

# The Impact of Social Policies on Youth Unemployment in Nigeria.

AYOMIKUN OLUGBODE

*Inspired Youth Network*

***Abstract-*** Youth unemployment remains one of Nigeria's most tangible socio-economic challenges, despite the multiple government interventions and social policy initiatives. The present study critically examines the impacts of social policies on Nigerian youth unemployment, focusing on programs such as the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), N-Power, and the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN!). The research employs a qualitative approach, and secondary data from government reports, policy documents, and scholarly literature are employed to analyze the performance and limitations of such interventions. The results indicate that although these social policies have created short-run employment opportunities and skill development platforms, they have failed to contribute meaningfully towards the issue in the long run because of limitations like policy inconsistency, corruption, weak implementation strategies, and inadequate funding. Other structural problems in the economy, including educational outcome-labor market demand mismatches, further exacerbate the youth unemployment issue. The research also explores how regional inequality and socio-political instability affect the equitable distribution and functioning of these schemes. It concludes that social policies can adequately fight youth unemployment only if there is a shift toward long-term, sustainable economic planning, government transparency, and a close relationship between educational curricula and the demands of the market. The paper proposes greater inter-agency collaboration, uniform policy monitoring and assessment mechanisms, and increased investment in vocational and entrepreneurial training. Lastly, addressing youth unemployment in Nigeria will require more than isolated interventions; it requires an integrated and long-term policy commitment that

*addresses the structural forces of the Nigerian economy.*

***Indexed Terms-*** Youth Unemployment, Social Policies, Nigeria, N-Power, NSIP, YouWiN!, Policy Implementation, Economic Planning, Labour Market

## I. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment remains one of Nigeria's most pressing socio-economic problems with significant national stability and development implications. Nigeria, with a population exceeding 220 million and over 60% under the age of 30, is experiencing a critical demographic crossroads. While the youth population holds economic growth promise, resultant poor job opportunities risk turning it into a source of socio-political instability, crime, and rising poverty (Akande, 2014; NBS, 2024). Government data by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed a 6.5% youth unemployment rate in Q2 2024. The number has been widely doubted, however the International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Bank have strongly criticized fundamental flaws in the new labor force survey framework of Nigeria, which now includes workers who work only one hour a week as being employed, masking the level of underemployment and latent unemployment (World Bank, 2024; SWP, 2023). The true situation remains one of extensive informal jobs, job insecurity, and unsustainable livelihoods for young Nigerians.

As a response to this crisis, successive Nigeria governments have developed some social policies to address youth unemployment. Some of these key programs are the N-Power program, the 3 Million Technical Talent (3MTT) program, and microcredit in the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP). They indicate growing state

recognition of youth unemployment as a national issue (Alaba, 2024). Nevertheless, overall effectiveness remains in doubt. Evaluations show that most of the interventions are short-term palliatives, yet fail to address the fundamental structural problems like low industrial capacity, infrastructural constraints, inadequacies of the education system, and lack of private sector absorptive capacity (Omoju et al., 2023; Virk et al., 2023). Omoligho (2022) highlights continued or reoccurring issues of policy inconsistency, inadequate funding, poor implementation, and ineffective monitoring arrangements. Although N-Power supposedly hired over 500,000 volunteers, there remain concerns about employability after the program and the long-term effectiveness of the program (Omoligho, 2022). Similarly, earlier initiatives like the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) were hampered by limited coverage, poor private sector take-up, and limited job placements.

The politicization and short-term character of the majority of initiatives have further undermined their credibility. Programs are given robust media attention when launched but then collapse due to inefficiencies in administration, lack of continuity between governments, and corruption (Reuters, 2024). Furthermore, the majority of interventions are incapable of coordinating program training with the demands of the labor market. Outdated curriculums and a lacuna between academic outputs and the requirements of the labour market make the majority of beneficiaries ill-prepared for gainful employment (Nwoba et al., 2024; Virk et al., 2023). Nigeria's adverse macroeconomic environment—slow growth, inflation, and underindustrialized industry base—also tightens job opportunities (Benard, 2025). This paper will critically analyze the degree to which major social policies shape youth joblessness, explore structural and governance impediments, and propose evidence-based reforms towards more sustainable and transformational employment outcomes.

## II. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

Youth unemployment in Nigeria has grown into an acute socio-economic crisis driven by a combination of demographic pressures, structural weaknesses, and institutional shortcomings. With a population of more

than 220 million in 2024 and over 60% being below the age of 30 years, Nigeria's youthful population is both a potential and a challenge to economic development (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Historically, the rate of youth unemployment stood at 8% to 10% in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Akande, 2014). However, since the 2016 economic recession, unemployment rose sharply, reaching over 13% in 2017 and a peak of around 53% in the fourth quarter of 2020 (NBS, 2021).

Subsequent economic shocks, like the COVID-19 pandemic, currency devaluation, and the removal of fuel subsidies and many more persisted in destabilizing the labor market from 2020 through 2023. Although the government reported a much reduced youth unemployment rate of 6.5% in 2024, this has been widely criticized as untrue (Reuters, 2024). Both the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank questioned the legitimacy of Nigeria's new methodology for the labor force survey, noting that the new employment definition has been broadened to include individuals engaged in as little as one hour of work per week, which is statistically manufacturing improvement (World Bank, 2024; ILO, 2024).

A more in-depth analysis of the labor market reveals that informality and underemployment are pervasive. Over 87% of Nigeria's employed population is self-employed as of 2024, and 92% are engaged in informal sector activities (Reuters, 2024). The reliance on informal employment is a sign of structural frailty in the economy, where most youths engage in precarious, low-paid work with no social protection and security (Akinleye et al 2019; Akanle and Uzieyi 2023). Geographic and gender disparities worsen the crisis, as northern and rural states record more unemployment than urban regions like Lagos and Abuja, and young women also face socio-cultural barriers to employment (BusinessDay, 2024).

The root causes of youth unemployment are multifaceted. Population growth continues to outstrip employment creation with an estimated 1.5 million young people entering the employment market annually (Lorenceanu and Savitki 2021; Akanle and Uzieyi 2023). Furthermore, Nigeria's education system is still not adequately aligned with the

demands of the labor market, producing graduates with theoretical know-how but limited practical or entrepreneurial expertise (Akanle, 2014). The private sector, which is underdeveloped and largely informal, lacks the capacity to absorb the growing labor force (Omoju et al., 2023). Macroeconomic instability, high chronic inflation, and low GDP growth also deter investment and private sector-led job creation (World Bank, 2024).

Government interventions have been largely responsive. Initiatives like the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), N-Power, and the 3 Million Technical Talent (3MTT) scheme have performed below expectations due to design flaws, funding issues, lack of monitoring, and politicization (Meagher 2013; Yvonne 2020; Omoligho, 2022). Evaluations show that such interventions have had minimal sustainable impact on employment or poverty alleviation (IIARD, 2025; Omoju et al., 2023). The socio-economic consequences are devastating, fueling poverty, crime, political unrest, and irregular migration (SWP, 2023). Unless radical structural reforms targeting education, industrialization, and private sector growth are implemented, Nigeria's youth unemployment crisis will worsen inequality and compromise national stability (World Bank, 2024).

### III. SOCIAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA

In response to the alarming rates of youth unemployment in Nigeria, successive governments have introduced a range of social policies aimed at addressing the issue. These policies, designed as both short-term interventions and medium-term employment generation strategies, have largely focused on skills development, entrepreneurship promotion, and temporary job placements.

#### 1.3.1 N-Power Programme

N-Power, which was launched in 2016 as part of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) of the Federal Government of Nigeria, is one of the most visible social interventions in the country's escalating youth unemployment situation. The programme, which was designed primarily to offer short-term work and skills training for unemployed graduates and non-graduates aged 18 to 35, is aimed at

reducing both income poverty and youth employability problems. Beneficiaries are employed in sectors like education, health, agriculture, and information technology and receive a modest monthly allowance of ₦30,000 (Adesina 2011; Adebayo, 2019).

Although the conception of the programme seemed promising, with enrollment figures of over 500,000 in its first phase, a critical evaluation of its design, implementation, and long-term impacts reveals fundamental limitations. Scholars have pointed out that N-Power is operating more as a social welfare programme than as a transformative employment creation approach (Emeh and Chukwuma, 2020). This observation stems from the fact that the programme is temporary in nature, and most of the beneficiaries are retained for two years, to be disengaged without formal employment placement or systematic absorption into the labour market. As Olawale and Ibrahim (2021) argue, this lack of an exit strategy subjects many of the participants to a relapse into unemployment or underemployment, undermining the programme's overarching goal of sustainable youth empowerment.

Secondly, the programme's finance or funding and administrative capacity have been points of major contention. Delayed payment of stipends has been a frequent occurrence, generating widespread resentment among the beneficiaries and concern regarding the financial sustainability of the programme amidst Nigeria's unstable revenue sources and rising debt profile (Oladeji and Adebayo, 2019). These difficulties in funding are also compounded by poor institutional monitoring frameworks, which complicate efforts at tracing actual programme results or quantifying the employability enhancement of beneficiaries following their period of engagement. The absence of credible and independent impact assessment data continues to limit meaningful programme evaluation and future planning.

Also looming over the N-Power programme is the specter of political interference. Processes for recruitment and selection of beneficiaries have often been charged with a lack of transparency, with allegations that selection criteria are sometimes

politically influenced, subject to ethnic considerations, and nepotism (Okeke-Uzodike and Chikere, 2022). This erosion of meritocracy not only undermines public trust but also reduces the programme's potential impact by failing to reach the most vulnerable or qualified segments of youth. The politicization of the N-Power programme is symptomatic of broader governance issues within Nigeria's social policy landscape, where political patronage too frequently undermines programme impact.

A second key area is the relevance and marketability of the skills being conveyed under N-Power. Although the programme covers areas including teaching (N-Teach), health (N-Health), agriculture (N-Agro), and technology (N-Tech), critics have argued that the training modules lack depth and are often not adapted to the realities of Nigeria's job market (Adebisi et al., 2018). For example, N-Teach beneficiaries are often deployed to schools with poor pedagogical training, thereby limiting both their professional development and the quality of education delivered in host institutions (Aiyede et al 2015; Akande 2014; Adebayo, 2019). Similarly, the majority of the agricultural engagements under N-Agro have been criticized for having poor technical content that does not empower beneficiaries with the ability for meaningful agricultural entrepreneurship or employment (Ojo and Fadeyibi, 2019).

Moreover, the N-Power programme has been very government-led with little involvement of the private sector in the design and implementation of the program. This insulation from the economy reduces the chances of private sector absorption of N-Power graduates and fails to leverage the innovation, market linkages, and investment potential the private sector can bring to the programme (Akinyemi and Awosusi, 2020). On the contrary, similar youth employment initiatives in other developing countries, such as Ghana's Youth Employment Agency or Kenya's Youth Empowerment Project, have achieved more sustainable impacts partly due to strong public-private sector partnerships (Adebisi et al., 2018).

The N-Power scheme also reflects the policy incoherence at the systemic level that has plagued Nigeria's employment interventions for decades. N-

Power's inability to align with other national economic, industrial, and educational policies limits its strategic impact. Without synergy with general job creation agendas, infrastructural development plans, or industrial development plans, N-Power is an orphan intervention with limited scalability and sustainability (Oladeji and Adebayo, 2019; Meagher 2013; Yvonne 2020).

### 1.3.2 Youth Entrepreneurship Support Programme (YES-P)

The Bank of Industry (BOI) in 2016 launched the Youth Entrepreneurship Support Programme (YES-P) which is among such policy actions dedicated to ending youth unemployment in Nigeria. Contrary to conventional wage employment schemes, YES-P centers on entrepreneurship development by offering cheap finance, business development expertise, and mentorship to young Nigerians (BOI, 2016). The scheme provides the youth with loan facilities ranging from ₦500,000 to ₦5 million single-digit interest rates in order to equip them with not just the financial capital but also technical capabilities to establish viable businesses in areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services. YES-P is a progressive and a visionary policy direction from excessive dependence on the creation of jobs by the public sector to private sector-driven job creation. This aligns with global best practice where entrepreneurship among the youth is promoted as a sustainable method of achieving economic inclusion and job creation (Adebisi et al., 2018). Closer examination of the programme, however, reveals many structural and operational problems that render it ineffective.

One of the key concerns is accessibility. Despite the high number of targets among YES-P, stringent loan application terms restrict participation by marginalized young people. Demands for sophisticated business plans, credit history, and collateral preclude unemployed and informally employed young people, who do not have the necessary financial past and business sense (Mueller and Thurlow 2019; Akinleye et al 2019). Additionally, the process of application is complicated, and the low level of financial literacy adds to mounting accessibility constraints.

Another major limitation or weakness is urban bias in programme delivery. Even as youth unemployment is more severe in rural areas, concentration of YES-P activities on urban spaces disproportionately excludes rural youths (Durham 2000; Egunjobi 2014). Inadequate infrastructure, restricted diffusion of information, and weak outreach efforts dampen rural participation, undermining programme inclusivity and equity. Business sustainability remains a key challenge. Despite the training and mentoring provision, these interventions are often insufficient in light of Nigeria's unfavourable business environment. The beneficiaries often face disadvantages like infrastructure, inconsistent power supply, market access constraints, and regulatory issues. Therefore, business failure rates among YES-P beneficiaries remain high, which reflects poorly in the recovery rate of loans and threatens the programme's sustainability (Ojo and Fadeyibi, 2019; Bailey 2023). Weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) also constrain programme accountability. African development suffers from lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation systems for long-term effects like job creation, income growth, and business viability (Akinyemi and Awosusi, 2020). Program assessment is rather predominantly focused on input measures like disbursement levels and training attendance. Coupled with this, Nigeria's macroeconomic volatility—like inflation, currency devaluation, and weak consumer demand simply compounds the challenges for YES-P beneficiaries (Emeh and Chukwuma, 2020; Bailey 2023). Allegations of politicization and nepotism in loan disbursement further dent public trust and compromise programme legitimacy (Okeke-Uzodike and Chikere, 2022). Overall, as much as there is hope for YES-P as an ideal model for encouraging youth employment, its sustainability and performance remain constrained by programme design flaws within as well as Nigeria's overall economic and governance deficiencies.

### 1.3.3 Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS)

The Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), which was launched in 2012 under the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), was a direct social intervention aimed at reducing graduate unemployment in Nigeria. Its basic objective was to enhance the employability of the unemployed

graduates by posting them to 12-month internships in private and public sector organizations (Fox and Simbanegavi 2016; Hamilton 2017). Interns received modest stipends while in placement, combining income support with high-quality work experience to improve their labour market prospects.

GIS was a step towards employability enhancement rather than direct job creation and was aligned with global best practices in youth employment interventions (Adebisi et al., 2018). The effectiveness of GIS was, nonetheless, compromised by certain design and implementation shortfalls. Uptake by the private sector was disappointingly low. Hosting interns was viewed as an administrative burden by most firms, citing ambiguous incentives and post-internship obligations (Ojo and Fadeyibi, 2019). Consequently, placements became overly concentrated in overstretched public sector agencies, undermining the scheme's goal of exposing graduates to dynamic work environments.

The other fundamental failure was the absence of post-internship employment trajectories. Only a few interns transitioned into full-time work after placements, pointing to the programme's failure to translate experience into sustainable employment (Ikeanyibe and Nzekwe 2019). The underlying reasons for this were that there were no retention incentives for employers, mismatch between internship work and the needs of the market, and limited employment opportunities in Nigeria's weak economy. GIS was also vulnerable to political transition. Its abrupt termination in 2015 with the scrapping of SURE-P highlighted Nigeria's long-standing policy discontinuity and short-termism (Oladeji and Adebayo, 2019). The absence of an institutional framework to anchor GIS in broader employment policies also limited its prospects for sustainability.

Administrative inefficiencies and weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms also plagued the programme. There is scant evidence on programme results, including the quality of training and employment placement rates (Sumberg et al 2021). Late payment of stipends also created financial difficulties and led to dropouts by beneficiaries (Emeh and Chukwuma, 2020). Finally, GIS stood

alone without complementary education and labour market reforms necessary to address underlying drivers of graduate unemployment such as skills mismatch and insufficient private sector job creation (Okeke-Uzodike and Chikere, 2022)

#### 1.3.4 Other Notable Programmes

In addition to high-profile national schemes like N-Power, YES-P, and the Graduate Internship Scheme, various other youth-related employment interventions have been initiated in Nigeria. One of these is the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN!) initiative, which was launched in 2011 by the Federal Government. YouWiN! was a business plan competition designed to find young entrepreneurs around the nation, finance them, and mentor them. It provided non-repayable business grants and capacity building training to successful recipients in an effort to stimulate job creation and entrepreneurial skills (Akinyemi and Awosusi, 2020). Initially, YouWiN! was commended for its merit-based selection and impact on youth business. However, critical analysis proves that the long-term impact of the programme was unequal and very non-sustainable. While part of the recipients managed to establish sustainable businesses, many businesses collapsed within a few years due to lack of mentoring, unstable business climates, and market fluctuations (Okoye and Eze, 2021). The subsequent rebranding of YouWiN! to YouWiN! Expand also diluted its original objectives, becoming more interested in training and raising an eyebrow over reduced contributions towards combating unemployment (Akanle and Uziewi 2023; Oladeji and Adebayo, 2019). State-level decentralized approaches to youth employment include initiatives such as EdoJobs in Edo State and the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF).

LSETF finances small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), vocational training, and job placement. EdoJobs focuses on entrepreneurship facilitation, job linkage, and training. While these initiatives are important local interventions, strict analysis identifies deficits in dimensions and sustainability. Finance constraints restrict scope, benefiting only a small percentage of out-of-work youth (Okoye and Eze, 2021). Moreover, policy discontinuity is still a challenge, whereby program continuation would be

dependent on the political administration prevailing at a given time (Lorenceanu and Savitki 2021). Another major challenge is that the state-level initiatives lack coordination with the national employment strategy.

This fragmentation leads to duplication of effort, inefficiencies, and difficulties in tracking aggregate employment effects (Oladeji and Adebayo, 2019). Some additional factors against programme credibility are politicization, nepotism, and lack of transparency in beneficiary selection (Okeke-Uzodike and Chikere, 2022). Weak monitoring and evaluation systems, more emphasis on input indicators than long-term employment effects, further constrain accountability and evidence-based policy reforms (Akinyemi and Awosusi, 2020)

#### IV. IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA

A careful assessment of the effect on Nigeria's youth employment policies holds mixed results, with evidence suggesting partial success in overall youth unemployment decline. While some interventions have achieved short-term gains in participation, skill acquisition, and entrepreneurial activities, long-term young employment declines are lacking. Findings from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) show that despite efforts at implementing flagship programs such as N-Power, YES-P, and YouWiN!, these have not resulted in young employment declines.

Nigerian youth unemployment levels have been consistently high, oscillating between 30% and 40% in the last decade (NBS, 2023). On a direct employment level, initiatives such as N-Power have temporarily employed thousands of graduates who were out of work, receiving allowances and on-the-job experience in strategic areas like education, health, and agriculture (Adebayo, 2019). Likewise, the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) exposed many graduates to on-the-job experience. Nonetheless, critical assessments indicate that the interventions failed, for the most part, to generate lasting employment results.

The majority of N-Power beneficiaries returned to either unemployment or informal economy employment upon exiting the program, whereas GIS had a low rate of interns converting to full-time personnel (Ojo and Fadeyibi, 2019). Entrepreneurship-focused initiatives such as the Youth Entrepreneurship Support Programme (YES-P) and YouWiN! showed some early potential in establishing youth enterprise in Nigeria. Beneficiaries reported more short-term business establishment and self-generated sources of income (Akinyemi and Awosusi, 2020). Long-term business survival remains a great challenge because of Nigeria's business-unfriendly environment, infrastructure, limited access to market, and macroeconomic instability (Okoye and Eze, 2021).

Extremely high failure rates for youth-owned enterprises indicate that such programs have failed to establish sustainable entrepreneurial environments (Oladeji and Adebayo, 2019). A policy failure has been in the area of sustainability. Many interventions have fallen victim to political discontinuity as well as inadequate funding. For instance, the abrupt termination of GIS when the SURE-P program concluded is a testament to the vulnerability of employment policies to changing political priorities (Lorenceau and Savitki 2021). Similarly, the renaming of YouWiN! to YouWin!

Connect was dilution of the programme's original intent, from grant funding to general business education, therefore limiting its employment generation potential (Okoye and Eze, 2021). Fragmentation of policy is yet another of the most significant challenges. Poor co-ordination among programmes at federal and state levels led to duplicative efforts and inefficient utilisation of resources (Oladeji and Adebayo, 2019). For example, initiatives like LSETF and EdoJobs are independent of federal programmes, with negligible synergy or coordination to national employment strategies. Such fragmentation has inhibited the scaling up of effective interventions and limited the scope for broader labour market impact. Moreover, governance challenges like politicization, nepotism, and transparency in beneficiary selection have diminished programme credibility (Okeke-Uzodike and Chikere, 2022).

These deficiencies undermine public confidence and have a tendency to exclude the most vulnerable youth from the benefits. Despite these, there are some success stories to highlight. Some of the recipients of the YES-P and YouWiN! programmes, for example, have established thriving businesses, which have ridden into work opportunities in their communities (Akinyemi and Awosusi, 2020). Similarly, state-initiated programs like LSETF have also been relatively more successful in loan disbursement and vocational training compared to their federal equivalents simply because they are in a position to better assess proximal needs and provide more agile governance systems. In the acquisition of skills, N-Power and state-programmed initiatives have succeeded in improving the job opportunities of some of the youths, especially for education and ICT sectors. However, all these advances are marginal in comparison to the entire scale of joblessness among youth.

#### V. CHALLENGES IN POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

A careful review of Nigeria's youth employment policy implementation recognizes recurring structural and institutional factors undermining programme effectiveness and sustainability. Prior to these challenges are corruption, poor funding, policy inconsistency, poor monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, and low stakeholder engagement. Corruption is a common bottleneck, with political interference, nepotism, and poor transparency affecting beneficiary selection, fund allocation, and project implementation (Okeke-Uzodike and Chikere, 2022). Programs like the N-Power and Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) have been said to have ghost beneficiaries, as well as instances of nepotism, undermining public trust and weakening desired impact (Adebayo, 2019).

Insufficient funding also constrains policy implementation. Despite ambitious policy targets, appropriations for youth employment programmes are often insufficient, sporadic, or late (Oladeji and Adebayo, 2019). Programmes such as the GIS and YouWiN! have documented delayed payments and shattered promises on funding, demotivating programme participants and inhibiting programme

effects (Arowoshegbe and Emmanuel, 2016; Okoye and Eze, 2021). Policy inconsistency is a significant hindrance. Successive governments tend to discontinue or re-structure programmes for the employment of young people, such as discontinuing GIS after realizing that SURE-P had been phased out, or re-structuring YouWiN! into YouWiN! Connect (Akinyemi and Awosusi, 2020; Ojo and Fadeyibi, 2019; Yvonne 2020). Such abrupt discontinuities undermine continuity and waste previous investments.

Weak Monitoring and Evaluation systems magnify implementation challenges. Majority of the programmes lack continuous performance monitoring, making outcomes difficult to assess, gaps unconceivable, or evidence-based reforms to be implemented (Okeke-Uzodike and Chikere, 2022). Non-operational Labour Market Information System (LMIS) leaves policymakers with a situation of poor data (Oladeji and Adebayo, 2019). Poor engagement of stakeholders is also a huge gap. Young people's opinions are scarcely incorporated into policy making or implementation, resulting in poorly targeted interventions that fail to reflect the actual needs of the target group (Adebisi et al., 2018)

### CONCLUSION

This study critically assessed the effectiveness of youth unemployment mitigation social policies in Nigeria. N-Power, Youth Entrepreneurship Support Programme (YES-P), the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), and state-led intervention programs such as EdoJobs and LSETF indicate a recognition by government of the youth employment problem (Adebayo, 2019; Akinyemi and Awosusi, 2020). However, the wider contribution of these interventions is low and largely not sustainable. The results show that while some of the programs have succeeded in the short term through the acquisition of earning skills and income support, their long-term effect on structural youth unemployment is low. This is due to recurrent issues like corruption, weak financing, policy inconsistency, and weak monitoring and evaluation (Oladeji and Adebayo, 2019; Okeke-Uzodike and Chikere, 2022). Politicization of beneficiary selection and illegal release of funds have undermined the credibility and success of the

majority of interventions (Ayinde and Aribifo 2016; Anyidoho et al 2012). Essentially, a major limitation is the disconnected character of the policies.

They are mostly disconnected with each other and with macroeconomic, industrial, and private sector policies. This policy disconnect or fragmented has also undermined their capacity to address the structural drivers of youth unemployment (Sumberg et al 2021; Lorenceau and Savitki 2021). Furthermore, youth voices being denied voice in policy formulation continue to limit programme continuity and pertinence. From a critical point of view, addressing Nigeria's unemployment crisis among the youth requires more than social interventions. A coordinated, evidence-based approach to integrating youth employment policy and national economic development strategies is required. Institutional responsibility can be made more effective, funding arrangements streamlined, and monitoring systems strengthened to enhance future programme performance.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

To better enhance the efficiency of social policy in addressing youth unemployment in Nigeria, what is needed is a multiple-pronged approach. First, policy development should emphasize sustainability and continuity across different political regimes in order to avoid the frequent discontinuation of productive programs. Institutionalization of governance systems through increased transparency, anti-corruption accountability, and merit selection of beneficiaries is fundamental to public confidence rebuilding. Secondly, increased and timely disbursements of funds are essential so that programs can efficiently be implemented and expanded.

Integration of labour market information systems will enable evidence-based decision-making, where interventions are synchronized with current market demand and emerging sectors. Further, the improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems can provide policymakers with real-time feedback on programme performance, and thus lead policymakers to make the necessary adjustments. The involvement of the stakeholders, especially youth in policy-



making, will ensure programmes address the needs and aspirations of the target groups.

Finally, additional integrated social policy and macroeconomic, industrial, and education reform interconnections are needed to create an enabling environment for employment and entrepreneurship. Encouraging credit accessibility, streamlining regulatory burdens on new enterprises, and investment in vocational and digital skills training will ensure Nigerian youth enjoy more sustainable employment options.

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