

# Youth and Women Empowerment in Nigeria: Catalyst for Poverty Eradication

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## Abstract

*The socioeconomic status of rural and urban areas in every country could be enhanced through the empowerment of youth and women folk whose activities spread across almost all sectors of the economy. The scrutiny in this study is basically on innovation, skills acquired through empowerment and the resulting entrepreneurial activities in stimulating growth in Nigeria. Data covering 2002-2021 sourced from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics and issued by the Central Bank of Nigeria statistical Bulletin were used. The Autoregressive Distributed Lag model was employed to analyze data since the findings revealed that youth and women's entrepreneurial activities contributed insignificantly to economic growth in the period considered. The R-Squared ( 0.629882) in the ARDL estimate indicates that all the variables used contributed 62.98 per cent to growth in the period considered, while all factors or variables not captured in the model are responsible for the remaining 38 per cent growth in the economy. The F-Statistics value, 1.259266 in the ARDL Bound test, is less than the 2.86 under the I(0) bound at a 5% significance level, which shows no long-run relationship between the GDP and all the explanatory variables. It also showed that youth and women empowerment positively affects unemployment reduction in Nigeria, but the statistical value is insignificant. This study recommended, among others, that Steps to reduce or stop the persistent increase in the general price should be taken by this present government and that a single exchange rate system should be adopted. At the same time, a climate for industries to thrive should be provided to increase production and stem the depreciation of the naira.*

**Keywords:** Skill Acquisition, Innovation, Youth Empowerment, Women Empowerment, Job Creation and Economic Growth.

## Introduction

Empowering women is to equip them with skills to generate income activities to create healthy living and reduce poverty. Women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for achieving all development agenda and growth in every world economy. It is about rights and equity. Women do experience barriers in almost every aspect of life, most especially in the area of innovation. Investing in youth and young women's economic empowerment and skills development is one of the most urgent and effective means to drive progress on gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive growth. In Nigeria, women play a vital role in building, catering for families and communities, and sometimes participating in politics. However, all these are subjected to gender-related discrimination, especially in less developed countries. Some of these discriminations, occasioned by culture, are in the areas of distribution of social wealth, such as education and health (Ibru, 2009; Ilo, 2009); yet, women

contribute to the rural and economic development of their communities through involvement in credit schemes (Salia and Mburambo, 20) and get creations through micro-enterprises.

Women play a pertinent role in national development globally, even though entrepreneurship has genuinely been considered male-dominated. Nevertheless, many students in the literature stress the significance of women's contribution to national development.(Luisa & Michela, 2014). Women, the vital gender of the overall population, have great capacity and potential to be an essential key to the overall economic development of a nation. Hence, policies and programmes need to be tailored to promote female and youth empowerment and put into practice strategies which can prop up entrepreneurial culture among youth and women in the urban areas of Nigeria. Despite the positive outcomes of young women's economic empowerment, they continue to experience unequal access to education and skills development; hence, they face barriers to securing decent employment and opportunities to thrive as entrepreneurs. Women's access to resources, including land and loans, may be restricted by discriminatory laws, and they will have to continue shouldering an unequal share of unpaid work due to the persistence of traditional gender roles to increase access to decent employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

The European Union (2010) reported that gender equality, women's empowerment, the full realization of women's human rights and their full and equal participation and leadership in the economy are vital to achieving inclusive, equitable and sustained economic growth. However, many youths and women in different parts of Nigeria do not have credit for their petty business and are denied from having the full employment that government provides. Women are the key managers of national resources and powerful agents of change. However, gender bias is still deeply embedded in cultural, economic, political and social institutions worldwide. Women and young girls face unacceptable levels of discrimination and abuse, which is wrong and prevents them from playing a part in society and decision-making. This makes poor living standards persist.

Furthermore, women lag behind men in many social indicators like education, politics and economic opportunities. Hence they need special attention due to their vulnerability and lack of access to economic resources (Singh 2013). The deprivation and poor access to national wealth and opportunities that youth and women experience initiated this study. Hence it intends to examine the role of youth and women empowerment in stimulating the growth of Nigeria. This study also looks into challenges and factors bedevilling women and youth empowerment in Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

Kabeer (1991) viewed empowerment as expanding people's ability to make strategic and life choices where they had been previously denied. The concept of empowerment is personal; an individual has a unique definition of what it means to be empowered based on his or her life experience, personality and aspirations. Youth empowerment is a process where young adults gain the ability and authority to make decisions and implement change in their own lives to aid other people's lives. It is a means of encouraging young graduates to make a significant impact in their society; Ojenike, Shodiya and Jolaosho (2016) reiterated that youth empowerment is an initiative to re-engineer their potential and energy for peace and stability, to reduce poverty and curb unemployment and community. Youth empowerment is often addressed as a gateway to intergenerational equity, civic engagement and democracy building. Empowerment activities may focus on youth rights, youth council, youth-led activism, and youth involvement in community decision-making to generate opportunities to learn, practice and increase skills (Khan, 2014). It also suggests that engaging youth in pro-social activities helps them to be responsible and have the confidence necessary to become productive and healthy adults. This is an approach to stop all sorts of marginalization and negligence against the youth, giving them equal opportunity and access to education, financial control, political participation, leadership, etc., regardless of gender or educational level.

Youth empowerment examines six inter-dependent dimensions; psychological, community organizational, economic, social and cultural. Psychological empowerment enhances an individual's consciousness, belief in self-efficacy, awareness of problems and how individuals can address problems that harm their quality of life (Malhotra, Schelte & Detesch 2016). This dimension aims to create self-confidence and give youth the skills to acquire knowledge. Community empowerment focuses on enhancing the community through leadership, development, improving communication and creating a support network to mobilize the community to address concerns. Organizational empowerment aims to protect, promote and advocate for the less privileged. Economic empowerment teaches entrepreneurial skills, how to take ownership of assets and how to have income security. Social empowerment teaches youth about social inclusion and literacy, as well as helping them find the resources to be proactive in their communities. Cultural empowerment aims to create cultural practices and redefine cultural rules and norms for youth. Youth empowerment is pertinent in Nigeria for poverty eradication, improved standard of education, both formal

and informal, good governance, crime reduction, national security and employment creation. It plays a vital and significant role in poverty alleviation and eradication from society. An empowered youth focuses more on developing his skills to make it a better earning service in his early life stage. When youths are equipped with skills and financial resources through empowerment, they can feed themselves, facilitate other people in skill building, help them become financially independent, invest money in business, and bring innovation to earn more. This implies that when these young adults are not morally supported, they often take wrong steps, harming them and creating unfavourable circumstances for the country. This is one of the reasons why youth empowerment should be given more priority so that they will not indulge in idleness or engage in criminal acts (Malhotra, Schelte&Detesch 2016). Stepping towards the path of crime will harm them and make them a nuisance and threat to society. Youth tends to commit a crime when their financial needs are not fulfilled, and their hard work is not encouraged.

Youth in Nigeria may be described as being energetic, full of life, vigour, stamina, and vitality and enduring with drive and fearlessness. These potential and resourcefulness could be used negatively and disrupt social and economic structures if not directed towards productive ventures. Economic empowerment enables the youth to decide how to fix their life-long experience and self-development. The youth form the fulcrum politico-economy of a nation. Renu and Renu (2017) reiterate that woman empowerment is the process by which unequal power relations between men and women become distorted, and women increase better parity with men. It is the procedure to challenge social limitations and social customs for women, which are barriers in the way of their progress so that their level of self-confidence can increase in order to contribute to the development of the country's social, political and economic life in the local, regional and national level (Yakubu 2019) Women empowerment means a more unbiased social position for women in the society. Yong (2016) observed that women in developed countries increasingly contribute to their country's development while enduring to provide for their family members. United Nations International Development Origination (UNIDO) provides opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills in developing countries so they can be involved in industrial activities that will make them independent in society. In Nigeria, women can perform better if provided with the knowledge and the necessary skills.

Pallari and Paril (2017) pointed out four procedures for empowering women: awareness, capacity building and skill development, greater participation and control over

decision-making, and transformative action. The Development Research and Project Centre (DRPC) stated that women's economic empowerment programme is the transformative process by which women and girls go from having limited power, voice and choices at home and in the community to having the skills, resources and opportunities needed to access and complete equitably in markets. It identified four essential elements; human capital (education, skill and training), financial capital (loans, grants, and savings), social capital (mentoring, networking) and physical capital (land, machinery), which are parameters that the DRPC considers necessary preconditions for sustainable economic growth. Women bear the brunt of climate change and are the world's best in fighting for a clean, healthy, sustainable planet. Given their traditional roles in agricultural production, cooking and other household work, women are well-suited to solve household problems. Hammawa and Hashim (2016) submitted that as of their study, women constitute 60 per cent of the agricultural labour force, 80 per cent of food production, and 50 per cent of annual husbandry and other related activities in Nigeria. Despite this population, they need better access to information on climate change, especially regarding farming practices, seasonality, soil health and weather patterns. In addition, women farmers are often confined to primitive farm implements, which prolong working hours with reduced productivity. This makes them more vulnerable to detrimental climate change.

In many African and European Countries, the participation of youth and women has paid off in the form of many newly established enterprises for jobs, increased living standards and wealth creation (Gem 2012). Participation in the Rotational Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA) uncovers the workforce and materials to satisfy their organizational performance. In Nigeria, women participate in micro-enterprises/businesses such as baking, tailoring, hairdressing, and rearing animals and hen poultry to overcome domestic problems and abject poverty (Ekpe, 2011). Rural young women are becoming managers who initiate and develop new ideas and innovations to create wealth. However, young women in urban cities also pass through the transition period; they experience credit access that upholds and extends their opportunities to the socio-economic growth of society. It is equally important to stress women's entrepreneurship due to its governance role in promoting the development of a nation. Women's entrepreneurial activities are essential for rural economic transformation and poverty alienation mechanisms in less developed economies and, at the same time, create diverse opportunities for young and prospective entrepreneurs in developing countries. The training and education that youth and women acquire have made them discover new business

opportunities and ideas to become self-reliant. However, most women in Nigeria are predominantly confined to the informal sector such as agriculture, bakery, table water industry, and retailing (Lawal, Omorana, Ajani and Oni, 2009). Therefore, supporting youth and women with soft loans could be a means of economic development at the grassroots (Salia&Mbwambo 2014). Momoh (2009) explained that community entrepreneurship and women-led activities help develop society at large through equal distribution of resources to improve health, happiness and home index (H). This will make possible the success of the country's national development and world growth.

### **Youth and Women Empowerment in Nigeria**

There are various types of empowerment programmes across the globe. There are programmes to empower women and young girls to improve their well-being, self-esteem, and self-efficacy and enhance social status by teaching technical and organizational skills. Some youth and women empowerment programmes focus on poverty alienation to empower poor youth and women. There are also empowerment movements that use the social action model for disadvantaged people to become empowered, organized and educated so that they may create change. Another model is the 66's, which emphasizes competence, confidence, connection, character and societal contribution. The youth-adult partnership is another type of empowerment method used in many countries. It focuses on reciprocity among adults and reflective learning. To empower youth and women in Nigeria, the federal and state government initiated and established several empowerment programmes at all levels. Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) was established in 2003 to expedite the promotion and growth of the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector efficiently and sustainably (Yakubu 2019). The main objective was to reduce poverty among youth and women to the barest minimum. Industrial development centres (DCS) were established in Nigeria to empower women and youth across the nation. This programme was established to provide extension services to micro, small and medium enterprises in critical areas, such as project appraisal for a loan application, training of entrepreneurs in the managerial process, product development, production planning and control, and other extension services (Yakubu, 2019).

The federal government of Nigeria established the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1986 to promote the development of micro, small and medium enterprises. NDE launched several programmes to generate self-employment. These

programmes include small-scale industries, youth employment and vocational skills Development, and Special Public Works; NDE operated two credit guarantee schemes complemented by entrepreneurs' development programmes to assist enterprises (Nigeria Industrial Revolution Plan 2014). The National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1980. However, some other measures of tightened monetary policy made it difficult for many of these enterprises to thrive and secure external finance for improving working capital and investment purpose.

To bridge the prevailing resource for these enterprises, the federal government set up the National Economic Reconciliation Fund (NERFUND), effective from 9th January 1990, with the Central Bank of Nigeria as one of the facilitating institutions. The fund aimed to provide medium to long-term loan finance (5-10 years) to micro, small and medium enterprises at concessionary interest rates to solve the most fundamental problems of the sector. Furthermore, to empower youth and women in Nigeria, business and engineering school training centres were established across the 36 states of the country; these centres were initiated to train women and youth in different skills and capacity building. These centres produce graduates in different fields and specializations, which include fashion designing, welding, bricklaying, computer engineering, soap making, bid making etc.

The immediate past administration implemented twenty-five (25) initiatives/programmes 2015 to empower youth. These programmes include N-Power, NTech, N-Agron, Youth Fintech, NYSC Monthly Allowance increase (N16000 to N30,000), Public work scheme, N75 billion Nigerian Youth Investment Fund (NYIF), Farmer moni, Trader moni and market moni, Dying (Digital Youth Nigeria), Construction and Rehabilitation of National Youth Development Centres, Mobile Device Repair Training Scheme, Establishment of 120 million Fund for Nigerian Tech Innovators and Entrepreneurs (NTIE), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Youth Entrepreneurship Support Programme (YES-P), National Young Farmers Scheme (NYFS), Development of the Nigerian Creature Industries, Fashion and Beauty Sector, Green stimulus plan, capacity Building workshops on energy, efficiency and empowerment programme for wealth and job creation in six Geopolitical zone, Digital Youth Nigerian (DYING) Programme specific focus on positioning youth for remote job opportunities, tapping into the global technology market, Work experience programme (Employability) in six Geopolitical zone, Provision of equipment for youth development centres, digital skills training, robotic laboratories in six geopolitical zones, Provision of 300,000 homes to be built by young architects/engineers,

Provision of 5000,000 solar home systems installation by youth owned business and Buhari young farmers Network. (Nigeria Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development 2020). The overall policy goal of youth and woman empowerment programmes is to provide an appropriate framework that will promote fundamental human rights and protect the health, social and economic well-being of all young men and women in order to enhance their participation in the overall development process and improve their quality of life (Jegede et al. 2019). Apart from the N programme, which many youths across the country benefited from, there is no evidence that many of the initiatives implemented are working.

### **Theoretical and Empirical Framework**

Some theories that serve as the basis for this study are the psychology of adolescent development developed by China and Linney (1998), youth development and empowerment programme theory. Youth is bound to positive institutions through actions, skill development and reinforcement. Positive social bonding can prevent youth engagement in harmful social activities. Three dimensions are paramount for youth development and adolescent participation: community service, positive reinforcement, and recognition from adult thought development prices. Youths are also guided within the context of substance abuse prevention. Youths are made to participate in community service projects for positive social bonding and preparation for involvement in the socio-economic and public affairs of the community. This theory is grounded in social control theory, social learning theory and expectation state theory. Its basis is recognizing that youths are assets and resources that should be called upon to participate in social affairs. However, this process requires solid social support from supportive adults who place high expectations on youth participation and reinforce achievement. The role of the adult leader is to serve as a guide and facilitator, allowing the youth leader to take on leadership responsibility for ensuring activities. As projects are completed, participants evaluate their efforts and future directions, recognize everyone's contributions and celebrate their success. Desired youth outcomes include the development of positive relationships with both peers and adults, participating in public activities and demonstrating success in selling community problems and issues (Kim et al. 1998).

The work of Dasarathi (2017) showed that youth and women empowerment is a new expression in the language of gender literature. The expression is general and specific; it denotes empowering women to be self-dependent by providing them access to liberty and opportunities they were previously deprived of. The study carried out by Shabana (2018)



revealed that entrepreneurship has been a male-dominated phenomenon. However, in all the world's developed nations, women compete with men in the field of all business sectors. Nayoux (2009) observed that women's empowerment rests on certain factors linked to domestic management and social elevate. Mainly, women utilize their income for the physical health of the family, food, domestic need and education of children.

Bharani, Vinay Singh, and Sriniral (2018) noted that the social enterprises working for women's empowerment must concentrate on value creation. The work considered the framework's components recommended by London, Anupindi and Shelth (2010) regarding value creation done through commence, obtaining ability and quality of manufacture inputs, investment, working capital, insurance and technology, equipment, business knowledge and storage. However, Barik (2015) noted that there was no chance for rural women to accomplish their events or to make money by themselves.

## **Methodology**

The research design used for this study is the ex-post facto research design. Secondary data were resourced from the central bank of Nigeria statistics and World Development Indicators. Relevant literature was sourced from the International Labour Organisation, the Ministry of Youth and Sport and other government and non-governmental organizations. The variables, unemployment rate, per capita income proxy with profit of the small and medium enterprises, exchange rate, inflation, and money supply. This study intends to examine the role and gains of youth and women empowerment in Nigeria and their impact on the country's growth. The justification for including inflation, interest rate and exchange rate as control variables is the issue of escalation in the general price level caused by volatility in the exchange rate, which always has an adverse effect on the profit of the SMEs; Autoregressive distributed lag mode was to analyze data after the unit root test confirmed that variables are integrated in order of 1(0) and first difference.

## **Model Specification**

$$\text{GDP} = \text{Unemp} + \text{exch} + \text{inf} + \text{int} \quad (1)$$

where

GDP is the Gross Domestic Product used to proxy economic growth,

exch is exchange rate

inf is the rate of inflation

Unemp is unemployment rate

Int is the interest rate

$$GDP = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Unemp + \alpha_2 exch + \alpha_3 inf + \alpha_4 int(2)$$

$$GDP = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Unemp + \alpha_2 exch + \alpha_3 inf + \alpha_4 int + \dots + e \quad (3)$$

Where e is the error term

## Results

### Unit Root Test

#### GDP

Null Hypothesis: GDP has a unit root

Exogenous: Constant

Lag Length: 0 (Automatic - based on AIC, maxlag=4)

	t-Statistic	Prob.*
Augmented Dickey-Fuller test statistic	-4.558629	0.0009
Test critical values:		
1% level	-3.639407	
5% level	-2.951125	
10% level	-2.614300	

Date: 04/21/23 Time: 11:07

#### Inflation Rate

Null Hypothesis: INF has a unit root

Exogenous: Constant

Lag Length: 1 (Automatic - based on AIC, maxlag=4)

	t-Statistic	Prob.*
Augmented Dickey-Fuller test statistic	-3.072132	0.0386
Test critical values:		
1% level	-3.646342	
5% level	-2.954021	
10% level	-2.615817	

Date: 04/21/23 Time: 11:12

#### InterestRate

Null Hypothesis: INT has a unit root

Exogenous: Constant

Lag Length: 0 (Automatic - based on AIC, maxlag=4)

	t-Statistic	Prob.*
Augmented Dickey-Fuller test statistic	-5.824611	0.0000
Test critical values:		
1% level	-3.639407	
5% level	-2.951125	

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10% level -2.614300

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### Exchange Rate

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Null Hypothesis: LEXCH has a unit root  
Exogenous: Constant  
Lag Length: 2 (Automatic - based on AIC, maxlag=4)

	t-Statistic	Prob.*
Augmented Dickey-Fuller test statistic	-3.064360	0.0411
Test critical values: 1% level	-3.689194	
5% level	-2.971853	
10% level	-2.625121	

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### Unemployment Rate

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Null Hypothesis: D(UNMP) has a unit root  
Exogenous: Constant  
Lag Length: 0 (Automatic - based on AIC, maxlag=4)

	t-Statistic	Prob.*
Augmented Dickey-Fuller test statistic	-4.289226	0.0019
Test critical values: 1% level	-3.646342	
5% level	-2.954021	
10% level	-2.615817	

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Date: 04/21/23 Time: 11:31

### Descriptive Statistics

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	INT	UNMP	INF	GDP	EXCH
Mean	76.00353	9.306471	19.49147	5.469412	140.3844
Median	17.87500	5.880000	12.71000	4.350000	123.4000
Maximum	1984.000	32.50000	72.73000	33.70000	423.7100
Minimum	11.00000	3.280000	1.250000	0.830000	4.540000
Std. Dev.	337.1645	7.155664	17.05374	5.495795	115.2747
Skewness	5.568901	1.383267	1.743075	4.137505	1.167720
Kurtosis	32.01890	4.596710	5.038757	21.81813	3.645115
Jarque-Bera	1368.708	14.45453	23.10551	598.6802	8.316477
Probability	0.000000	0.000727	0.000010	0.000000	0.015635
Sum	2584.120	316.4200	662.7100	185.9600	4773.070
Sum Sq. Dev.	3751437.	1689.716	9597.390	996.7240	438512.4
Observations	34	34	34	34	34

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### Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model

Dependent Variable: GDP  
 Method: ARDL  
 Date: 04/21/23 Time: 11:39  
 Sample (adjusted): 1992 2022  
 Included observations: 29 after adjustments  
 Maximum dependent lags: 4 (Automatic selection)  
 Model selection method: Akaike info criterion (AIC)  
 Dynamic regressors (4 lags, automatic): INF INT LEXCH UNMP  
 Fixed regressors: C  
 Number of models evaluated: 2500  
 Selected Model: ARDL(4, 4, 4, 1, 4)

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.*
GDP(-1)	0.115676	0.363019	0.318650	0.7593
GDP(-2)	0.095592	0.287042	0.333024	0.7489
GDP(-3)	0.014177	0.287662	0.049283	0.9621
GDP(-4)	0.072316	0.297506	0.243076	0.8149
INF	-0.147715	0.488982	-0.302087	0.7714
INF(-1)	0.327522	0.390249	0.839264	0.4290
INF(-2)	-0.345844	0.635552	-0.544164	0.6032
INF(-3)	0.369848	0.381413	0.969678	0.3645
INF(-4)	0.051343	0.407936	0.125861	0.9034
INT	-0.009136	0.014548	-0.628001	0.5499
INT(-1)	-0.003576	0.023483	-0.152290	0.8833
INT(-2)	-0.011174	0.014386	-0.776731	0.4628
INT(-3)	-0.005124	0.014341	-0.357300	0.7314
INT(-4)	-0.001337	0.007312	-0.182877	0.8601
LEXCH	4.510914	6.205610	0.726909	0.4909
LEXCH(-1)	-1.955287	8.208503	-0.238203	0.8185
UNMP	-0.346356	0.614066	-0.564037	0.5903
UNMP(-1)	0.714760	0.857787	0.833260	0.4322
UNMP(-2)	-0.451339	0.854240	-0.528351	0.6136
UNMP(-3)	-0.866636	0.611290	-1.417717	0.1992
UNMP(-4)	1.156307	0.462830	2.498339	0.0411
C	-12.82948	39.30865	-0.326378	0.7537
R-squared	0.629828	Mean dependent var	5.370000	
Adjusted R-squared	-0.480687	S.D. dependent var	5.821379	
S.E. of regression	7.083658	Akaike info criterion	6.849314	
Sum squared resid	351.2475	Schwarz criterion	7.886573	
Log likelihood	-77.31505	Hannan-Quinn criter.	7.174170	
F-statistic	0.567149	Durbin-Watson stat	3.092402	
Prob(F-statistic)	0.851625			

### Bound Test

ARDL Bounds Test  
 Date: 04/21/23 Time: 12:41  
 Sample: 1992 2022  
 Included observations: 29  
 Null Hypothesis: No long-run relationships exist

Test Statistic	Value	k
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F-statistic            1.259266            4

Critical Value Bounds

Significance	I0 Bound	I1 Bound
10%	2.45	3.52
5%	2.86	4.01
2.5%	3.25	4.49
1%	3.74	5.06

Test Equation:

Dependent Variable: D(GDP)

Method: Least Squares

Date: 04/21/23 Time: 12:41

Sample: 1992 2022

Included observations: 29

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
D(GDP(-1))	-0.003127	0.458382	-0.006821	0.9947
D(GDP(-2))	0.063748	0.355693	0.179223	0.8613
D(GDP(-3))	0.056325	0.241984	0.232761	0.8206
D(INF)	-0.091925	0.243096	-0.378145	0.7132
D(INT)	-0.001956	0.006987	-0.279883	0.7853
D(INT(-1))	0.009209	0.009715	0.947967	0.3655
D(INT(-2))	0.005325	0.007236	0.735892	0.4787
D(INT(-3))	0.002193	0.004326	0.507003	0.6231
D(LEXCH)	4.846756	5.111994	0.948115	0.3654
D(UNMP)	-0.000786	0.277541	-0.002834	0.9978
D(UNMP(-1))	0.102724	0.397149	0.258654	0.8011
D(UNMP(-2))	-0.292557	0.346625	-0.844016	0.4184
D(UNMP(-3))	-0.916268	0.373097	-2.455841	0.0339
C	17.66590	23.17492	0.762285	0.4635
INF	-0.143576	0.188667	-0.761003	0.4642
INT(-1)	-0.015308	0.016147	-0.948028	0.3655
LEXCH(-1)	-1.909570	3.580103	-0.533384	0.6054
UNMP(-1)	0.041711	0.380438	0.109639	0.9149
GDP(-1)	-1.027641	0.563302	-1.824316	0.0981
R-squared	0.730482	Mean dependent var		0.081724
Adjusted R-squared	0.245349	S.D. dependent var		7.450504
S.E. of regression	6.472301	Akaike info criterion		6.818575
Sum squared resid	418.9068	Schwarz criterion		7.714389
Log likelihood	-79.86933	Hannan-Quinn criter.		7.099132
F-statistic	1.505736	Durbin-Watson stat		3.047427
Prob(F-statistic)	0.257548			

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### Discussion of Findings

The unit root test conducted showed that GDP, inflation, interest rate and exchange rate are stationary at level i.e. I(0) with probability values of 0.0386, 0.000 and 0.0411 respectively while unemployment is integrated at first difference i.e. I(1) with probability value of 0.0019.

These outcomes necessitated the type of statistical tool used for this study; Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model. The descriptive statistics result revealed normal distribution of three variables; unemployment, inflation and exchange rate, their kurtosis value is close to 3. Interest rate and GDP are not normally distributed as their kurtosis value is far greater than 3.

In the ARDL estimate, inflation has a negative effect on GDP at lag 2 but has a positive impact on GDP at lag 4. Interest and exchange rates are negatively related to GDP. At lag 4, unemployment has a positive relationship with GDP. The R-Squared ( 0.629882) in the ARDL estimate indicates that all the variables used contributed 62.98 percent to growth in the period considered while all factors or variables not captured in the model are responsible for the remaining 38 per cent growth in the economy. The F-Statistics value; 1.259266 in the ARDL Bound test is less than the 2.86 under the I(0) bound at 5% level of significance. This shows that there is no long run relationship between the GDP and all the explanatory variables.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper reviewed the imperatives of youth and women empowerment for poverty eradication in Nigeria. In the econometric analysis, inflation has a negative impact on growth; this calls for a check on the general price level. This present government should take steps to reduce or stop the persistent increase in the general price. All the variables used have a short relationship with economic growth; policies to reduce interest rates and unemployment of graduates should be adopted and implemented. The industrial production base should be strengthened. There is a need for the government at the national and sub-national levels to develop a framework that will ensure that gender-sensitive indicators are used during government climate change adaptation and mitigation planning. This will integrate gender perspectives into the government's climate change action plan. It is also necessary for the government to provide affordable mode technology for women farmers to adapt to and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

Based on the findings, the government should provide palliatives to cushion the effect of inflation at the state and federal levels. Interest rates should be reduced to a single digit to make borrowing attractive to intending and prospective young and women entrepreneurs. A single exchange rate system should be adopted while a climate for industries to thrive should be provided to increase production and stem the depreciation of the naira. Skill centres where

youth can be stationed to acquire the necessary skills and trained with basic skills should be established to reduce unemployment.

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