

**HARNESSING THE UNITED NATIONS DECENT WORK AGENDA AND YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AS A STRATEGY TO MITIGATE CYBER-
FRAUD (OKE-ITE) IN SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study investigates the potential of the United Nations Decent Work agenda as global labour governance in promoting sustainable growth and efficiency excellence in indigenous industries, focusing on youth employment and reduction in Cyber-Fraud. Specifically, the enquiry interrogates how tailored socioeconomic initiatives, when harmonised with UN global development tenets, especially Sustainable Development Goals, Target 8 can facilitate job creation; tourism and crime prevention. Employing institutional theory framework, this qualitative inquiry explores how localised industrial growth facilitated by targeted social policies, can provide viable options to youth employment, thereby mitigating the upsurge of Cyber-Fraud, locally known as Oke-ite. The data collection for this qualitative study were obtained by means of detailed discussions with youth participants, sectorial experts and decision makers, alongside on-site observation of the manufacturing settings. The study elucidates the interface of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework and local realities, shedding light on how indigenous industries can contribute to achieving decent work, public peace, and equitable development through locally owned businesses. The finding of this investigation highlights the potential of indigenous industries and tourism to provide inclusive and resilient domestic economic progress especially through youth employment and Cyber-Fraud reduction initiatives.

Keywords: Decent Work Agenda, Cyber-Fraud, Oke-ite, tourism, Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

Youth unemployment and Cyber-Fraud pose significant socio-economic challenges in Nigeria. In the recent years, Nigerian youths have increasingly perceived as a global threat due to their involvement in cyber related crimes. These encompass a range of illegal activities, such as internet fraud to vulnerable victims, hacking, cyber stalking, identity theft, job/investment fraud, phishing scams among many others. On the other hand, the word “*Okite*” (Cyber-Fraud with mystical observances) was coined from the Igbo word “Ogwu ego” which literally means “money ritual”. It is synonymous with “*yahooplus*” (advanced cybercrime/mystical practices) which is believed to have originated from the South southern part of Nigeria. This has become a worrisome trend, as an increasing number of young people are turning to quick means of acquiring wealth.

However, the United Nations' Decent Work agenda as developed by the International Labour Organisation is aimed at promoting sustainable economic growth, productive employment, and decent work for all (UN, Malawi, 01 May, 2023), though recognised as a key global governance objective and was endorsed as targets 8 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In Nigeria, this initiative faces political, economic, and social challenges, which have significantly limited its effectiveness and resulted in minimal outcomes. Nevertheless, the widespread involvement of youths in cyber-fraud is a global phenomenon that cuts across diverse backgrounds. A notable rise in this phenomenon has been observed in southeastern Nigeria, prompting considerable concern. In spite of the emerging economic prospects within the southeastern Nigeria, there is concomitant escalation in crime and security threats. Importantly, the systemic disenfranchisement, such as political exclusion, economic marginalisation, social injustice, and education inequalities, with its ripple effects have contributed to the upsurge of youth unemployment, destitution and social vices in the region. These have paved way for illicit activities, due to socio-economic problems linked to the federal government's institutionalised

practices and policies that deny the youth's access to important services in Nigeria, consequently affecting the regional development industries and tourism. To this end, the study will examine these challenges in Southeastern Nigeria, focusing on Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo, which are exemplary cases of the region's cultural and socioeconomic affinity.

Over the past few years, Nigeria has experienced a distressing escalation in cyber fraud/mystical observances among youths aged sixteen (16) to twenty-five (25) years. The Guardian Newspaper in its report in 2024 stated that some youth, as young as 13 years are involved in cyber-fraud due to the emergence of cybercrime academies or "hustle kingdom". Prior to this period, about the sum of \$500 million were reported to have been lost to cybercrimes with significant number of youths among the 3,455 convictions secured by Economic Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) in 2022. In 2023, the Nation Newspaper claimed that the EFCC Chairman, Ola Olukoyede stated that 7 of 10 students in Nigeria are involved in cybercrimes. Consequently, notable interventions or initiatives, and policy actions from the federal government have been adopted. Inadequate attention and poor implementation strategies are evidenced in the rising unemployment rates and cyber-fraud involvement among youth. For instance: youths constitute approximately 50% of Nigeria's total population of 233,522,000 (UNDESAPD, 2022). According to Nigeria Labour Force quarterly report (Q2, 2023), the unemployment rate of youths aged 15 – 24 years increased from 6.9% in Q1 to 7.2% in Q2. Regardless of this demographic significance, effective initiatives by policymakers to tackle unemployment, economic destitution and its corresponding cyber-fraud (*Oke-ite*) practice by youths have been remarkably inattentive at both state and federal levels. Amid the United Nations Decent Work agenda and the supported initiative that aimed at promoting sustainable economic growth, productive employment and decent work for all (UN, Malawi, 01 May, 2023). Its correspondent initiative in Nigeria, such as N-Power under the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) has not significantly promoted the inclusivity or aligns with the global framework of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG target 8), as youth unemployment and persistent criminality upsurge.

Amid, the existing literature on the Decent Work Agenda, the unemployment challenges of the youth and cyber fraud in Nigeria, most of the extant literature explore the issue separately with little or no attention to the links with the informal and digital economy. Moreover, when there is limited specific context of analyses that connects labour market exclusion to the upsurge among youth in Nigeria.

Therefore, this study aims to address the gap by investigating on the connection between the United Nations' Decent Work shortfalls, and the proliferation of cyber fraud; especially in southeastern Nigeria. It will contribute to the literature offering additional integrated analytical viewpoint that associate employment susceptibility, digital survival approaches, and illegitimate economic participation. By so doing the study will help to advance knowledge by providing empirical understandings and pertinent policy recommendations aligned to the socio-economy realities of Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Despite the potential of indigenous industries, such as Aba shoe factories, to drive economic growth, job creation, and infrastructural development, youths in southeastern Nigeria continue

to be involved in cyber related crime as sources of livelihood. The repercussions of this systemic disenfranchisement, circumscribing political segregation, material deprivation, institutionalised discrimination, and disproportionate educational opportunities, have triggered substantial rates of unemployment, poverty and social vices within the southeastern Nigeria. This perpetuates an environment conducive to criminal activities, primarily motivated by the socio-economic challenges confronting the disadvantaged youths. For instance: Youth unemployed rate as at first and second quarter of 2023 in Nigeria for aged 15 – 24 increased from 6.9% in Q1 to 7.2% in Q2 (NLF, Report Q2, 2023). Within this region, the poverty head count rate as at 2019 and 2020 were as follows: Abia – 30.67%; Anambra – 14.78%; Ebonyi – 79.76%; Enugu – 58.13% and Imo – 28.86% (NBS, 2020). The absence of robust strategies by stakeholders to align the UN decent work initiative to the development of local industries is underprovided. In effect, impedes viability of this initiative such as N-power programme, under the National Social Investment Policy (NSIP) to harness entrepreneurship or employment opportunities, and the economic potential of the local industries. Thus, exacerbate *Oke-ite* (cyber-fraud and mystical observance) practices, thereby intensifying insecurity, and criminality among Nigerian youths. For instance: in 2022, over \$500million were lost to cybercrime in Nigeria (Nairametrics, 2022); followed by N9.5 million lost to e-fraud (Vanguard, 2023); then average of 3.759 of cyber-attacks per week were recorded (Nairametrics, 2024). That notwithstanding, most youth caught in cyber-fraud and money rituals usually claim to be following the part of their destiny as the country do not have any future for them. However, a state like Anambra has taken decisive steps against youth involvement in ritual practices and criminal activities. Other states such as Lagos, Ogun and more have launched and sensitised the public and created specialised task forces to deal with ritual killings and the unlawful trafficking of human organs. For instance, Lagos State in its effort to eliminate fraudulent actors in 2020 applied severer rules around traditional healing practices.

Similarly, countries in Africa and elsewhere are faced with these challenges. For instance, Ghana is battling with “sakawa” (internet fraud and scams tied to spiritual beliefs), South Africa is faced with “muti” (traditional medicine) practices in the context of superstition driven crimes. This study aims to bridge the existing gap in knowledge by exploring how UN decent work agenda can enhance indigenous industrial development for economic growth, employment opportunities, and reduction in criminal activities among youths for inclusivity and sustainable economic growth in Nigeria.

Literature Review

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) developed the idea of decent work in 1999 in response to the widening gaps in labour markets and the shortcomings of economic growth models that did not guarantee inclusive employment possibilities. Aiming to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all," the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8) later adopted

the Decent Work Agenda, which consists of four interconnected pillars: employment creation, rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue (ILO, 2019).

The Decent Work Agenda serves as a normative framework guiding international influence on national development. Some scholars like Standing (2011) and Ghai (2003) have underscored the importance of this agenda it helps to shape the labour market reforms, especially in low and middle-income countries. However, the implementation of the agenda frequently at the national level encounters political and structural obstacles, especially in a country such as Nigeria, that have high percentages of informal sectors. Similarly, the Nigeria's youth unemployment has been constantly a developmental challenge. Accordingly, the percentage of unemployment is above 40%, with inadequate access to opportunities in the formal sector. This has resulted to increase in the dependence on informal employment, with much concentration in indigenous developed industrial hubs such as the Aba shoe manufacturing sector in southeastern Nigeria. Though economically vibrant, these industries operate outside formal regulatory guidelines and still underexplored in a typical development works (Eme & Uche, 2023).

Although informal sectors have the potential to lower unemployment, they are frequently characterised by subpar working conditions, irregular pay, and no government assistance-elements that run counter to the ILO's definition of "decent" labour. According to academics like Chen (2012) and Meagher (2010), development policies need to take into account the realities of informal economies more closely, especially in Africa, where they employ a sizable percentage of the labour force. However, few studies have looked into how local industry actors interpret, modify, or oppose global labour standards like the Decent Work Agenda.

Nigeria's unemployment problem is made worse by the widespread rise in cyber-fraud, or "Yahoo Yahoo." According to recent reports, poverty, peer pressure, and a lack of good job options are the main causes of the high number of Nigerian youths, some as young as 13 years are engaged in cybercrime (The Guardian, 2024; EFCC, 2023). The bulk of offenders were young people, with over 3,455 cybercrime convictions reported in 2022, according to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Seven out of ten Nigerian students are involved in cyber-related offenses, according to a startling 2023 report by the EFCC Chairman (The Nation, 2023).

Few studies have looked at the connection between employment and Cyber-Fraud from a developmental or preventive standpoint, despite mounting concerns. The majority concentrate on the technological underpinnings of cybercrime or criminal justice solutions. However, this study contends that one structural factor contributing to teenage digital crime is a lack of access to good, fulfilling employment. Therefore, encouraging respectable jobs in regional businesses might provide a longer-term remedy for young people's involvement in cybercrime. The function of national and local players, such as governments, investors, and civil society, in converting international frameworks like the Decent Work Agenda into locally applicable solutions is another area of scholarly neglect. The shortcomings of top-down policy approaches

that ignore the complexity of local socioeconomic situations are highlighted by academics like Hilhorst (2018) and Peters (2019). In Nigeria, political meddling, inadequate coordination between federal and state agencies, and weak institutions can make implementation gaps worse.

Although the extant literatures offer valuable insights on youth unemployment and Cyber-Fraud in Nigeria; there are various limitations.

At first; some scholarly work handled Cyber-Fraud as immoral or criminal matter; ignoring the structural foundations of the exclusion in the labour market. Secondly; the primary focus of Decent Work Agenda is on formal employment structures; with inadequate consideration to informal and realities of digital economy as alternative choice for most youth in Nigeria. Thirdly; the empirical integration is scarce on these themes; given rise to fragmented policy responses. This study advance from current literature by synthesis within aspects and situating Cyber-Fraud with a wider context of decent work discrepancies and existing strategies in a inhibited labour market..

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework depicts the process from global labour regulation to local socioeconomic results. At the top is the United Nations Decent Work Agenda, a worldwide project aiming at encouraging inclusive and long-term economic growth. This informs Nigeria's National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), namely N-Power, which focusses on young employment. The programme's engagement with local businesses in southeastern Nigeria is projected to generate employment and empowerment, ultimately contributing to a reduction in cyber-fraud and economic insecurity among youngsters. See chart below:

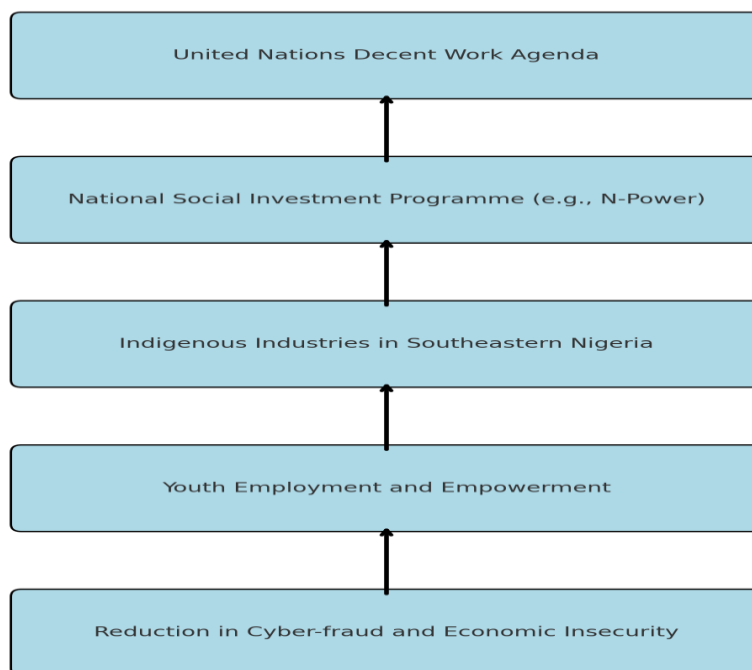


Figure 1: A conceptual framework depicting the relationship between global governance (UN Decent Work Agenda), national initiatives (NSIP), local industry growth, and desired socioeconomic outcomes.

The conceptual framework was used to connect local employment outcomes with global labour governance. Embedded in the United N Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is seen as a global governance tool influencing national policies and development projects. Within the Nigerian setting, the framework investigates how these international standards are localised within indigenous businesses, such as the cluster of Aba shoe manufacture, and how they affect young employment trends. The framework hypothesis that more decent work opportunities may lower young vulnerability to digital crime, so linking youth employment to the frequency of cyber-crime is factual. Examined as mediators in this global-local interaction is the function of the Nigerian government, tourism, and local investors..

To this end, the study is grounded in institutional theory, which posits that institutions formal and informal rules, norms, and practices shape the behaviours and opportunities of actors within a society (Scott, 2014). In the context of southeastern Nigeria, particularly the southeastern Nigeria, institutional structures have not sufficiently adapted to address the socio-economic demands of the growing youth population. This discrepancy has significantly established a gap where informal and commonly illegal economic practices such as cyber-fraud, locally referred to as *Oke-ite*, have become popular options for survival and personal development.

In this context, the study bridges broad policy-level interventions, that is, the United Nations supported Decent Work initiative, the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), and to small-scale socio-economic challenges in local industrial workplaces to mitigate youth unemployment; poor development of tourism and Cyber-Fraud. The United Nations Decent Work Agenda (UNDWA) fosters effective employment, sustainable wages, and economic equality as pivotal to development (ILO, 2023). However, the realisation of these goals in Nigeria remains hampered by inconsistent policy implementation and a disconnection between national strategies and grassroots realities. For instance, in spite of the NSIP's specified goal of empowering young people and poverty reduction, several recipients in areas comparable to Southeastern Nigeria marginalisation persist owing to exploitation, lack of awareness and political patronage (Adedoyin et al., 2022). According to North (1990), the circumstance demonstrates what he defines as institutional miscarriage where laydown guidelines are not effectively applied or are uneven with the inducements and needs of indigenous actors. Tourism, as an industry known for contributing significantly to employment creation, local enterprise growth, social, economic, and environmental development is not left out in this regard. In a situation where the structural support is lacking, the youth usually tilt towards cyber-fraud, often pervaded with ritualistic practices (*Oke-ite*), as an alternative means to access wealth. Although these are criminal acts, yet serves as a respond mechanism of the young people to the economic deprivation and systemic exclusion in the country. Equally, Ghana and other African countries have in one way or the other witnessed the same scenario. . For example, in Ghana, some studies have indicated a similar trend on youth involvement in cyber-fraud as a result of the rise of unemployment and supposed institutional failure to offer viable economic prospects (Aboagye & Asenso, 2021).

The conceptual framework also considers the role of indigenous industries as potential buffers against youth disenfranchisement. Aba shoe factory and Nnewi Automobile, for instance, is an indigenous industrial cluster that could engage substantial labour if effectively sustained in Abia and Anambra States. The empirical data derived from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2020) endorses the worrying rise of poverty in southeast, Abia State that situates Aba, with a record of 30.67% rate. However, these figures harmonise with the town's standing as a small-scale manufacturing and entrepreneurship hub. The inconsistency suggests that in as much as productive prospect exists, institutional restrictions, such as lack of access to credit, unstable electricity supply, and fragile industrial policy impedes function-ability as a sustainable employment mechanism (Eze et al., 2023).

The challenges of youth unemployment and cyber-fraud are comprehensively positioned under the institutional framework. It interrogates how uneven governance structure can create illicit economic behaviour among young people when considered disfranchised through underutilised indigenous economic coordination. Moreover, when these local industries fail to show transformative roles even if unified with global development programmes, such as the UN Decent Work Initiative that is suitably aligned with similar national supported programme.

For instance, the NSIP meant for empowerment, employability to alleviate economic challenges and other social vices among young people.

By entrenching this study in this theoretical framework underlines the importance of youth engagement and economic inclusion. The presence of empowerment or development programmes, is one thing, while their contextual relevance, institutional coherence, and the strategic mobilisation of local economic assets is another thing. Thus, the approach to enable a multi-level analysis to link global policy objectives with local implementation approach becomes laudable, thereby, making the study insightfully applicable for policy and practice. In another development, as the decent work guidelines offers a valuable insights for understanding employment deficits, notably the behavioural effects as links to prolonged exclusion from formal labour markets are insufficiently known. To This is directed by the conceptual framework, this study is seek to investigate the limitation through the decent work framework with elements of institutional theory to explain how unmet socio-economic expectations may drive youth engagement in cyber fraud. By combining these standpoints, the study advances a more inclusive systematic framework that links structural labour market conditions with individual adaptive behaviours in the digital economy, with the following research questions

Research Questions

1. Does the UN Decent Work agenda promote sustainable development and improve productivity in the indigenous industries to support job creation in Nigeria?
2. To what extent does youth employment in indigenous industries significantly contribute to the decrease in Cyber-Fraud rates?
3. How can the government and local investors leverage Decent Work Initiative to effectively counteract the security concerns posed by cyber fraud among youth in southeastern Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

1. Examining how the UN Decent Work agenda can promote sustainable development and improve productivity in the indigenous industries to support job creation in Nigeria
2. Assessing the extent to which youth employment in indigenous industries significantly contributes to the decrease in Cyber Fraud.
3. Exploring how the government and local investors can leverage the UN Decent Work agenda to counteract the security concerns posed by cyber-fraud among youth in southeastern Nigeria

Significance of the Study

For several reasons, this study is important. First, it advances scholarly knowledge of how local settings interpret and apply global governance structures, especially the UN Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organisation under the United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals. It also interrogates the relevance of tourism in promoting and sustaining indigenous businesses for creation of jobs and poverty alleviation. Emphasising indigenous businesses in southeast Nigeria, the study provides insightful analysis of the dynamics of global–local policy interaction. Second, the study tackles a current policy issue in Nigeria: the junction of growing Cyber-Fraud incidence with young unemployment. The paper provides useful advice for local investors, development practitioners, and legislators by looking at how good work initiatives might affect young participation in productive employment rather than cybercrime.

Finally, the study emphasis the part localised, informal industry sectors play in national development a topic sometimes disregarded in both scholarly and policy discussions. The results could guide not only Nigerian but also other environments confronting similar difficulties labour policy reform, youth empowerment initiatives, and industrial development projects.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine how indigenous businesses in Southeast Nigeria; namely: Abia; Anambra; Ebonyi; Enugu; and Imo states perceive, interpret, and operationalise the United Nations Decent Work Agenda in its indigenous . A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of complex social realities as can be seen in some places such as Aba; Nnewi etc; unemployment, Cyber-fraud, and industrial development through the lived experiences and subjective interpretations of key actors within the southeastern Nigeria. This approach creates room for a nuanced knowledge of “what”, “how”, and “why” these situations occur, particularly within the Nigerian socio-economic and policy context where such issues are often under-researched and deeply embedded in local structures.

Research Design: An exploratory research design was adopted, focusing on the Aba shoe-manufacturing cluster in Southeast Nigeria as a representative indigenous industrial hub. This site is purposively selected due to its prominence as a localised industrial environment and its relevance to national social investment initiatives (NSIPs). The case study design is suitable as it facilitates an intensive examination of the interaction between global policy frameworks such as the Decent Work Agenda and local socio-economic dynamics. It also provides the opportunity for the identification of developing patterns and contributes to the building of theory and insights on the relevance of policy.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size: A purposive sampling technique was utilised for selecting participants with relevant knowledge and experience related to the focus of the study. One of the notable advantage of non-probability sampling method it ensures that only information-rich cases are included. Five key categories of targeted participants were used:: (1) employed youth within the Aba industrial cluster, (2) unemployed youth from the five southeastern states (3) university students, (4) private business owners, and (5) government and anti-cybercrime officials, including representatives from agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation that is, the point at which no new insights emerge from additional data collection. In total, approximately 15 –20 participants were

engaged across individual interviews and focus group discussions. This range was considered adequate for qualitative enquiry of this nature, as it balances depth with diversity of perspectives while ensuring manageability of data.

Methods of Data Collection: The data were collected through the triangulation of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide developed in line with the study objectives and relevant literature on decent work, youth employment, and informal economies. The guide consisted of open-ended questions organised around key themes such as awareness of the Decent Work Agenda and its correspondence National Social Investment Programme (NSIP); employment experiences, perceptions of decent work conditions, and views on Cyber-Fraud as an economic alternative. This flexible format allowed participants to express their views freely while ensuring consistency across interviews.

Focus group discussions were conducted particularly among youth from this region and university students to capture shared experiences and collective interpretations. These discussions also enabled the researcher to observe group dynamics and the social structure of meaning around employment and economic survival.

In addition, documentary sources including policy documents, government reports, and academic literature were analysed to complement primary data and provide contextual depth. This triangulation of data sources enhances the robustness of the findings.

Data Analysis: The data were thematically analysed, thereafter; an inductive coding approach was used. The interview conducted and focus group transcripts were carefully reviewed, coded, and categorised into emerging themes derived directly from participants' narratives. This process involved multiple stages, including familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of patterns, and development of overarching themes.

The qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo was employed to organise and manage the data systematically at necessary points. The analysis was guided by the study objectives and informed by relevant theoretical frameworks, particularly global governance and institutional theory, to provide deeper analytical insights.

Validation and Reliability of data: To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, various validation strategies were employed. First, data triangulation was achieved by integrating multiple sources of data (interviews, focus groups, and documents), thereby enhancing the consistency and reliability of the results. Second, member checking was conducted by sharing selected findings with participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations. Third, peer debriefing was undertaken with academic colleagues to review the coding process and thematic development, reducing potential researcher bias. In addition, a clear audit trail was maintained throughout the research process, documenting decisions related to data collection and analysis. This enhances transparency and allows for the replication of the study. Reflexivity was also observed, with the researcher critically reflecting on their positionality and its potential influence on the research process.

Throughout the process of this research ethical principles such as informed consensus, privacy, and intentional involvement were strictly followed. Before any data is collected, ethical approval was

adopted from the appropriate institutional review board before the data collection. This evidenced the guaranteed methodological approach of the empirical richness, theoretical strength, and context-sensitive, granting a whollistic understanding of the ways local veracities intermingle with international labour regulation.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study was thematic, showing the main tendencies that occurred throughout the data collection. On the other hand; the discussion contextualises the findings by the use of current literature and institutional theory before the conclusion with policy and practical effects. The thematic analysis of the findings' were organised and discussion as follows:

Thematic Analysis:

1. Limited Participation in Government Programmes

The findings indicate that there was a disconnection between the existences of government led youth empowerment programmes and actual participation among young people in the Southeastern Nigeria. Despite wide-spread awareness of N-Power and similar efforts in Nigeria, the majority of respondents had not engaged in any formal government youth empowerment programme due to structural and procedural obstacles in this region. These include bureaucratic bottle-neck; poor dissemination of information and perceived exclusion. Illustrative responses received: (i) "I have not gotten the opportunity." (ii) "Didn't know on time and the much requirements discouraged me." This does not point to individual constraints but to systemic inefficiencies in programme delivery.

Critical Discussion: This finding highlights a fundamental limitation in the localisation of global policy frameworks in Nigeria. From an institutional theory perspective, it suggests a gap between formal policy adoption and practical implementation, often referred to as institutional decoupling. While the Nigerian state formally aligns with global standards such as the Decent Work Agenda, the translation into accessible, inclusive National Social Investment programmes (eg. N-Power) remains weak and regionally biased.

Moreover, this reflects broader governance challenges in developing contexts, where policy frameworks are frequently symbolic rather than operational. The implication is that global governance initiatives risk becoming performative if they are not embedded within local institutional capacities and realities.

2. Employment as a Deterrent to Cyber-Fraud

The theme across the data shows a strong belief` that meaningful employment can actually bring a reduction in youth involvement in Cyber-Fraud. The responses consistently connected to cybercrime to unemployment economic frustration and social pressure These are the sample of responses`: (i) "To keep the youths busy." (ii) "One of the major reasons for Cyber-Fraud is unemployment." (iii) "It will create more jobs to the youth." This suggest that Cyber-Fraud is widely perceived not simply as criminal deviance but as a response to economic exclusion.

Critical Discussion: This finding challenges some narratives on conservative criminology that frame Cyber-Fraud primarily as moral failure or individual deviance. Instead, it supports a political economy perspective, where illegal activities emerge as adaptive strategies within contexts of scarce legitimate opportunities.

From a global governance standpoint, this raises important questions about the effectiveness of enforcement-driven approaches to cybercrime. The data suggests that punitive measures alone are insufficient, and that sustainable reduction requires addressing underlying structural inequalities, particularly youth unemployment in NigeriC.

Furthermore, this aligns with institutional theory by demonstrating how informal practices (Cyber-Fraud) can become normalised where formal institutions fail to provide viable economic alternatives to youth in Nigeria.. In this sense, Cyber-Fraud can be interpreted as part of an informal survival economy rather than an isolated criminal phenomenon.

3. Institutional Mistrust and Crisis of Policy Credibility: The study reveals sceptical approaches towards government programmes such as N-Power. While some respondents acknowledged the programme’s theoretical value, many described it as ineffective, politicised, or even deceptive.

Responses such as “It sounds like a scam” and “It doesn’t really work” reflect a wider mistrust in public institutions in Nigeria.

Critical Discussion: This scepticism points to a crisis of institutional legitimacy, which has significant implications for policy effectiveness. From an institutional perspective, policies derive their impact not only from public confidence and perceived fairness.

The findings suggest that repeated experiences of unfulfilled policy promises contribute to what may be described as institutional fatigue, where citizens disengage from state-led initiatives altogether. This undermines the capacity of government programmes to function as instruments of social and economic transformation.

In the context of global governance, this raises critical concerns about the assumption that adopting international frameworks automatically leads to improved outcomes. Without trust, transparency, and accountability, such frameworks may fail to achieve meaningful local impact.

Theme 4: Structural and Multi-Dimensional Approaches to Combating Cyber-Fraud

The participants proposed a range of solutions to Cyber-Fraud, including job creation, skills development, educational reform, and psychological re-orientation. These responses reflect an understanding that cybercrime is rooted in both economic and social factors.

For instance, suggestions such as “Provision of substantial jobs and a working economy” and “Empowerment and education are necessary” indicate a preference for wholistic interventions.

Critical Discussion: These recommendations reinforce the argument that Cyber-Fraud is a multi-dimensional problem requiring integrated policy responses in Nigeria. The emphasis on both economic empowerment and psychological reorientation suggests that effective interventions must address not only material deprivation but also social values and behavioural norms.

From a policy perspective, this supports a shift from reactive to preventive strategies, aligning with global best practices in addressing youth marginalisation. It also highlights the importance of human capital development within indigenous industries as a sustainable pathway for employment generation.

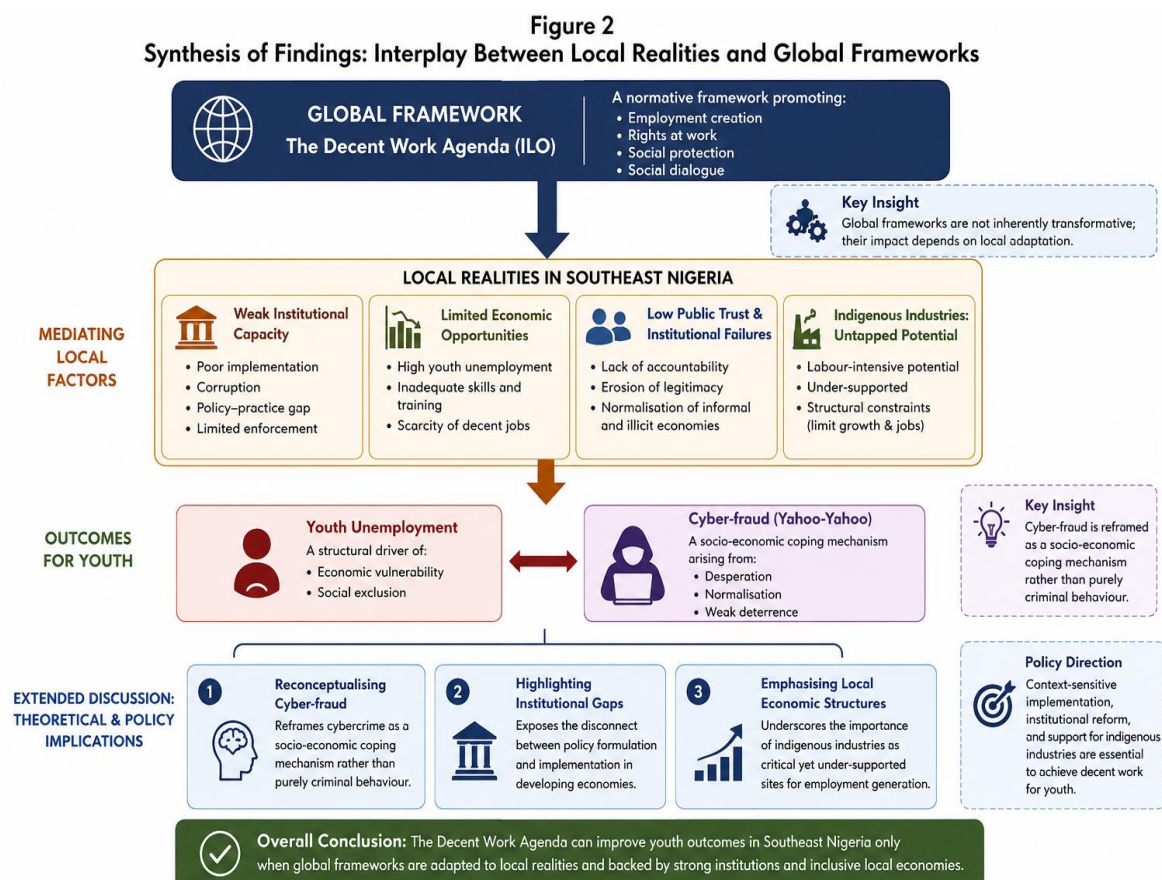
Table 1 show the summary of themes

Table 1: Summary of Themes, Critical Discussion and Implications

Theme	Description of Critical Discussion	Implication
Limited Participation in Government Programmes	This finding highlights a fundamental limitation in the localisation of global policy frameworks in Nigeria	The implication is that global governance initiatives risk becoming performative if they are not embedded within local institutional capacities and realities..
Employment as Deterrent to Cyber-Fraud	Challenges some narratives on conservative criminology that frame Cyber-Fraud primarily as moral failure or individual deviance	In this sense, Cyber-Fraud can be interpreted as part of an informal survival economy rather than an isolated criminal phenomenon.
Institutional Mistrust and the Crisis of Policy Credibility	Repeated experiences of unfulfilled policy promises contribute to what may be described as institutional fatigue, where citizens disengage from state-led initiatives altogether.	This undermines the capacity of government programmes to function as instruments of social and economic transformation..
Structural and Multi-Dimensional Approaches to Combating Cyber-Fraud	Cyber-Fraud is a multi-dimensional problem requiring integrated policy responses in Nigeria.	The emphasis on both economic empowerment and psychological reorientation suggests that effective interventions must address not only material deprivation but also social values and behavioural norms.

Source: Compiled by the Author

Figure 2: Synthesis of Findings – Interplay Between Local Realities and Global Frameworks



Explanation of Figure 2

The diagram presents a conceptual synthesis of how global governance frameworks, particularly the Decent Work Agenda, interact with local socio-economic realities in Southeast Nigeria to shape youth outcomes.

At the top level, the global framework represents a normative policy model designed to promote employment creation, workers’ rights, social protection, and social dialogue. However, the diagram illustrates that such frameworks are not inherently transformative; their effectiveness depends on how they are adapted within local contexts.

The middle section highlights key mediating local factors, including weak institutional capacity, limited economic opportunities, low public trust, and structural constraints facing indigenous industries. These factors collectively shape how global policies are interpreted and implemented in practice.

The next level focuses on youth outcomes, particularly unemployment and engagement in Cyber-Fraud. The diagram emphasises that youth unemployment is not merely an economic issue but a structural driver of vulnerability and social exclusion. In this context, Cyber-Fraud is re-conceptualised as a socio-economic coping mechanism rather than purely criminal behaviour.

The bottom section presents the broader theoretical and policy implications. These include the need to re-conceptualise cyber-fraud, address institutional gaps between policy formulation and implementation, and prioritise the development of indigenous industries as key sources of employment.

In summary, the figure demonstrates that the impact of global frameworks is mediated by local realities, and meaningful policy outcomes require context-sensitive implementation, institutional reform, and support for local economic structures.

Conclusion

This study explored how the UN Decent Work Agenda is perceived and experienced within indigenous industrial settings in southeastern Nigeria, and how it relates to youth employment and cyber-fraud. The findings reveal that while the principles of decent work are valued, implementation gaps and policy inefficiencies limit their impact on indigenous industries and developmental opportunities like tourism. Youths overwhelmingly see employment as a solution to Cyber-Fraud, but they express mistrust in existing national programmes designed to provide such opportunities.

To address these issues, there is a need for a more inclusive and context-sensitive application of global labour initiatives and sensitisation. This includes building trust in institutions, enhancing the accessibility of empowerment programmes, and strengthening indigenous industries to provide meaningful employment. Doing so could play a pivotal role in reducing youth vulnerability to Cyber-Fraud and supporting sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

Against this backdrop, the following recommendations were made:

1. The establishment of targeted digital employment programmes aimed at integrating unemployed youth into legitimate online economic activities. Such programmes should focus on skills development in areas such as software development, digital marketing, and indigenous manufacturing work.
2. The government should design context-specific labour policies that recognise the realities of the informal digital economy, including flexible employment frameworks and micro-enterprise support systems.
3. Enforcement strategies should be complemented with socio-economic interventions to address the root causes of Cyber-Fraud than to rely solely on punitive measures.

Finally, this study made three important contributions to knowledge. (i) It offered an integrated analysis of the linkage between the Decent Work Agenda, youth unemployment, and Cyber-Fraud in Nigeria, an aspect that has not received enough scholarly attention; (ii) It provides context-specific empirical understanding that highlight how labour market exclusion shapes youth engagement in digital informal and illegal activities. (iii), it advances policy discourse by proposing targeted and practical interventions that addressed employment discrepancies and Cyber-Fraud prevention within a unified framework.

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