

APPRENTICESHIP IN YORUBA ECONOMIC CULTURE OF IBADAN, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Apprenticeship is a fundamental component of Yoruba economic culture, facilitating skill acquisition, wealth creation and intergenerational knowledge transfer. Nevertheless, the decline in Yoruba apprenticeship system poses significant threat to Ibadan economy, livelihood of youths and policy sustainability. Previous studies have highlighted entrepreneurship and labour mobility; the socio-economic integration and mentorship of Yoruba apprenticeship networks and culture remain under-researched. This study focuses on apprenticeship in Yoruba economic culture in Ibadan. Human Capital Theory provided the framework. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design, using a mixed-methods approach, was adopted. A sample of 350 apprentices were selected through a systematic sampling technique for the quantitative approach. Using a snowball sampling technique, six key informant interviews were conducted with master artisans, while a purposive sampling method was used to select nine apprentices for in-depth interviews. Findings reveal that the majority started apprenticeship in 2020, involved in apprenticeship combined with formal education, used modern technology in apprenticeship for the purpose of income generation and certification. Informal apprenticeship was a means of sustaining informal Yoruba vocational heritage, which involved empowerment through vocational work, mentorship and indigenous productivity. Therefore, the Federal and Oyo State Governments should institutionalise the apprenticeship of the Yoruba people through the process of certification, provision of financial support, technological training and vocational regulation.

Keywords: Apprenticeship, economic culture, youth empowerment, Yoruba vocational heritage, Ibadan

Introduction

The Informal Apprenticeship (IA) is a strong system of knowledge passing on occupational skills, entrepreneurial values and socio-economic knowledge for much of the Global South outside formal education. Despite the poorly institutionalised vocational training infrastructures in some contexts, apprenticeship remains a significant avenue for acquiring skills and engaging in economic activity (Irene, Chukwuma-Nwuba, Lockyer, Onoshakpor & Ndeh, 2024). The scholarships from South-East Nigeria, especially on the Igbo Apprenticeship System, have shown the importance of apprenticeship in entrepreneurship development, business start-up, wealth creation and empowerment of the youth. These studies give a valuable insight into indigenous economic organisation and human capital formation. Likewise, apprenticeship learning, which takes place through observing and imitating then mastering skills has continued to be a core part of employment creation and microenterprise development in Sub-Saharan Africa (Afeti, 2024). In West Africa, these are facilitated through kinship, trust relationships, and community obligations (Olabisi & Adesola, 2025). Although the apprenticeship system is a vital aspect in the local economy of Ibadan, the institutional and policy aspects of the Yoruba system is not widely explored, even though it exists (Babatunde, 2024).

The challenge of dearth of informal apprenticeship and weak institution for skills acquisition remain dominant in the Yoruba economic culture in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. It plays a key role in absorbing labour and in transferring entrepreneurial skills yet it is not formally integrated in regulatory and developmental policy frameworks, resulting in a paradox between the socio-economic importance of the sector and the lack of policy visibility (Ankoojee & Werquin, 2026). Informal apprenticeship systems are widely used across Africa as a large employment pathway, but are poorly governed, lack certification systems and are poorly integrated into national skills policies (Glover, Appiah & Haruna, 2024). In Nigeria, such systems are still playing a significant role in defining labour mobility and entrepreneurial socialisation, as characterised by the experience and intergenerational learning that is integral to the local socialisation practices (Irene *et al.*, 2024). The absence of formal recognition, however, poses questions on labour protection, labour standardisation and economic optimisation (Olujimi, 2024). Moreover, the uncertainty in the regulation for

such systems is indicative of other regulatory gaps, which hinders systems integration with national development objectives and restricts policy actions to address these systems.

Extant studies have identified informal apprenticeship as an essential tool for acquiring skills through hands-on experience and for learning about entrepreneurship and business outside of formal education institutions (Akoojee&Werquin, 2026). Internationally, this has increased attention focused on the need for policy support to formalise informal apprenticeship within formal vocational education and training (FVT) to boost youth employment and enterprise creation, across Africa (Nunyonamehet *al.*, 2024). The analyses of the continents, however, are focused primarily on policy harmonisation and structural changes, and are missing a detailed account of the socio-cultural aspects of the embedding of apprenticeship in particular ethnic economies. Igbo apprenticeship attracts substantial research attention (Kanu & Rector, 2019; Chukwuka, &Agbele, 2024), whereas Yoruba apprenticeship remains underexplored.

In light of the gap identified, the present study aimed at investigating the informal apprenticeship in Yoruba economic culture. In order to achieve the overarching research objective, the study specifically sought to investigate the: (i) types and nature of apprenticeship in Ibadan among Yoruba artisans, and (ii) patterns, technology and mentorship effects on the practices of apprenticeship among the Yoruba ethnic group.

Review of Related Literature

Apprenticeship is a largely informal learning experience that is structured and involves gaining practical skills, knowledge and work ethics from an experienced practitioner or master artisan. Learning is done by observing, imitating, involvement, and ongoing repetition in a culturally-rich occupation setting. Yet, apprenticeship is one of the most traditional forms of skills transfer, especially within the informal sector where learned skills are mainly acquired by experiential learning and social networks is the primary channels. Recent studies have shown that in societies that have limited access to formal vocational education, informal apprenticeship plays a vital role in entrepreneurship development, job creation, and sustainable livelihoods (Hofmann, Zelenka, Savadogo, & Okolo, 2022; Ali *et al.*, 2024). Empirical evidence also confirms that the process of emulation, imitation and practice of occupational skills is a culturally-mediated process that is acquired during apprenticeship (Irene *et al.*, 2024).

Regarding prevalence and patterns of apprenticeship amongst artisans, research findings show that apprenticeship systems are embedded in local economic cultures, influencing the production process as well as: occupational continuity, and intergenerational transmission of skills. In Africa, apprenticeship is not just a technical training programme; it is a form of socio-economic institution that helps to build social networks and an entrepreneurial attitude as well as the formation of capital among apprentices (Afeti, 2024). Out-of-school youth in sub-Saharan Africa continue to be engaged in apprenticeship as a key means of acquiring skills and launching businesses in the informal economy (Aneke, 2025). The systems are maintained and strengthened by the mentoring practices and discipline that emanates from the culturally developed relationships between master artisans and apprentices who pass along the occupational knowledge, discipline and ethics. These facilitate entrepreneurial development, trade network, income generation and sustainability of micro-enterprises (Olabisi & Adesola, 2025).

Yoruba economic culture is a very institutionalised one where apprenticeship is a key forum for the transmission of occupational knowledge, economic values and entrepreneurial practices across generations and especially among artisans in Ibadan. Artisans participate in the economy and social mobility in Nigeria is constrained by the cultural principles of apprenticeship: mentorship, reciprocity, discipline and communal responsibility among Yoruba (Familoni, 2024). But with changes in technology or new workplace practices, traditional mentorship structures are being modified and new issues of adaptation, continuity, and transfer of skills in today's apprenticeship system are emerging. Even though Yoruba apprenticeship is a socio-economic phenomenon, the literature has explored little the impact technology has on mentorship practices and occupational learning. Hence, this study looks at the prevalence, socio-economic role, and role of technology and mentor in the Yoruba apprenticeship system of artisans in Ibadan.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in Human Capital Theory, propounded by Schultz (1961), which posits that investments in education, training, and experience enhance individual productivity and broader socio-economic development. The theory underscores the economic value of human capabilities and systematic skill acquisition. Within the Yoruba economic culture of Ibadan, informal apprenticeship aligns with this framework, as it facilitates the transmission of vocational skills, trade knowledge, and work ethics through experiential learning under

master artisans. Despite its non-formal structure, it strengthens human capacity, sustains indigenous industries, and promotes economic stability. Apprentices thereby acquire technical, analytical, and entrepreneurial competencies that enhance employability and wealth creation (Becker, 2024). Consequently, this framework supports policy advocacy for the recognition, regulation, and optimization of informal apprenticeship systems.

Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design using a mixed-methods approach about apprenticeship in the Yoruba economic culture of Ibadan in Oyo State, Nigeria. The design was suitable, given that it allowed the researcher to gather, analyse and interpret empirical data on the prevalence, patterns, socio-economic significance of apprenticeships, the process of mentoring and the role of technology, while keeping the study variables unchanged. The study was carried out in the Southwestern part of Nigeria in Ibadan metropolis of Oyo State. The choice of Ibadan was due to its traditional status as an important centre of Yoruba culture and the customary practice of apprenticeship among artisans.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

Sample size was calculated at 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error with a large population using the Cochran formula. Using $Z = 1.96$, $p = 0.35$, $q = 0.65$, and $e = 0.05$, the calculation produced 349.586, which was approximated to 350 respondents for the quantitative aspect of the study. In addition, six key informant interviews and nine in-depth interviews were conducted as complements to the quantitative data.

For the purpose of representativeness, multi-stage sampling technique was used in the study. Firstly, five Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected (Ibadan North, Ibadan Southeast, Egbeda, Ido and Akinyele) out of the existing 11 LGAs in Ibadan. Secondly, in each of the LGAs, three artisan clusters were purposively due to high population density of apprentices. Thirdly, respondents were selected using a systematic sampling technique for the quantitative aspect of the study where the sampling interval was determined by dividing total number of registered artisans and apprentices in each sampling frame before selecting respondents on the sampling interval from the lists of apprenticeship.

For the qualitative component of the study, key informants and in-depth interviewees were purposively selected because of their rich experiences on mentorship and indigenous

knowledge transfer, in addition to adapting to technological changes. While the key informants included master artisans and professionals with skills in informal occupation that were acquired outside of formal training, the participants for the in-depth interviews comprised apprentices in the vocations like tailoring, barbing, telephone repairs, plumbing, panel beating and electrical works, among other trades.

Inclusion Criteria

The following inclusion criteria were adopted: Respondents were selected to be Yoruba in ethnic affiliation, who lived and worked in Ibadan; Apprentices were apprenticed for a minimum of one year; Master artisans have trained or supervised apprentices for a minimum of five years. These criteria ensured that the participants have relevant knowledge on apprenticeships and their socio-economic implications.

Instrumentation, validity and ethical considerations

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design where a structured questionnaire was administered to respondents in the selected Local Government Areas. The data gathering techniques included were researcher designed questionnaire, semi-structured interview guides and non-participant observation. The quantitative approach was chosen due to its ability to provide objective data on the prevalence, duration, payment of apprenticeships, technology being used, certification patterns, working conditions and socio-economic outcomes for the apprentices. All the questions in the instrument were nominal and ordinal scale questions to standardise and easy to interpret the statistics. The questions in the questionnaire were developed from the existing indigenous labour system and indigenous informal vocational training literature in Nigeria (Jegede, 2024). In addition, interview guides were designed using semi-structured interview guide format in order to complement and allow for flexibility in questions during participants engagement in interview sessions. Throughout the research process, informed consent, confidentiality and voluntary participation were adhered to, in line with ethical principles.

As a measure to validate the instruments, face validity and pre-test of instruments were carried out in Ibadan Southwest before the actual administration of the instruments. In line with the ethical guidelines, informed consents were obtained from the heads of workshops before administering the questionnaire and interview guides. The principles of voluntary

participation, confidentiality, anonymity and non-maleficence were duly observed during the entire study as applicable in social research ethics around the world (Olujimi, 2024).

Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire was analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistical tools such as tables, percentages, bar charts and pie charts. In addition, the qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis method following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) steps of qualitative data analysis. The use of the two approaches was informed by the ability of both complementing each other and the provision of more insights and nuances to the findings of the study.

Results

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were obtained. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents across the socio-demographic variables. The socio-demographic characteristics showed that the apprenticeship activities were well distributed across Ibadan metropolis with a higher concentration in the semi-urban artisan clusters in Egbeda, Ibadan North and Akinyele LGAs with 45.7%, 18.0% and 36.3%, respectively.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency (n=350)	Percentage (%)
LGA		
Ibadan North	63	18.0
Egbeda	160	45.7
Akinyele	127	36.3
Gender		
Male	190	54.3
Female	160	45.7
Religion		
Christianity	201	57.4
Islam	110	31.4
Marital status		
Single	222	63.4
Married	128	36.6
Education qualification		
Primary	127	36.3
Secondary	95	27.1
Tertiary	64	18.3

Source: Field survey, 2026

The gender distribution was slightly male-dominated (54.3%), but with significant participation of females (45.7%) indicating a growing sense of inclusiveness in informal vocational training. The majority of respondents (63.4%) and young people are single, which is consistent with the perception that apprenticeship systems are mainly targeting young, unmarried people who want to enter the labour market. The level of education revealed that the majority of respondents had only primary to secondary level of education, which also indicated that informal apprenticeship is a major alternative to the formal education paths.

Objective 1: The Types and Nature of Apprenticeship in the Yoruba Economy of Ibadan

Table 2 illustrates the type and nature of informal apprenticeship among the Yoruba artisans in Ibadan.

Table 2: Types and Nature of Informal Apprenticeship among the Yoruba Ethnic Group

Variables	Variable categories	Frequency	Percentage
Types of the training	Tailor	128	36.6
	Hairdresser	64	18.3
	Panel-pitter	32	9.1
	Electrician	32	9.1
	Phone repair	62	17.7
	Others	32	9.1
Time to start up informal apprenticeship	2020	223	63.7
	2022	32	9.1
	2024	32	9.1
	2019	63	18.0
Type of training engaged	Tailoring	64	18.3
	Hairdressing	96	27.4
	Phone repairs	31	8.9
	Plumbing	32	9.1
	Others	127	36.3

Age of the apprenticeship	15-20	159	45.4
	21-30	95	27.1
	31-40	64	18.3
	41 and above	32	9.1
Years spent under boss	1-2years	223	63.7
	3-4years	95	27.1
	5years and above	32	9.1
Respondents' guarantor	Father	95	27.1
	Mother	64	18.3
	Relatives	160	45.7
	Friends	31	8.9
Duration of apprenticeship	1years	96	27.4
	2years	127	36.3
	3years	96	27.4
	4years and above	31	8.9
Payment of stipends	Yes	126	36.0
	No	224	64.0
Resumption time to work on daily basis	Between 7-8a.m	32	9.1
	between 8-9a.m	96	27.4
	between 9-10a.m	190	54.3
	Others	32	9.1
Closing time at work	between 4-5p.m	32	9.1
	between 5-6p.m.	158	45.1
	between 6-7p.m.	128	36.6
	Others.	32	9.1

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The prevalence of tailoring (36.6%) and hairdressing (18.3%) also suggests the gendered and service dimension of the Yoruba craft-based economies. The low stipend access (64% unpaid) however, shows that there are exploitative trends in informal labour arrangements, where survival takes priority over welfare. Relatives serving as guarantors (45.7%) perpetuates the implicit trust system that supports apprenticeship entry. Figure 1 indicates

that more than half (54.6%) of the respondents were paying part payment while (45.4%) paid full payment. It signifies that in the informal context of artisanal work, financing of apprenticeship schemes is primarily through flexible installment-based funding (54.6 %), with the other 45.4 % paying for the apprenticeship upfront.

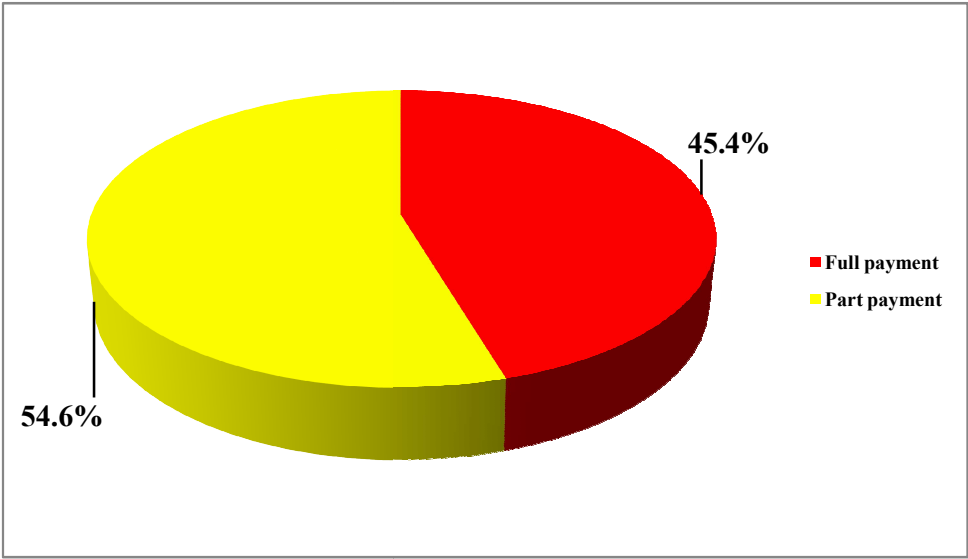


Figure 1: Mode of payment of the respondents

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Figure 2 depicts that more than half (54.3%) combine informal apprenticeship with formal education while (45.7%) did not.

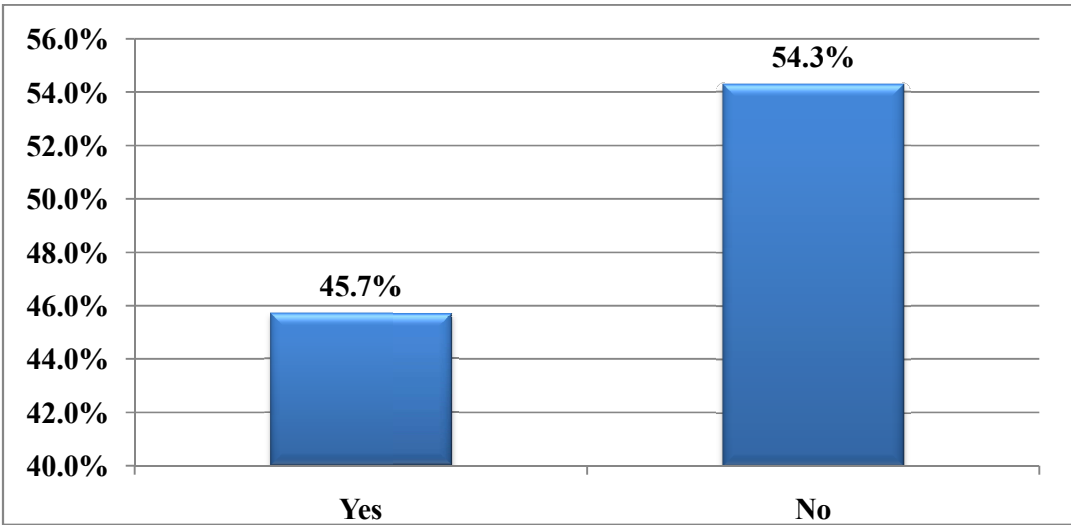


Figure 2: Combination of informal apprenticeship with formal education

Source: Field Survey, 2026

It indicates that the majority of the respondents (54.3%) engaged in informal apprenticeship and formal education as opposed to 45.7% that did not, suggesting an emerging hybrid learning arrangement among the Yoruba apprentices in Ibadan. Figure 2 reflects a change in the traditional exclusive apprenticeship systems to integrated human capital development paths.

The nature of apprenticeship was also delved into using the interview of various artisans. Different answers were provided due to their knowledge, exposure and experience. One participant stated thus:

An artisan was informal apprenticeship among the Yoruba is like a rite of passage. Each master teaches his apprentice, and the apprentice teaches his master, and so on. It's a tradition that has been passed down for generations. When you're learning a trade or learning a skill, you're learning about life, you're learning about responsibility, you're learning about respect for your elders, you're learning about a whole lot more. Your master is like your father to you; he guides, corrects and encourages you to be the best you can be **(KII/Male/22 years/Plumber/Ibadan/2026)**

Another participant added that apprenticeship is not all about learning a craft but also learning about the culture and settings of the craft. As he put it precisely:

When I was an apprentice, I was taught that it wasn't only about learning a craft, it was about learning the culture and setting of the craft." My master taught me how to create traditional Yoruba cloths as well as the history and meaning behind them. He taught me how to select the right materials, how to use the right tools, and how to infuse each piece with meaning and purpose. It is a skill that is not taught in the classroom or a book **(IDI/Male/18 years/Tailor/Ibadan/2026)**.

Another participant also reported as follows:

The apprenticeship system is, more than a trade, it's about character building. As an apprentice, be obedient, respectful and hardworking. You should learn from the errors you make, overcome difficulties and aim for excellence. My master was hard upon me but he was also fair and kind. He challenged me to do my best and helped me to be proud of my work. These are lessons I have lived and learned throughout my life and career **(IDI/Male/23 years/Cobbler/Ibadan/2026)**.

Objective 2: Patterns, technology and mentorship effects of apprenticeship practices among the Yoruba ethnic group

Table 3 depicts that there is high labour discipline and continuity in these informal apprenticeships as 63.4% of the respondents reported their regular attendance at work in Ibadan. The motives for taking on an apprenticeship are highly dual, with financial gain (27.1%) and personal interest (27.4%) also being important. Family and peer influence are also significant, and apprenticeship systems are well embedded in society. Technological patterns reveal a transitional pattern, with 45.2% employing modern tools and the remaining patterns using a combination of or crude tools, suggesting a process of gradual digitalisation.

Table 3: Patterns, technology used and mentorship effects of informal apprenticeship among the Yoruba ethnic group

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Appearance at work</i>		
Always	222	63.4
During school holiday	128	36.6
<i>Motivation for engaging in this apprenticeship</i>		
Family influence	64	18.3
Personal interest	96	27.4
Friends	64	18.3
Financial gain	95	27.1
Other	31	8.9
<i>Mode of the apprenticeship in terms of technological usage</i>		
Crude technology	96	27.4
Modern technology	158	45.2
Both crude and modern	96	27.4
<i>Years that the respondents intend to spend on learning your work</i>		
1 year	160	45.7
1-2 years	32	9.1
3-4 years	158	45.2
<i>Who are you living with during your training</i>		
Parents	63	18.0

Sister	64	18.3
Brother	128	36.6
Neighbour	95	27.1
<i>Apprentices receive formal certification upon completion of training</i>		
Yes	254	72.6
No	96	27.4
<i>Primary goal of informal apprenticeship</i>		
To earn salary	222	63.4
To learn a trade or skill	96	27.4
To gain certificate	32	9.1
<i>Role of the master in an informal apprenticeship</i>		
To provide theoretical knowledge	95	27.1
To supervise and guide the apprentice	159	45.4
To provide financial support	64	18.3
To certify the apprentice's skill	32	9.1
<i>Masters typically assess an apprentice progress</i>		
By observing their work and providing feedback	191	54.6
Through peer review and feedback	159	45.4
<i>Role of community in informal apprenticeship</i>		
To provide financial support	63	18.0
To offer training facilities	159	45.4
To provide social support and networking	128	36.6

Source: Field Survey, 2026

There is a high level of certification (72.6%), indicating growing recognition of informal skills in the formal process. From the qualitative results, the part that Ogas play in guiding and training young apprentices was reported. The role of the so-called “Oga” in the Yoruba culture in mentoring and guiding the apprentice was examined here and responses were garnered from the respondents. A participant said thus:

There are many things that apprentices can bring to the trade, for instance the use of social media in marketing, or adding wonderful ideas to the trade, like, in my shop, there's one girl that is always on Tiktok, she'll just do something and post it, and the customer will just go to the shop and buy it. Through the hands-

on approach of learning, they learn to practice their job and develop themselves. They learn physically with face to face method **(KII/Male/Participant from Akinyele, Ibadan)**.

Another participant commented like this:

As a tailor, I can tell you that our apprenticeship pattern is quite structured, I come to work at 8a.m. in the morning and close around 6p.m. in the evening depends on our boss, I always come to work unless on Sunday, typically an apprentice will start by learning the basics of sewing and garment construction, they will begin by assisting the master tailor with simple tasks like cutting fabric, threading needles, sewing straight lines and as they get more experience in the job, they will continue to work more on pattern-making, and embroidery **(KII/Female/44 years/Tailor/Ibadan/2026)**.

Working in an informal apprenticeship offers important skills and training for economic empowerment. In response to the question asked a young girl fashion designer stated thus:

My informal apprenticeship and entrepreneurship have played a key role in my economic development, gaining the skills and techniques to start my own business in the fashion design industry, and now supporting the local economy with taxes and job creation. "It has not only helped me improve my economic situation but also helped me to find employment and start businesses in my community, thus boosting its economy **(IDI/18 years/Female/Tailor/Ibadan/2026)**.

Another participant, who is an aspiring auto-mechanic stated thus:

I have been an auto mechanic for 13 years and my informal training and entrepreneurship has changed my economic status and led to employment for others as well. My skills and knowledge as an auto mechanic has helped me contribute to the local economy, support my family, and become financially stable **(IDI/Male/23 years/Auto Mechanic/Ibadan/2026)**.

Responses were also gotten from the *Ogas*, which were the key-informant interviewee of this study. One of the participants said the following:

Having an informal apprenticeship as a builder has been a big part of my economic growth. The skills and knowledge I learnt helped me start up my own building business which has helped me improve my economic status and also provided jobs for others. I had a chance to do informal apprenticeships and entrepreneurship, so I have been able to support the local economy, support my family and become financially stable **(KII/Male/45 years/Builder/Ibadan/2026)**.

Another also explained thus:

Yes, many women learn trades, such as hairdressing and tailoring and catering, through apprenticeship, and are able to begin their own business and feed their families. It is observed that women have to lead their lives as per what they earn from this their work of hand (**KII/Female/32 years/Hairdresser/Ibadan /2026**).

Discussion of Findings

The study focused on apprenticeship in the Yoruba economic culture of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Findings revealed that the gender distribution of apprentices was slightly male-dominated and highly youthful oriented. This finding corroborates the International Labour Organisation's (ILO, 2024) observation that emerging evidence suggests informal apprenticeship systems in Nigeria continue to be characterized by occupational concentration in low-capital trades, relative gender balance and a predominance of youth participation.

It was further revealed that tailoring/hairdressing sector were more predominant in the vocational training engaged in by the respondents, which indicate the adaptiveness and service orientation of the informal economies in Ibadan. Again, the share of 1-2 years spent under masters and of 2-year standard duration reveals a relatively short training period compared to the multi-year apprenticeship systems generally found, which may be due to economic pressures. These findings are consistent with the World Bank's (2025) report that highlight the importance of informal labour markets as key absorbers of semi-skilled urban African populations.

In line with recent literature, which has shown that the informal apprenticeship system is still economically adaptive and structurally uneven, with a balance between the creation of opportunities and precarious working conditions in West Africa (OECD, 2025). Findings revealed that the many of the apprentices faced financial difficulties, which require regular monthly payments and support from family members to undertake vocational training. Also, part-payment indicates that apprenticeship continues to be available but negotiated, it further supports the position that apprenticeship is an entry point to the informal economy without limits. It also provides clues to possible issues in training stability and training completion. This finding aligns with recent evidence of the growing reliance on flexible, "household-mediated" financing models in informal vocational systems in the economies of the African cities to support skill acquisition and labour inclusion (African Development Bank, 2024).

The trend of informal apprenticeship is indicative of greater flexibility, young apprentices who are engaged in both formal and vocational learning at the same time, thereby building the skills and knowledge required for their employability and economic security. In a similar vein, the findings align with the latest studies which show that dual learning systems help build skills among young people and enhance their employability in developing countries (UNESCO, 2024).

Furthermore, the findings illustrate that the process of apprenticeship in Ibadan is not only a process of learning technical skills but it is also a process of socialisation, moral edification and transmission from one generation to another in a culturally engrained system. The “Oga-apprentice” relationship was constantly reported as being familial and was understood to involve more than just training competence, encompassing discipline, respect and a shaping of behaviour over the lifetime of the relationship. The narratives also emphasise the situatedness and cultural nature of learning that involves not only the mastery of a technical skill but also the learning of historical meanings and indigenous values of production. This illustrates the apprenticeship as a developmental institution in which work, ethics and identity formation are all wrapped up together. The results support recent literature that suggests apprenticeship systems in Africa are both economic and socio-cultural and transmit productive skills as well as communal values (ILO, 2024).

The results on technology and mentorship effects on the practices of apprenticeship among the Yoruba are consistent with the international evidence of the formalisation and certification of skills in the informal apprenticeship sector (ILO, 2024), which is in contrary to the earlier study by Glover, Appiah and Haruna (2024) that informal apprenticeship systems are widely used across Africa as a large employment pathway, but are poorly governed, lack certification systems and are poorly integrated into national skills policies. Conversely, it was implicated that the vocational learning system among the Yoruba ethnic group displays features of both modernisation and continuity of culture. This supports Adeyemi’s (2025) work that the apprentice system among the Yoruba people is rooted in their community, where kinship ties, mentorship, and social networks play significant roles.

The patterns of informal apprenticeship among the Yoruba ethnic group indicate that *Ogas* are key figures in the Yoruba apprenticeship process, both as technical trainers and socio-cultural facilitators in the informal sector of Ibadan. Participants consistently referred to masters as

surrogate parents who pass on vocational skills and moral values, discipline, and indigenous knowledge systems like proverbs and traditions associated with a trade or craft. Apprenticeship is therefore placed in the context of a whole learning experience where identity development and mastery of the technical skills go hand in hand. The formal organisation of training, with set working hours and progressive acquisition of skills, is indicative of an organised but informal system of labour socialisation. This aligns with current evidence that African apprenticeship systems are built as a whole system for skills training and culture transmission (International Labour Organisation, 2024). Furthermore, it resonates with research findings that Indigenous Vocational Training Systems in Nigeria promote entrepreneurship, job creation, and economic empowerment through experiential learning and mentorship programmes (World Bank, 2025).

The findings of the study provided strong support to the hypotheses of Theodore Schultz's (1961) Human Capital Theory which posited that investment in training, education, experience, and skill acquisition increases productivity, employability and socio-economic development. The majority of the respondents in the young age group and the significant proportion of those in tailoring, hairdressing, repairing of phones and other vocational occupations, indicated that the informal apprenticeship was an indigenous mechanism for producing productive human capacities in the Yoruba economy of Ibadan. The fact that for many apprentices, vocational learning was made possible alongside formal education further strengthened the theoretical argument that various aspects of learning will lead to a broader formation of human capital and competitiveness in the labour market.

The study likewise depicted that the apprenticeship experience was not just one of skill acquisition, but of moral orientation, discipline and entrepreneurial consciousness, which were accomplished by “Ogas” as mentors. This supported the theory of Human Capital and the work of Akoojee and Werquin (2026) that the experiential learning and workplace socialisation improve the efficiency level of individuals and economic utility over time. In addition, the widespread use of new technology and social media in apprenticeship training practices showed evidence of human capital development that was adaptive and able to meet today's economic challenges. The socio-economic benefits realised through employment creation, self-reliance and enterprise development then validated the theoretical stance that formalised vocational learning was an important pillar of sustainable development, indigenous productivity and economic resilience in informal economies.

Conclusion

This study posits that informal apprenticeship was a well-entrenched institution in the Yoruba economic culture of Ibadan and was a viable mechanism for the transmission of native skills, economic empowerment and youth vocational integration. Results showed that apprenticeship made a significant contribution to employment creation, entrepreneurial development, cultural continuity and formation of sustainable livelihoods for Yoruba artisans. A higher proportion of young people, the use of new technology, and a significant mixing of apprenticeship and formal education highlighted its adaptability and evolution in response to the changing and social-economic context. It was also found that mentorship from “Ogas” went beyond the technical aspect of learning to also encompass moral guidance, socialisation, and character formation. Informal apprenticeship was thus not just vocational training, but a culturally embedded economic institution which not only maintained productivity, resilience and the development of communities but also sustained in the Ibadan metropolis.

Recommendations

- a) The National Directorate of Employment as well as the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment need to institutionalise informal apprenticeship in Nigeria through the formalisation of vocational frameworks.
- b) Oyo State Government should create artisan development centre(s) in Ibadan to equip master artisans and apprentices with modern production facilities, mediums of production and financial support for training.
- c) Indigenous vocational knowledge should be transferred from generation to generation in the community through traditional rulers, community associations, and artisan unions; with the orientation towards culture and ethical discipline among the youths.
- d) Schools and technical service providers should incorporate programmes for supporting apprenticeship into formal education to improve the employability and entrepreneurship of students.
- e) Financial institutions should introduce readily available microcredit schemes to support completion of apprenticeship, enterprise establishment and sustainable local economic development.

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