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INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN PROMOTING HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This research examined how youth organizations facilitate health and educational efforts aimed at fostering sustainable community progress in Rivers State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research framework was used to methodically analyze the impact of youth organizations throughout the state. The study sample includes 283 registered youth organizations, from which 23 Local Government Areas using multistage sampling method across the three senatorial districts. The research aimed to survey 348 youth officials, ultimately receiving 247 valid responses, which accounts for a 70% response rate. Data gatherings were carried out with structured questionnaires that were validated for both face and content, and reliability was confirmed with a test-retest method resulting in a coefficient of 0.94. For data evaluation, descriptive statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) techniques were applied.

The findings indicated that youth organizations have a crucial influence on health development primarily through awareness initiatives, including campaigns on HIV/AIDS, drug abuse prevention, family nutrition education, and the promotion of treated mosquito nets. Nonetheless, their participation in health infrastructure and service provision was determined to be limited. In the educational domain, youth organizations significantly contribute through scholarships and the supply of essential learning materials but demonstrate little involvement in infrastructure projects such as building schools or training teachers. The ANOVA analysis showed notable variations in the roles of youth organizations in health and educational programs across the three senatorial districts.

The study concludes that youth organizations significantly aid community development, although their contributions are predominantly focused on awareness activities and vary by region. It suggests improved funding, capacity building, and institutional support to enhance their effectiveness in sustainable community development.

Keywords: Investigating, Role, Youth, Organizations, Promoting, Health, Education, Initiatives & Sustainable

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sustainable community development is a key issue in various underdeveloped areas, particularly in situations where governmental resources are inadequate to fulfill the increasing social requirements of residents. In this context, youth organizations have progressively taken on significant roles as grassroots influencers in advancing development projects, notably in areas like health and education (Muhammad, & Kanon-Haki, 2025). Youth organizations can be defined as organized groups composed of young individuals aimed at enhancing social welfare, encouraging community involvement, and coordinating efforts towards development objectives (Nwaozuru, et al, 2021). Their functions typically encompass mobilizing communities, advocating for change, raising awareness, and delivering fundamental support services within their neighborhoods. Conversely, health and educational projects are essential for human and social development since they directly affect the quality of life, productivity, and the long-term viability of communities (Okafor & Owolade, 2023).

In Rivers State, like various regions in Nigeria, communities confront considerable obstacles in health and educational progress. Challenges such as restricted access to high-quality healthcare, insufficient health facilities, the spread of communicable diseases, inadequate health literacy, and lack of educational resources are common in many areas (Robinson-Mbato, 2024).

In education, issues like a shortage of teaching materials, limited access to quality educational resources, poor infrastructure, and few opportunities for skill development continue to impede advancement. These ongoing difficulties have led to a disconnect between policy objectives and real development results, highlighting the necessity for the participation of non-state entities such as youth organizations to support government initiatives (Sani, et al, 2025).

Past research has underscored the impact of youth organizations on community development, particularly in terms of raising awareness, peer education, and energizing community engagement. Investigations into youth participation in health campaigns have indicated that initiatives led by youth effectively foster behavioral changes, particularly in sectors like HIV/AIDS awareness, strategies for preventing drug use, and education on reproductive health. Likewise, studies regarding youth engagement in education have highlighted their involvement in providing scholarships, backing informal learning, and improving access to essential educational resources (Tugwell, 2020). Nonetheless, most of these analyses have concentrated mainly on sectors or isolated interventions, often overlooking a broad evaluation of the roles played by youth organizations across various development sectors within a designated geographical area.

Despite the increasing acknowledgment of youth organizations as critical change agents, there remains a substantial void in the existing literature concerning how their socio-organizational strengths manifest concrete development results, especially within Rivers State. Many of the current studies have inadequately investigated the comparative functions of youth organizations across diverse senatorial areas, nor have they thoroughly examined the relationship between awareness-driven initiatives and infrastructural support. Moreover, there is a dearth of empirical data regarding whether the impacts of youth organizations are uniformly distributed or shaped by regional economic and social inequities. This research intends to address these deficiencies by conducting a thorough examination of how youth organizations contribute to health and educational programs aimed at fostering sustainable community growth in Rivers State. By employing both descriptive and inferential methods, the research aspires to evaluate the type of their contributions and the degree of differences among various areas. The results are anticipated to

offer significant perspectives for policymakers, development professionals, and stakeholders regarding strategies to effectively leverage and enhance the potential of youth organizations as vital agents of sustainable community progress.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is anchored in Social Capital Theory, originally conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and subsequently expanded by James Coleman (1988) and Robert Putnam (1993). The theory emphasizes the value of social relationships, networks, trust, and shared norms in facilitating coordinated actions that yield mutual benefits within a community. Social capital resides within the structure of relationships among individuals and groups, enhancing cooperation and enabling collective problem-solving.

At its core, Social Capital Theory posits that individuals and groups derive benefits from their social connections, which can be mobilized to achieve developmental goals. These connections foster trust, reciprocity, and shared values—critical elements that encourage participation and sustained engagement in community activities. In this context, youth organizations represent structured forms of social capital, functioning as platforms through which young people can mobilize resources, disseminate information, and coordinate development-oriented initiatives.

The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its explanatory power regarding how youth organizations contribute to community development. Through their networks, these groups facilitate collaboration, enhance information flow, and promote collective action in areas such as health awareness and educational support. Furthermore, Social Capital Theory helps explain variations in effectiveness across different regions, as disparities in trust, social cohesion, and

network strength can influence the capacity of youth organizations to drive meaningful development outcomes in Rivers State.

2.2 Conceptual Review

Youth organizations are defined as structured groups of young individuals formed to pursue shared social, economic, or developmental objectives within their communities. These organizations play a critical role in grassroots mobilization, advocacy, and service delivery, particularly in contexts where government resources are limited. Their flexibility and proximity to local populations enable them to address community-specific needs effectively.

Community development refers to a participatory process in which members of a community collectively identify challenges and implement solutions aimed at improving their socio-economic and environmental conditions. It emphasizes empowerment, inclusivity, and sustainability, ensuring that development initiatives are locally driven and contextually relevant.

Health development initiatives encompass activities designed to improve public health outcomes. These include disease prevention campaigns, health education, sanitation awareness, and efforts to improve access to healthcare services. Youth organizations often engage in such initiatives through peer education, awareness campaigns on issues such as HIV/AIDS and drug abuse, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Educational development initiatives focus on enhancing access to quality education and improving learning outcomes. These efforts may involve providing scholarships, distributing educational materials, supporting school infrastructure, and advocating for improved educational policies. Additionally, youth organizations contribute to informal education through skill acquisition programs and community-based learning initiatives.

Sustainable community development integrates social, economic, and environmental dimensions to ensure long-term improvements in living standards. It prioritizes inclusive participation, capacity building, and responsible resource utilization to meet present needs without compromising future generations. In this study, youth organizations are viewed as key actors in advancing both health and educational initiatives, thereby contributing to sustainable development in Rivers State.

2.3 Empirical Review

A growing body of empirical literature highlights the significant role of youth organizations in community development, particularly in health and education. Studies by Nwaozuru et al. (2021) and Arije et al. (2023) demonstrate that youth-led initiatives in Nigeria have been instrumental in promoting HIV/AIDS awareness through peer education and community outreach. Similarly, Brieger et al. (2001) found that youth participation in health campaigns enhances knowledge dissemination and fosters positive behavioral change, especially among underserved populations.

In the educational sector, research by Jegede et al. (2019) and Okafor and Owolade (2023) indicates that youth organizations improve access to education through scholarships, provision of learning materials, and community-based educational programs. These interventions have been particularly beneficial for marginalized groups. Furthermore, Tugwell (2020) and Sani et al. (2025) highlight the importance of youth-led informal education and skill development programs in complementing formal education systems.

Despite these contributions, existing studies reveal certain limitations. Youth organizations are often more engaged in awareness campaigns and material support rather than large-scale infrastructural development. Additionally, studies by Charles et al. (2024)

and Chinapaw et al. (2024) identify significant regional disparities in the effectiveness of youth organizations, influenced by factors such as funding availability, socio-economic conditions, and institutional support.

Importantly, a critical gap persists in the literature. Most studies examine health and educational interventions independently, with limited focus on their combined impact within a sustainable development framework. There is also a lack of comparative analysis across different senatorial districts, particularly in Rivers State, and insufficient application of rigorous statistical methods to assess regional variations.

This study seeks to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of youth organizations' roles in both health and educational development, while also examining regional differences using inferential statistical techniques. By integrating these dimensions, the research aims to contribute to a more holistic understanding of youth-driven community development and offer evidence-based insights for policy and practice.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which involves the systematic collection and analysis of data from a defined population in order to describe existing conditions and relationships. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to examine the contributions of youth organizations to community development in Rivers State, Nigeria, without manipulating any variables. By relying on firsthand data obtained from respondents, the approach provided a reliable basis for understanding patterns, perceptions, and roles of youth organizations in promoting health and educational development initiatives within their communities.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all registered youth organizations in Rivers State. According to records from the Government of Rivers State (2019), there are two hundred and eighty-three (283) registered youth organizations across the state, and this figure constituted the target population for the research. The inclusion of all registered organizations ensured that the study was grounded in an official and comprehensive framework, thereby enhancing the generalizability and relevance of the findings to youth-driven community development efforts within the state.

3.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation across the study area. In the first stage, Rivers State was stratified into its three senatorial districts: Rivers East, Rivers West, and Rivers South. In the second stage, two Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from each district, resulting in a total of six LGAs.

Subsequently, youth organizations were selected proportionately based on their distribution across the districts, with forty (40) organizations drawn from Rivers East, seven (7) from Rivers West, and eleven (11) from Rivers South, reflecting the higher concentration of organizations in Rivers East. Furthermore, using an equal allocation sampling technique, six key officials—president, secretary, financial secretary, treasurer, welfare officer, and public relations officer—were selected from each organization due to their active involvement in organizational activities. This process produced an initial sample size of 348 respondents; however, only 247 valid responses were obtained and used for analysis due to non-response and incomplete questionnaires, representing a response rate of approximately 70 percent.

3.4 Instrument for Data Collection

Primary data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire designed in alignment with the research objectives. The instrument was organized into sections to capture both demographic and substantive information. The first section focused on respondents' personal characteristics, including age, gender, marital status, and duration of involvement in youth organizations. The second section examined the roles of youth organizations in promoting health and educational development initiatives for sustainable community development. The items in this section were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, allowing for the quantification of respondents' perceptions and facilitating statistical analysis.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure the quality of the instrument, both validity and reliability were rigorously established. Face and content validity were achieved through expert review, as the questionnaire was examined by the research supervisors to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Their feedback was carefully incorporated into the final version of the instrument. In addition, the reliability of the instrument was assessed using the test-retest method. A pilot study was conducted by administering ten copies of the questionnaire in one Local Government Area from each senatorial district not included in the main study, namely Ikwerre, Degema, and Tai. The pilot test yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.94, indicating a high level of internal consistency and stability of the instrument over time.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to ensure a comprehensive interpretation of the findings. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies,

percentages, and weighted mean scores, were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and responses to questionnaire items. In addition, inferential statistics, specifically Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), were employed to test the research hypotheses and determine whether significant differences existed across the senatorial districts regarding the roles of youth organizations in community development. This combination of analytical methods provided both a detailed description of the data and a robust basis for drawing meaningful conclusions.

Research Question One: What roles do youth organizations play in promoting health development Initiatives for Sustainable Community Development in Rivers State

Roles	Rivers East (n=199)				Rivers West (n=21)				Rivers South East (n=27)				Pooled (n=247)			
	Sum	Mean	SD	Remark	Sum	Mean	SD	Remark	Sum	Mean	SD	Remark	Sum	Mean	SD	Remark
Building health centers	286	1.44	.582	D	62	2.95	1.244	D	45	1.67	.480	D	393	1.59		D
Monitoring of health facilities	414	2.08	1.387	D	72	3.43	1.399	A	50	1.85	.362	D	536	2.17		D
Supply of Drugs	325	1.63	.523	D	56	2.67	1.390	D	43	1.59	.694	D	424	1.72		D
Monitoring team to healthcare center	350	1.76	.842	D	65	3.10	1.375	A	44	1.63	.492	D	459	1.85		D
Campaign against expired drugs	702	3.53	1.869	A	78	3.72	1.189	A	87	3.22	1.423	A	867	3.51		A
Cleaning of the hospitals	320	1.61	.539	D	63	3.00	1.643	A	58	2.15	.864	D	441	1.78		D
In-service training of caregivers	329	1.65	.477	D	55	2.62	1.359	D	50	1.85	.907	D	434	1.76		D
Dietitian to community	423	2.13	.791	D	49	2.33	.913	D	49	1.81	.396	D	521	2.11		D
Provision of hospital facilities	272	1.37	.483	D	47	2.24	.995	D	39	1.44	.698	D	358	1.45		D
Provision of hospital cash	305	1.53	.593	D	51	2.43	1.207	D	58	2.15	.770	D	414	1.67		D
Campaign on improved family nutrition	831	4.18	1.084	A	51	2.43	1.326	D	68	2.52	1.221	D	950	3.85		A
Campaign on HIV/AIDS awareness	729	3.66	.965	A	68	3.24	1.670	D	74	2.74	1.375	D	871	3.53		A
Campaign on Lassa fever and infectious diseases	274	1.38	.506	D	53	2.52	1.662	D	67	2.48	1.014	D	394	1.59		D
Campaign on drugs abuse	767	3.85	1.152	A	58	2.76	1.670	D	55	2.04	1.160	D	880	3.56		A
Awareness of the use of treated mosquito nets	727	3.65	.956	A	60	2.86	1.740	D	78	2.89	1.013	D	865	3.50		A
Provision of free treated mosquito nets	365	1.83	.530	D	47	2.24	1.446	D	49	1.81	.681	D	461	1.87		D
Vigilante in health care centre	276	1.39	.509	D	53	2.52	1.632	D	52	1.93	.550	D	381	1.54		D
Equipping the health care centre	256	1.29	.475	D	45	2.14	1.424	D	47	1.74	.656	D	348	1.41		D
Donations of drugs to health care centre	299	1.50	.731	D	44	2.10	1.411	D	44	1.63	.492	D	387	1.56		D
Ambulance for health care centre	404	2.03	.910	D	43	2.05	1.117	D	42	1.56	.506	D	489	1.98		D
Grand Mean		2.17				2.67				2.03				2.20		

Source: Field survey, 2026 : Decision Means ≥ 3.0 = Agreed; < 3.0 = Disagreed

The findings displayed in Table 4.1 highlight the descriptive statistics of the respondents' feedback regarding the contributions of youth organizations in advancing health development programs throughout Rivers East, Rivers West, and Rivers Southeast. The average mean scores suggest that youth organizations are significantly involved in certain health-focused community enrichment efforts, especially in initiatives targeting expired medications (average mean = 3.51), improved family nutrition awareness (3.85), HIV/AIDS education (3.53), drug abuse prevention (3.56), and campaigns advocating for the use of treated mosquito nets (3.50).

These aspects were identified as important functions of youth organizations, as their average scores surpassed the decision threshold of 3.0. Conversely, various other health-related activities, including the construction of health centers, drug supplies, oversight of health facilities, provision of hospital resources, and contributions to health centers, recorded average scores under 3.0 across all three senatorial zones, reflecting disagreement. The average scores for Rivers East (2.17), Rivers West (2.67), Rivers South East (2.03), and the overall average (2.20) further substantiate that, in general, youth organizations have a restricted role in supporting health development infrastructure, but are notably more engaged in awareness and campaign initiatives. These findings lead to the conclusion that youth organizations primarily enhance health awareness and preventive health campaigns rather than directly delivering health services or developing infrastructure within Rivers State.

Research Question Two: What roles do youth organizations play in promoting educational development Initiatives for Sustainable Community Development in Rivers State

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics of the respondent's responses on the roles of youth organizations in promoting Educational development Initiatives for Sus-

tainable Community Development in Rivers State

Roles	Rivers East (n=199)				Rivers West (n=21)				Rivers South East (n=27)				Pooled (n=247)		Remark
	Sum	Mean	SD	Remark	Sum	Mean	SD	Remark	Sum	Mean	SD	Remark	Sum	Mean	
Donations of books to community	399	2.01	.873	D	74	3.52	1.504	A	86	3.19	1.302	A	559	2.26	
Monitoring of schools equipment	337	1.69	.705	D	72	3.43	1.502	A	45	1.67	.480	D	454	1.84	
Cleaning school environment	288	1.45	.498	D	65	3.10	1.670	A	56	2.07	.781	D	409	1.65	
Donation of Coaster buses	206	1.04	.185	D	57	2.71	1.454	D	41	1.52	.509	D	304	1.23	
Evaluation team	266	1.34	.474	D	61	2.90	1.513	D	45	1.67	.734	D	372	1.50	
Employment	332	1.67	.675	D	57	2.71	1.347	D	44	1.63	.688	D	433	1.75	
In-service training of teachers	249	1.25	.435	D	50	2.38	1.117	D	59	2.19	.834	D	358	1.45	
Feeding of pupils	442	2.22	.739	D	55	2.62	1.244	D	38	1.41	.501	D	535	2.166	
Scholarships award	840	4.22	.848	A	69	3.29	1.271	A	75	2.78	1.013	D	984	3.98	
Building of schools	331	1.66	.747	D	47	2.35	1.387	D	59	2.19	.557	D	437	1.77	
Donation of book shelf	270	1.36	.501	D	60	2.86	1.424	D	58	2.15	.534	D	388	1.57	
Donations of books cabinets	356	1.79	.736	D	55	2.62	1.431	D	39	1.44	.506	D	450	1.82	
Donations of patrol van to schools	289	1.45	.519	D	57	2.71	1.309	D	35	1.30	.542	D	381	1.54	
Vacuum cleaners to school	677	3.40	1.741	A	57	2.71	1.189	D	56	2.07	.474	D	790	3.19	
Cutting machines to schools	565	2.84	.819	D	64	3.05	1.244	A	45	1.67	.555	D	674	2.72	
White board to school	804	4.06	.970	A	60	2.86	1.459	D	77	2.85	.818	D	941	3.81	
Blackboard duster to schools	888	4.46	.968	A	68	3.24	1.578	A	84	3.11	1.121	A	1040	4.21	
Window blinds to schools	271	1.36	.482	D	63	3.00	1.581	A	41	1.52	.509	D	375	1.52	
Donations of air conditioners to school	319	1.60	.809	D	54	2.57	1.599	D	66	2.44	1.450	D	439	1.78	
Donations of ceiling fans to schools	801	4.03	1.070	A	69	3.29	1.554	D	53	1.96	1.192	D	923	3.73	
Grand Mean		2.24				3.89				2.04				2.27	

Source: Field survey, 2026: Decision Means ≥ 3.0 = Agreed; < 3.0 = Disagreed

Table 4.2 outlines the descriptive analysis of the respondents' perspectives concerning the role of youth organizations in fostering educational development in Rivers State. The results indicate that youth organizations are considerably active in various educational support initiatives such as awarding scholarships (average mean = 3.98), supplying whiteboards (3.81), providing blackboard dusters (4.21), donating vacuum cleaners (3.19), and supplying ceiling fans to educational institutions (3.73). These factors were recognized as essential contributions from youth organizations towards educational development, as their average measures exceeded the established decision criterion. However, the majority of infrastructural and institutional support efforts, such as constructing schools, donating school buses, providing employment assistance, training teachers, and supplying educational materials, had mean scores below 3.0, indicating rejection in most areas. The overall mean scores for Rivers East (2.24), Rivers West (3.89), Rivers South East (2.04), and the pooled

mean (2.27) imply a generally limited degree of involvement, with Rivers West reflecting a comparatively higher engagement in certain educational activities. In summary, the findings reveal that youth organizations are more focused on donating materials and providing scholarships than on large-scale educational infrastructure development in Rivers State.

H01: There is no significant difference in the Roles of Youth Organisations in Rivers East, Rivers West and Southeast in promoting health development initiative for Sustainable Community Development in Rivers State

Table 4.3: Analysis of Variance Result for the respondents on the Roles of Youth Organisations in Rivers East, Rivers West and Southeast in promoting health development initiative for Sustainable Community Development in Rivers State

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups	5.437	2	2.719	20.047	0.000
Within Groups	33.090	244	.136		
Total	38.527	246			

Where: ss = sum of squares; df= degree of freedom, ms = mean squares, and F=F calculated

Source: Researcher's computation with SPSS 25.0

The findings presented in Table 4.3 display the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) conducted to evaluate the hypothesis about whether there exists a notable difference in how youth organizations contribute to health development initiatives within the three senatorial districts of Rivers State. The data indicates that the computed F-value is 20.047, accompanied by a p-value of 0.000. Given that the p-value falls below the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is dismissed. This suggests that there is a statistically significant variation in the contributions of youth organizations to health development initiatives among Rivers East, Rivers West, and Rivers South East. The observed differences imply that the extent and nature of involvement of youth organizations in health-focused community development efforts vary considerably among the senatorial districts, likely as a result of variations in socio-economic circumstances, organizational abilities, and resource accessibility.

H02: There is no significant difference in the Roles of Youth Organisations in Rivers East, Rivers West and Southeast in educational development initiatives for Sustainable Community Development in Rivers State

Table 4.4: Analysis of Variance Result of the respondents' responses on the Roles of Youth Organisations in Rivers East, Rivers West and Southeast in educational development initiatives for Sustainable Community Development in Rivers State

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups	9.867	2	4.933	26.054	0.000
Within Groups	46.202	244	.189		
Total	56.069	246			

Where: ss = sum of squares; df= degree of freedom, ms = mean squares, and F=F calculated

Source: Researcher's Computation with SPSS 25.0.

Table 4.4 provides the ANOVA outcome assessing the hypothesis regarding any significant differences in the roles of youth organizations in educational development initiatives across the three senatorial districts in Rivers State. The analysis reveals an F-value of 26.054, with an associated p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. As a result of this finding, the null hypothesis is rejected, signifying that significant differences exist in how youth organizations participate in educational development across Rivers East, Rivers West, and Rivers South East. This result implies that youth organizations do not have an equal impact on educational development initiatives throughout the state, with disparities likely affected by differences in organizational capacity, community backing, and the availability of resources in the various regions.

4.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Pattern of Youth Roles in Health Development Initiatives and How Current Results Align with Other Studies in Rivers State

The findings indicate that youth groups in Rivers State engage more in awareness activities and minor assistance (such as health initiatives, scholarships, and essential educational supplies) compared to large-scale investments in infrastructure (like buildings and equipment). Additionally, there are notable variations across different regions regarding their roles in health and education (ANOVA $p < 0.001$). The discovery that youth organizations concentrate on prevention campaigns (such as those for HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, mosquito nets, and nutrition) instead of establishing or equipping facilities aligns with more extensive research showing that youth programs are primarily focused on awareness, peer education, and community involvement rather than on infrastructure for service delivery (Nwaozuru et al., 2021; Arije et al., 2023; Brieger et al.,

2001; Robinson-Mbato, 2024; Hansell et al., 2020). Projects engaging Nigerian youth typically highlight collaboratively developed HIV prevention strategies, peer assistance, and community outreach rather than the construction of health facilities (Nwaozuru et al., 2021; Arije et al., 2023; Kuhns et al., 2021; Idigbe et al., 2022). Peer-led initiatives focused on reproductive health in West Africa have proven effective in enhancing knowledge and facilitating behavior change, again without significant infrastructural input (Brieger et al., 2001)

4.2 Pattern of Youth Roles in Educational Development Initiatives and How Current Results Align with Other Studies in Rivers State

The focus on scholarships and the provision of minor educational materials instead of building schools or purchasing buses aligns with programs aimed at empowering youth and enhancing education, focusing on scholarships, skill development, and fundamental support for learning rather than extensive infrastructure (Charles et al., 2024; Muhammad & Kanon-Haki, 2025; Jegede et al., 2019; Tugwell, 2020; Okafor & Owolade, 2023; Sani et al., 2025). Community-based and youth-led approaches in Nigeria and northern Nigeria frequently boost access through informal education, resources, and local support systems rather than through large capital investments (Jillani, 2022; Tugwell, 2020; Sani et al., 2025). Significant differences noted in ANOVA across senatorial districts correspond to broader trends indicating that the influence of youth is affected by local socio-economic factors, program structure, and community backing (Charles et al., 2024; Chinapaw et al., 2024; Jegede et al., 2019; Okafor & Owolade, 2023). Research on youth-friendly health services and HIV initiatives in Nigeria also reveals variations among locations that relate to available resources, urban-rural disparities, and the capacity of organizations (Nwaozuru et al., 2021; Arije et al., 2023; Kuhns et al., 2021; Idigbe et al., 2022;

Hansell et al., 2020)

4.0 CONCLUSION

This research focused on the contributions of youth groups in fostering health and educational development projects aimed at achieving sustainable community progress in Rivers State. The analysis indicated that youth organizations primarily engage in activities centered around awareness and material assistance, which include health initiatives addressing drug abuse, promoting HIV/AIDS knowledge, advising family nutrition, and encouraging the use of mosquito nets. They also provide educational aid through scholarships and the donation of educational resources. Nonetheless, their participation in building infrastructures such as health facilities, schools, and essential amenities were found to be quite limited. The inferential outcomes further highlighted considerable variations in the involvement of youth organizations in health and educational development efforts across Rivers East, Rivers West, and Rivers Southeast. This suggests that the impact of youth organizations on community development is inconsistent throughout the state and shaped by specific contextual and regional dynamics. Youth organizations have a significant yet uneven impact on enhancing community development in Rivers State, focusing more on advocacy and resource provision instead of infrastructure advancement.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is essential for the government and relevant stakeholders to bolster youth organizations through specialized funding, capacity enhancement initiatives, and institutional backing to improve their capabilities in extending beyond awareness initiatives to drive more significant infrastructure and service-oriented growth in the

health and educational domains.

2. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for balanced support and coordination among all senatorial districts in Rivers State to minimize regional inequalities in the activities of youth organizations and to ensure that their contributions to community development are more equitable, structured, and sustainable.

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