. This implies that entrepreneurship offers a viable legal means of livelihood for youths in communities affected by oil and gas activities.

The table shows that 155 respondents (44.7%) strongly agreed that government support for entrepreneurship can reduce youth restiveness, while 45.6% agreed. Meanwhile, 6.9% disagreed and 2.9% strongly disagreed. This indicates that government support for entrepreneurship is perceived as an effective measure for reducing youth restiveness in oil-impacted communities.

Additionally, the table reveals that 120 respondents (34.7%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurship reduces social vices among young people, while 161 respondents (46.1%) agreed. However, 54 respondents (15.5%) disagreed and 13 respondents (3.7%) strongly disagreed. This implies that entrepreneurship plays a vital role in reducing social vices among youths in communities affected by oil and gas exploration.

The table further indicates that 58 respondents (16.9%) strongly agreed that government entrepreneurship programs can reduce youth reliance on crime, while 73.6% agreed. In contrast, 8.1% disagreed and 1.4% strongly disagreed. This suggests that most respondents believe government entrepreneurship programs help reduce youth dependence on criminal activities.

In addition, the table shows that 177 respondents (51%) strongly agreed that youths with entrepreneurial opportunities are more focused and responsible, while 142 respondents (40.7%) agreed. Meanwhile, 23 respondents (6.6%) disagreed and 6 respondents (1.7%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that entrepreneurial opportunities contribute to making youths more focused and responsible.

The table also reveals that 60 respondents (17.5%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurial engagement provides an alternative means of livelihood for idle youths, while 51.3% agreed. However, 24.1% disagreed and 7.2% strongly disagreed. This implies that most respondents believe entrepreneurship offers a viable alternative source of livelihood for idle youths in oil-impacted communities.

Furthermore, the table indicates that 80 respondents (23%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurship reduces peer pressure that leads youths into criminal behavior, while 164 respondents (47%) agreed. Meanwhile, 83 respondents (23.8%) disagreed and 21 respondents (6%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that entrepreneurship helps reduce the influence of peer pressure that pushes youths toward criminal activities in communities affected by oil and gas exploration.

Finally, the table shows that 78 respondents (22.6%) strongly agreed that communities with active youth entrepreneurs experience less insecurity, while 164 respondents (47.6%) agreed. However, 77 respondents (22%) disagreed and 27 respondents (7.7%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that communities with active youth entrepreneurial involvement tend to experience lower levels of insecurity.

Table 4 Response to the Extent to which Entrepreneurship Culture can Help in Redirecting the Energy and Creativity of Restless Youth into Productive Activities in Communities Devastated by Oil and Gas Explorations in Niger Delta

s/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Entrepreneurship encourages youths to use their creativity productively	78 (22.6%)	156 (44.7%)	90 (25.8%)	24 (6.9%)
2	Developing an entrepreneurial mindset promotes innovation among youths	106 (30.7%)	178 (51%)	57 (16.3%)	7 (2%)
3	Entrepreneurship culture channels the energy of restless youths into meaningful venture	75 (21.8%)	195 (55.9%)	65 (18.6%)	13 (3.7%)
4	Exposure to entrepreneurship education helps youths discover and utilize their talents	93 (26.9%)	189 (54.2%)	43 (12.3%)	23 (6.6%)
5	Youth entrepreneurship can transform social challenges into business opportunities	27 (8%)	204 (58.5%)	79 (22.6%)	38 (10.9%)
6	Entrepreneurial culture reduces the tendency of youths to engage in destructive behavior	86 (24.9%)	161 (46.1%)	53 (15.2%)	48 (13.8%)
7	Youths involved in entrepreneurship become role models for others in society	71 (20.6%)	158 (18.6%)	80 (22.9%)	39 (11.2%)
8	Entrepreneurship helps youths to acquire leadership and problem-solving skills	155 (44.7%)	149 (42.7%)	34 (9.8%)	10 (2.9%)

9	Entrepreneurial activities channel youth energy towards nation-building	78 (22.6%)	166 (47.6%)	77 (22%)	27 (7.7%)
10	A strong entrepreneurial culture promotes creativity and innovation in society	106 (30.7%)	178 (51%)	57 (16.3%)	7 (2%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 shows that 78 respondents (22.6%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurship encourages youths to use their creativity productively, while 156 respondents (44.7%) agreed. In contrast, 90 respondents (25.8%) disagreed and 24 respondents (6.9%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that entrepreneurship supports the productive use of youth creativity in communities affected by oil and gas exploration.

The table also reveals that 106 respondents (30.7%) strongly agreed that developing an entrepreneurial mindset promotes innovation among youths, while 178 respondents (51%) agreed. However, 57 respondents (16.3%) disagreed and 7 respondents (2%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset enhances youth innovation.

Furthermore, the table shows that 75 respondents (21.8%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurship culture channels the energy of restless youths into meaningful ventures, while 55.9% agreed. Meanwhile, 18.6% disagreed and 3.7% strongly disagreed. This indicates that an entrepreneurial culture has the potential to redirect youthful energy toward productive activities.

In addition, the table indicates that 26.9% of respondents strongly agreed that exposure to entrepreneurship education helps youths discover and utilize their talents, while 54.2% agreed. However, 12.3% disagreed and 6.6% strongly disagreed. This implies that entrepreneurship education contributes to talent identification and utilization among youths.

Table 4 further shows that 27 respondents (8%) strongly agreed that youth entrepreneurship can transform social challenges into business opportunities, while 204 respondents (58.5%)

agreed. In contrast, 79 respondents (22.6%) disagreed and 38 respondents (10.9%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that youth entrepreneurship can convert social problems into viable economic opportunities.

The table also reveals that 86 respondents (24.9%) strongly agreed that an entrepreneurial culture reduces the tendency of youths to engage in destructive behavior, while 46.1% agreed. Meanwhile, 15.2% disagreed and 13.8% strongly disagreed. This implies that an entrepreneurial culture helps minimize destructive behavior among youths.

Furthermore, the table shows that 20.6% of respondents strongly agreed that youths involved in entrepreneurship become role models for others in society, while 45.3% agreed. However, 22.9% disagreed and 11.2% strongly disagreed. This indicates that many respondents believe entrepreneurial youths often serve as role models.

The table also indicates that 155 respondents (44.7%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurship helps youths acquire leadership and problem-solving skills, while 42.7% agreed. In contrast, 9.8% disagreed and 2.9% strongly disagreed. This suggests that entrepreneurship significantly enhances youths' leadership and problem-solving abilities.

Additionally, the table shows that 78 respondents (22.6%) strongly agreed that entrepreneurial activities channel youth energy toward nation-building, while 47.6% agreed. Meanwhile, 22% disagreed and 7.7% strongly disagreed. This indicates that entrepreneurial activities can contribute to directing youth energy toward national development.

Finally, the table reveals that 106 respondents (30.7%) strongly agreed that a strong entrepreneurial culture promotes creativity and innovation in society, while 178 respondents (51%) agreed. However, 57 respondents (16.3%) disagreed and 7 respondents (2%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that a vibrant entrepreneurial culture fosters creativity and innovation within society.

Test of Hypotheses

The three hypotheses formulated were tested using Pearson Chi-Square at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One

Ho: Entrepreneurship has not helped in economic empowerment and employment creation for the youths.

Table 5: Chi-square Tests for Hypothesis One

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	39.424[a]	12	.002
Likelihood Ratio	12.711	12	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.261	1	.010
N of Valid Cases	348		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5 shows a chi-square value of 39.424, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level with 12 degrees of freedom. Since the chi-square value is significant at the 5% level, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it is concluded that entrepreneurship had contributed to economic empowerment and employment creation for the youths.

Hypothesis Two

Ho: Entrepreneurship has not help in reducing idleness and reliance on crime as a source of livelihood among youths.

Table 6 Chi-square Tests for Hypothesis Two

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	43.841[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	17.371	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.829	1	.003
N of Valid Cases	348		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 6 above indicates that the value of chi-square 43.841 which is statistically significant at 0.05 level at 12 degree of freedom. Since, chi-square value is statistically significant at 5% level of significance. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Hence, we conclude that entrepreneurship have helped in reducing idleness and reliance on crime as a source of livelihood among youths.

Hypothesis Three

Ho: Entrepreneurship culture has not help in redirecting the energy and creativity of restless youth into productive activities.

Table 7 Chi-square Tests for Hypothesis Three

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	41.236[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	27.871	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.851	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	348		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 7 shows a chi-square value of 41.236, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level with 12 degrees of freedom. Since the chi-square value is significant at the 5% level, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Consequently, we conclude that entrepreneurship culture has helped redirect the energy and creativity of restless youths into productive activities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research focused on the role that entrepreneurship can play as a solution to the restiveness that has been witnessed among the youth in the areas that have been adversely affected by oil and gas exploitation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The research revealed that entrepreneurship has helped in improving the economic power of the youths in the region. In other words, the research revealed that entrepreneurship has played an important role in improving the economic power of the youths in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This conclusion can be supported by previous research that revealed that entrepreneurship has played an important role in providing alternatives for the youths in regions that have been adversely affected by oil and gas exploitation, as the youths can no longer engage in economic activities such as fishing and farming due to environmental degradation (Obasi, Ohaebo, Nwodo, & Onwubiko, 2025). Moreover, Okechukwu and

Nwekwo (2020) noted that the enterprises that the youths have started have helped in improving economic security through the provision of employment opportunities that have helped the youths to become economically independent, as the number of job opportunities in the region is scarce. From the research, it is evident that entrepreneurship has played an important role in solving the problems associated with unemployment, which has been one of the causes of restiveness among the youth in the region.

Entrepreneurship has continued to help reduce the incidence of idleness and the urge to commit crimes among the youth. This means that when young people are engaged in entrepreneurial activities, they are less likely to engage in idle activities or resort to illegal means to make a living. In oil-producing states, where poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities are endemic, young people have no choice but to resort to thieving, militancy, and vandalism to make ends meet. However, as earlier established, entrepreneurial activities have continued to engage young people in meaningful activities that reduce the time spent on anti-social behaviors. Nwosu and Agabi (2021) established that entrepreneurial activities have continued to engage young people in meaningful activities that reduce the time spent on anti-social behaviors. This is an indication that entrepreneurial activities have the capacity to reduce the incidence of crimes among young people.

In addition, the research established that the culture of entrepreneurship has helped redirect the energy, creativity, and resilience of restless young people into constructive activities. This means that entrepreneurship initiatives have succeeded in redirecting the vigor, ingenuity, and resilience of restless young people into constructive activities. Epem and Ekpotuatin (2025) established that with the right skills and environment, young people who could have been lured into anti-social behaviors have succeeded in converting their innovative skills into entrepreneurship development. This is an indication that the culture of entrepreneurship is essential in redirecting the creativity, ingenuity, and resilience of

restless young people into constructive activities. By so doing, the high-energy levels that could have been channeled into restiveness have been redirected to developmental activities. Obasi et al. (2025) established that by cultivating the culture of entrepreneurship, the high-energy levels that could have been channeled into restiveness have been redirected to developmental activities.

CONCLUSION

This particular research focused on the possibility of using entrepreneurship as a solution to the problem of restless youths in the Niger Delta, which has been greatly affected by oil and gas exploration. The research findings clearly indicated that entrepreneurship plays an important role in addressing the challenges facing restless youths in the Niger Delta. The research established that entrepreneurship has greatly empowered youths economically, as it has created new ways through which they can make money. It has created new job opportunities, which have greatly helped to reduce the number of idle youths in the region.

The research findings also established that entrepreneurship has greatly helped to reduce the number of idle youths in the Niger Delta. It has greatly helped to reduce the number of youths involved in criminal activities as a source of livelihood. Through entrepreneurship, restless youths have been kept busy with productive ventures that have greatly helped to reduce the number of youths involved in social vices. The research further established that the development of an entrepreneurial culture has greatly helped to redirect the energy, creativity, and resilience of restless youths in the Niger Delta towards productive and socially useful activities. Through skill acquisition, innovation, and development, restless youths have the ability to redirect their creativity, energy, and resilience towards constructive activities that have greatly helped to develop the community.

From the research findings, it is clear that entrepreneurship is an effective solution to the problem of restless youths in the Niger Delta. It is an effective solution to the problem because it has greatly empowered youths economically, reduced the number of idle youths, and reduced the number of youths involved in criminal activities as a source of livelihood. It has also helped to redirect the creativity, energy, and resilience of restless youths towards constructive activities that have greatly helped to develop the community. The development of an entrepreneurial culture has greatly helped to develop the community.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings that entrepreneurship promotes economic empowerment, reduces idleness and crime, and channels youth creativity into productive activities, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

1. The government agencies should establish and implement wide-ranging entrepreneurship initiatives for the youths in the Niger Delta region. The initiatives would include vocational training, business management, and innovation support, as well as mentorship, with a focus on the realities of the region and available market opportunities.
2. The governments should seek to widen financial inclusion by establishing youth-friendly loans, grants, and credit facilities. The microfinance institutions and development banks should be mandated to simplify their loan conditions and provide flexible payment options to young entrepreneurs. The governments should establish community enterprise facilities in areas affected by oil production, where young people can receive vocational training, production facilities, and technical assistance to start small businesses.
3. The oil and gas sector in the region should also be made to commit some of its resources in the CSR portfolio towards promoting youth entrepreneurship in the region. This implies that there should be funds allocated towards youth start-ups and empowerment

in the region. At the same time, environmental degradation is also leading to unrest in the region; thus, the government should ensure that there is enforcement of environmental protection laws and that oil companies are made to pay for environmental degradation in the region. A conducive social and environmental climate is important for youth enterprise in the region.

4. The policies should also ensure that there is reduction in red tape and that there are tax incentives for youth start-ups in the region. The government should ensure that there is access to basic infrastructure like electricity, road connectivity, and water and reliable digital connectivity in the region. To promote the culture of entrepreneurship from an early age, the education ministries in the respective governments should ensure that there is the incorporation of entrepreneurship in the school curriculum in secondary and tertiary institutions in the region.

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