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EFFECTS OF YOUTHS' UNEMPLOYMENT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN SABON GARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE: (2019 – 2023)

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Abstract

The study examined the effect of youth unemployment on socio-economic activities in Sabon Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The problem of unemployment among the youth necessitated that both the state, Local Government Councils and community stakeholders devise means to address the rising scourge, but it persisted. Bearing this in mind, this research was undertaken bordering on the dimension of unemployment among the youth and attendant effects on the political as well as the socio-economic activities of the people of the study area and the state in general. For framework analysis, the study adopted the Relative Deprivation. The research employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection, where a total of 372 returned questionnaires distributed to various respondents were used for analysis and also conducted interviews. The study blended data analysis techniques by using the Frequency/Percentage Distribution method, which enabled the researcher to easily determine the highest and lowest responses in frequencies and percentages of data collected through questionnaires administered in the field and complemented with information gained through interviews with key informants. The major findings of the study revealed issues such as high levels of illiteracy, inadequate skills among the youth, economic instability in the region, poor infrastructure such as roads and electricity, and limited access to finance and capital for small businesses which contributes to the scourge of high

unemployment rate among the youth in Sabon-Gari LGA. The research therefore concludes that youth unemployment negatively impacts the community at large. A majority of respondents agreed that unemployment has led to increased poverty, higher crime rates, weakened local businesses, reduced community development initiatives, diminished standards of living, and declining social cohesion. These outcomes highlight that unemployment is not merely an individual problem but a structural issue with far-reaching socio-economic consequences for Sabon Gari LGA. The study hence recommends that governments at both local and state levels should demonstrate commitment to youth employment by establishing and funding skill acquisition centres, monitoring employment programmes, and ensuring accountability in policy implementation.

Keywords: Unemployment, Youth, Socio-Economic, Empowerment, Government

Introduction

Unemployment, particularly among the teeming youth, relates to attendant socio-economic effects that transcend geographical boundaries, affecting nations worldwide, but with more adverse effects on developing economies. This is validated by the Economic Survey of 2016 that the global unemployment rate was 197.1 million in 2015. The growth of the world's real gross domestic product (GDP) dropped from 3.4% in 2014 to 3.1% in 2015 (Virk et al. 2023).

High youth unemployment rates signify wasted opportunities for vital national and international economic development, as well as widespread personal disasters for people. Research has demonstrated that youth unemployment has a lasting impact on income and job security because young people affected by it begin their careers with less established credentials and exhibit a lack of confidence and resilience when faced with opportunities and challenges in the labour market throughout their working lives (World Bank, 2023).

The majority of young people on the African continent who engage in crime and violence do so mostly as a result of youth unemployment, which has also increased the likelihood of civil unrest in the area (Natrass, 2002). The belief that youth unemployment will push them to seek decent employment and a better life has significantly contributed to the rise in both legal and illegal immigration abroad. Franz and Omolo (2014) discovered that young people are more likely to work in the unofficial sector than the official sector. Young people own 37% of home businesses, according to UNDP (2018). Despite this percentage, youth employment is still a major policy priority, as stated in the United Nations Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth found in the UN (SDG) Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Similarly, the Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU) states that youth unemployment will be eradicated and that youth in Africa will have complete access to health services, education, training, technology, jobs, and economic opportunities, as well as recreational and cultural activities and the opportunity to reach their full potential (Igwenagu, 2022).

Nigeria, the largest and most populous economy in Africa, is experiencing a “youth bulge,” as its population of young people grows rapidly, bringing large proportions of working-age populations into the labour market. Currently, 43% of the country's population is under 14 years and 33% between 15 and 24 years, with this growth trend expected to continue until at least 2050, as the country's population continues to grow at an annual rate of 2.3% (UNDESA, 2022). Between 2010 and 2030, about 66 million people are expected to join the ranks of Nigeria's working-age population. (UN, 2005 in (Price, 2019).

While some see the uniqueness and scale of Africa's "demographic bulge" as overstated (Sumberg et al., 2021), in policy circles in Nigeria, a young workforce is viewed as a massive resource to engineer regional growth (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning, 2021). Similar developmental thinking is evident in international organisations like the World Bank's advocacy around developing youth capabilities through investments in health and education (World Bank, 2023b).

However, the present-day reality in Nigeria, like other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, provides a strong counterpoint in the scale of challenges for young people to access basic services and gainful employment. Nigeria ranks low on the United Nations' Human Development Index, with 30.9% of the population living below the poverty line, most in the North of the country and rural areas (UNDP, 2023; World Bank 2023a; World Bank, 2023c).

Conceptual Clarification

Youth Unemployment

Youth Unemployment occurs when young people categorized as the 'youth' are without jobs and they have actively sought a job within the past four weeks. Youth unemployment refers to a situation where young people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment (Fajana 2000). Youth unemployment has been defined as a situation in which young people who are willing to work at the prevailing wage rate are unable to find jobs. Youth unemployment refers to the condition in which individuals typically aged between 18 and 24 who are actively seeking but unable to find gainful employment remain without work. This unemployment is distinct from general unemployment in that it focuses specifically on young people who are at the early stages of their working life and often face barriers such as lack of experience, limited job availability, or mismatch between skills and labour market demands. (Omolo, 2014)

Political Leadership

According to Ofosu-Anim and Back (2021), a political leader is an embodiment of characteristics, actions, and the capacity to make use of one's skill set through deliberation and consultation in order to advance political objectives. Political leaders are frequently found in high-ranking positions in government and can be recognized by their traits, views, and actions, as stated by Rhodes and Hart (2014). Government heads, cabinet ministers, leading lawmakers, key party figures, advisors to politicians, and senior public officials are examples of political leaders. Political leaders' traits, personalities, and skills, both innate and acquired, which are displayed in their decisions and actions, play a crucial role in carrying out their mandates.

Socio-Economic Activities

Socio-economic activities refer to the activities that encompass the various ways in which people, communities, and organizations engage in the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services, while also considering social factors such as culture, education, health, and welfare. Socio-economic activities are essential for understanding how societies function and develop. They encompass a range of activities that address both economic needs (income, employment) and social needs (health, education, welfare), often working together to promote overall societal well-being and sustainability (Todaro & Smith, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The Relative Deprivation Theory provides a framework for understanding the effects of youth unemployment on socio-economic activities by emphasizing how individuals perceive inequality and deprivation in comparison to others. Developed by scholars such as Samuel Stouffer, Robert K. Merton, James C. Davies, and Ted Robert Gurr, the theory argues that dissatisfaction arises not necessarily from absolute poverty but from the gap between people's expectations and their actual living conditions. Its core assumptions include social comparison with reference groups, perceived

disparities between aspirations and achievements, and the emotional consequences of unmet expectations, such as frustration, resentment, and dissatisfaction. These feelings can influence individual and collective behaviour, including social protests, political activism, and other forms of social response.

The theory is particularly relevant to the study of youth unemployment in Sabon Gari LGA, Kaduna State, as it explains how unemployed youths experience frustration when their educational achievements and future expectations do not translate into employment opportunities. Such feelings of deprivation may contribute to low self-esteem, hopelessness, criminal activities, social unrest, migration, and other socio-economic challenges. The theory highlights the broader social and economic consequences of unemployment and underscores the need for policies that address both economic opportunities and social inequalities. However, critics argue that the theory relies heavily on subjective perceptions, is difficult to measure accurately, and cannot fully explain why some deprived individuals engage in deviant behaviour or protest while others do not, since personal and social factors also influence human actions.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for the study on the effects of youth unemployment on socio-economic activities in Sabon Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The study employed a descriptive survey research design to obtain information directly from respondents without manipulating the variables under investigation. Sabon Gari LGA served as the study area, with a target population comprising adults aged 18 years and above. Using Yamane's formula, a sample size of 400 respondents was selected from the projected population of 430,500 through simple random sampling. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources, with questionnaires and interviews serving as the main instruments of primary data collection, while textbooks, journals, government publications, and reports provided secondary data. The collected data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22.0), with results presented through frequency tables and supported by interview responses. To ensure the validity of the research instruments, experts reviewed the questionnaire and interview schedule, and necessary corrections were made based on their recommendations to enhance the reliability and accuracy of the data obtained.

Results and Discussion

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to respondents across different communities in Sabon Gari Local Government Area (LGA). Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 372 questionnaires were correctly completed and returned, representing an effective response rate of 93%, which is adequate for reliable generalization in social science research. In addition to the questionnaires, interviews were conducted with 10 key informants, including local government officials, community leaders, business owners, and youth association representatives. These interviews provided qualitative analysis of the causes, effects, and potential solutions to youth unemployment in the study area. Data from both quantitative and qualitative sources were analysed using frequency tables, percentages, and descriptive commentary.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Table 1: Whether Illiteracy Contributes to Unemployment

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	102	27.40
Agree	164	44.10
Neutral	45	12.10
Disagree	34	9.10
Strongly Disagree	27	7.30
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Survey, Nov 2025.

Table 4.2.5 above shows that 102 respondents representing 27.40% strongly agreed that illiteracy contributes to unemployment while 164 respondents representing 44.10% agreed and 45 respondents representing 12.10% disagreed. However, 27 respondents representing 7.30% strongly disagreed. The majority of the respondents perceive illiteracy as a significant factor contributing to unemployment in Sabon Gari LGA. This indicates that the lack of basic education among the youth severely limits their employability, both in formal and informal sectors.

Table 2: Inadequate Skills among Youths Contribute to Unemployment

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	119	32.00
Agree	160	43.00
Neutral	42	11.30
Disagree	31	8.30
Strongly Disagree	20	5.40
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Survey, Nov 2025.

Analysis in Table 4.2.6 above indicates that 119 respondents, representing 32.00% of the respondents, strongly agreed that inadequate skills among youths contribute to unemployment, while 160 respondents, representing 43.00% and 42 respondents, representing 11.30%, are neutral. However, 31 respondents representing 8.30% disagreed, while 20 respondents representing 5.40% strongly disagreed. Analysis based on the majority of the respondents indicated that inadequate skills among youths in Sabon Gari LGA are a major contributor to unemployment. This finding underscores the critical gap between educational attainment and marketable skills. Many youths may have formal education but lack technical, vocational, or entrepreneurial skills that are essential for employment or self-employment.

Table 3: Economic Instability as a Cause of Unemployment

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	103	27.70
Agree	152	40.90
Neutral	48	12.90
Disagree	44	11.80
Strongly Disagree	25	6.70
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Survey, Nov 2025.

Table 4.2.7 shows a total of 103 respondents representing 27.7% strongly agreed that economic instability is one of the major causes of unemployment, while 152 respondents representing 40.9% agreed and 48 respondents representing 12.9% were neutral. However, 44 respondents, representing 11.8% are disagreed, while 25 respondents, representing 6.7% are strongly disagreed. The majority of the respondents agreed that economic instability is a major cause of unemployment in Sabon Gari

LGA. Economic instability may discourage investors and limit the expansion of local enterprises, thereby exacerbating unemployment.

Table 4: Poor Infrastructure Limits Employment Opportunities

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	258	69.40
No	84	22.60
Not sure	30	8.00
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Survey, Nov 2025.

Table 4.2.8 above shows a total of 258 respondents representing 69.40% who confirmed that ‘Yes’, they believe that poor infrastructure, such as inadequate roads, electricity, and water supply, limits employment opportunities in Sabon Gari. However, 84 respondents (22.60%) said ‘No’, while 30 respondents (8.00%) were not sure. This finding emphasizes the role of infrastructure in enabling business operations, industrial growth, and the establishment of new enterprises. Poor infrastructure increases the cost of doing business, discourages investors, and reduces efficiency in both private and public sectors.

Table 5: Whether Youth Unemployment Increases Poverty

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	121	32.50
Agree	172	46.20
Neutral	34	9.10
Disagree	25	6.70
Strongly Disagree	20	5.40
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Survey, Nov 2025.

Table 4.2.10 above shows a total of 121 respondents representing 32.50% who strongly agreed that youth unemployment exacerbates poverty in Sabon Gari, while 172 respondents representing 46.20% agreed and 34 respondents representing 9.10% were neutral. However, 25 respondents representing 6.70% disagreed, while 20 respondents representing 5.4% strongly disagreed. Analysis based on the majority in Table 4.2.10 indicated that youth unemployment increases poverty in Sabon Gari LGA. The findings highlight the cyclical nature of poverty and unemployment, suggesting that without intervention, affected families are likely to remain in economic hardship.

Table 6: Whether Youth Unemployment Increases Crime

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	123	33.10
Agree	166	44.60
Neutral	39	10.50
Disagree	29	7.80
Strongly Disagree	15	4.00
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Survey, Nov 2025.

Table 4.2.11 above shows that 123 respondents, representing 33.10%, strongly agreed that youth unemployment increases crime, while 166 respondents, representing 44.60%, agreed and 39 respondents, representing 10.50%, were neutral. However, 29 respondents, representing 7.80%, disagreed, while 15 respondents, representing 4.0%, strongly disagreed. The majority of the

respondents indicated that youth unemployment increases crime. Youths without stable employment may resort to theft, drug abuse, or street-level crimes as coping mechanisms for economic deprivation.

Table 7: Unemployment Reduces Community Development Activities

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	127	34.10
Agree	143	38.40
Neutral	36	9.70
Disagree	39	10.50
Strongly Disagree	27	7.30
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Survey, Nov 2025.

Table 4.2.13 shows that 127 respondents representing 34.10% strongly agreed that unemployment reduces community development activities, while 143 respondents representing 38.40% agreed and 36 respondents representing 9.70% were neutral. However, 39 respondents representing 10.50% disagreed, while 27 respondents representing 7.30% strongly disagreed. The majority of the respondents indicate that unemployment reduces community development activities in Sabon Gari LGA. This may be due to reduced participation in civic initiatives or voluntary projects, as unemployed youths often focus on survival rather than community engagement.

Table 8: Whether Government Subsidies will Reduce Unemployment

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	100	26.90
Agree	204	54.80
Neutral	17	4.60
Disagree	29	7.80
Strongly Disagree	22	5.90
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Survey, Nov 2025.

Table 4.2.17 shows that 100 respondents representing 26.90% strongly agreed that government subsidies will reduce unemployment, while 204 respondents representing 54.80% agreed and 17 respondents representing 4.60% were neutral. However, 29 respondents representing 7.80% disagreed, while 22 respondents representing 5.90% strongly disagreed. According to the majority, government subsidies and financial support for youth-led businesses can reduce unemployment.

Table 9: Whether Establishing Industries Will Reduce Unemployment

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	122	32.80
Agree	170	45.70
Neutral	35	9.40
Disagree	25	6.70
Strongly Disagree	20	5.40
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Survey, Nov 2025.

Table 4.2.20 above shows that 122 respondents representing 32.80% strongly agreed that establishing industries will reduce unemployment, while 170 respondents representing 45.70% agreed and 35 respondents representing 9.40% were neutral. However, 25 respondents representing 6.70% disagreed, while 20 respondents representing 5.4% strongly disagreed. The majority of the respondents believe that establishing industries and factories in Sabon Gari will create employment.

Discussion of Findings

The study identified several key factors contributing to youth unemployment in Sabon Gari LGA, including illiteracy, inadequate skills, economic instability, poor infrastructure, and limited access to finance. The quantitative results in the analysis show that 164 respondents (44.10%), the majority, perceive illiteracy as a significant factor contributing to unemployment in Sabon Gari LGA, while analysis in Table 4.2.6 indicated that 160 respondents (43.00%), the majority, highlighted that inadequate skills among youths is a major contributor to unemployment. These findings align with previous studies (Oyerinde, 2019; Okoro, 2020) which suggest that education without practical skills limits employability. The Key informants' contributions further reinforce this, with community leaders emphasizing that even graduates often lack vocational or technical skills needed in local labour markets.

Economic instability emerged as another important factor, with analysis in shows 152 respondents (40.90%) as the majority agreed that economic instability is a major cause of unemployment. Key informant interviews explained that the irregular economic environment, coupled with inflation and fluctuating prices of goods, discourages private investment, thereby reducing job opportunities for youths. This resonates with the findings of Nwosu (2018), who asserts that youth unemployment is often aggravated in regions with weak economic policies and volatile markets. Poor infrastructure, cited in Table 4.2.8 with 258 respondents (69.40%) as the majority, confirmed that poor infrastructure, such as inadequate roads, absence of electricity, and water supply, limits employment opportunities, which hinders both entrepreneurship and industrial investment in Sabon Gari. It was further highlighted by Key informants that poor infrastructure is a major barrier to business development.

Analysis of the 266 respondents (71.50%) highlighted that limited access to finance is a major cause of unemployment as the views of the majority. This was further supported in interviews with key informants noting that youth businesses fail due to lack of start-up capital, strict collateral requirements, and limited microfinance opportunities. In sum, the study confirms that youth unemployment in Sabon Gari is multifaceted, combining structural, economic, and social factors. Further findings indicate that youth unemployment significantly affects both individuals and the community's socio-economic development. This finding is consistent with the works of Adebayo (2017), who reported that high youth unemployment correlates with higher household and community poverty levels.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, the study concluded that youth unemployment in Sabon Gari LGA has profound and multifaceted effects on socio-economic activities in the area. The findings indicate that a significant proportion of the youth population remains unemployed due to a combination of factors, including illiteracy, inadequate skills, poor infrastructure, limited access to capital, and economic instability. These challenges are compounded by the lack of political will and insufficient policy interventions aimed at creating meaningful employment opportunities.

The study also concludes that youth unemployment negatively impacts the community at large. A majority of respondents agreed that unemployment has led to increased poverty, higher crime rates, weakened local businesses, reduced community development initiatives, diminished standards of living, and declining social cohesion. These outcomes highlight that unemployment is not merely an individual problem but a structural issue with far-reaching socio-economic consequences for Sabon Gari LGA.

Key informant interviews further corroborated the survey findings, emphasizing that systemic issues such as bureaucratic bottlenecks, inadequate vocational training programs, and weak public-private

collaboration exacerbate unemployment challenges. Respondents pointed out that without deliberate and targeted interventions, the youth may continue to experience marginalization, which in turn affects the overall development path of the local government area in the state. Furthermore, the study concludes that potential solutions exist, including vocational training, promotion of entrepreneurship, establishment of small and medium-scale industries, government subsidies, infrastructure development, and enhanced public-private partnerships. These measures, if implemented effectively, can significantly mitigate youth unemployment and its adverse effects on socio-economic activities.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Government at both local and state levels should demonstrate commitment to youth employment by establishing and funding skill acquisition centres, monitoring employment programs, and ensuring accountability in policy implementation.
- ii. Financial institutions, in partnership with government agencies and through Public-private partnerships, should create youth-friendly loan schemes, grants, and microfinance programs with minimal collateral requirements to provide seed funding for small and medium-scale enterprises.
- iii. Vocational training centres should be expanded and integrated with market-driven skills such as ICT, carpentry, tailoring, agro-processing, and digital entrepreneurship.
- iv. Educational programs should include skill acquisition, entrepreneurship, and internship opportunities to enhance employability coupled with mentorship programs to nurture business ideas into viable enterprises.

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