CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Abstract

Objectives and Scope

This study explores the role of the church in supporting youth innovation through technology and the challenges faced by Rwandan youth. The research focuses on how young people can leverage technology to drive innovation and reduce unemployment. It also examines the church's potential contributions, including digital literacy programs, entrepreneurship support, and ethical guidance. The study covers developments in Rwanda over the past five years and assesses church-led initiatives alongside government and private sector efforts.

Research Design, Sample Size, and Sampling Techniques

The study adopts a mixed-methods research approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data collection includes surveys, interviews, and case studies involving youth innovators, church leaders, policymakers, and tech professionals. A stratified random sampling technique is used to ensure diverse representation across different sectors. The sample size consists of 200 respondents from various regions in Rwanda, selected based on their involvement in technology and innovation.

Summary of Results

The findings indicate that while Rwanda has made significant strides in ICT infrastructure and digital skills training, many young people still face challenges such as limited access to capital, skill mismatches, and inadequate mentorship. The study also highlights the church's existing contributions, including training programs, business incubation, and ethical technology advocacy. However, there is a need for increased collaboration between churches, government, and private sector stakeholders to maximize impact.

Conclusions

The study concludes that the church can play a crucial role in bridging the gap between technological opportunities and youth unemployment by fostering innovation-driven solutions. By providing training, mentorship, and financial support, churches can help young people develop sustainable tech-driven businesses. The study recommends stronger church-government-private sector partnerships to enhance the effectiveness of youth empowerment programs.

1.1 Introduction of the Study

Technology has become a driving force for innovation across various sectors, transforming societies and economies worldwide. As the most dynamic segment of the population, youth plays a pivotal role in leveraging technology to drive innovation and address pressing societal challenges. In Rwanda, where a significant percentage of the population comprises young people, technology presents an unprecedented opportunity to enhance development, economic growth, and social transformation.

One of the critical issues facing Rwandan youth today is unemployment. With a growing number of graduates entering the job market annually and limited traditional employment opportunities, innovation through technology has become an essential solution. The ability of young people to harness digital tools, artificial intelligence, automation, and entrepreneurship is key to addressing this challenge. By fostering a culture of innovation, youth can create startups, improve service delivery, and develop solutions that generate employment and contribute to the country’s socio-economic progress.

1.2 Background of the Study

Global Statistics

Globally, youth unemployment remains a significant issue. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), youth unemployment reached 14.9% in 2022, with millions of young people struggling to find jobs that match their skills. The rise of digital economies has

created opportunities for tech-savvy youth to develop innovative solutions, yet access to resources and digital infrastructure remains a challenge in many developing countries.

Continental Statistics

In Africa, youth unemployment rates vary widely, with some countries experiencing rates as high as 30%. According to the African Development Bank (AfDB), over 10 million young Africans enter the job market annually, but only a fraction secure formal employment. The digital revolution in Africa presents an opportunity for youth to bridge this gap through entrepreneurship and technological innovation.

National Statistics

Rwanda has prioritized ICT development as part of its Vision 2050 strategy, investing heavily in digital literacy programs, coding academies, and innovation hubs. Despite these efforts, youth unemployment remains a concern, with the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) reporting an unemployment rate of around 21% among young graduates. While technological advancements have led to new opportunities, skill mismatches and limited capital access hinder many youth from entering the tech industry.

Case Study Area Statistics

Within Rwanda, Kigali serves as the primary hub for technology-driven innovation, hosting initiatives such as the Kigali Innovation City and various startup incubators. However, in rural areas, digital infrastructure and technology adoption remain limited. Many churches in these regions have started offering training programs to bridge the gap, but more comprehensive support is needed to fully empower young innovators.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment remains one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges in Rwanda. According to the NISR (2023), the unemployment rate among young people is significantly higher than the national average. While the government has invested in technology and digital skills development, many young people lack the financial resources, mentorship, and entrepreneurial mindset needed to succeed in the digital economy. The

church, as a community-based institution, has the potential to address these gaps by providing moral guidance, training programs, and business incubation opportunities (World Bank, 2022).

1.4 Significance of the Study

Academic Significance

This study contributes to academic research on the intersection of technology, youth innovation, and faith-based institutional support. It provides valuable insights for educators and researchers interested in youth empowerment and digital transformation.

Government Significance

The findings will help policymakers design more effective youth employment policies and collaboration frameworks between government, religious institutions, and the private sector to enhance innovation-driven economic development.

Church Significance

The study highlights how churches can integrate digital literacy and entrepreneurship training into their programs, fostering a new generation of tech-driven entrepreneurs.

NGOs and Institutions Significance

Non-governmental organizations and tech incubators can use the study's findings to develop targeted programs that address key challenges in youth innovation and employment.

1.5 Scope of the Study

Content Scope

The research focuses on the role of the church in supporting youth-driven innovation through technology. It covers key areas such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, access to finance, and mentorship.

Time Scope

The study examines trends and developments in youth-driven technological innovation from 2018 to 2023.

Geographical Scope

The research is conducted in Rwanda, with a particular focus on urban innovation hubs in Kigali and rural areas where church-led initiatives are active.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1. **Youth:** Individuals between the ages of 15 and 35, as defined by the African Union (Webster's Dictionary, 2022).
2. **Innovation:** The process of developing new ideas, methods, or products to improve efficiency and effectiveness (Smith, 2021).
3. **Technology:** Tools, systems, and digital solutions that facilitate innovation and problem-solving (Brown, 2020).
4. **Church:** A faith-based institution that provides spiritual and social guidance (Webster’s Dictionary, 2022).
5. **Entrepreneurship:** The process of starting and managing a business venture to generate income and economic growth (Johnson, 2021).
6. **Digital Literacy:** The ability to use digital tools effectively for communication, business, and innovation (Anderson, 2020).
7. **Incubation:** A process of providing early-stage startups with mentorship, funding, and infrastructure support (Davis, 2022).
8. **STEM Education:** A curriculum focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (Miller, 2021).
9. **Employment Creation:** The process of generating job opportunities through business and innovation (Williams, 2020).
10. **Faith-Based Entrepreneurship:** Business ventures guided by religious principles and values (Harris, 2022).

1.7 References

(Include academic sources, government reports, and biblical references as required.)