

Mitigating Health Implications of Food Scarcity on Children in the Era of Youths' Unemployment in Africa through a Proactive Communication Model

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ABSTRACT

Addressing the pervasive challenges of hunger and unemployment among African children is critical for sustainable development and long-term socio-economic stability. The intersection of food scarcity and youth unemployment presents critical health implications for children in Africa, necessitating a nuanced rethinking of job creation strategies in the region. This study underscores the intertwined relationships between food scarcity, child health, and youth unemployment in Africa, advocating for a proactive communication approach aimed at equipping the youth with the necessary skills to combat these challenges effectively. Utilizing the Teno Proactive Communication Model developed by Onyejelem (2020), the study presents a comprehensive framework consisting of communication content, medium, target audience, and objectives aimed at mobilizing various segments of the youth in creative-technical skills while in school. The campaign's objectives focus on promoting technical skill acquisition alongside academic credentials, enhancing employability through diversified skill sets, and fostering self-reliance through entrepreneurship. By adequately leveraging this model, the research highlights the potential of harnessing Africa's untapped natural resources and cultivating entrepreneurial abilities in the youth. This proactive approach not only addresses the pressing issue of hunger necessitated by food scarcity among children but also positions the younger generation as job and wealth creators, ultimately transforming the socio-economic landscape of the region. The findings aim to inform policymakers and stakeholders on effective communication strategies that can galvanize youth involvement in sustainable economic endeavors, thereby improving health outcomes for future generations

INTRODUCTION

Africa is at a turning point in its history. Despite having the youngest population in the world, the continent faces the twin problems of widespread food insecurity and rising youth unemployment (African Union, 2023; UNICEF, 2023; Aondover et al., 2024). The health and well-being of African children are disproportionately affected by this convergence, which poses a serious danger to long-term socioeconomic stability and sustainable development. Stunted growth, poor cognitive development, compromised immune systems, and heightened vulnerability to infectious diseases are only a few of the irreversible effects of inadequate nutrition during the formative years (Victora et al., 2008). A vicious cycle of poverty and malnutrition is created when high rates of youth unemployment limit income and purchasing power, which in turn makes household food insecurity worse. In order to lessen the negative consequences of these issues, this study looks at how they interact and suggests a proactive communication paradigm called the Teno Proactive Communication paradigm. The main contention is that by providing young people with the required information and abilities through focused communication, their potential as change agents can be unlocked, leading to better child nutrition and economic opportunities.

Background: Food Scarcity, Youth Unemployment, and Child Health in Africa

Food insecurity remains a persistent and deeply entrenched problem across much of Africa. Despite possessing vast arable land and significant agricultural potential, the continent struggles to achieve food self-sufficiency (FAO, 2022). This scarcity is driven by a complex interplay of factors, including climate change-induced droughts and floods, protracted conflicts displacing populations and disrupting agricultural production, inadequate infrastructure hindering transportation and storage, volatile market conditions, policy deficiencies, and substantial post-harvest losses (WFP, 2023). The consequences are particularly severe for vulnerable populations, especially children, who are disproportionately affected by malnutrition. The World Food Programme (2023) estimates that millions of African children suffer from acute malnutrition, with devastating long-term effects on their physical and cognitive development.

At the same time, Africa's median age is just under 20 years old, indicating a population explosion (African Union, 2023). However, if the continent doesn't address the startlingly high rates of youth unemployment, this demographic dividend could turn into a demographic catastrophe. According to statistics from the International Labour Organization (2023), more than 60% of young Africans are either unemployed or underemployed and do not have access to good employment possibilities. Numerous socioeconomic issues, including as poverty, social unrest, elevated crime rates, and irregular migration, are exacerbated by this lack of economic opportunities. It's important to note that adolescent unemployment directly contributes to household food insecurity because lower income means that families, especially their children, have less access to wholesome food. World Bank (2021) studies show a substantial relationship between household income and dietary diversity, underscoring the negative effects of unemployment on the nutritional status of children.

Child health and young unemployment have a complex relationship that goes beyond financial factors. According to Bradley and Corwyn (2002), psychological stress, anxiety, and sadness brought on by unemployment can have a detrimental effect on parenting styles and the development of children. Youth without jobs may also not have the funds to obtain medical care, which puts their children's health and wellbeing at even greater risk. In order to protect children's health and secure a successful future for the continent, it is vital that youth unemployment be addressed. This goes beyond simply being an economic necessity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualising Food Scarcity and Food Insecurity in the African Context

Food scarcity and food insecurity are often used interchangeably, but they represent distinct concepts. Food scarcity refers to the physical lack of food, while food insecurity encompasses a broader range of issues, including access, affordability, and utilization of food (FAO, 2018). In the African context, food insecurity is often rooted in systemic issues such as land tenure insecurity, limited access to credit and agricultural inputs, inadequate infrastructure, and political instability (Hazell & Rahman, 2006). Climate change is exacerbating these challenges, leading to more frequent and severe droughts, floods, and other extreme weather events that disrupt agricultural production (IPCC, 2021). Continental initiatives like the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) aim to address these challenges by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and investing in rural infrastructure (NEPAD, 2003).

The Ramifications of Inadequate Nutrition on Child Development and Health Outcomes

Malnutrition, encompassing stunting, wasting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies, has profound and long-lasting consequences for child development and health (UNICEF, 2019). Stunting, a chronic form of malnutrition, impairs physical growth and cognitive development, leading to reduced educational attainment and economic productivity in adulthood (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). Wasting, an acute form of malnutrition, increases the risk of mortality, particularly from infectious diseases. Micronutrient deficiencies, such as iron deficiency anaemia and vitamin A deficiency, compromise immune function and cognitive development (Allen, 2006). The economic costs of child malnutrition are substantial, estimated to be billions of dollars annually in lost productivity and healthcare expenses (Shetty, 2002).

Youth Unemployment in Africa: A Demographic Dividend or Disaster?

Africa's youthful population presents a significant demographic opportunity, but realizing these potential hinges on addressing the pervasive issue of youth unemployment. The scale and characteristics of youth unemployment vary across African regions, but the overall trend is alarming. According to the International Labour Organization (2023), youth unemployment rates are consistently higher than those of adults, with some countries exceeding 30%. This unemployment is often characterized by

precarious employment, informal sector jobs with low wages and limited social protection, and a mismatch between skills and labour market demands. The socio-economic and political consequences of youth joblessness are far-reaching, including increased poverty, social unrest, political instability, and irregular migration (World Bank, 2021). Furthermore, a direct and indirect linkage exists between youth unemployment and household food insecurity. Unemployed youth contribute less to household income, reducing the family's ability to afford nutritious food. Studies by Okoro and Oso (2018) in Nigeria demonstrate how youth unemployment significantly impacts household food consumption patterns, leading to reduced dietary diversity and increased reliance on less nutritious, cheaper food options. This, in turn, exacerbates malnutrition among children. Oso (2015) further highlights the role of media in shaping perceptions of employment opportunities and influencing youth aspirations, emphasizing the need for positive messaging that promotes skills development and entrepreneurship.

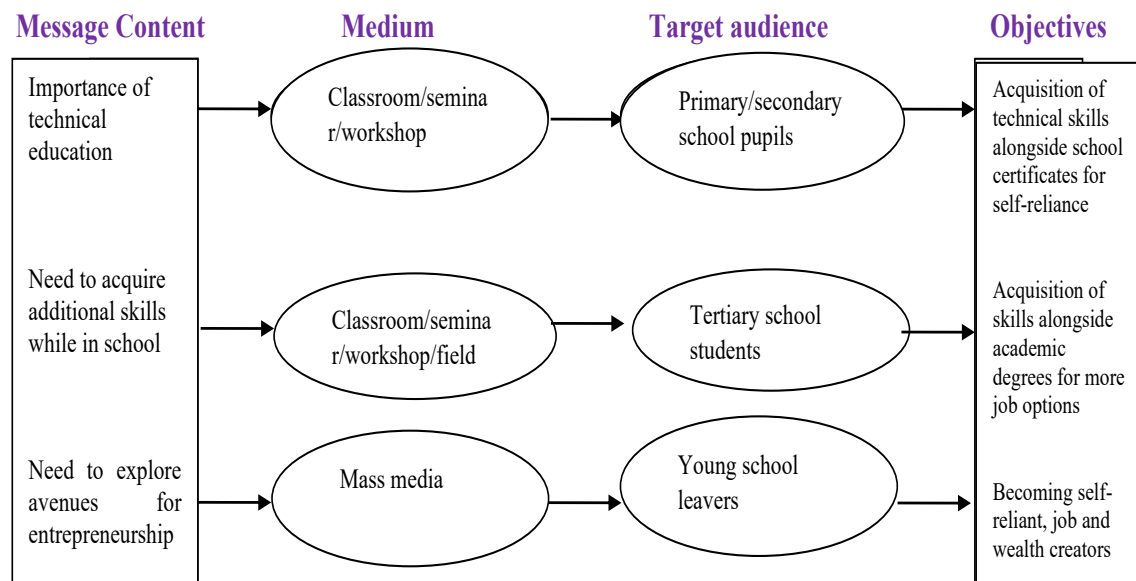
Communication for Development (C4D): Theoretical Foundations and Evolution

Communication for Development (C4D) has evolved significantly over the decades, moving from early modernization theories emphasizing top-down information dissemination to more participatory and empowering approaches. Early C4D models, rooted in the diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 2003), focused on persuading individuals to adopt new technologies or behaviours through mass media campaigns. However, these approaches often failed to address the underlying social, economic, and political factors that contribute to development challenges. Later, participatory communication models emerged, emphasizing the importance of engaging communities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of development initiatives (Freire, 1970). Key C4D theories that underpin this evolution include social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which highlights the role of observation, modelling, and reinforcement in behaviour change; framing theory (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993), which emphasizes how the way information is presented influences perceptions and attitudes; and agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which suggests that the media influences the salience of issues in the public agenda. Effective C4D recognizes that communication is not merely about transmitting information but about fostering dialogue, building trust, and empowering communities to take control of their own development (Servaes, 2008; Adeyemi, 2024). Akinfeleye (2010) emphasizes the crucial role of the media in national development, advocating for responsible journalism that promotes social justice and economic empowerment.

The Teno Proactive Communication Model for Job Creation in Nigeria (Onyejelem, 2020): A Detailed Examination

The Teno Proactive Communication Model, developed by Onyejelem (2020), offers a novel approach to addressing complex socio-economic challenges in Nigeria, and its principles are readily applicable to the broader African context. The genesis of the model stemmed from the need to address the persistent problem of youth unemployment and underemployment in Nigeria, recognizing the potential of communication to mobilize youth and equip them with the skills necessary to create their own opportunities. The model's philosophical

underpinnings are rooted in a participatory and empowerment-based approach, emphasizing the importance of actively engaging youth in the communication process and providing them with the tools and resources they need to succeed.



Source:

https://www.ijmra.us/project%20doc/2020/IJRSS_APRIL2020/IJRSS3April20-16789.pdf

Picture 1. The Teno Proactive Communication Model: A Preemptive Approach to Job Creation

The model comprises four core components: Communication Content, Medium, Target Audience, and Objectives. The Communication Content focuses on promoting technical and vocational skills acquisition alongside academic education, highlighting the economic opportunities available in various sectors, and showcasing success stories of young entrepreneurs. The Communication Medium advocates for a multi-channel approach, leveraging both traditional and new media to reach diverse audiences. The Target Audience is primarily youth in secondary schools and tertiary institutions, but also includes parents, teachers, community leaders, and policymakers. Finally, the Communication Objectives are threefold: increasing awareness of the importance of technical skills, enhancing employability through diversified skill sets, and fostering self-reliance through entrepreneurship.

A distinctive feature of the Teno model is its proactive nature, moving beyond reactive communication strategies that simply respond to existing problems. It emphasizes anticipating future needs and proactively equipping youth with the skills and knowledge they will need to thrive in a rapidly changing world. The model's applicability to the complex challenges of food scarcity, youth unemployment, and child health lies in its ability to mobilize youth as agents of change, empowering them to create economic opportunities that improve household food security and contribute to better health outcomes for children. Scholars like Okigbo (2006), Ezeonyejiaku & Onyejelem (2021);

Gambo et al (2021) argue that effective development communication requires a strategic and integrated approach, aligning communication efforts with broader development goals – a principle central to the Teno model.

Bridging the Skills Gap: Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) and Entrepreneurship

Addressing the skills gap is crucial for unlocking Africa's economic potential and creating employment opportunities for its youth. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a vital role in equipping individuals with the practical skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the labour market (UNESCO, 2015). However, TVET systems in many African countries are often underfunded, poorly equipped, and disconnected from the needs of industry. There is a critical need to reform TVET curricula to ensure they are relevant, market-driven, and aligned with the demands of the 21st-century economy. Entrepreneurship is another key pathway to job creation and economic empowerment. Supporting young entrepreneurs through access to finance, mentorship, and business development services can stimulate economic growth and create sustainable livelihoods (World Bank, 2017). Harnessing Africa's vast natural resources for youth engagement and value addition is also essential. Investing in agro-processing, renewable energy, and other resource-based industries can create employment opportunities and promote economic diversification (Onyejelem, et al., 2015). Soola (2012) emphasizes the importance of health communication in promoting healthy behaviours and improving health outcomes, highlighting the need to integrate health messages into broader development initiatives.

Contributions of Notable Nigerian Communication Scholars to Development Communication

Nigerian communication scholars have made significant contributions to the field of development communication, offering valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the continent. Charles Okigbo (2006) is renowned for his work on strategic communication and its role in social change and development, emphasizing the importance of aligning communication efforts with broader development goals. Lai Oso (2015) has extensively researched the role of media in youth development, highlighting the potential of media to shape perceptions, promote positive values, and empower young people. O. Soola (2012) is a leading expert in health communication, advocating for the use of culturally appropriate communication strategies to promote healthy behaviours and improve health outcomes. Ralph Akinfeleye (2010) has made significant contributions to understanding the role of the media in national development, emphasizing the importance of press freedom and responsible journalism. Nnanyelugo Okoro (2017) specializes in public relations and development communication, focusing on stakeholder engagement and advocacy. Other relevant scholars include Innocent Okoye, whose work explores the intersection of communication and conflict resolution; Chinedu Okoro, who researches the impact of media on poverty and inequality; and Kate Omenugha, whose research focuses on gender, communication, and development. These scholars collectively provide a rich body of knowledge that informs the

development of effective communication strategies for addressing Africa's development challenges.

Synthesis of Literature and Identification of Research Gaps

The literature review reveals a clear and compelling interconnectedness between food scarcity, youth unemployment, and child health in Africa. While significant research exists on each of these issues individually, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding integrated approaches that address them simultaneously. Existing interventions often operate in silos, failing to leverage the potential of youth as agents of change. Furthermore, there is a limited understanding of how proactive communication strategies, such as the Teno Proactive Communication Model, can be effectively utilized to equip youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to address these multifaceted challenges. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the application of the Teno model as a framework for mobilizing youth, promoting skills development, and improving nutritional outcomes for children. The research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a practical and actionable roadmap for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to address these critical issues.

Justification for a Multi-Theoretical Approach

The complexity of the interconnected challenges of food scarcity, youth unemployment, and child health necessitates a multi-theoretical approach. Relying on a single theoretical lens would be insufficient to capture the nuanced interplay of factors at play. This study draws upon Framing Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Diffusion of Innovations Theory, alongside the core principles of the Teno Proactive Communication Model, to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing these issues. Framing Theory helps explain how communication content can shape perceptions and influence behaviour, while Social Learning Theory highlights the importance of role modelling and observational learning in skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development. Diffusion of Innovations Theory provides insights into how new ideas and practices can spread through social networks and communities. The Teno model serves as the overarching framework, integrating these theories into a practical and actionable communication strategy.

Framing Theory: Shaping Perceptions and Driving Action

Framing Theory, rooted in the work of Goffman (1974) and Entman (1993), posits that how an issue is presented - the "frame" - influences how it is understood and acted upon. In the context of this study, framing plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of technical skills and entrepreneurship among African youth. Traditionally, vocational training has often been stigmatized as a second-class option compared to academic education. The Teno model leverages framing to reframe technical skills as valuable, marketable, and pathways to economic empowerment. By highlighting success stories of young entrepreneurs who have thrived through vocational training, the model aims to challenge negative stereotypes and promote a positive perception of skills acquisition. Furthermore, framing the connection between youth empowerment and improved family well-being - emphasizing how entrepreneurial success allows for better nutrition and healthcare for children - can motivate youth to invest in

their own skills development. This aligns with Oso's (2015) work on the power of media to shape perceptions and influence behaviour.

Social Learning Theory: Learning Through Observation and Reinforcement

Social Learning Theory, developed by Bandura (1977), emphasizes the importance of observational learning, modelling, and reinforcement in behaviour change. Youth are more likely to adopt new behaviours and skills if they observe successful role models and receive positive reinforcement for their efforts. The Teno model incorporates this principle by showcasing success stories of young African entrepreneurs who have overcome challenges and achieved economic success. These stories serve as powerful models, demonstrating the potential rewards of skills acquisition and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the model advocates for mentorship programs, connecting youth with experienced entrepreneurs who can provide guidance, support, and encouragement. Positive reinforcement, such as recognition awards and access to funding opportunities, can further motivate youth to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations. Okigbo's (2006) work on strategic communication underscores the importance of using compelling narratives and relatable role models to inspire action.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory: Spreading New Ideas and Practices

Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003) explains how new ideas and practices spread through social systems. The theory identifies five adopter categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. The Teno model leverages this theory by targeting innovators and early adopters – youth who are already open to new ideas and willing to take risks – to champion the adoption of technical skills and entrepreneurship. These individuals can then serve as “change agents,” spreading the message to their peers and communities. The model utilizes a multi-channel communication strategy, leveraging both traditional and new media, to reach diverse audiences and facilitate the diffusion of innovation. Social media platforms, in particular, play a crucial role in accelerating the diffusion process, allowing youth to connect with each other, share information, and build networks.

Centrality of the Teno Proactive Communication Model for Job Creation in Nigeria and Africa

The Teno Proactive Communication Model serves as the overarching framework that integrates and applies the principles of the aforementioned theories to create a coherent and actionable communication strategy. It provides the practical blueprint for mobilizing youth, promoting skills development, and fostering entrepreneurship. The model's proactive nature distinguishes it from traditional communication approaches, emphasizing the importance of anticipating future needs and equipping youth with the skills they will need to thrive in a rapidly changing world. The model's four core components – Communication Content, Medium, Target Audience, and Objectives – provide a structured approach to designing and implementing effective communication campaigns. Onyejelem's (2020) model is particularly relevant to the African context, as it is rooted in a deep understanding of the continent's socio-economic challenges and cultural nuances.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: A Conceptual and Analytical Approach

This study employs a conceptual and analytical research design. It is not an empirical study involving primary data collection through surveys or interviews. Instead, it is a theoretical exploration and application of the Teno Proactive Communication Model to a complex societal problem. The research involves a systematic review and synthesis of existing literature, policy documents, and theoretical frameworks to develop a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected challenges of food scarcity, youth unemployment, and child health in Africa.

Nature of Data: Secondary Data Analysis and Literature Synthesis

The study relies entirely on secondary data. Data sources include academic journals, books, reports from international organizations (FAO, WFP, UNICEF, World Bank, ILO, African Union), policy documents, and publications by Nigerian communication scholars. The secondary data will be analyzed to identify trends, patterns, and gaps in the existing literature.

Data Collection Procedure: Systematic Review of Scholarly and Grey Literature

A systematic review of scholarly and grey literature was conducted to gather relevant data. The following databases were searched: Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and the databases of relevant international organizations. Keywords used in the searches included: "food scarcity," "food insecurity," "youth unemployment," "child health," "malnutrition," "proactive communication," "Teno Proactive Communication Model," "technical skills," "entrepreneurship," "Africa," and "Nigeria." The search was limited to publications published within the last 10 years (2013-2023) to ensure the relevance of the data. Additionally, a targeted search was conducted for publications by the Nigerian communication scholars identified in the literature review (Okigbo, Oso, Soola, Akinfeleye, Okoro, Okoye, and Omenugha).

Data Analysis Strategy: Qualitative Content Analysis and Theoretical Application

The data analysis involved qualitative content analysis of the collected literature and policy documents. The analysis focused on identifying key themes, concepts, and arguments related to food scarcity, youth unemployment, child health, and communication for development. The Teno Proactive Communication Model was used as a framework for analyzing the data, examining how its core components can be applied to address the identified challenges. The theoretical frameworks of Framing Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Diffusion of Innovations Theory were also used to interpret the data and provide a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms driving behaviour change. The analysis involved a process of coding and categorizing the data, identifying patterns and relationships, and drawing conclusions based on the evidence.

RESULTS

Application of the Teno Proactive Communication Model: A Framework for Intervention

1. Reiteration of Model's Core Principles for Proactive Engagement

The Teno Proactive Communication Model, as developed by Onyejelem (2020), provides a robust framework for addressing the complex challenges of food scarcity, youth unemployment, and child health. Its core principles – proactive engagement, youth-centricity, multi-channel communication, and a focus on skills development and entrepreneurship – are essential for creating sustainable solutions. The model moves beyond simply disseminating information to actively empowering youth to become agents of change, equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to create their own opportunities and contribute to the well-being of their communities.

2. Strategic Communication Content for Youth Mobilisation and Empowerment

The communication content is the cornerstone of the Teno model. It must be carefully crafted to resonate with the target audience and inspire action.

5.2.1. **Messaging for Technical Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurial Mindset:** Content should highlight the demand-driven nature of technical skills, showcasing specific career pathways and earning potential. Testimonials from successful young entrepreneurs who have benefited from vocational training should be prominently featured. Messaging should demystify vocational training, emphasizing its practical benefits and challenging negative stereotypes. Short explainer videos demonstrating various trades and providing practical guidance on starting small businesses can be highly effective. Content should also emphasize the importance of lifelong learning and continuous skills development.

Promoting Innovative Agricultural Practices and Value Chain Development: Content should promote sustainable and climate-smart agricultural practices, such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and water harvesting techniques. It should highlight the potential for value addition in food processing, packaging, and marketing, creating new economic opportunities for youth in rural areas. Success stories of youth-led agro-enterprises should be showcased, demonstrating the profitability and sustainability of agricultural ventures. Information on accessing agricultural finance, land, and markets should be readily available.

Highlighting Health, Nutrition, and Hygiene Education: While the primary focus is economic empowerment, content should indirectly reinforce health messages. For example, messaging could emphasize that “Investing in your future means investing in your family’s health: how entrepreneurial success allows for better nutrition for your children.” Basic hygiene practices for food handling and preparation should be promoted, reducing the risk of foodborne illnesses. Content should also address the importance of maternal and child nutrition, emphasizing the benefits of breastfeeding and a balanced diet.

Emphasising Self-Reliance, Innovation, and Societal Contribution: Content should emphasize the importance of self-reliance, innovation, and contributing to the betterment of society. Messaging should inspire youth to think creatively,

identify opportunities, and develop solutions to local challenges. Content should also highlight the role of entrepreneurship in creating jobs, stimulating economic growth, and improving the quality of life for communities.

3. *Optimising Communication Mediums for Diverse African Youth Audiences*

Reaching diverse youth audiences requires a multi-channel communication strategy that leverages both traditional and new media.

Leveraging Digital Platforms: social media, Mobile Applications, E-learning Portals: Digital platforms offer a cost-effective and interactive way to reach a large number of youth. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter can be used to share engaging content, promote events, and facilitate online discussions. Mobile applications can provide access to skills training materials, business resources, and market information. E-learning portals can offer flexible and accessible online courses in various technical and vocational fields.

Harnessing Traditional and Community Media: Radio, Television, Community Theatre, Town Hall Meetings: Radio remains a powerful medium in many African countries, particularly in rural areas where internet access is limited. Localized radio dramas, call-in shows, and jingles can convey messages effectively. Television programmes can showcase success stories and provide practical demonstrations of skills. Community theatre and town hall meetings can foster direct engagement and dialogue with youth and community leaders.

Utilising Educational Institutions and Vocational Training Centres as Hubs: Schools, colleges, and vocational training centres are critical hubs for reaching in-school youth. These institutions can be used to host workshops, seminars, and training programmes. Skills-building modules can be integrated into existing curricula, and entrepreneurial clubs can be established to provide students with opportunities to develop their business ideas.

Role of Peer-to-Peer Communication and Mentorship Programmes: Peer-to-peer communication is a highly effective way to reach youth, as they are more likely to trust and listen to their peers. Establishing youth networks and mentorship programmes can facilitate the sharing of knowledge, skills, and experiences. Youth influencers and community champions can be leveraged to spread positive messages and promote skills development.

4. *Targeted Audience Segmentation and Engagement Strategies*

Recognizing the diversity of the youth population is crucial for tailoring communication strategies to specific needs and contexts.

In-School Youth: Integrating Skills into Curricula, School-Based Clubs: For in-school youth, the focus should be on integrating practical skills and entrepreneurial training into the existing curriculum. This can be achieved through the introduction of vocational subjects, the organization of career guidance workshops, and the establishment of school-based clubs focused on entrepreneurship and innovation. Collaboration with local businesses and industries can provide students with opportunities for internships and apprenticeships.

Out-of-School Youth: Community Outreach, Vocational Training Workshops, Apprenticeships: Reaching out-of-school youth requires a different approach. Community outreach programmes can be used to identify and engage youth who are not enrolled in formal education. Vocational training workshops can provide them with the skills they need to secure employment or start their own businesses. Apprenticeships with local artisans and entrepreneurs can offer valuable on-the-job training and mentorship. Microfinance initiatives can provide access to capital for starting small businesses.

Parents and Community Leaders: Gaining Support and Buy-in: Engaging parents and community leaders is essential for creating a supportive environment for skills development and entrepreneurship. Communication campaigns should address traditional perceptions about vocational training and highlight the economic benefits of skills acquisition. Community meetings and workshops can be used to educate parents and leaders about the importance of investing in youth development.

Policymakers and Industry Stakeholders: Advocacy for Supportive Ecosystems: Advocacy efforts should be directed towards policymakers and industry stakeholders to create a supportive ecosystem for youth entrepreneurship. This includes advocating for policies that promote access to finance, reduce regulatory burdens, and provide incentives for businesses to hire young people. Collaboration with industry stakeholders can ensure that training programmes are aligned with the needs of the labour market.

5. Campaign Objectives and Expected Outcomes of the Proactive Model

The campaign objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound).

Short-Term Objectives: Increased Awareness, Skill Acquisition Enrolment: Within the first six months of the campaign, the objective is to increase awareness of the importance of technical skills and entrepreneurship among youth by 20%. This will be measured through surveys and focus group discussions. The objective is also to increase enrolment in vocational training programmes by 15% within the same timeframe.

Medium-Term Objectives: Enhanced Employability, Startup Formation, Improved Household Income: Within one to two years, the objective is to enhance the employability of youth who have completed vocational training programmes. This will be measured by tracking employment rates and average income levels. The objective is also to facilitate the formation of at least 500 new youth-led startups. Furthermore, the campaign aims to improve household income levels in participating families by 10%.

Long-Term Objectives: Reduced Child Malnutrition, Sustainable Economic Growth, Youth as Job Creators: Over a period of three to five years, the campaign aims to contribute to a sustainable reduction in child malnutrition rates in targeted communities. This will be measured through monitoring child health indicators, such as stunting and wasting rates. The ultimate goal is to foster sustainable economic growth and position youth as job creators, transforming the socio-economic landscape of the region.

DISCUSSION

The Synergistic Impact of Youth Empowerment on Food Security and Child Health

The application of the Teno Proactive Communication Model has the potential to create a synergistic impact on food security and child health. By empowering youth with the skills and knowledge to create their own economic opportunities, the model addresses the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition. Increased household income allows families to afford nutritious food, improving dietary diversity and reducing the risk of malnutrition among children. Youth-led agricultural initiatives can boost local food production, increasing food availability and reducing reliance on imports. Furthermore, empowered youth are more likely to invest in their children's education and healthcare, creating a virtuous cycle of development. This aligns with the findings of the World Bank (2021), which demonstrate a strong correlation between household income and child health outcomes.

Policy Implications and the Role of Stakeholder Collaboration

The success of the Teno model hinges on strong policy support and effective stakeholder collaboration.

Government Policies and Investment in TVET and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: Governments must prioritize investment in TVET, ensuring that training programmes are relevant, market-driven, and accessible to all youth. Policies should be enacted to create a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurship, including access to finance, reduced regulatory burdens, and incentives for businesses to hire young people.

Private Sector Engagement: Skills Development, Apprenticeships, Market Linkages: The private sector has a crucial role to play in providing skills development opportunities, apprenticeships, and market linkages for youth-led businesses. Collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders can ensure that training programmes are aligned with the needs of the labour market.

Role of Non-Governmental Organisations and International Development Partners: Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international development partners can provide funding, technical assistance, and capacity building support for implementing the Teno model. They can also play a vital role in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the campaign.

Community Participation and Local Ownership: Community participation is essential for ensuring the sustainability of the campaign. Local communities should be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the model, ensuring that it is culturally appropriate and responsive to local needs.

Addressing Challenges and Ensuring Sustainability of the Communication Model

Implementing the Teno model will inevitably encounter challenges.

Infrastructure Gaps (e.g., Internet Access, Electricity): Limited access to internet and electricity in many African regions poses a significant challenge to the effective implementation of digital communication strategies. Creative

solutions, such as offline content delivery, solar-powered community hubs, and the use of mobile technology, can help overcome these challenges.

Funding and Resource Mobilisation: Securing sustainable funding for the campaign is crucial. Diversifying funding sources, including government funding, donor contributions, private sector investment, and social enterprises, is essential.

Cultural Barriers and Perceptions towards Vocational Skills: Addressing cultural barriers and negative perceptions towards vocational skills requires targeted communication campaigns that challenge stereotypes and highlight the economic benefits of skills acquisition.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptation Mechanisms: Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is essential for tracking progress, measuring impact, and making necessary adjustments to the campaign. Regular evaluations should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the communication strategies and identify areas for improvement.

Broader Implications for African Development and Youth Agency

The successful implementation of the Teno Proactive Communication Model has broader implications for African development. By empowering youth to become agents of change, the model can contribute to increased economic growth, reduced poverty, improved health outcomes, and greater social stability. It can also foster a sense of agency and ownership among youth, encouraging them to participate actively in shaping their own futures and contributing to the development of their communities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Key Arguments and Findings

This study has demonstrated the interconnectedness of food scarcity, youth unemployment, and child health in Africa, and has argued that a proactive communication approach, utilizing the Teno Proactive Communication Model, offers a viable pathway to address these challenges. The model's emphasis on skills development, entrepreneurship, and youth empowerment provides a holistic and sustainable solution. The application of Framing Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Diffusion of Innovations Theory further strengthens the theoretical foundation of the model and provides insights into how to effectively mobilize youth and drive behaviour change.

Reiteration of the Teno Model's Potential

The Teno Proactive Communication Model holds significant potential for transforming the socio-economic landscape of Africa. Its comprehensive and youth-centric approach, combined with its emphasis on proactive engagement and skills development, makes it a powerful tool for addressing the complex challenges facing the continent.

Recommendations for Policymakers and Stakeholders

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to policymakers and stakeholders:

- Integrate proactive communication strategies, informed by models like Teno, into national youth development and food security plans.

- Prioritize investment in TVET and entrepreneurship, ensuring that training programmes are relevant, market-driven, and accessible to all youth.
- Create a supportive ecosystem for youth entrepreneurship, including access to finance, reduced regulatory burdens, and incentives for businesses to hire young people.
- Foster collaboration between government, private sector, and civil society to implement the Teno model effectively.
- Invest in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and measure impact.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research should focus on conducting pilot studies applying the Teno model in specific African contexts, quantitatively measuring its impact on youth employment rates, household income, and child nutrition indicators. Further research is also needed to explore the role of digital technologies in scaling up the model and reaching wider audiences. Investigating the cultural nuances and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of the model in different African countries is also crucial.

Ethical Clearance

This study examined the interconnected challenges of food scarcity, youth unemployment, and child health in Africa. It proposes the application of the Teno Proactive Communication Model as a framework for empowering youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to address these issues, ultimately improving nutritional outcomes for children. This is a conceptual study relying on secondary data analysis and does not involve direct interaction with human subjects.

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While no direct interaction with individuals occurred, the study acknowledged the sensitivity of the topics addressed (food insecurity, unemployment, child health). The research was conducted with respect for the dignity and well-being of the populations affected by these issues. The study only used data that was readily available to the public from reliable sources (FAO, WFP, UNICEF, World Bank, ILO, African Union, scholarly publications). There was no gathering, usage, or disclosure of personally identifiable information. Every source was correctly cited.

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