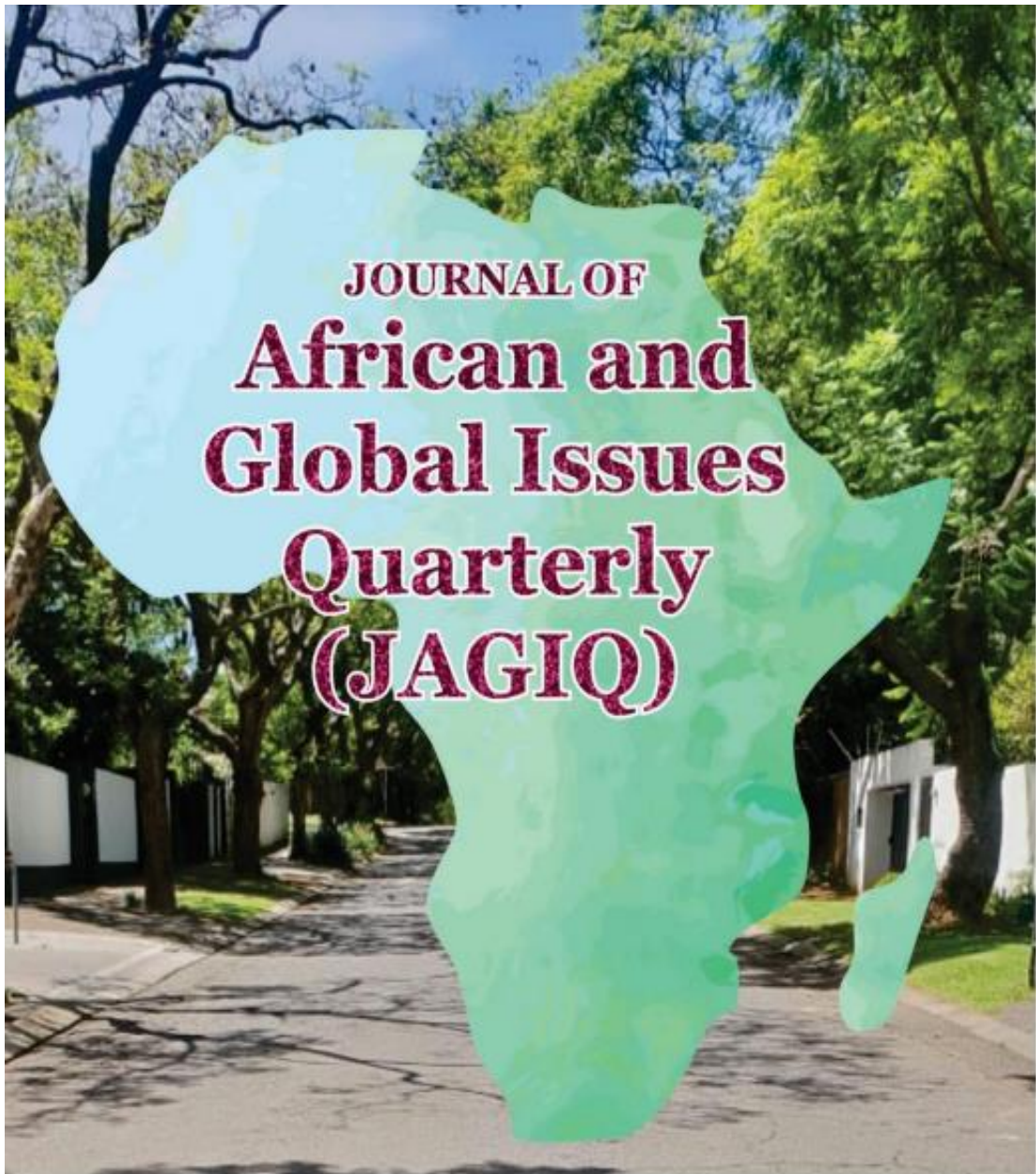




ISSN: 2709-8478 (PRINT)
2710-0073 (ONLINE)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69778/2710-0073/2026/7.1/EN>

EDITORIAL NOTE

This volume represents concerted calls within and outside Africa on the need for multidisciplinary collaboration and research output. Specifically, papers were drawn from all disciplines and research focuses, which has further increased the quality of research and collegial engagement. Hence, topics covered in this volume cut across the areas of economics, politics, security, ICT, indigenous knowledge, development studies, finance, trade, youth engagement, agriculture, democratization, and nation-building, among others.

For instance, Thizwilondi Josephine Mudau in *African Youths and the Promotion of Sustainable Development through the Lens of Indigenous Knowledge (IKS) in the 21st Century* employed qualitative desktop research methodology in synthesizing existing literature to argue that IKS represents a dynamic body of wisdom encompassing sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, and community resilience and offers proven, contextually grounded solutions to modern challenges like climate change and food insecurity. The analysis highlights youth-led initiatives across the continent that are revitalizing indigenous crops, integrating traditional ecological knowledge with climate adaptation strategies, and using digital platforms for cultural preservation. Mudau concluded that for Africa to achieve authentic and sustainable development, a concerted effort is needed to empower youth through inclusive education, supportive policy frameworks, and intergenerational dialogue, thereby transforming indigenous knowledge from a cultural heritage into a living toolkit for a resilient future.

Masila Joshua Masipa in *Beneficiaries of Corruption? An analysis of the function of South African banks in handling and making money from crime proceeds* adopted institutional theory and the political economy of corruption and a qualitative research design that combines semi-structured interviews with compliance officers, financial regulators, and civil society actors with document analysis of Zondo Commission and Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) reports, legal statutes, and policy papers in examining how, in spite of strict anti-money-laundering (AML) and anti-corruption laws, South African banks may profit from, handle, or ineffectively stop the flow of monies associated with corruption. Specifically, with an emphasis on whether banks directly or indirectly benefit from the proceeds of crime, Masipa investigated the relationship between financial institutions and illegal financial flows within the following objectives: (1) assess the regulatory framework that oversees AML compliance; (2) examine high-profile cases of corruption in which banks are implicated; (3) evaluate due diligence and institutional accountability; and (4) suggest changes to improve ethical banking governance.

Then Sipho Patrick Bhengu-Mancosa & Andrisha Beharry-Ramraj in *Advancing Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise Growth through Digitalized Enterprise and Supplier Development in South Africa* examined the current state of Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) in South Africa, investigated the role of digitalization in enhancing ESD, identified the challenges and opportunities in digitalizing ESD, and provided recommendations for policymakers, corporates, and Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). A qualitative secondary data approach was employed, drawing on thematic analysis of existing literature, reports, and industry initiatives. For key findings, Bhengu-Mancosa & Beharry-Ramraj indicated that ESD adoption remains limited; digitalization (Mancosa) significantly enhances market access and supplier diversity; infrastructure and skills gaps persist; and strategic digital integration can unlock growth opportunities for SMMEs.

Lere Amusan & Ebenezer O. Oni, in their study, ***Disinvestment of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in Developing Areas: An Assessment of Shoprite Disengagement in Nigeria, started by reflecting on why***, at the global level, many MNCs have started to disengage from their host states. In a bid to respond to the possible reasons, Amusan & Oni pushed further into examining possible reasons that could explain why Shoprite, a large South African retailing company, disinvested from Nigeria after operating in the country for about 15 years, using secondary sources supported by primary data and personal observations. For them, the reasons range from political, economic, marketing, and legal to civil society attitudes towards their business. Employing the twin theories of neoliberalism and oligopoly that facilitate globalization, Amusan & Oni concluded that, aside from losing litigation to its erstwhile Nigerian business partners, competition from domestic and foreign retail companies contributed in no small measure to why Shoprite exited the Nigerian market.

In A sober teacher is a problem”: Unpacking Political Ideology and Emancipatory Struggles Within teacher unionism, Zwane Thembinkosi Trevor & Matsepe David adopted the grounded postcolonial theory in examining how teacher unions embody and deploy political stances and ideologies to promote the emancipation and freedom of education, as well as the broader communities they aim to serve. Clearly, Trevor and Matsepe employed a qualitative interpretivist approach to analyze data from narrative interviews with unionized educators, along with further examination of public union discussions. Key findings of their research indicated four interrelated themes: (1) political consciousness as both a threat to order and a driver of democratic emancipation; (2) teacher unions functioning as a counter-hegemonic force challenging neoliberal geopolitics and political norms; (3) the ideological repositioning of teacher unions as intellectual activists rather than compliant officials; and (4) tensions between political agency and professional identity.

Douglas Nyath in ***Rural Youth and the Future of Farming in Sub-Saharan Africa: Revisiting the Abandonment Debate*** explored whether rural youth are truly abandoning agriculture or are instead redefining their involvement through diversified livelihood strategies. It examines the socio-economic, institutional, and cultural factors influencing youth decisions and analyzes how emerging hybrid forms of engagement—such as agriprenueurship and part-time farming—are reshaping rural economies. A systematic desktop synthesis of peer-reviewed literature (2000–2025) was conducted using databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. Nyaath observed that youth disengagement from agriculture is not uniform but context-specific, and the key determinants to such disengagement include land scarcity, education, labor market structures, gender norms, and limited access to finance and technology.

Then, in ***Equal Ideals, Unequal Realities: Gender Dynamics in the Workplace of an International Religious Non-governmental Organisation in Eswatini***, Thembumenzi Jomo Ntshalintshali & Innocent Simphiwe Nojiyeza examined attitudes, experiences, and organizational practices regarding gender roles, power dynamics, and inclusivity by drawing on in-depth interviews and focus groups with 20 employees from a range of departments and hierarchical levels. The results of their findings show that male participants, who were primarily ideologically devoted to gender equality, showed conflicted feelings about shifting power dynamics. Unconscious bias, policy implementation gaps, and organizational culture were equally identified as the primary obstacles to change. The results emphasize that in order to guarantee changes in gender equality, context-specific solutions are required that go beyond the adoption of policies.

In Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Environmental Conservation *Ngugi's Petals of Blood*, Thabo Prince Zondo started by reflecting on members of the impoverished and socio-economically disadvantaged community who are distressed by incessant drought and who consult a seer and offer sacrifices to seek solutions. Using this as a point of departure, Zondo explored how text gestures and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) address the real dilemmas faced by Africans following the extensive and cross-generational crises that accompany coloniality. In this, Zondo provided an ecocritical reading of the text, drawing on relevant postcolonial/decolonial ideas to illustrate the ways in which indigenous African epistemologies can indeed boost efforts at environmental conservation and poverty alleviation in rural communities today.

Also, **Rendani Tshifhumul in Exploring the Role of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Healing Practices and Resilience During the COVID-19 pandemic in Thohoyandou**, presented a narrative inquiry into the experiences of individuals who survived COVID-19 without requiring hospitalization, based on in-depth interviews with three respondents. For Tshifhumul, among the identified practices were the inhalation of steam treated with stones and salt, as well as the application of various herbal concoctions, including *Tshiumbeumbe*, *Musese*, *Mufula Musudzungwane*, *Miora*, and *Mubomo*, guava leaves, and lemon grass tea, including a mixture that comprises onion, ginger, lemon, honey, and garlic. Therefore, Tshifhumul concludes that these findings not only shed light on the adaptive strategies employed by individuals in response to the pandemic but also underscore the significance of traditional healing practices in the context of contemporary health crises. Khulisile Judith Nkuna & Sikhumbuzo Sibuso Khoza, in their work, ***Capturing Cultural Heritage: Exploring the Poetic Elements of Domesticated Animal Praise***, carried out an analytical analysis of the lyrical components found in the praises of Siswati domestic animals. Nkuna & Khoza observed that expressing gratitude to animals for their contributions to human life remains a significant goal of animal praise. Reflecting on case studies, they noted that the Nguni people view domestic animals as very close environmental companions, particularly for those who live in rural areas. Praise poetry's primary goal is to commemorate great men's accomplishments. However, the reverse is the case for the Swati people, who have a tradition of honoring non-human animals in their poetry, including the wild animals they encounter in their environs as well as the domestic livestock they raise.

Intaher M. Ambe, Ellsworth C. Jonathan, Phathutshedzo D. Lavhelani,* and David H. Selby, in their study, ***Exploring the landscape of demand management practices in the public health sector in the Gauteng Province, South Africa: An Empirical Analysis***, employed secondary sources in determining what demand management practices are employed within Gauteng, South Africa, and public health sector institutions. Findings in their study revealed substantial obstacles in organizational structure, demand management techniques, budget, and alignment between demand planning and strategic goals, as well as supply chain management (SCM) rules, regulations, and specifications. They conclude that the paucity of demand management implementation in public sector organizations reveals a misalignment between strategic goals, demand management, and demand planning, resulting in a loss of value for public sector organizations.

Aderinsola E. Kayode, Shalini Sing, & Patricia P. Badenhorst's research, ICT for Indigenous Knowledge Dissemination and Education in Africa: A Systematic Review, conducted a systematic review of literature published between 2015 and 2025 to examine how ICT tools and platforms have been deployed to support indigenous knowledge

dissemination and education in African contexts. The findings of their research indicated that ICT can enhance indigenous knowledge preservation, improve youth engagement, facilitate intergenerational learning, and broaden global visibility of African knowledge systems when implemented with community participation. However, challenges remain regarding digital access, cultural sensitivity, intellectual property rights, and the sustainability of technology-driven initiatives.

In ***Donald Trump-Twitter Diplomatic Disruptions And Impact On The Post-World War II International Order.***, Ndivhoniswani Aaron Tshidzumba & Puseletso Nthate examine how President Donald Trump's unprecedented use of Twitter as a direct channel for foreign policy communication disrupted established diplomatic norms inherited from the post-World War II international order. Through content analysis of Trump's social media communications, examination of foreign policy outcomes, and comparative analysis with traditional diplomatic practices, Tshidzumba & Nthate demonstrated that Trump's social media presidency constituted a significant departure from institutional diplomacy and contributed to broader challenges facing the established international order. Further findings reveal that digital direct engagement by heads of state bypasses institutional constraints, undermines multilateral consensus-building, and creates new vulnerabilities in international relations.

Furthermore, in ***Determinants And Effect Of Small-Scale Livestock Production On Household Income In Malawi: Evidence From Fifth Integrated Household Survey***, Gladson Andrew Chipala, Christopher Chombo & Hannah Dunga examined the determinants and effects of small-scale livestock production on household income among farmers in Malawi, using cross-sectional data from the Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS5) with a sample of 8,795 households. Their key findings indicate that household size, access to credit, access to extension services, landholding size, distance to the market, and location in the Northern region significantly increase the likelihood of participation in livestock production. Notably, households engaged in livestock production earned, on average, an additional MWK 36,405.76 compared to non-producing households, demonstrating its important role in improving economic welfare.

In ***Navigating Artificial Intelligence Personalization and Consumer Privacy in Digital Marketing across South Africa and Global Contexts***, Suraksha Moothura and Andrishah Beharry-Ramraj critically examined how AI-driven hyper-personalization in digital marketing influences consumer privacy, with a specific focus on its ethical implications and regulatory challenges in South Africa in comparison to global standards using desktop literature review methodology. Moothura & Beharry—Ramraj observed that ethical concerns such as manipulation, algorithmic bias, and reduced consumer autonomy were found to be inadequately addressed in South Africa, where legal instruments like POPIA lack the specificity and enforcement capacity evident in global standards like the GDPR. Taleat, Bisiriyu Abiodun & Lukamba, Muhlya Tshombe's article, ***Energy Sustainability and Sustainable Development Agenda: The Role of Public-Private Partnership in South Africa***, investigated the role and effectiveness of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in South Africa's energy development towards sustainability using a qualitative desk research methodology to analyze secondary data from policy documents, scholarly literature, and government publications. For Abiodun & Tshombe, key findings demonstrate that PPPs have attracted a substantial amount of private investment and benefited the economy through job creation and community development. However, institutional and systemic barriers, e.g., Eskom monopoly, regulatory uncertainty, grid integration constraints, and institutionalized dependency on coal, impede the full implementation of PPPs in accelerating the energy

transformation. Hence, they recommend policy stability, energy regulation reform, enhancing financial methods, and ensuring that social equity consideration is factored into PPP structures.

For Olukayode Idris Lasisi in *The Governance–Development Nexus in Nigeria: A Conceptual Synthesis of Good Governance and Policy Discourse Theories*, a qualitative, conceptual, and desk-based review approach was employed, relying on the literature, policy documents, and theoretical frameworks in reevaluating the governance development interface in Nigeria in terms of the role of institutional weaknesses, the inconsistency of policies, and discursive framing in the determination of sustainable development outcomes. Findings revealed that weak institutions, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, low accountability, and marginalization in policymaking processes bedeviled Nigeria's sustainable development, thereby distorting policy implementation and weakening effective service delivery. Lasisi concludes by calling for the need to strengthen institutions, improve transparency, guarantee policy sustainability, encourage civic participation, and apply digital governance solutions, which is essential to attaining sustainable development.

Eyitayo Francis Adanlawo & Mpho Chaka in *The Effect of Ethnicity And Politics on the Democratization of African Nations* examined the theoretical challenge that ethnicity poses to the African state and the challenges it poses for democratization on the continent. To guide the discourse, critical questions are raised: What kind of connection exists in Africa between politics and ethnicity? Under what conditions may ethnicity either support or undermine democracy? Can citizenship rights be reconciled with ethnicity? . Furthermore, Adanlawo & Chaka explored the evolution of ethnicity from the viewpoints of development communication and provided it with a psycho-social meaning. In their conclusion, Adanlawo & Chaka posited that, if ethnicity has an informative component, we should anticipate that voters' reliance on ethnic cues will decrease when certain forms of higher-quality information become available.

Lindokuhle Senamile Ntuli & Innocent Simphiwe Nojiyeza in *Does Resource Scarcity Constrain Rural Women's Entrepreneurial Performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa?*, examined whether resource scarcity significantly constrains the entrepreneurial performance of rural women in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. Anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV), the study adopts a quantitative research design using survey data collected from 273 rural women entrepreneurs across uMhlabuyalingana, Big5Hlabisa, and eJozini municipalities. Ntuli & Nojiyeza revealed statistically significant relationships between entrepreneurial performance and seven resource-based constraints: leadership skills, financial institutional barriers, entrepreneurial experience, regulatory constraints, access to financial resources, technological limitations, and limited training opportunities. Lastly, in *Transformative Governance Frontiers: Relational Public Administration for Smart City Inclusivity*, Melvin Diedericks examined the conceptualization of informal systems in the context of South African smart city initiatives. By repositioning informal systems as co-creators in urban governance, this study advocates for a paradigm shift from technocratic optimization to relational inclusion. This reframing aligns with South Africa's constitutional and developmental goals, enabling transformative governance and the effective localization of SDGs in sustainable cities.

It is expected that these works compiled in this volume will further enrich the discourse and provide policy options to individuals, governments, and countries, particularly in Africa.

Nicholas Idris ERAMEH, PhD
Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA),
Lagos State, Nigeria.

TABLE OF CONTENT-AGIQ APRIL 2026 EDITION

1. African Youths and the Promotion of Sustainable Development through the Lens of Indigenous Knowledge in the 21st Century Thizwilondi Josephine Mudau	9
2. Beneficiaries of Corruption? An Analysis of the Function of South African Banks in Handling and Making Money from Crime Proceeds Masila Joshua Masipa	25
3. Advancing Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise Growth through Digitalised Enterprise and Supplier Development in South Africa Sipho Patrick Bhengu, Andrisha Beharry-Ramraj	40
4. Disinvestment of Multinational Corporations in Developing Areas: An Assessment of Shoprite Disengagement in Nigeria Lere Amusan and Ebenezer O. Oni	64
5. A sober teacher is a problem”: Unpacking Political ideology and Emancipatory Struggles Within Teacher Unionism Zwane Thembinkosi Trevor, Matsepe David	78
6. Rural Youth and the Future of Farming in Sub-Saharan Africa: Revisiting the Abandonment Debate Douglas Nyathi, Stanley Maphosa	98
7. Does Resource Scarcity Constrain Rural Women’s Entrepreneurial Performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa? Lindokuhle Senamile Ntuli, Innocent Simphiwe Nojiyeza	114
8. Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Environmental Conservation in Ngugi’s <i>Petals of Blood</i> Thabo Prince Zondo	127
9. Exploring the Role of African Indigenous Knowledge(IKS) Systems in Healing Practices and Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Thohoyandou Rendani Tshifhumulo	144
10. Capturing Cultural Heritage: Exploring the Poetic Elements of Domesticated Animal Praise Khulisile Judith Nkuna & Sikhumbuzo Sibusiso Khoza	164

11. Exploring the landscape of demand management practices in public health sector in the Gauteng Province, South Africa: An Empirical Analysis
Ellsworth C Jonathan, Phathutshedzo D Lavhelani, David H Selby

178
12. ICT For Indigenous Knowledge Dissemination And Education In Africa: (A Systematic Review)
Aderinsola E. Kayode, Shalini Sing, Patricia P. Badenhorst

198
13. Donald Trump-Twitter Diplomatic Disruptions And Impact On The Post-World War II International Order.
Ndivhoniswani Aaron Tshidzumba

222
14. Determinants And Effect Of Small-Scale Livestock Production On Household Income In Malawi: Evidence From Fifth Integrated Household Survey
Gladson Andrew Chipala, Christopher Chombo, Hannah Dunga

239
15. Navigating Artificial Intelligence Personalisation and Consumer Privacy in Digital Marketing across South Africa and Global Contexts
Suraksha Moothura and Andrisha Beharry-Ramraj

261
16. Energy Sustainability and Sustainable Development Agenda: The Role of Public-Private Partnership in South African
Taleat, Bisiriyi Abiodun, Lukamba, Muhlya Tshombe

286
17. The Governance–Development Nexus in Nigeria: A Conceptual Synthesis of Good Governance and Policy Discourse Theories
Olukayode Idris Lasisi

311
18. Equal Ideals, Unequal Realities: Gender Dynamics in the Workplace of an International Religious Non-governmental Organisation in Eswatini
Thembumenzi Jomo Ntshalintshali, Innocent Simphiwe Nojiyeza

324
19. The effect of ethnicity and politics on the democratisation of African nations
Eyitayo Francis Adanlawo, Mpho Chaka

340
20. Transformative Governance Frontiers: Relational Public Administration for Smart City Inclusivity
S Sikwela & M Diedericks

352

RURAL YOUTH AND THE FUTURE OF FARMING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: REVISITING THE ABANDONMENT DEBATE

Douglas Nyathi,

School of Public Management,
Governance and Public Policy, University of Johannesburg,
Gauteng, South Africa

dnyathi@uj.ac.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1310-627X>

&

Stanley Maphosa,

Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation,
University of Johannesburg,
Gauteng, South Africa.

director@gfsa.org.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0466-494X>

Abstract

Agriculture remains the backbone of most rural economies in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), employing up to 70% of the youth population. Yet, a paradox arises: despite its economic importance, many young people are increasingly distancing themselves from agriculture, perceiving it as a sector linked to poverty, hard labor, and limited financial returns. This disengagement threatens future food security, rural transformation, and job creation across the region. This study explores whether rural youth are truly abandoning agriculture or are instead redefining their involvement through diversified livelihood strategies. It examines the socio-economic, institutional and cultural factors influencing youth decisions and analyzes how emerging hybrid forms of engagement—such as agripreneurship and part-time farming—are reshaping rural economies. A systematic desktop synthesis of peer-reviewed literature (2000–2025) was conducted using databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. The search focused on keywords such as rural youth, agriculture, migration, livelihood diversification, and agrarian transition. The findings reveal that youth disengagement from agriculture is not uniform but context-specific. Key determinants include land scarcity, education, labour market structures, gender norms, and limited access to finance and technology. While many youth migrate or pursue non-farm work, others engage in innovative agro-enterprises, peri-urban horticulture, and contract farming that integrate farm and non-farm income sources. Youth (dis)engagement reflects structural constraints rather than a wholesale rejection of agriculture. The challenge lies in transforming the sector into a viable, attractive, and profitable livelihood path. Policies should prioritize land access, affordable credit, youth-focused extension, agribusiness incubation, and vocational training aligned with market needs. This study contributes to debates on rural transformation by reframing youth “abandonment” as strategic livelihood diversification within evolving agrarian systems in SSA.

Keywords: *Youths, agriculture, participation, abandonment, livelihoods.*

Introduction

Agriculture remains the cornerstone of livelihood, employment, and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), accounting for nearly 60 percent of the labor force and

a third of regional GDP (FAO, 2022). However, the sector faces a mounting challenge: declining participation of rural youth (Ripoll et al, 2017; Nyathi et al, 2022). Across the region, young people

increasingly view farming as a residual livelihood option—labor-intensive, low-status, and poorly remunerated—while aspiring to urban, non-farm, or migration-based opportunities (Brooks et al., 2013; Bezu and Holden, 2014). This perceived “abandonment” of agriculture by youth has raised an alarm among scholars, policymakers, and development practitioners who fear the future of food systems and rural transformation. The debate on youth disengagement is neither new nor uniform (Ripoll et al, 2017). Earlier studies have attributed declining youth participation to structural barriers, such as limited access to land, credit, and markets (White, 2012; Leavy and Hossain, 2014). Others link it to the broader agrarian transition in which rural economies are diversifying, agriculture is becoming commercialized, and labor markets are restructured (Bryceson, 2002; Jayne et al., 2016). In this context, youth choices often reflect rational responses to constrained opportunities, shifting aspirations, and changing social identities, rather than the simple rejection of agriculture (Sumberg et al., 2012).

The demographic profile of Sub-Saharan Africa further intensifies this ongoing debate. With approximately 60 percent of its population under the age of 25 (UNDP, 2023), the region's ability to integrate this burgeoning labor force into productive and sustainable livelihoods is of critical importance. The agricultural sector has potential as a significant employer; however, persistent underinvestment, insufficient innovation, and policy fragmentation continue to undermine its appeal. In addition, gender and class inequalities exacerbate exclusion, as young women and landless youth encounter compounded disadvantages in accessing productive resources and agrarian value chains (Tadele and Gella, 2012; Anyidoho et al., 2012). The “abandonment debate”

also reflects epistemological and methodological tensions in the understanding of youth agency. Some scholars portray youth as disinterested actors and disengaged from rural development, while others emphasize their adaptive strategies within constrained environments (Chinsinga and Chasukwa, 2012). Recent empirical research indicates dynamic livelihood portfolios that integrate farm, off-farm, and migratory activities, suggesting that, rather than abandoning agriculture, many youth redefine their engagement through diversification, innovation, and entrepreneurial ventures (Amanor, 2019; Yeboah and Jayne, 2018). Despite the proliferation of research in this area, significant gaps persist. Studies are often country-specific, fragmented, or policy-driven, with limited synthesis across regions and methodological approaches (Ripoll et al, 2017). Consequently, there is a need to revisit the debate through a comprehensive desktop-based synthesis drawing from global academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. This approach facilitates a panoramic understanding of the key drivers, emerging trends, and policy responses that shape youth engagement in agriculture across the SSA. Therefore, this article re-examines the question, “Are rural youth abandoning agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa?” It interrogates the evidence underpinning this claim, identifies research and policy gaps, and explores pathways for revitalizing youth participation. By integrating insights from political economy, livelihood, and behavioral theories, this study contributes to ongoing debates on the future of African agriculture and the role of youth in achieving inclusive rural transformations. Ultimately, it argues that understanding youth agricultural participation requires moving beyond the simplistic narratives of abandonment to appreciate the complex,

adaptive, and aspirational nature of young people's engagement with farming in contemporary rural Africa.

Theoretical underpinnings around the youth-farming abandonment debate

The examination of youth involvement in agriculture is anchored in several theoretical frameworks that elucidate behavioral motivations, structural constraints, and livelihood choices. The foremost among these is the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), which positions youth engagement in agriculture within the interaction of assets, capabilities, and vulnerability contexts (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998). The SLF highlights that decisions to engage in or withdraw from agriculture are influenced by access to natural capital (land and water), human capital (skills and education), financial capital, and institutional structures. For rural youth, limited access to these assets often restricts their ability to maintain meaningful livelihoods through agriculture. Complementing the SLF, the Agrarian Political Economy Perspective (Bernstein, 2010; Bryceson, 2002) underscores the structural forces that influence agricultural participation. It emphasizes the impact of land commodification, capitalist accumulation, and policy reforms that marginalize smallholders and make farming less appealing to youth. From this perspective, youth disengagement is not merely an individual choice, but a reflection of broader political-economic dynamics that constrain agrarian opportunities. Another significant framework is the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which interprets agricultural engagement as a result of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Research utilizing this theory (Aphunu and Atoma, 2010; Mwaura, 2017) indicates that youth

perceptions of farming as unprofitable or socially inferior diminish their intention to engage in agriculture despite awareness of its potential benefits. In addition, the Livelihood Diversification and Aspirations Framework (Sumberg et al., 2012; Leavy and Hossain, 2014) analyses youth decisions within evolving aspirations and identity formation processes. It acknowledges that many young individuals perceive agriculture as a transitional rather than a permanent livelihood, opting for diversified strategies that integrate farm and non-farm income sources. The Capability Approach (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2005) also contributes to youth agricultural studies by emphasizing the freedom and choices available to young people. It argues that enhancing youth agency through education, access to technology, and supportive institutions can expand their capability to choose agriculture as a viable livelihood rather than as a last resort. Integrating these perspectives will provide a comprehensive understanding of youth participation. The interplay between structural constraints (agrarian political economy), behavioral intentions (planned behavior), and capability expansion (Sen, 1999) influences how rural youth perceive and engage with agriculture. Collectively, these theories demonstrate that fostering youth participation in agriculture necessitates addressing not only material and policy barriers, but also the social meanings and aspirations associated with farming.

Methodology

This study employed a desktop-based systematic review methodology to investigate academic and policy evidence regarding the dynamics of rural youth engagement and disengagement from agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa. The research was guided by the principles of transparency, reproducibility, and inclusion

of diverse data sources. The literature was obtained from Google Scholar, Scopus, and the Web of Science Core Collection, ensuring a comprehensive review of both peer-reviewed and gray literature. The review focused on publications from 2000 to 2025 to capture contemporary discussions on agricultural transformation, rural employment, and youth livelihoods. A structured search strategy was implemented, utilizing Boolean operators and key terms such as “rural youth,” “agricultural participation,” “youth migration,” “farm abandonment,” “livelihood diversification,” and “Sub-Saharan Africa.” Titles, abstracts, and keywords were screened for relevance, followed by full-text review. Studies were included if they (i) focused on sub-Saharan Africa, (ii) examined youth engagement or disengagement from agriculture, and (iii) provided empirical, theoretical, or policy-based insights. Duplicates, non-English papers, and studies with weak methodological foundations were also excluded. Data extraction concentrated on the geographical scope, research design, key findings, policy recommendations, and identified gaps. Thematic analysis was conducted to map trends in publication output, citation networks, and theoretical construction.

Findings and Discussions

The findings of the study are presented using different themes emanating from the research questions.

Role of agriculture on the socio-economic needs of youths

Agriculture is increasingly required to respond to complex and interrelated development challenges by strategically allocating resources toward youth development (FAO, 2016). Meaningful

youth engagement in agricultural transformation necessitates attention to their fundamental personal and social needs, including safety, recognition, social belonging, and the acquisition of relevant skills and competencies that enable effective participation in everyday life (Pittman, 1993). Within this context, agriculture presents significant opportunities for youth employment through farming and agribusiness, thereby contributing to improved livelihoods and enhanced standards of living (Adekunle et al., 2009). Expanding youth participation in agriculture has been identified as a critical strategy for addressing rising levels of youth unemployment (Osti et al., 2015). Young people can participate across multiple nodes of the agricultural value chain, including primary production, post-harvest management, processing, distribution, and marketing of agricultural commodities (Adekunle et al., 2009). An illustrative example is Tanzania’s Agri-Hub network, which promotes youth entrepreneurship by linking young agripreneurs to markets, input suppliers, extension services, and media platforms to support both existing and emerging agribusiness opportunities (Osti et al., 2015).

Beyond employment creation, agriculture plays a fundamental role in ensuring food availability and food security, thereby sustaining a productive workforce capable of contributing to broader economic sectors (Nyathi et al, 2022). As noted by Micallef (2015), agriculture encompasses the cultivation of crops and the rearing of livestock, as well as forestry activities that generate food and other goods. Historically, the domestication of plants and animals represented a transformative milestone in human development, enabling food surpluses that underpinned the emergence of complex and stratified societies. In contemporary development

discourse, revitalising the agricultural sector and strengthening youth engagement are considered essential to meeting the projected 60% increase in global food demand by 2050 (FAO, 2012). Moreover, enhanced youth participation in agriculture contributes not only to employment generation but also to broader socio-economic stability and security (Osti et al., 2015).

Socio-economic, Institutional and Structural Determinants of Rural Youth Engagement in Agriculture

The engagement or disengagement of rural youth in agriculture within Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is influenced by a complex interplay of socioeconomic, institutional, and structural factors that either facilitate or hinder participation (Deininger, 2003; Yaro, 2006; FAO, 2012). A central issue in these dynamics is land access, which is widely recognized as the most significant barrier for young individuals entering the agricultural sector (Deininger, 2003). Research by Bezu and Holden (2014), White (2019), and Yeboah et al. (2020) indicates that limited land access—attributable to inheritance customs, land fragmentation, and patriarchal tenure systems—diminishes youth autonomy and discourages long-term agricultural investment. The commodification of land and expansion of commercial estates have further marginalized young smallholders, exacerbating intergenerational inequalities (Jayne et al., 2016; Muyanga and Gitau, 2022).

Education and skill development are critical determinants. While formal education enhances employability, it often alienates youth from agriculture by shaping aspirations towards urban and white-collar occupations (Leavy and Hossain, 2014; Sumberg and Okali, 2018). Conversely, agricultural training, vocational programs,

and youth entrepreneurship initiatives have demonstrated potential in reframing farming as a modern, profitable career (Mwaura, 2017; Minde et al., 2021). However, discrepancies persist between educational curricula and practical competencies required in contemporary agribusiness systems. Technology and innovation have emerged as transformative, yet uneven, influences. Digital agriculture, encompassing mobile-based market information for precision farming, has attracted technologically literate youth into agribusiness (Agyeman et al., 2021; Chanza and Musiyiwa, 2023). Nevertheless, infrastructural deficits, high Internet costs, and unequal access to digital tools constrain inclusive participation, particularly in remote rural areas. Thus, the digital divide reinforces spatial and class-based inequalities in agricultural opportunities (FAO 2022).

Labor market structures also significantly influence youth decisions. The rural economy in SSA is increasingly characterized by informality and under-employment, with limited prospects for upward mobility (Filmer and Fox, 2014; Losch, 2016). Non-farm opportunities in trade, construction, and services often offer higher and faster returns than subsistence farming, prompting youth to diversify livelihoods or migrate to urban centers (Mwaura and Glover, 2020). This transition reflects a pragmatic strategy rather than outright rejection of agriculture. Institutional and policy environments further shape engagement. Weak agricultural financing systems, limited youth-sensitive credit facilities, and bureaucratic program implementation discourage youth investments (Ahaibwe et al., 2018). Although several governments and development partners have launched youth-in-agriculture initiatives, such as Nigeria's YouWin and Kenya's Youth Enterprise Development Fund, evaluations

have revealed mixed results due to inadequate targeting, corruption, and lack of post-training support (Yaro, 2006; Mkandawire, 2021).

Gender and social norms exacerbate such barriers. In particular, young women have been excluded from land, credit, and decision-making spaces (Tadele and Gella, 2012; Anyidoho et al., 2022). Furthermore, cultural perceptions that view agriculture as a low-status or "fallback" activity discourage youth engagement (Sumberg et al., 2019). Collectively, these interconnected factors indicate that rural youth disengagement from agriculture in SSA is less a matter of disinterest and a consequence of structural disempowerment. Addressing these constraints necessitates an integrated policy framework to secure land rights, modernize agricultural education, expand digital infrastructure, and ensure equitable access to finance and markets. Empowering youth through institutional reforms, innovation ecosystems, and inclusive value chains is crucial for revitalizing Africa's agricultural future (Bezu & Holden, 2014; Onoja et al., 2012).

From a sustainable livelihood perspective (SLP) and Agrarian Political Economy (APE) perspective, youth (dis)engagement in agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa reflects both agency and structural constraints. The SLP underscores how access to livelihood assets, such as land, finance, education, and social networks, determines the capacity of rural youth to sustain agricultural participation (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998). When these assets are undermined by institutional failures, policy neglect, or market exclusion, youth often diversify into non-farm sectors as adaptive survival strategies, rather than abandoning agriculture altogether (Ellis, 2000; Bezu & Holden, 2014). Conversely, the APE

framework situates these livelihood choices within wider structural processes, such as land commodification, capitalist accumulation, and neoliberal agricultural reforms that privilege large-scale agribusiness while marginalizing smallholders and rural youth (Bernstein, 2010; Cousins, 2013). Within this context, youth disengagement emerges less from apathy, and more from systemic dispossession and limited access to productive resources. Integrating these theoretical perspectives highlights the necessity of redistributive land reforms, inclusive agrarian policies, and diversified livelihood strategies that strengthen youth agencies, challenge structural inequalities, and reimagine rural transformation from below (Sumberg et al., 2021; White, 2020).

Youth Perceptions, Aspirations and the Social Meaning of Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa

Perceptions of agriculture among rural youth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are influenced by a complex interplay of livelihood aspirations, socio-cultural identities, and the perceived economic viability of farming (Brooks et al., 2021; White, 2020). Research consistently indicates that youth attitudes toward agriculture are ambivalent, simultaneously acknowledging their significance for food security and rural livelihoods while rejecting it as a desirable personal occupation (Leavy and Hossain, 2014; Sumberg et al., 2017; Nyathi et al, 2022). These perceptions are deeply rooted in historical and structural conditions that have rendered farming synonymous with poverty, drudgery, and social immobility (White, 2019; Bezu and Holden, 2014). Livelihood aspirations are central to understanding this dynamic. The

increasing exposure of rural youth to formal education, digital media, and urban lifestyles has reshaped their expectations of employment and modernity (Brooks et al., 2021; White, 2020). Many aspire to occupations associated with stability, prestige, and income security, attributes that are rarely associated with smallholder agriculture (Anyidoho et al., 2022; Mwaura and Glover, 2020). Farming is often perceived as a "fallback" or temporary livelihood, suitable only in the absence of better opportunities. However, scholars such as Chinsinga and Chasukwa (2012) and Yeboah et al. (2020) argue that these aspirations reflect rational choices within constrained structural contexts, rather than a wholesale rejection of agriculture. Social identity and generational meaning further influence youth perception. In many communities, farming is viewed as an occupation of the older generation, while youth identity is increasingly linked to urban modernity, technology, and consumption (Tadele and Gella, 2012; Sumberg et al., 2019). The cultural representation of agriculture as backward or low status discourages young people from associating farming with success. Gender norms intensify these perceptions; young women often face additional stigma in agriculture due to unequal access to land and resources (Ahaibwe et al., 2018; Anyidoho et al., 2022). This intersection of age, class, and gender identities shapes who engages, under what conditions, and with what aspirations. Concurrently, emerging evidence has revealed changing narratives and hybrid engagements. A new generation of "agripreneurs" and youth-led agribusiness innovators is reframing agriculture as a profitable, technology-driven enterprise (Agyeman et al., 2021; Chanza and Musiyiwa, 2023). Digital platforms, value chain integration, and climate-smart innovations help youth view agriculture as a space for creativity, self-

employment, and modern enterprises. Programs such as "Youth in Agribusiness" and "Enable Youth" across Africa have contributed to this attitudinal shift by promoting entrepreneurship, mentorship, and value addition (Minde et al., 2021). However, these positive perceptions remain limited to youth with better access to education, finance, and networks, leaving poorer and rural-based youth less convincing of the potential of agriculture. Economic opportunity perceptions are also mediated by policy and market context. Where agricultural markets are unreliable, inputs are expensive, and extension services are weak, youth regard farming as risky and unsustainable (Jayne et al., 2016; Mkandawire, 2021). Conversely, access to land, credit, infrastructure, and supportive institutions significantly improved agricultural appeal. In essence, rural youth's perceptions of agriculture are neither static nor uniformly negative (Brooks et al., 2021; White, 2020). The construction of these concepts is informed by lived experiences of marginalization, evolving aspirations for contemporary livelihoods, and selective engagement with agricultural opportunities. As Leavy and Hossain (2014) contend, meaningful engagement necessitates the transformation of not only the material conditions of agriculture, but also its social significance, thereby rendering farming visible as a modern, innovative, and dignified livelihood.

Interpreted through the theory of planned behavior (TPB), youth engagement in agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa is shaped by attitudes toward farming, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Negative attitudes, rooted in farming's association with poverty, reduce intention to participate, while limited access to resources constrains perceived control. However, where social norms valorize entrepreneurship, positive

behavioral intentions emerge (Mwaura & Glover, 2020). The Livelihood Diversification and Aspirations Framework further elucidates how youth balance their aspirations for modernity with pragmatic livelihood choices (Sumberg et al., 2017). Diversification reflects adaptive responses to structural constraints, as youth navigate between agricultural and non-farm pursuits to achieve aspirational well-being (Leavy & Hossain, 2014). Together, these frameworks reveal that youth agricultural engagement is intentional, negotiated, and aspiration driven.

Livelihood options pursued by youths outside smallholder agriculture

The rise in unemployment has emerged as a significant concern in sub-Saharan Africa, contributing to the increased migration of young individuals seeking better opportunities. Deshingkar (2004) noted that rural youth exhibit considerable mobility both within national and international borders. Recent research indicates that migration from rural to urban areas is likely to persist on a large scale, serving as a crucial component of livelihood strategies for the rural poor. The agricultural sector must be revitalized to engage youth, thereby increasing global food production by 60% by 2050 (FAO 2012). Such agricultural transformation could mitigate out-migration from rural areas and contribute to stable growth (FAO 2004). However, De Haas (2010) emphasizes that the migration of rural youth may lead to the loss of a vital and dynamic segment of the workforce, with significant implications for agricultural productivity. Additionally, alternative livelihood strategies pursued by youths outside agriculture include involvement in sex work and rising crime rates. It is noteworthy that many young individuals migrating from rural areas in search of

employment opportunities often resort to criminal activities and sex work because of a lack of qualifications for available jobs (Brooks et al., 2021; White, 2020). According to the Swedish Crime Prevention Agency report of 2017, 58% of the suspected crimes are attributed to migrants. In the cases of murder and manslaughter, the corresponding figure was 73%. Consequently, migration has led to a quadrupling murder rate in Sweden. Although sex work is recognized as a significant livelihood strategy (UNAIDS, 2012), it remains criminalized in South Africa (Scheibe et al., 2016), exposing sex workers to various vulnerabilities, including gender-based and behavioral violence, harassment by clients, and abuse by law enforcement or the public. Furthermore, they are susceptible to diseases such as HIV/AIDS and STIs (Gould and Fick, 2008). Due to climate change, agricultural activities in sub-Saharan Africa are challenged by arid conditions, compelling youth to explore alternative means of livelihood (Masawi, 2018). Fortunately, some countries in the Global South are endowed with mineral resources, particularly gold, leading to the establishment of illegal mines, as youth pursue quick financial gains. The GCEJDT (2018) reports that mining has resulted in illegal gold panning, as some residents prefer mining illegally over accepting low wages in other occupations. A pertinent example is Ghana, where exploratory studies reveal that miners persuade farmers to relinquish their farms for monetary compensation, indicating a shift from agricultural land use to mining (Yaro, 2010).

Furthermore, a greater number of rural youth are inclined towards fishing rather than smallholder agriculture. According to the BNP (2008), approximately 93 million rural households in developing countries engage in small-scale fishing. Martin et al.

(2013) further noted that alternative livelihoods within rural settings are unlikely to lead fishers to abandon fisheries; rather, they enhance their livelihood portfolios as a supplementary activity. Fishing constitutes a significant portion of income, employment, and food security for impoverished rural households in the coastal regions. Consequently, small-scale fisheries (SSF) literature has prioritized the right to fish as a human right and a vital component of gender equality (Allison et al., 2012; FAO, 2015; Sharma, 2011) over merely increasing productivity. This emphasis is due to the occupation's role in development policies aimed at food security and poverty alleviation (Bavinck & Johnson, 2008).

Digital Transitions: Youth and Technology Adoption in Sub-Saharan African Agriculture

The digitalization of agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is increasingly influencing youth engagement with farming, presenting new opportunities for innovation, productivity, and rural transformation (Oosterom, 2021). However, the extent and quality of technology adoption remain inconsistent, and are influenced by access to infrastructure, education, finance, and institutional support. Digital transitions are redefining not only the methods by which youth engage in farming, but also their perception of agriculture as a viable and modern livelihood pathway (Aker et al., 2021; Bolarinwa & Adekunle, 2023). Youths are generally more receptive to innovation and digital tools than older farmers (World Bank, 2022). Mobile platforms, digital extension services, and precision agriculture technologies are rapidly expanding to connect young individuals to information, input suppliers, and markets. For instance, e-extension systems such as Kenya's Digital Green and

Nigeria's AgroMall provide real-time agronomic advice, whereas TruTrade in Uganda links smallholders directly to buyers through transparent mobile transactions (Aker & Mbiti, 2019; CTA, 2020). These platforms have improved market access, reduced transaction costs, and greater income predictability among young producers. Furthermore, digital technologies foster new entrepreneurial identities. The growth of "agritech start-ups" has enabled educated youth to participate in agriculture through value-added services, such as logistics, input distribution, and data analytics. In Ghana and Rwanda, start-ups such as Farmerline and AgroCenta have created youth-led employment opportunities in digital agricultural ecosystems (Makura et al., 2023). These developments challenge the traditional notions of farming as manual and unprofitable, positioning agriculture within the broader digital economy. Despite these promising shifts, several structural barriers constrain equitable digital transitions. First, the digital divide in access to smartphones, electricity, and broadband remains significant between urban and rural youth. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, 2023) estimates that only about 30–40% of rural youth in SSA have reliable internet access. Second, financial exclusion limits young people's ability to purchase or maintain digital tools. Credit systems often remain biased against youth because of a lack of collateral and limited credit history (Afande & Nderitu, 2021). Third, digital literacy and sex disparities remain pervasive. Young women in rural areas are 25% less likely than men to own mobile phones or access digital financial services (GSMA, 2022). Consequently, the benefits of digital agriculture risk reinforce existing inequalities if interventions do not address intersectional barriers (FAO 2020). As noted by Klerkx et al. (2021), digital

innovation ecosystems can reproduce power asymmetries in which well-connected youth benefit disproportionately from data-driven platforms. Governments and development partners have introduced policies that foster digital youth engagement in agriculture. Rwanda's ICT4Ag Strategy and Nigeria's e-NAM initiatives illustrate these efforts.ustrate how state-led programmes can promote rural digital inclusion. The African Development Bank's Digital Agriculture Flagship Programme (2022–2026) was designed to expand climate-smart agricultural technology across 20 sub-Saharan African countries, with a focus on engaging 10 million young farmers. Evaluations indicate that integrated interventions comprising training, financial access, and digital extension services result in the most sustainable adoption outcomes (Makura et al., 2023; FAO, 2022). Institutional innovations such as blended finance and incubation hubs have demonstrated efficacy in supporting youth agritech ventures (Aker et al., 2021). For example, the ENABLE Youth program, co-funded by AfDB and IFAD, offers start-up grants, business incubation, and mentoring for digital agripreneurs in Nigeria, Kenya, and Zambia. Evidence suggests that participants in such programs exhibit higher rates of technology adoption and enterprise sustainability (AfDB, 2022).

Gender, Youths and Agriculture

The intersection of gender and youth within Sub-Saharan African (SSA) agriculture is pivotal for comprehending both the challenges and opportunities associated with inclusive rural transformations. Although agriculture remains the predominant employer of young individuals in the region, structural gender inequalities continue to influence the extent and nature of youth engagement in this sector (Doss et al., 2018; FAO, 2020). In

particular, young women encounter compounded barriers related to age, gender, and social norms that restrict their access to land, credit, extension services, and productive technologies. These disparities have significant implications for agricultural productivity, innovation, and rural development outcomes (Oosterom, 2021). Agriculture in SSA is often delineated by gender, in terms of responsibility and opportunity. Women contribute a substantial portion of agricultural labor, ranging from subsistence production to market-oriented horticulture, yet remain underrepresented in ownership and decision-making roles (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019). For rural youth, gender influences their entry and participation in agriculture. Studies from Ghana, Ethiopia, and Uganda indicate that while young men often aspire to mechanized or commercial farming, young women are concentrated in small-scale horticulture or processing activities due to limited access to land and start-up capital (Bezu & Holden, 2014; Agyeman et al., 2021). Consequently, female youth agricultural participation tends to be confined to low-value or labor-intensive subsectors, perpetuating cycles of economic vulnerability. The feminization of agriculture, coupled with youth unemployment, necessitates a gender-transformative approach to agricultural policy. Structural barriers, including patriarchal land tenure systems and discriminatory inheritance norms, remain the central constraints. According to the World Bank (2022), women in SSA own less than 15% of their agricultural land, with even lower ownership rates among young women. This exclusion limits their ability to access collateral-based credit or participate in contract-farming arrangements. Furthermore, institutional bias within extension and financial systems reinforces the gender gap as extension services are frequently designed around

male-dominated cash crops and do not cater to the specific needs of young female farmers (Peterman et al., 2011). However, the emergence of youth-led and gender-sensitive agricultural programs has demonstrated a growing recognition of these disparities. Initiatives such as the African Development Bank's Enable Youth and the FAO's Gender Action Plan in Agriculture have begun to integrate gender equality and youth empowerment into agribusiness models (AfDB, 2019; FAO, 2020). These programs emphasize value chain inclusion, entrepreneurship, and mentorship, particularly for young women in agribusiness and agro-processing. For instance, blended finance and capacity development schemes targeting young women in Rwanda and Nigeria have improved access to credit and market linkages (WFP & Mastercard Foundation, 2022). The digital transformation of agriculture presents new opportunities for inclusivity. ICT-based agricultural services, e-extension platforms, and mobile banking tools have the potential to overcome traditional barriers by improving young female farmers' access to information and finance for young women farmers (Akinola, 2020; Bolarinwa & Fakoya, 2022). However, digital divides persist: rural women and young girls often have lower mobile phone ownership and Internet access than their male counterparts, thereby limiting their participation in digital agribusiness ecosystems (GSMA, 2021). Addressing this gap requires deliberate policy actions to promote digital literacy and equitable access to technology.

The gender-youth perspective also uncovers significant social dynamics beyond mere access to resources. Cultural perceptions that regard farming as a "last resort" occupation—particularly for young, educated women—serve as a deterrent to their participation. This is compounded by a lack of visible female role models in

contemporary agribusiness. Consequently, gender-transformative interventions should prioritize reshaping social norms, promoting women's leadership within producer organizations, and integrating gender equality into agricultural education curricula (White, 2020; Sumberg et al., 2021). Ultimately, addressing the dual challenge of gender and youth exclusion in sub-Saharan African agriculture is crucial for achieving inclusive and sustainable rural development. Policies must transcend tokenistic inclusion to tackle the systemic inequalities that limit the agency of women and youth. This necessitates coordinated strategies that combine land reforms, gender-responsive financing, equitable access to extension services, and digital inclusion. Empowering young women in agriculture not only enhances productivity but also fosters broader social change, thereby building resilient, equitable, and innovative food systems in the region (Oosterom, 2021). From a radical feminist perspective, gendered exclusion in Sub-Saharan African agriculture reflects patriarchal power structures that systematically subordinate women and youth, particularly young women, through control over land, labor, and decision-making (Tong, 2014; hooks, 2000). These inequalities are not incidental, but structurally embedded within agrarian and institutional systems that privilege male authority and capitalist accumulation (Boserup, 1970; Oosterom, 2021). Radical feminism calls for dismantling these hierarchies through transformative land rights reforms, collective agency, and redistribution of productive resources, beyond mere inclusion, to achieve genuine emancipation and gender justice in agrarian economies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The discourse concerning rural youth and the future of farming in sub-Saharan Africa

reveals a more nuanced narrative than the commonly assumed notion of youth desertion from agriculture. Although empirical evidence indicates a decline in the direct involvement of young individuals in traditional smallholder farming, this trend does not necessarily signify complete rejection of agriculture. Instead, it reflects evolving aspirations, structural barriers, and the reconfiguration of agriculture as a part of diversified livelihood portfolios. The engagement of youth in agripreneurship, agritech, value chain services, and non-farm enterprises illustrates a shift from subsistence-oriented farming to more modern, opportunity-driven participation. This transformation underscores that youth are not merely abandoning agriculture; rather, they are redefining it to align with their social identities, economic goals, and demands of contemporary rural economies. However, persistent barriers, such as limited access to land, finance, markets, and supportive infrastructure continue to constrain rural youth participation (Bezu & Holden, 2014; Leavy & Smith, 2010). Traditional inheritance systems, high input costs, and inadequate mechanization deter youth from perceiving farming as a viable pathway for prosperity. Moreover, institutional fragmentation across ministries and poor coordination of youth-targeted agricultural programs have diluted policy impact (Sumberg et al., 2021). Despite numerous initiatives, such as Nigeria's N-Power Agro, Kenya's NARIGP, and Ghana's Youth in Agriculture Programme, outcomes have often been mixed due to weak follow-up, limited market linkages, and inconsistent funding. Evidence suggests that youth will continue to leave unprofitable and labor-intensive farming unless agriculture is reimagined as an innovative, technologically enabled, and socially valued profession. Nevertheless, youth-led innovations and agri-

entrepreneurship models show promise in revitalizing rural economies. The rise of digital agriculture, encompassing mobile-based extension services, e-commerce for farm produce, and drone-assisted precision farming, has opened new possibilities for youth employment (Akinola, 2020; Bolarinwa & Fakoya, 2022). With appropriate policies and institutional support, youth can act as agents of transformation in rural food systems. The challenge lies not in preventing migration or discouraging diversification but in creating conditions that render agriculture a competitive and dignified livelihood option.

Reconceptualizing youth engagement in agriculture requires a comprehensive and forward-thinking policy framework that transcends traditional subsistence models. Governments and development partners should transition from welfare-oriented approaches that perceive the youth as passive beneficiaries of aid. Instead, they must acknowledge young individuals as innovators, investors, and pivotal agents of agri-food transformation. Incorporating youth perspectives into agricultural policy making through participatory forums and advisory councils ensures that interventions are relevant, aspirational, and responsive to actual challenges. Access to productive resources and finances is therefore crucial. Land reforms, youth land banks, and transparent leasing arrangements should be prioritized to address generational exclusion. Furthermore, innovative financial instruments, such as blended finance, youth agribusiness funds, and credit guarantee schemes, can mitigate risks in agricultural lending and attract private capital to youth-led ventures. Digitalization offers transformative potential. Governments should expand ICT infrastructure and digital literacy programs to empower youth to utilize technology for data-driven

decision making, e-marketing, and mobile-based financial transactions. Public-private partnerships must support youth-led digital start-ups in precision agriculture, logistics, and value-chain integration. Agricultural education also requires a realignment. Curricula at technical and vocational institutions should emphasize entrepreneurship, innovation, and climate-smart practices to bridge the gap between training and market demand (Agyeman et al., 2021). Institutional coordination is vital. Effective youth agriculture governance necessitates cooperation among ministries of agriculture, youth, and industry, reducing duplication, and ensuring coherent policy delivery. Establishing national youth agribusiness councils and rural innovation hubs can institutionalize mentorship and incubation support. Finally, the development of infrastructure and gender

inclusion is imperative. Rural electrification, irrigation, and transportation connectivity are prerequisites for competitiveness. Gender-sensitive financing and training programs should empower young women and marginalized youth, promoting inclusive participation and equitable benefit sharing. Collectively, these measures can transform agriculture from a survival strategy into a modern, profitable, and dignified career path for rural African youth. Above all, the future of farming in Sub-Saharan Africa depends not on reversing youth mobility or diversification but on creating enabling ecosystems that render agriculture profitable, innovative, and dignified. If harnessed strategically, youth can drive the next wave of rural transformation, elevating agriculture from a symbol of drudgery to a domain of opportunity and modernity.

References

- Afande , F., & Nderitu , A. (2021). Youth access to agricultural finance in Kenya. *African Journal of Rural Development*, 6(2), 45–61.
- Agyeman, B., Sumberg, J., & Yeboah, T. (2021). Digitalisation and youth agripreneurship in Africa. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 84, 134–146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.03.006>
- Ahaibwe , G., Mbowa , S. and Lwanga , M.M. (2018) Youth engagement in agriculture in Uganda: Challenges and prospects. AfDB Working Paper 323.
- Ajzen , I. (1991) The theory of planned behavior . *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211.
- Aker, J. C., & Mbiti , I. M. (2019). Mobile phones and economic development in Africa. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 33(3), 207–232.
- Aker, J. C., Ghosh, I., & Burrell, J. (2021). *Digital agriculture and youth inclusion in Sub-Saharan Africa* (World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 9655). World Bank.
- Ankomah , B . (2001). Addressin g Food security in South Africa. Pretoria: The National Institute for economic Policy Department of Agriculture.
- Anyidoho, N. A., Leavy, J., & Asenso-Okyere, K. (2022). Youth, gender and agrarian change in Africa. *Development and Change*, 53(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12718>

Bahaman, A.S., Jeffrey, L.S., HayrolAzril, M.S. & Jegak, U. (2010) Acceptance, attitude and knowledge towards agriculture Economic activities between Rural and urban Youth : The case of contract Farming, *Journal of Applied Science*, 10(19), 2310-2315.

Bernstein, H. (2010) *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*. Halifax: Fernwood .

Bezu, S. & Holden, S. (2014) Are rural youth in Ethiopia abandoning agriculture? *World Development*, 64, 259–272.

Bolarinwa, K., & Adekunle, O. (2023). Digital agriculture and youth employment in Nigeria. *Technology in Society*, 75, 102–118.

Bryceson, D. (2002) The scramble in Africa: Reorienting rural livelihoods. *World Development*, 30(5), 725–739.

Chambers, R. & Conway, G. (1992) Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21st century. IDS Discussion Paper 296.

Chanza, N. & Musiyiwa, K. (2023) Youth digital inclusion and agrarian futures in southern Africa. *African Geographical Review*, 42(2), 159–176.

Chinsinga, B. & Chasukwa, M. (2012) Youth, agriculture and land grabs in Malawi. *IDS Bulletin*, 43(6), 67–77.

Cousins, B. (2013). Smallholder irrigation schemes, agrarian reform and “accumulation from below”: Evidence from Zimbabwe. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 13(1), 116–139.

CTA (2020). *The Digitalisation of African Agriculture Report 2018–2019*. Wageningen : CTA.

Ellis, F. & Freeman, H.A. (2004). Rural livelihoods and poverty reduction strategy in four African countries. *Journal of Development Studies*, 40(4), 1-30.

Ellis, F. (2000). *Rural livelihoods and diversity in developing countries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

FAO (2022). *Youth and Digital Agriculture in Africa*. Rome: FAO.

Faridi, M.Z. & Basit, A.B. (2011). Factors Determining Rural Supply; A micro analysis, *Pakistan Economic and Social review*, vol.49(1), 91-108pp

Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I. (1995) *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behaviour; An Introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA; Addison-Wesley.

GSMA (2022). *The Mobile Gender Gap Report*. London: GSMA.

IFAD (2023). *Rural Youth Digital Inclusion Report*. Rome: IFAD.

Jayne, T. S., Chamberlin, J., Headey, D. D., & Benfica, R. (2016). Land constraints and agricultural intensification in Africa: A comparative analysis of patterns and determinants. *Food Policy*, 48, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2014.10.003>

Kimaro, A.A., Mpanda, M. & Rioux, J. (2015). Is conservation agriculture ‘climate-smart’ for maize farmers in the highlands of Tanzania?.

Klerkx , L., Jakku , E., & Labarthe , P. (2021). A review of digitalisation in agriculture and its implications for advisory services. *Agricultural Systems*, 190, 103–118.

Leavy , J. & Hossain, N. (2014) Who wants to farm? Youth aspirations, opportunities and rising food prices. IDS Working Paper 439.

Losch , B . ,Magrin,G .,& Imbernon , J.(2013). A new emerging rural world: An overview of rural change in Africa.

Losch B, Freguin -Gresh,S & White, E.T.(2012). Structural transformation and rural change revisited: Challenges for late developing countries in a globalizing world.

Makura , A., et al. (2023). ICT innovation and youth agripreneurship in Africa. *African Development Review*, 35(2), 187–205.

Minde, I. J., Terblanché, S. E., & Babu, S. C. (2021). *Youth agribusiness and innovation ecosystems in Africa* (CTA Policy Brief No. 21). Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA).

Mkandawire , P. (2021) Youth policy and agricultural transformation in Africa. *African Affairs*, 120(480), 27–49.

Murad ,M.W ., NikMustapha,N.H&Siwar , C.(2008).Review of Malaysia agricultural polices with regards to sustainability, *American Journal of Environmental Sciences*.

Mwaura , F. & Glover, E. (2020) Youth livelihoods and agricultural transformation in Kenya. *Development in Practice*, 30(7), 843–856.

Niehof ,A .(2004). The significance of diversification for rurallivelihood system. *Food policy*, 29 (4), 321-338.

Nyathi, D., Ndlovu, J., Ncube, N., Phiri, K. (2022). The Dynamics of Promoting Youth Participation in Smallholder Agriculture for Sustainable Food Security in Lupane District, Zimbabwe. In: Leal Filho, W., Kovaleva, M., Popkova, E. (eds) *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security*. World Sustainability Series. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-98617-9_15

Oosterom, M (2021) Are rural youth stuck in waitthood? In: Sumberg, J. (Ed.), *Youth and the Rural Economy in Africa: Hard Work and Hazard*. CABI, Wallingford and Boston.

Ripoll, S, Andersson J, Badstue, L, Büttner M, Chamberlin, J, Erenstein, O, & Sumberg, J. (2017). Rural transformation, cereals and youth in Africa: What role for international agricultural research? *Outlook on Agriculture*, 46(3), 168-177.
doi.org/10.1177/0030727017724669

Scoones , I. (1998) Sustainable rural livelihoods: A framework for analysis. IDS Working Paper 72.

Sen , A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Silvia,J.L , MohamadShaffril,H.A , Uli , J, & Abu Samah,B .(2010) Socio- demography factors that influence youth attitude towards contract farming , *American Journal of Applied Science*, 7 (4),603-608.

Start ,D .(2001). The rise and fall of the rural nonfarm economy: Poverty impacts and policy options .Development policy review, 19 (4), 491-505.

Sumberg , J., Anyidoho , N.A., Leavy , J., te Lintelo , D. & Wellard , K. (2012) Young people, agriculture, and transformation in rural Africa: An “opportunity space” approach. IDS Bulletin, 43(6), 9–19.

Sumberg, J., Anyidoho, N., Leavy, J., te Lintelo, D., & Wellard, K. (2017). Young people and agriculture in Africa: A review of research evidence and future directions. IDS, Brighton.

Sumberg, J., Yeboah, T., Flynn, J., & Okali, C. (2021). Africa’s young rural lives: Rethinking rural transformation in Africa. London: Routledge.

White, B. (2019) Rural youth, education and the global food system. Journal of Peasant Studies, 46(2), 239–256.

White, B. (2020). Youth, agriculture and agrarian change. Journal of Peasant Studies, 47(2), 189–208.

World Bank (2022). Youth Employment in Agriculture and the Digital Transformation. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank, (2007). World Development Report 2008. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Yaro ,I.J .(2010). The impact of mining on Livelihoods of local communities: a case study of Newmont Ahafo South Mining Project of BrongAhafo Region of Ghana. International Institute of Social Sciences. The Hague, the Netherlands.

Yaro ,J.A .(2006). Is de-agrarianisation real? A study of livelihood activities in rural northern Ghana. The Journal of Modern African Studies , 44 (01) , 125 -156