



Innovations in educational access: Applying the diffusion of innovation theory

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<https://doi.org/10.51867/ajernet.7.3.142>

ABSTRACT

Africa is recently battling with huge statistics of children exclusion from formal education, prompting examination into how new ideas for education accessibility are spread, accepted or rejected in the drive for universal education of out-of-school children in Ogun State (OoSCiOs). Previous studies on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory in Nigeria have asserted that fresh products or technologies are usually spread through interpersonal routes, but not on the drive for universal education of OoSCiOs. A sample of nine participants were purposively chosen and interviewed, using Management of Out of School Children Interview Guide (MOSCIG). The qualitative data were thematically analysed. From the content analysis reports, Rogers' assertion was validated, since it was discovered that interpersonal communication channels, such as, community platforms, religious leader mobilisation and peer networks alter the knowledge and enrollment behaviour of students who are not in school far more effective than the traditional mass media programmes. Therefore, the article posits that the level of adoption depends largely on perceived relevance, the proximity of rehabilitation centres, trustworthiness, and the cultural adaptability of the new solutions. Recommendations emphasise a well-thought-out commitment to locally-specific innovations, underpinned by incessant conversations and the ability to respond to change, will be a major factor in facilitating access not only to children who are excluded but also to all children in Ogun State.

Keywords: Community Leaders, Diffusion of Innovation, Educational Access, Out-of-School Children, Religious Leaders

I. INTRODUCTION

The continent of Africa is blessed with abundance human and material resources, nonetheless, the continent is faced with challenges including inaccessibility to quality education, bad leadership, corruption, poor service delivery, environmental degradation, human rights abuse, insecurity, unemployment, poverty and porous borders among others (Aniche et al, 2023). In Africa, millions of children are without the prospect of attending school daily. This reality is not just a personal tragedy for these children but a significant threat to the future of Africa. Education is a cornerstone for development, yet a huge number of African children are deprived of this essential tool. The consequences of these include low economic growth, ill health outcomes, social instability, ethnic/religious crises, proliferation of arms, terrorism, attacks on the vulnerable, intra- and cross-border organised crimes, among others (Aniche et al, 2023). It was postulated in the seven objectives of the African Union's 2013 Agenda that by year 2063 there will be inclusive growth and sustainable development in Africa where no child misses school due to poverty or any kind of discrimination (African Union, 2015). This suggests that Africans will have a high standard of living, a good quality of life, a high level of well-being, a well-educated citizenry supported by a skills revolution that intentionally focuses on science, technology, and innovation for a knowledge society.

Despite the laudable aspirations of the African Union on "no child misses school" for any reason, the problem of access to qualitative education persists. Since the creation of the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) on education in 2015, the percentage of children who do not attend school has dropped by less than 1%. Upper secondary education is the most impacted educational level, with 48% of all students at that level being OoS. In sub-Saharan Africa, more than 103 million out of 258 million globally OoS children and youth aged 6-18 are in the region, accounting for over 40% of the global total in 2024. This statistic, from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), highlights sub-Saharan Africa's share of the global education crisis, escalated by poverty, conflict, and climate change, worsening African access to quality education in recent times (UNESCO, 2019). The fact that 20% of elementary-aged children who are not enrolled in school have never attended and will probably never start if current trends are not rapidly reversed is disheartening (UNESCO, 2025). This implies that there is a need

for improvement and the OoS children to regain the lost or impaired physical, cognitive, sensory, communication, and emotional abilities. Therefore, the adopted strategies in tackling the unresolved problem need reformation and rehabilitation of the affected children.

Nigeria has the most OoS children worldwide, according to recent research by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). With 18.3 million children out of school in 2025, the nation is dealing with a worsening education crisis. There will be severe repercussions if this education problem is not resolved. The nation's economic and political stability will eventually be weakened by an increasing number of young people without formal education, which will raise unemployment, crime, and social discontent. Oyekan et al. (2023) discovered that Nigeria's growing number of OoS children is a result of both supply and demand impediments to educational access. The scholars reiterate that in order to address the present crisis, both governmental and non-governmental actions are required. Therefore, utilising educational innovations in conjunction with other traditional interventions like infrastructure expansion and reconstruction, increased enrolment sensitisation, economic intervention, enhanced security, and legal enforcement would be a comprehensive strategy to accomplish this.

According to Manzuma-Ndaaba et al. (2021), there was a substantial correlation between OoS children in Nigeria and poverty, ignorance, uncertainty, misbehaviour, deteriorating levels of education and competence in the social system, and consumerism. These circumstances might be the reason why many of these children are OoS. In addition, Farouq et al. (2024) conducted a study on Nigerian OoS children: consequences and future directions. The researchers concluded that the societal ramifications of OoS offspring include high levels of illiteracy, high socioeconomic and dependence concerns, poor worldwide reputation, security challenges, and a future scarcity of trained labour. Consequently, Yusuf et al. (2024) observed that the educational problem of OoS children in Nigeria should be effectively addressed by innovation and technology.

Similarly, Ogun State faces a challenge with a notable percentage of children who are OoS across different levels. For instance, a 2024 UNICEF survey indicated alarming percentages: 10.3% at primary, 12.1% at junior secondary, and 20.9% at upper secondary levels, making a total of 43.3%. It was also shown that Ogun State has the highest percentage of OoS adolescents in Nigeria's southwest. Poverty and the associated costs of education were identified as the primary reasons for children being OoS, according to UNICEF and other stakeholders in Ogun State, Nigeria. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate how the Diffusion of Innovation (DoI) Theory might improve OoS children's educational accessibility in Ogun State, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ogun State, Nigeria, is recently attacking with massive statistics of children exclusion from formal education, instigation examination into how new ideas for education accessibility are disseminated, accepted or rejected in the quest for universal education of OoSCiOs.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. examine how the activities of community and religious leaders impact the educational accessibility of OoSCiOs, Nigeria; and
- ii. examine the potentials of rehabilitation strategy in increasing educational accessibility of OoSCiOs, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. how has the activities of community and religious leaders impacted the educational accessibility of OoSCiOs, Nigeria?
- ii. what are the potentials of rehabilitation strategy in increasing educational accessibility of OoSCiOs, Nigeria?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is related to Rogers Everett's DoI Theory (1962), which focuses on understanding how, why, and how quickly innovative ideas and technologies spread in a social system.

2.1.1 Diffusion of Innovation (DoI) Theory

This theory is most suitable as it aims to explain the mechanism or process, describe the patterns of utilisation, and help anticipate if (and how) an innovation will be successful. It may take a long time for new technologies to be fully adopted and employed, and sometimes these efforts encounter strong opposition from certain segments of the community in which they are intended to be spread. Diffusion of innovation is often used to describe the dissemination of ideas from one society to another or from a centre or institution within a society to other regions of that society

(Rogers, 1962). The whole DoI theory consists of four main parts, namely innovation, communication system, time and social system.

Innovation: An individual or other unit of use-specific concept, method, or product (Rogers, 1983). It encompasses all collections of goods and services, new or old, that, when used, provide the user with an unparalleled level of utilisation. In other words, an innovation happens when a user thinks it is original. Innovation, as used in this research work, embraces the idea or practice by the government to adopt the use of religious and community leaders' communication systems to reach out to the OoS children and enhance their access to education. In addition, it equally involves creating the levels of awareness or knowledge, persuasion, making a decision on adoption or rejection, implementing and confirmation of utilisation of innovations (education initiatives).

Communication System: The communication system, which serves as a conduit for users to exchange information with one another, is another component of dispersion. It is a method that manages information flow between users. Mass media and interpersonal channels are the two groups into which Rogers has separated communication systems. The DoI increases with the speed and quality of the communication mechanism. Even if mass media may disseminate knowledge more rapidly, Rogers argues that the interpersonal channel is more important for the dissemination of new innovations or technology. It is in light of this that the researcher believed that most of the innovation in the ICT tools or facilities will be diffused through interpersonal channels to the communities (OoS children). In contrast, diffusion is a profoundly social phenomenon that involves interpersonal interactions (Rogers, 2003).

Time: The adopter classification and use rate are really recorded by the time component of the innovation dissemination process. In addition, it records the duration of an innovation from the moment of creation until it ceases to be original. It also measures how quickly the invention spreads across society and is used by various users (OoS children aged 6 to 18).

Social System: A group of connected units working together to solve problems in order to achieve a shared objective is another essential component of diffusion (Rogers, 2003). Until an invention is acknowledged by a social structure, it is useless. An educational innovation ceases to exist in a society if it is not acknowledged. Only when a social system acknowledges it as an invention and then disseminates information about it both inside and across systems does the DoI occur. Rogers (2003) classified society's members into five categories based on their level of inventiveness in his study of social systems. Innovativeness is the extent to which an individual embraces new ideas relative to other members of the system (Rogers, 2003). These groups consist of knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation.

Adoption of DoI Theory by education administrators, for instance, will prompt community leaders, parents and OoS children to take action towards utilisation of government educational initiatives. This is because they will be well informed about the expected positive outcomes of what they do. The execution of the reformation and rehabilitation process will be improved by using the four components of diffusion research (Innovation, Communication System, Time, and Social System). While the Innovation gives room for reformation of educational activities, communication and social systems will help in the rehabilitation of the OoS children. The time element will then help in the assessment of the effective management of the initiatives to increase equal accessibility to qualitative education.

2.2 Empirical Review

A central component of community-based educational reform is the decentralization of decision-making. This approach can make educational policies more responsive to local needs because community members possess contextual knowledge that may not be available to policymakers operating at state or national levels. Empirical evidence from Nigeria, however, indicates that the existence of community structures does not necessarily translate into effective participation. Musa and Muhammad (2018) investigation involved teachers, head teachers and community members found no statistically significant relationship between community participation and primary-school management ($p = .360$). The finding suggests that merely creating opportunities for community involvement is insufficient; participation must be structured, meaningful and connected to actual decision-making authority. This distinction is important for educational reform. When community members attend meetings but have little influence over decisions may have limited effects on school performance. Effective community-based reform should therefore move beyond consultation toward shared planning, joint decision-making, transparent resource management and collective accountability.

Research from South-Eastern Nigeria, for example, Enyi (2021) found that communities participated to a considerable extent in funding school projects and providing infrastructure in public secondary schools. This indicates that community structures can serve as an additional managerial resource when appropriately integrated into school governance. Consequently, community-based educational reforms should be conceived as a governance strategy that combines decentralization, local knowledge, social accountability, resource mobilization and collective responsibility. When supported by adequate public financing, capacity building, transparent decision-making and inclusive participation, such reforms can contribute to more responsive, equitable and sustainable educational management.

Adeleke and Alabede (2022) investigated terrestrial elements and flashpoints of OoS children in Nigeria. The study found that OoS children were unequally distributed across Nigeria. It was further reported that poverty, joblessness, low level of education, and meager socioeconomic situations pointedly increase OoS statistics. However, the study attributed geographic location and community characteristics as strong influencers of school enrolment. The level of generalization of the aforesaid findings is yet to be ascertained which informed this current study in Ogun State. Besides, OoS children peculiar characteristics like age, failure and early marriage that were not addressed by Adeleke and Alabede were factored into this investigation.

In another expansion, Ogunode and Adanna (2022) examined factors accountable for huge OoS children in Nigeria and its remedies. The study reported that the major contributors to high rate of OoS kids despite government interventions: poverty, inadequate educational funding, insecurity, specifically in conflict-prone provinces remain the most dominant factor discouraging school turnout. The enquiry further establishes weak execution of educational rules and child rights regulation aggravates the problem. From the foregoing, it is crystally shown that the government adopted strategies have not yielded expected outcomes. Hence, this study explored the inclusion of local authorities approach to enhance education access in Nigeria.

Manzuma-Ndaaba, et al. (2021) remarked that economic hardship and parental illiteracy; gender disparities; poor school infrastructure and inadequate instruction personnel, and policy implementation gaps caused high statistics of OoS children. Although the research identified the causes of OoS children, very germane to this study but was unable to found pragmatic measures that could solve the problems at local level. It is noteworthy that all the aforementioned lacunas would not only be addressed but also resolved through the recommendations of this study.

Keijzer et al. (2022) posited that partnership between local authorities and government agencies will further enhance rehabilitation strategies for vulnerable children. Effective community-based rehabilitation requires coordinated efforts among schools, local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious leaders, community-based institutions, and development partners (UNICEF, 2022). These stakeholders could significantly contribute resources, expertise, and integrate interventions that focus on the educational, social and economic needs of OoS children.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach. This technique is meant to achieve a set of two research objectives and questions related to OoS children in Ogun State, Nigeria.

3.2 Study Area

This investigation was done in Ogun State, Nigeria. UNICEF (2022) indicated that Ogun State has the highest percentage (43.3%) of OoS adolescents in Nigeria's southwest which informed the choice of this research locale.

3.3 Target Population

The target population consisted of community leaders, religious leaders and OoS children, Nigeria. These group of people were in close proximity which informed their inclusion in the study.

3.4 Sampling and sample size

The multi-stage sampling procedures, comprising purposive, quota and snowball sampling methods, were utilised in the selection of nine participants in three selected communities in Ogun State.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

A semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted to elicit qualitative data using Management of Out of School Children Interview Guide (MOSCIG), contained two themes and six sub-themes. One community leader, a religious leader and one OoS child were interviewed in each of the selected communities.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data generated was analysed through a thematic technique (content analysis), themes and sub-themes were mapped out in the study.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The Ethical Approval, Federal University Oye-Ekit Unit was secured. The study adhered to ethical considerations of the participants and obtained their informed consent based on the principle of confidentiality.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

The content analysis of the three qualitative reports (OoS children, community leaders, religious leaders), organised by main themes and sub-themes are presented thus:

Theme 1: Perceived Roles of Community and Religious Leaders

Sub-themes 1.1: Proximity, Trust, and Moral Authority

All three groups strongly believe that *community leaders and religious leaders can influence OoS children more effectively than mass/social media*. Reasons given include: physical proximity and daily contact; ability to invite parents and children for direct dialogue; capacity to organise town-hall meetings and sensitisation; and moral and spiritual authority as “fathers” or custodians of community values. Out-of-school youth themselves express higher confidence in local leaders than in government or media promises.

Sub-themes 1.2: Monitoring, Sanctions, and Accountability

Community leaders envisage setting up *monitoring teams* and even applying community-level sanctions to “erring parents and children” who refuse to cooperate. This indicates that local governance structures could be mobilised to enforce schooling norms, provided safeguards are in place to protect children’s rights and avoid abusive sanctions.

Sub-themes 1.3: Faith-based Advocacy and Scriptural Framing

Religious leaders stress the activities they have been carrying out - preaching on the subject of education, asking God to help children to have the right minds, counselling parents and reading passages of the Bible which demonstrate that knowledge is a great value. They go on to add that the best way for government programmes for OoS children to go is through religious institutions because they have reached the highest levels of trust. This indeed is a great leverage point of faith-based partnerships as a community-anchored response.

Theme 2: Rehabilitation, Willingness to Return, and Pragmatic Solutions

Sub-themes 2.1: Strongly Expressed Willingness to Return to School

Out-of-school children often reiterate that they would or even would more than willingly go back to school. Their main motive is the feeling of shame, regret, comparison with siblings who are moving ahead in school, etc. Community and religious leaders also believe that a large number of youths will take the chance of schooling if there are conditions that will support them. This is quite a contravention of the picture that is sometimes drawn about OoS youth, i.e. that they are disinterested in education.

Sub-themes 2.2: Barriers to Re-entry: Shame, Age, and Stigma

However, the answers expect obstacles such as shame of repeating classes, age mismatch with classmates, and early marriage. These factors especially serve as obstacles for the cases of older youths, which finally lead to recommendations such as changing one’s school, abandoning one’s locality, or running one through a separate rehabilitation setting to curtail stigmatisation.

Sub-themes 2.3: Rehabilitation Centres and Alternative Pathways

Absolutely, the different parties express educational assistance and vocational rehabilitation centres at the wards, local government areas or educational zones with some form of incentive as a top priority. Such centres are expected to accomplish the following: offer remedial classes and skills training; be a safe place where students who have previously been in schools could go to avoid being embarrassed; make use of being close to keep the students in school; and make the dropouts the useful citizens of tomorrow. Therefore, a two-track route, one for academic catch-up and the other for vocational skills, is a likely way to get the whole range of ages and interests.

Table 1

Summary of Themes and Sub-themes of Results

Stakeholder Group	Main Themes	Total Sub-themes	Key Focus
A. OoS Children	2 Themes	6	Lived experiences, self-perceived responsibility/agency, pathways to return
B. Community Leaders	2 Themes	6	Community-level diagnosis, governance responsibility, rehabilitation proposals
C. Religious Leaders	2 Themes	6	Religious discourse, spiritual leadership, faith-based policy solutions
Stakeholder Group	Theme	Sub-theme	Description
A. OoS Children	Theme 1: Perceived Roles of Local Leaders	1.1 Proximity, Trust, and Moral Authority	Physical proximity and daily contact; ability to invite parents and children for direct dialogue; capacity to organise town-hall meetings and sensitisation; moral and spiritual authority



A. OoS Children	Theme 1: Perceived Roles of Local Leaders	1.2 Monitoring, Sanctions, and Accountability	Setting up monitoring teams, applying community-level sanctions to erring parents and children
A. OoS Children	Theme 1: Perceived Roles of Local Leaders	2.3 Faith-based Advocacy and Scriptural Framing	Preaching about education, praying for children, counselling families, and using scriptures to emphasise the value of knowledge
A. OoS Children	Theme 2: Pathways Back to Education	2.1 Strong Willingness to Return	More than willing to return; dissatisfaction with current life; education as a route to restore dignity
A. OoS Children	Theme 2: Pathways Back to Education	2.2 Barriers of Shame and Age	Ashamed to repeat classes in the same school, age gaps with classmates, early marriage, making reintegration unrealistic
A. OoS Children	Theme 2: Pathways Back to Education	2.3 Rehabilitation Centres and Alternative Schools	Recommend rehabilitation centres, study centres at ward/LGA level with incentives, remedial classes, and non-stigmatising environments
B. Community Leaders	Theme 1: Perceived Roles of Local Leaders	1.1 Community-level diagnosis,	Proximity, trust, and moral authority
B. Community Leaders	Theme 1: Perceived Roles of Local Leaders	1.2 Governance responsibility,	Monitoring, sanctions, and accountability
B. Community Leaders	Theme 1: Perceived Roles of Local Leaders	1. Rehabilitation proposals	Faith-based advocacy and scriptural Framing
B. Community Leaders	Theme 2: Responsibility and Governance	2.1 Multilevel Responsibility	Parents, children, teachers, school management, government, and peer groups are responsible; system-wide problem
B. Community Leaders	Theme 2: Responsibility and Governance	2.2 Community Leaders as Gatekeepers	Leaders are more effective than the media; they propose town-hall meetings, monitoring teams, community sanctions, and local governance structures
B. Community Leaders	Theme 2: Rehabilitation and Policy Proposals	2.3 Rehabilitation Centres at Local Levels	Support educational/vocational centres at ward/LGA levels with incentives; proximity and dedicated services are crucial
C. Religious Leaders	Theme 1: Responsibility and Religious Leadership	1.1 Shared Responsibility with Moral Tone	Parents, government, teachers, school management, community, children responsible; moral language (God-given duties, justice, willingness)
C. Religious Leaders	Theme 1: Responsibility and Religious Leadership	1.2 Religious Leaders as Spiritual Fathers and Advocates	Pastors/imams preach, pray, know children by name, and can counsel; intervention should channel through religious institutions; children have more confidence in religious leaders than in the government
C. Religious Leaders	Theme 1: Responsibility and Religious Leadership	1.3 Faith-based Advocacy and Scriptural Framing	Preaching about education, praying for children, counselling families, and using scriptures to emphasise the value of knowledge
C. Religious Leaders	Theme 2: Rehabilitation, Re-entry and Policy Solutions	1.1 Willingness of Youth and Conditions for Return	Youth unhappy, would return with counselling, financial aid, remediation, orientation; older youth face age/marriage barriers
C. Religious Leaders	Theme 2: Rehabilitation, Re-entry and Policy Solutions	2.2 Educational and Vocational Rehabilitation Centres	Endorse centres at ward/district/community/zone/LGA levels with incentives; a non-stigmatising environment to recover lost ground
C. Religious Leaders	Theme 2: Rehabilitation, Re-entry and Policy Solutions	2.3 Integrated Policy Levers with Faith-Based Involvement	Fee waivers, cash transfers, teacher supply, infrastructure, gender equity, study centres, and faith-based innovations must be in partnership with religious organisations

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Perceived Superiority of Local Leadership over Mass Media

All three groups of stakeholders are quite convinced that community leaders and religious leaders have a greater capacity to influence OoS children compared to mass or social media. The reasons cited are: physical proximity and the ability to identify and invite specific children and parents; capacity to organise town-hall meetings and direct community dialogues; shared language, culture and daily contact, which allow sustained follow-up; and moral authority to sanction

non-compliant parents and children where appropriate. Out-of-school children themselves express greater trust in community and religious leaders than in distant government officials or media campaigns. In a broad sense, the findings reinforce Rogers' (2003) idea that the DoI theory sees the social process as part of the interpersonal communication interactions.

4.2.2 Moral and Spiritual Framing of Education

Religious leaders mention their efforts to continually preach about knowledge, pray for OoS children, and use scriptural counselling for families. They believe that any government programme aimed at OoS children will be much more successful if faith-based institutions, which are trusted, are the main channel of communication. Educational advocacy, which is a part of teaching about learning, can be viewed as a continuation of existing moral and spiritual practices through which formal interventions can be introduced. The study's findings are in line with Rogers Everett's DoI Theory (1962), which aims to understand how and to whom innovation and technology unfold in a social system.

4.2.3 Strong Willingness to Return to School

The research also made an attempt to see how reformation methods can help OoS children get more educational exposure in Ogun State, Nigeria. Almost all OoS children at all times and from different directions express an interest in going back to school. They perceive their present state as unsatisfactory and feel less fortunate in comparison to siblings and friends who are still attending school. Community and religious leaders attest that many OoS youths secretly express their remorse during private talks. This indicates that the main factor is not a lack of motivation but the presence of realistic and socially acceptable ways of getting back into education. The results support the findings of Oyekan et al. (2023), who note that the rise in OoS children in Nigeria is a result of both supply and demand constraints to educational access.

4.2.4 Stigma, Age and the Need for Alternative Routes

Despite their willingness, respondents anticipate significant barriers to re-entry, particularly those that have to do with the following: shame associated with repeating classes or being much older than classmates; embarrassment at returning to former schools where their dropout history is known; and early marriage for some girls, making a return to conventional full-time schooling socially complex.

To address this, children and leaders suggest changing schools, moving to different environments, or creating separate structures for over-age learners. The study's findings are consistent with those of Farouq et al. (2024), who state that the societal ramifications of OoS children include security concerns, a future lack of competent labour, a poor reputation abroad, high rates of illiteracy, and socioeconomic and dependence problems. One of the main factors influencing OoS children's desire to return to school is the effects of illiteracy and social reliance.

4.2.5 Rehabilitation and Remedial Centres

All three groups strongly endorsed the establishment of educational and vocational rehabilitation centres at ward, local government or educational zone levels. These centres are expected to provide remedial classes to cover missed content and prepare learners for re-integration or certification; vocational training options for older youth who may not wish to pursue conventional academic routes; incentives such as feeding or stipends to offset opportunity costs and encourage attendance; a fresh social environment that reduces the stigma of returning to one's former school. This sub-theme points to a preference for flexible, community-proximate education models that recognise the diverse ages and responsibilities of OoS youth. The results support Oyekan et al (2023) assertion that governmental and non-governmental initiatives are needed to investigate new educational innovations, such as infrastructure expansion and reconstruction, increased enrolment sensitisation, and economic intervention to support traditional interventions.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that interpersonal communication channels, community and faith-based advocacies, as well as peer networks, are far more effective drivers of behavioural change than conventional ICT campaigns. This study also concluded that the rates of adoption of innovations in educational accessibility depends on the perceived relevance, proximity to rehabilitation centres, trustworthiness, and cultural adaptability of new initiatives.

5.2 Recommendations

The results of the research have led to useful suggestions for policy makers and other shareholders. Educational stakeholders in the state should prioritise grassroots champions to positively influence OoS children in Ogun State. Proximity of rehabilitation centres to the disadvantaged children at the local government and ward levels should be

considered along with conventional school settings by the Ogun State Government. The government should consider the inclusion of community and religious-lead intervention in the planning and implementation phases of educational initiatives in the state to expand educational access for OoS children. A renewed social environment that reduces the stigma of returning to one's former school through vocational training options for older youth who may not wish to pursue conventional academic routes should be considered by the educational stakeholders in the state. The government should also consider incentives for OoS children, such as feeding programme or stipends to offset opportunity costs and encourage sustainable school attendance across the state.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Funding Declaration

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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