



## Governance failure and youth unemployment levels in Nigeria

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JUNE EDITION - YOUTH MONTH

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### Abstract

*The Nigerian government has shied away from serving the youth's interests. At both the national and municipal levels, the powerful government officials who built vast patronage networks during the military era now use their political office to expand these networks and their fortunes dominate Nigerian politics. Nigeria's economic development and progress have suffered as a result of this. Nigeria's democratic consolidation efforts are hampered by persistent poverty, which is compounded by youth unemployment. A nation comprised of parasites, bandits, and beggars is doomed to fail. The youth's unemployment is related to an increase in sectarian criminality, terrorism, and violence. In addition, Nigeria's high youth unemployment level contributes to a high level of state insecurity, which leads to robberies, abductions, tribal tensions, arbitrary arrests, ethnoreligious conflicts, and other illicit activities in Nigeria. This article examines the relationship between governance failure and the youth unemployment level in Nigeria.*

Keywords: Governance failure, youth unemployment level, Nigeria, poverty, economic development

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### Introduction

The youth are one of the most valuable assets that any country may possess because they are the foundation of a society. Their inventiveness, energies, character, and orientation define the pattern of development and security of a nation. They are not only appropriately recognized as today's partners but also as the largest investors in a country's development. A nation makes great strides by combining its creative talents and labour power. The youth

are a sensitive, dynamic, and active segment of the national population, and they are in their most productive phase of life as citizens. Without them, there is no future in terms of socioeconomic, development, and other aspects. They are a good indicator of a country's ability to reproduce as well as sustain its economy. On a worldwide scale, programs and policies that focus on the holistic development of the youth and their active participation in various sectors of nation-building are becoming more prominent.

## **Nigerian governance**

Since its independence in 1960, the Nigerian government, the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa regime, have shied away from serving the interests of its people. The powerful government officials who established vast patronage networks during the military era now use political office to expand these networks and fortunes, and they dominate Nigerian Federation politics at the federal, state, and local levels (Wayas & Selvadurai 2019). The youth unemployment level in Nigeria has hurt Nigeria's economic growth and development. Despite political protests against youth unemployment, the statistics are staggering (Nwaobi 2019). In 2015, Nigeria's population was estimated to be over 167 million people (National Bureau of Statistics 2015). According to the National Population Commission, youth, defined as those aged 15 to 34, account for roughly half of the population (NPC 2016). Unfortunately, the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 39.69% in the fourth quarter of 2020 from 32.80% in the second quarter of 2020. In light of the foregoing, the rapid increase in the country's unemployment rate has become a major source of worry, several school leavers and adults are either finding it difficult to secure employment or are laid off work for one reason or the other.

The visionless, selfish, mediocre, tribalistic, and opportunistic small money-minded people masquerading as the government who have continued to regenerate Nigeria's political landscape since 1960 are at the root of this problem (Adelowokan, Maku, Babasanya & Adesoye 2019). Flagrant mismanagement and widespread corruption have worsened the social crisis of unemployment. It has increased the number of idle youth turning to militia groups to make a living by joining forces with a political party to commit violence. All state programs for youth empowerment and other employment-generating policies, implemented by succeeding administrations since 1960, have failed to realize the youth's vision of gaining employment.

## **Governance failure in Nigeria**

The term governance might be challenging to define. Political science has disagreed on this issue in the past. The most basic definition of governance is the "presence of a multitude of

agencies, which stretch over conventional public and private sector lines, and which collectively play a significant role in the formulation and implementation of public policy” (Adelowokan et al. 2019). As a result of this definition, the term ‘governance’ refers to the activity of managing a nation or an organization. It is defined in the context of this paper as “the efficient, effective, and accountable exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to achieve a society's objectives, including the welfare of the youth, sustainable employment, and personal freedom” within the framework of the three tiers of government (federal, state, and local) (Wayas & Selvadurai 2019). However, it is important to consider the traits of competent governance in order to comprehend government more fully. Honesty, dedication, the capacity to motivate others, the capacity for delegation, a sense of humour, self-assurance, and a positive outlook are among the qualities Nwaobi (2019) listed. According to Ogunbayo and Mhlanga (2022), good governance must exhibit the following qualities: character, charisma, commitment, communication with followers, competence, courage, discernment, focus, positive attitude, generosity, good initiative, enthusiasm, and problem-solving skills. Further, they should listen to followers, have self-discipline, be a servant, a teacher, and have a vision. They also need to be competent, courageous, focused and have a positive attitude. Governance in Nigeria is lacking in these characteristics.

A failed, corruptible, and incompetent government, combined with an unfavourable domestic sociopolitical environment, has plunged Nigeria's development performance into irrelevancy. Development is no longer what the youth desires, but what the governments of the nation and international financial institutions dictate. One of the important factors of political instability and an increase in insecurity is the failure of political elites to adhere to basic democratic and constitutional principles (Ipe & Pepple 2018). The political government in Nigeria relies heavily on ethnicity and religion in addition to their colonial heritage, which borders on mistrust, tribal animosity, religious intolerance, and an instinct for political dominance. This unfortunate trend is blended with high-profile corruption by all three arms of government (i.e., the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary). According to Agbai (2018) and Ogunbayo (2021), this situation “has given rise to misuse of power, corruption, disregard for due process and the state of law, hostility of political opponents, misuse of the election process, and the weakening of institutions.” Similarly, Ogunbayo, Aigbavboa, Thwala, Akinradewo, Ikuabe, and Adekunle (2022) stated that the government has shown a lack of patriotism (defined as a love for one's nation and willingness to make sacrifices for the country with all sense of commitment), and they placed nepotism and self-egotism at the altar of selfless service. As a result, there is a high level of indiscipline and a lack of self-control. Ogunbayo et al. (2022) further stated that our governments, who are expected to be the first to keep and uphold the law, break it with violence. Ipe and Pepple (2018) and Ogunbayo and Mhlanga (2022) postulated that a poor

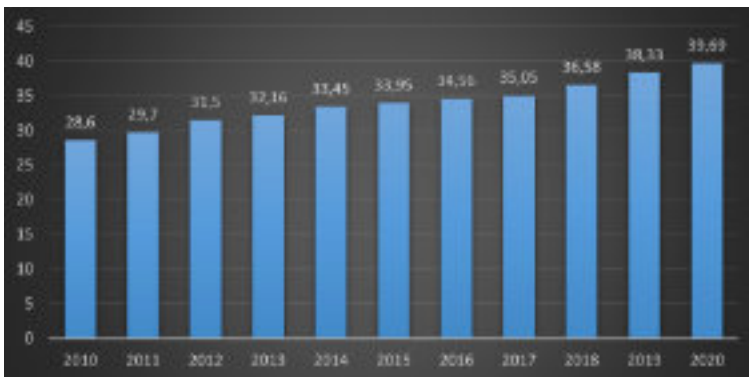
attitude, overconfidence, lack of social skills, loss of vision; and a failure to value uniqueness, communicate a vision, listen to others' feedback and create an atmosphere for accomplishment are all reasons for governance failure. Governments also fail when they care little about the consequences of their decisions or their constituents, as is the case in Nigeria.

## Youth unemployment levels in Nigeria

Unemployment is equated to poverty because when someone has no income or way of making an income, they risk becoming poor very quickly. According to Akanle and Omotayo (2020), poverty is “a product of unemployment, unfairness, and economic inequality.” Unemployment has left many youths dissatisfied as a result of inequity and economic hardship. Approximately 90% of the Nigerian population is estimated to be impoverished, and the youth unemployment rate was 39.69% in 2021 (Ogunbayo 2021). In a nutshell, a poor person is not a complete social individual because he or she lacks the basic freedom to engage in the life that he or she enjoys. Is it any surprise that society is unstable?

Unemployment is defined as the percentage of the labour force that was available for work but did not work (Awofeso & Irabor 2002). In today's Nigeria, the rapid rise in the country's unemployment level has become a major source of concern, with many youths finding it difficult to find jobs. According to Okolie and Igbini (2020), the most recent report on the labour force shows that the unemployment rate among Nigerian youth (15-34 years old) is the highest in the country, at 21.72 million (42.5%) of the 29.94% Nigerian

**Figure 1: Youth unemployment levels in Nigeria**



Source: Okolie & Igbini (2020)

youth who are actively seeking employment, while the overall unemployment rate was 39.69% as of December 2020. Youth unemployment levels are frequently higher than general unemployment levels, which is especially true in Nigeria. Figure 1 depicts the levels of youth unemployment from 2010 to 2020.

According to the graph, the issue of youth unemployment in Nigeria has increased over the last decade, which is extremely problematic. Unemployment has become a major issue in the lives of today's youth, causing disruption, frustration, and reliance on friends and family members who, in turn, have their own problems to deal with. Youth unemployment in Nigeria is caused by several factors, including high population growth rates, deficient school curricula and poor teacher awareness, a lack of focus on manufacturing as a result of overreliance on the oil sector, and imperfect and inconsistent government policies on youth unemployment (Ogunbayo & Mhlanga 2021). Nigeria's population has continued to grow at a rapid pace. However, reducing Nigeria's high population growth is difficult, especially because of religious and cultural sentiments. Foreign donors primarily fund family planning campaigns, and many people are still aware of the cultural reliance on multiple births as a response to previously high infant mortality rates. There is also evidence that a large population is not always a bad thing if a country can use it to its advantage. Countries with large populations such as China, India, Brazil, and Indonesia have made significant developmental progress in the last 50 years (Nwaobi 2019).

Similarly, school curricula at various levels are not sufficiently tailored to the needs of employers, nor do they prepare the youths for self-employment. Many youths' complete tertiary education without being able to apply their knowledge in real-world situations. This has led some to believe that the majority of today's youth are 'unemployable'. Furthermore, it is expected that the drop in oil prices will lead to a greater emphasis on production and industrialization, which should result in the creation of additional jobs. If 'oil is over', there will be more job opportunities for youths in agriculture, solid minerals, telecommunications, and services as the government and private sector work to strengthen the economy (Okolie & Igbini 2020).

This perception has continued to influence Nigerian tertiary educational institutions that provide training and skills. Curricula and training programs are generally designed to prepare the youth for formal sector jobs. Because these jobs do not exist, there is frequently a mismatch between the skills of job seekers and the jobs available. In essence, Nigeria's education system has a liberal bias that oversupplies the labour market with graduates who lack the skills required by many employers of labour in Nigeria. Many graduates in Nigeria today lack entrepreneurial skills that would allow them to work for themselves (Nwaobi 2019). Poor governance, inefficient targeting of the poor resulting in resources being finely

spread among competing projects, overlapping of functions, poor coordination, and a lack of sustainable measures are among the other factors responsible for youth unemployment (Agbai 2018).

## Solutions

Based on the problems identified above, the following solutions are recommended:

- The government must do everything in its power to encourage the building of industries to absorb the millions of unemployed youths that are not only unproductive but are destroying the country by engaging in unlawful acts.
- The government should provide vocational skills training because skills such as carpentry, welding, plumbing, and brick laying are in high demand, but young people lack training in these areas and thus cannot find work.
- The various government agencies must encourage objectivity in data collection in order to reveal the true nature of things.
- The rate of crime must be reduced, and concentration in the oil and gas sector as a source of foreign earnings should be discouraged.
- The various ministries in charge of youth empowerment must prioritize capital development over ongoing expenses.

## Conclusion

It is evident that governance failure has a negative and significant impact on youth unemployment in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study established a relationship between governance failure and youth unemployment levels. To sum up, despite being the world's sixth largest oil supplier and blessed with economic potential, the majority of Nigerian youths experience poverty as a result of a failed government. Youth unemployment has continued to rise at a high level after Nigeria's return to democracy. As a result, developing opportunities and creating jobs for unemployed Nigerian youth is vital to provide them with a sense of belonging and dissuade them from engaging in different activities that harm the country's security.

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