



## The Impact of Youth Unemployment on Migration and Development in Nigeria

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v8i7.2819>

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### **Abstract**

Nigeria has implemented policies aimed at tackling the current heightened youth unemployment status, but there has been a significant lapse in the components of these policies, which is evident in the misalignment of the policy initiatives with the specific labor market needs and availabilities. However, this policy document carefully assessed these past policies thematically and analyzed the correlation of factors that border on economic, educational, and remittance factors and their influence on youth unemployment and migration in Nigeria. Hence, this policy paper recommended that, firstly, there should be the promotion of technical and vocational schemes and training capacity by the respective stakeholders, to help bridge the skills gap and curtail the inherent skills mismatch. Also, there should be an established public-private dialogue and synergy to reduce the duplication of functions and eliminate inefficient coordination to promote sustainability. Thirdly, the Nigerian government should make deliberate policy efforts to improve economic pull factors to reverse the migration trend by revamping the basic infrastructures that would create a conducive environment for investment in sectors capable of job creation. A fourth recommendation as a policy take is to take advantage of the country's huge remittances and synergize with the diaspora community to channel such accruals in sectors that have the potential for job creation and economic development. Lastly, Overhauling the security network has become imperative. Providing a secure environment for economic activities to thrive will attract both local investors and Foreign Direct Investment, which can create more employment opportunities, reduce brain drain, and trigger economic development.

**Keywords:** *Migration; Youths, Unemployment; Development*

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Amongst the numerous challenges confronting Nigeria today, the following are identified as ubiquitous: insecurity, religious and ethnic tensions, widespread poverty, socio-economic decline, and

unemployment (Aleyomi & Nwagwu, 2023). Unemployment remains pervasive and can be said to be responsible for most of the current socio-political restiveness being witnessed in the country and the massive exodus of Nigerians from their country (Kilic et al., 2019). Thus, many young Nigerians continue to emigrate from Nigeria to seek better opportunities in North America and Europe, mainly because of their inability to find gainful employment in their country or due to underemployment where skilled and educated youth receive wages that are neither commensurate with their qualifications nor able to cater for their livelihoods and needs.

The dwindling Nigerian economy is reported to be incapable of recruiting a substantial proportion of the workforce, and there is no enabling environment for the private sector to provide the needed jobs (Adelowokan, et al, 2019). Therefore, those young people who can afford it make plans to leave the country, especially young professionals. It is reported that about 6,221 Nigerian medical doctors left Nigeria for the UK in the last six years (Onyegbula, 2023). Others without the means and resources attempt to cross to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea, a situation increasingly becoming a very dangerous ordeal. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), about 1200 Nigerians died while crossing the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea in 2023 alone (Odeyemi, 2023). This dire situation constitutes a threat to the development efforts of the country.

In addition, Nigeria's burgeoning population of about 211 million people (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2022) combined with a youth unemployment rate that stands at 42.5% in 2023, and an underemployment rate of 22.8% (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023), complicates the migration question. Nigeria's population is predicted to get to 300 million by 2036 and by 2050 it is predicted to be more populated than the USA, with an estimated population of 379 million people (Moore, 2022). Therefore, it is important to state that without adequate population control legislation and planning, this question of unemployment and youth migration will only escalate.

This alarming situation should be a priority in the agenda of stakeholders such as the Nigerian government, institutions of learning, international non-government organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and governments of foreign countries, where most of these young Nigerians end up. Urgent action is needed because youth migration leads to brain drain and the loss of the youngest and brightest that could hitherto meaningfully contribute to economic development in the country (Adesote, 2018). Similarly, the receiving countries of Nigerian migrants, especially, illegal migrants will eventually face a migration crisis. Despite a consensus in most African countries regarding existing unemployment crises, comprehensive coordination of existing policy initiatives and political will for implementation has remained relatively weak (Naidoo, 2021). Despite a paradigm shift in most African countries regarding their awareness of unemployment realities, the comprehensive coordination of their existing policy initiatives has been relatively weak. In Nigeria for instance, institutions of higher learning are challenged with the issues of poor funding relating to inadequate lecturer motivation as reflected in deficient welfare and remuneration of lecturers, and the skyrocketed population of students due to the increase in the population of the country in general. Governments also constitute and play a critical role as major stakeholders in job creation in the country. This responsibility of governance could either be directly as employers of labor or indirectly through various socioeconomic and macroeconomic policies instituted to guide the activities of the private sector. Such policies are critical for balancing employment creation and solving the deficits. Developed countries have proven that there is an evident synergy and integration among their governments, the private sector, and the institutions of higher education as described in the Triple Helix Model (Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 1998). Arguably, comprehensive collaboration among government, education stakeholders, and the private sector in Nigeria is considered relatively weak, adversely impacting employment opportunities.

## 1.2 Research Questions

**RQ1:** What are the factors responsible for massive youth unemployment in Nigeria and how does this influence migration in Nigeria?

**RQ2:** How effective are the government policies on unemployment in ameliorating the trend of migration in Nigeria?

## 1.3 Objectives of Study

This policy paper will highlight the factors responsible for massive unemployment in Nigeria and its impact on the recent migration trends in the country. Despite efforts and policy positions of both state and federal governments on unemployment, the situation persists across the country. The policy brief seeks to address critical areas involving inadequate government policies with a view to proffering solutions on how this ugly trend can be reversed in the country. Lastly, the main objective of this policy brief is to explore the factors perpetuating unemployment and its attendant consequences on migration in order to provide some actionable policy recommendations on how to address unemployment, which is the major catalyst for youth migration in Nigeria.

## 1.4 Justification

It is pertinent to highlight that attempts by successive governments in Nigeria to create jobs in the public service and stimulate youth self-employment through various employment-driven initiatives, small business loans, and conditional cash transfers for the poor and vulnerable have been largely unsuccessful since unemployment and widespread poverty persist in the country and continue to motivate the youth to seek opportunities abroad (Shadare, 2020). The purpose of the brief is to understudy why government policies geared towards combating unemployment in Nigeria remain inefficient and proffer robust solutions to tackle it.

## 1.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings in this policy brief would determine the remote and immediate causes of youth unemployment and its implication on migration to draw the attention of the stakeholders such as the Nigerian government, institutions of learning involved, the private sector as well as the international community on the need to combine efforts to address this urgent problem, which must not be allowed to foster due to the undesirable consequences associated with it.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

According to the United Nations (2020), youth refer to the period of transition from infancy to adulthood, during which individuals become independent. The Commonwealth puts the range as between 15 and 29 years (Akinyetun, 2020), the youth according to the African Youth Charter (2006) is any individual between the ages of 15 and 35, while the Nigerian National Youth Policy (2019) puts the age range between 18 and 35. For our incumbent study, the age group comprises people between the ages of 18 and 35. Highly skilled. The meaning of "highskilled" is subject to variation depending on the specific context in which it is used (Weiner & Koppenfels, 2020).

The International Labor Organization (ILO) describes an unemployed individual as a person 15 years or older, who does not have a job in a specific week but is ready to begin employment within a short period. They must have actively searched for employment at some point in the last four (4) weeks or have already secured a job that will commence within the next three (3) months (Insee, 2021). Similarly, the new Nigeria Labor Force Survey (NLFS) used by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics describes the “unemployed” as individuals who are not employed but actively searching for paid work and are available to start such work, either last week or within the next two weeks (NBS, 2023).

## 2.2 Government Policy Initiatives Towards Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

The significance of youth in the process of development extends beyond their sheer number since there are other additional factors. Historically, Nigeria made several attempts at addressing the unemployment menace through various policy efforts such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1986 and the National Manpower Board (NMB), which was a recommendation of the Ashby Commission in 1962 (Nicholas, 2001). Given how critical addressing the social problem of unemployment is, Okonkwo, Onyeze, and Ociaka (2019) opined that investing in youngsters has a stronger multiplier impact compared to investing in the old within a community. Hence, in 2015, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) under the National Social Investment Office as a social welfare project. The plan was established to achieve a balanced allocation of resources to marginalized groups, such as children, young people, and women (Chukwugozi, 2022).

According to the policy document published by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2021) on the “Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan”, The Nigerian Government has made job creation, particularly for young people, a crucial objective and priority. The main policies consist of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), the National Youth Policy (NYP), the National Employment Policy (NEP), and the National Policy on Labour Migration. The objective of the ERGP is to provide employment opportunities via the growth of labor-intensive industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, housing, and construction. This according to the government, will be achieved by expanding and prolonging ongoing public works initiatives and promoting more involvement of the private sector in the economy. Additionally, its purpose is to promote the growth of infrastructure in industries that could provide employment opportunities, specifically for the local workforce. Another goal of the plan is to maintain the N-Power project which is a conditional cash transfer for youths and assist small and medium-sized firms in maximizing their capacity to generate jobs.

Despite these numerous policy plans and strategies, the complexities of youth unemployment in Nigeria currently have worsened due to corrupt practices by individuals manning public institutions who have deprived the youth of meaningful opportunities to be gainfully employed and achieve a sustainable livelihood (Okafor, 2011). Also, Emeh (2012) opines that corruption has penetrated deeply into the social fabric of the country thereby depleting the finances meant for developing a viable economic base for the country and creating jobs for the youth. These policy strategies have not achieved their objectives at full capacity due to poor management, underfunding, and population increase (Nicholas, 2012).

## 2.3 Unemployment and Economic Development in Nigeria

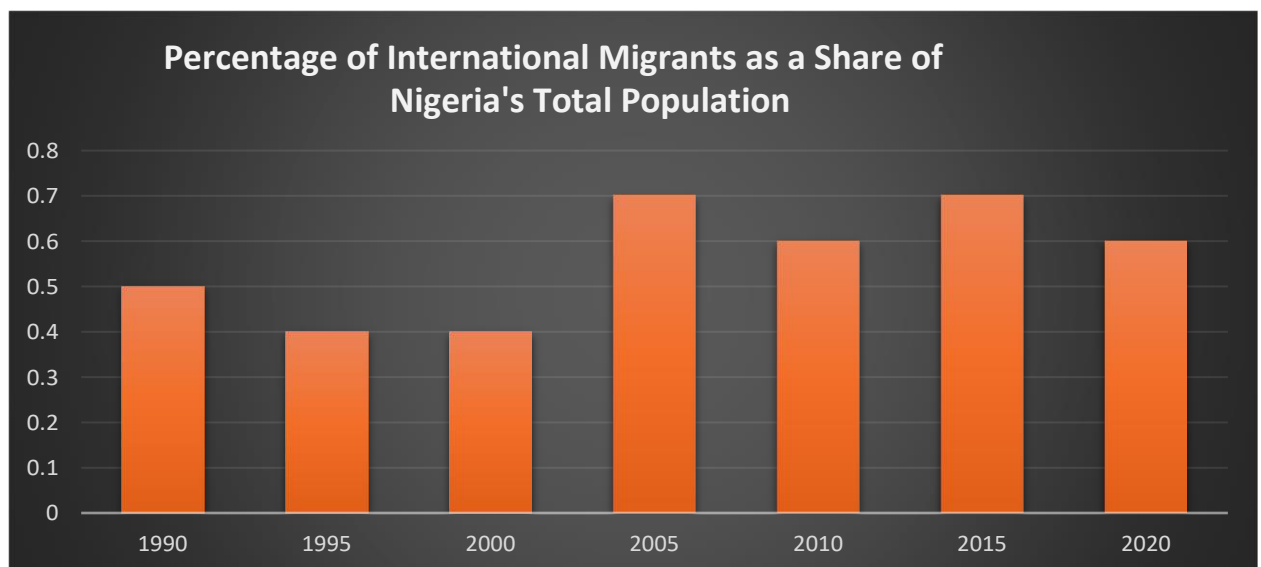
Nigeria has a substantial young demographic, including more than 35% of the nation's population, namely those aged 15 to 34 (PricewaterhouseCoopers [PwC], 2020). The issue of youth unemployment is not a new occurrence (Ugal et al., 2011; Bulus et al., 2020). What is novel, however, is the evolving nature of its repercussions, which elicit heightened worry. Unemployment rates are particularly elevated

among the age group of 15-34 years, leading to increased susceptibility to social vices, despair, and apathy (PwC, 2020). Animashaun (2015) emphasized that young people are not only the most vulnerable to the negative impacts of high unemployment rates but there is also a risk that the psychological and social consequences of unemployment on young people might be more harmful to both the youth and societal development. The recent surge in terrorism, abduction, armed robbery, and explosions in Nigeria has highlighted the pressing issue of unemployment in the nation. The repercussions of prolonged neglect of the young in Nigeria have been reflected in several regional uprisings, such as militancy in the Niger Delta, Boko Haram in the North, and the emergence of the New Biafra movement in the Southeast (Jegade et al., 2019). Gribble (2010) emphasized that neglecting the young population and the significant challenges they encounter in a country like Nigeria would result in long-lasting global repercussions. Such situations have dampened the economic growth and development of the country.

#### 2.4 Migration and Its Impact on Economic Development in Nigeria.

Migration refers to the process of permanently relocating from one's nation of origin to another. It entails the deliberate desire to find or create a residence and improve one's prospects, whether in terms of finances, social status, or personal motivations. The causes for emigration differ among individuals who make the choice, including elements such as educational opportunities, improved career prospects, or political stability (Kenton, 2021). Migration often has economic, demographic, and social consequences for both the country of origin and destination (Divisha, 2017). Therefore, several factors prompt individuals to relocate from their current residence (origin) to a different setting (destination). Typically, people relocate from areas with little resources to areas that are seen to provide better prospects. Hence, circumstances compel human beings to move, including both push forces and pull aspects. Lee (1966) categorized the elements that cause migration into two distinct segments, which he referred to as push and pull forces. Push factors refer to circumstances or situations that cause pain to an individual inside their current environment, whereas pull factors are conditions or situations that attract an individual to different abroad. The push elements include inadequate employment prospects, hazardous surroundings, subpar agricultural yields, insufficient precipitation, desertification, floods, persecution, enslavement, natural calamities, death threats, deprivation, and warfare.

**Figure 1: International Migration in Nigeria**



Source Statista 2020

In Figure 1 above, it can be observed that the percentage of international migrants as a share of Nigeria's total population has remained relatively stable over the past few decades. In 1990, international migrants accounted for 0.5% of the country's total population. This proportion decreased slightly to 0.4% in 1995 and held steady at 0.4% in 2000. It then ticked up again to 0.7% in 2015 before declining to 0.6% in 2020. Overall, international migrants as a percentage of Nigeria's total population have fluctuated within a narrow band of 0.4% to 0.7% since 1990, with no distinct long-term trend (Statista 2020).

The high rate of unemployment among Nigerian youths, coupled with the shortage of midskilled labor in Europe, creates a lucrative scenario for Nigerian youths to migrate to Europe (Adhikari et al., 2021). Clemens (2020) identified the presence of a phenomenon known as the "migration hump," whereby individuals from less developed nations would progressively move in a significant number to affluent nations. Also, Adedokun, and Karzanova, (2019) observed that the primary destinations for Nigerian physicians practicing abroad are the United States and the United Kingdom.

### **3. Methodology**

This policy brief utilized a qualitative document analysis and empirical analysis approach. This study adopted a comprehensive thematic analysis of policy documents and a review of empirical studies.

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

This study adopted an interpretivist philosophy. Interpretivism assumes that reality is subjective, and knowledge is gained through social constructions such as language, documents, and shared meanings (Clarke & Braun, 2017). This aligns with analyzing documents on unemployment, migration, and development thematically. Rather than seeking an objective universal truth, interpretivism allows for exploring subjective, contextualized realities constructed in the discourse.

#### **3.2 Research Strategy**

The strategy is qualitative document analysis. This entails identifying, appraising, and synthesizing relevant documents as empirical data to gain insights into the research issue (Bowen, 2009). This interpretive strategy analyses documents as social context reflections, not literal representations. Its inductive approach allows findings to emerge from the documents through coding without prior expectations.

#### **3.3 Research Design**

A thematic analysis design was used for the document analysis. The thematic analysis focuses on identifying, analysing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes within a data set (Nowell et al., 2017). It involves familiarizing the data, generating initial codes, and searching for, reviewing, and defining themes. Themes capture something meaningful related to the research question.

An interpretive philosophy focused on qualitative document analysis using thematic analysis provides a coherent framework for this research exploring perspectives on unemployment, migration, and development in Nigeria.

### **3.4 Data Collection Techniques**

Relevant documents were identified through comprehensive database searches and government/organization reports. The document sources include academic literature on unemployment, migration, and development in Nigeria - Searched via online databases like JSTOR, Scopus, and EBSCOhost. Reports by international agencies like the ILO, World Bank, and IMF on labor markets and migration trends in Nigeria. Nigerian government data and policy documents.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Data collected were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis methods (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Key themes and patterns in the discourse on unemployment, migration, and development were coded in the data. The thematic analysis allows for identifying common threads in the discussion on this policy issue across various sources. It provides a flexible, accessible, and systematic approach for synthesizing insights from the discourse.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

This research involves analysis of publicly available documents and does not directly involve human participants. However, ethical standards for integrity, quality, and transparency in the research were upheld (Webster et al., 2014). Documents were gathered from reputable sources such as academic databases, official government websites, and recognized civil society organizations. Biased, inaccurate, or falsified documents were excluded. This research applied principles of honesty and objectivity to generate quality evidence and responsibly contribute knowledge Resnik (2015).

### **3.7 Justification of Methods**

Thematic analysis of relevant documents was chosen as the most appropriate method for this policy research because it allows for a comprehensive synthesis of perspectives from diverse sources. While statistical analyses of unemployment and migration data could provide useful macro-level trends, this method enables a richer understanding of the nuanced social dynamics and discussions surrounding these issues.

### **3.8 Limitation of Methods**

While document analysis allows for efficient synthesis of existing discourse, there are limitations to this method. The documentary data reflects the biases of the researcher producing the content. The documents also contain historical data that may not capture the full realities of the present. While a wide range of documents was included, there are likely relevant documents that had been missing, limiting the scope. In addition, the themes identified involve subjective interpretive analysis by the researchers which could introduce bias.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

The thematic analysis generated insightful findings on the key factors connecting youth unemployment, migration, and development in Nigeria. This section presents the major themes identified in the data linking unemployment to migration patterns and impacts on socioeconomic development. The conceptual links and policy implications were analyzed concerning the reviewed literature.

#### 4.1 Thematic Analysis

In this regard, the paper utilized data from diverse policy documents that included national policies on unemployment, strategies for youth development, migration policies among other related reports from the government, and reports from nongovernmental sources. The documents were sampled purposely to meet the relevance required in the themes of youth unemployment, migration, and development within Nigeria.

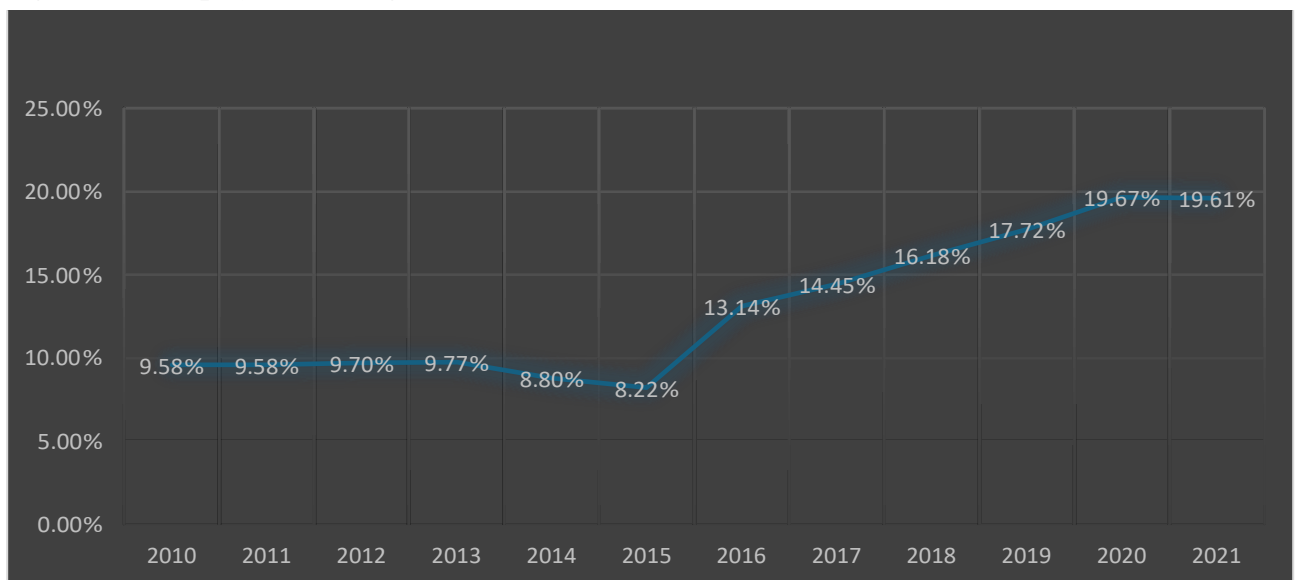
#### 4.2. Defining Themes

The study systematically explored the identified themes, shedding light on how they emerged from the policy documents and how they interconnect with the conceptual frameworks outlined in the literature review. This aims to deepen the understanding of the policy problem at hand.

##### 4.2.1 Theme 1: Policy alignment and youth unemployment

This theme was constructed through an analysis of some national policy documents including the Youth Employment Program (YEP) which targeted employment creation among the youth. It takes up to what extent these policies are adopted to address the unique needs of unemployed youth and the strategies intended to prevent youth migration driven by unemployment. The methodologies used in this identification are the document reviews thematic analysis, particularly the thematic analysis of the YEP document, as well as reports from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), and strategic plans from the Ministry of Labor and Employment.

**Figure 2. Unemployment in Nigeria from 2010 – 2021**



#### Percentage of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

Source: Statista, 2022

According to Statista (2022), the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria exhibited an overall increasing trend between 2010 and 2021, though with some fluctuations year-to-year. Data from Statista (2022) further revealed that after rising to 14.45% in 2017, youth unemployment hit 16.18% in 2018. The

climb continued in 2019, reaching 17.72%, before peaking at 19.67% in 2020. In 2021, the rate moved down slightly to 19.61% but remained extremely high from a historical perspective. The data reveals persistent youth unemployment as a major policy challenge in Nigeria.

#### 4.2.1 Theme 2: Economic development and socio-economic factors driving youth migration

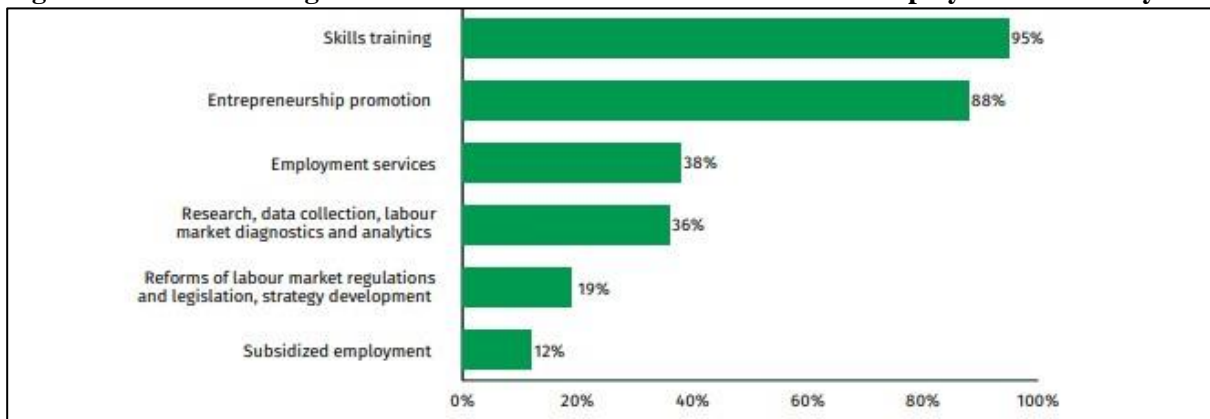
Analysis of demographic studies, migration reports, and economic analyses revealed this theme to reflect the major root causes of migration decisions of the youths. This theme goes beyond unemployment to include factors such as educational opportunities, economic concerns and remittances, and the search for better living conditions. Reports from researchers and migration studies provided a comprehensive view of the factors driving youth migration. These documents, coupled with economic analyses, highlighted the multifaceted nature of migration drivers.

### 4.3 Secondary Data Analysis

#### 4.3.1 Theme 1: Policy alignment and youth unemployment

Numerous youth employment initiatives have been put into effect in recent years. The main goals of these YEPs are to empower young people and improve their quality of life via respectable work. However, the specific details such as emphasis, scope, funding, and implementing agency differ across each program. Some YEP programs concentrate on vocational skill training, while others provide financial assistance, seed money, employability skills, and cash-for-job transfer.

**Figure 3: The main categories of interventions included in the Youth Employment Inventory**



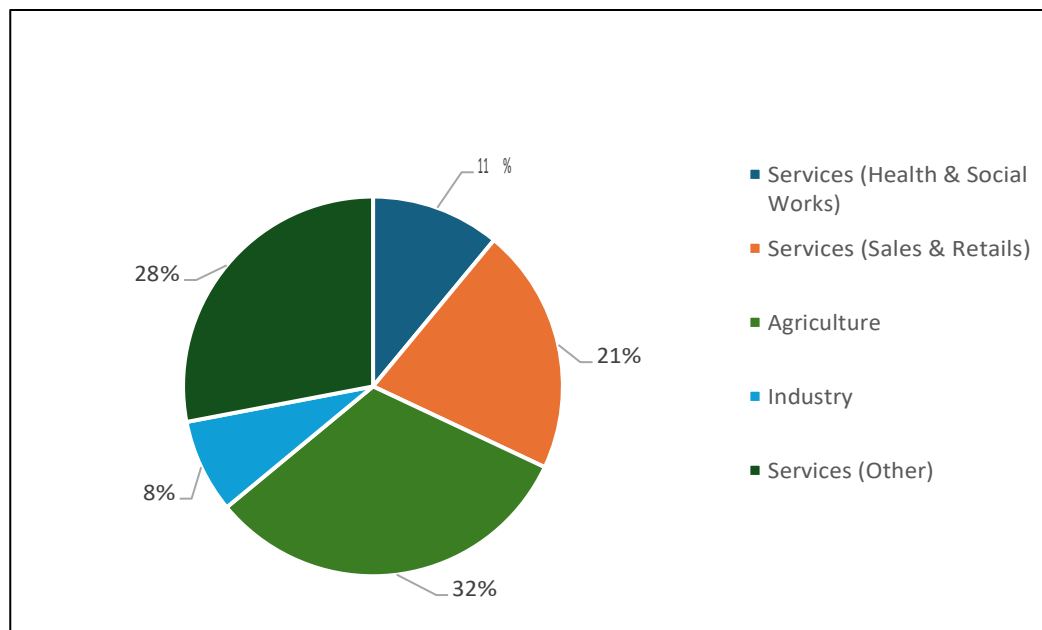
*Source: Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan (NYEP) 2021-2024*

Two YEP programs that concentrate on vocational skills are the Skills Development for Youth Employment (SKYE) and the Presidential Youth Empowerment Scheme (P-YES). SKYE provides technical and vocational education and training tailored to the requirements of young people. Some YEP programs also focus on developing entrepreneurial skills and providing financial assistance to young people. Youth Enterprise with Innovation (You Win) is a national program that offers equity finance to exceptional business concepts from small- and medium-scale firms (Odiji et al., 2016). McKenzie (2015) evaluated the program and discovered that it accounted for around 55% of employment produced by participants three years later. Additionally, participants showed an increase in innovative practices ranging from 14% to 22% compared to organizations that did not participate. The Youth

Entrepreneurship Support Program (YES) offers an intensive eight-week online course and a five-day in-class training to teach business skills, as well as providing loans of up to N 5 million (USD 11,904) to qualifying young individuals.

Another YEP goal is to enhance employability skills via internships or job placements. The NPower youth empowerment and employment creation project was launched as part of the National Social Investment Program in 2016. The program is a paid two-year volunteer opportunity where members earn a monthly stipend of N 30,000 (USD 71) to work in the agricultural, health, or education sectors (Akujuru & Enyioko, 2019). An assessment of the agricultural component of the N-Power Agro program revealed that participants had an average income of around USD 72 more than non-participants (Ogunmodede et al., 2020). The Jubilee Fellowship Program is a new empowerment project introduced in 2021 by the Federal Government of Nigeria in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program. This internship program places individuals under 30 years of age in public and commercial organizations to develop skills that improve their chances of being hired. The youth employment policies in Nigeria, while acknowledging the crisis of unemployment, contain some critical shortfalls and misalignments that limit their effectiveness. The focus on entrepreneurship does not align with the reality that most young Nigerians aspire for formal wage employment rather than microenterprise (Tunji-Olayeni et al., 2021). A study done by the Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan 2021-2024 found that the services industry is the favored choice for employment among young individuals. 60% of participants in the research expressed interest in pursuing a career in this area, whereas 32% were interested in agriculture and 8% in industry (See Figure 3).

**Figure 4: Sector of employment preferred by young people (aged 15-29) surveyed (percentage)**



#### Employment Preferred by the Youths in Nigeria

**Source: Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan (NYEP) 2021-2024.** The enabling environment for venture creation is also lacking. The predominant emphasis on skills training does not address the core shortage of job creation and availability, leading to a mismatch between skills supplied through training

programs and actual demands in the labor market. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks are not rigorous enough to track long-term sustainable employment outcomes (Oyinlade & Chimezie, 2019). Similarly, the policy focus on fostering entrepreneurship is misaligned with the reality that most young Nigerians aspire towards formal wage employment rather than microenterprise development. The constraints on the demand side of job creation, such as deficits in infrastructure, investment climate, and broader economic growth have not received adequate policy attention.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Socio-economic factors driving youth migration and economic development**

While lack of income-generating endeavours and employment is a major driving factor for migration of Nigerians to other countries, particularly, to countries in North America, the EU, the UK, and Asia, other socio-economic factors such as poor-quality curricula, equipment and teacher training, unfavourable economic realities, the promise of a good life in prospective countries of destination that can guarantee remittances contribute to fuelling migration.

##### ***Educational factor***

Scholars in Nigeria are focusing on the study of cross-border emigration, namely the emigration of Nigerians to the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States of America. The common topics in these studies include labor migration, the student movement, the impact of emigration on the nation, and remittances from the Nigerian diaspora to their families (Eyitayo & Oreofe, 2022; Ossai et al., 2020; Akusoba, 2014; Ogbu, 2019). Ossai et al. (2020) identified education as the primary push factor for emigration in Nigeria. It has been found that people with some form of higher education form the large chunk of unemployed youth people in Nigeria (See Table 1). Research conducted by Eyitayo and Oreofe (2022) indicates that emigration for educational reasons has persisted since the 1960s because of declining education quality in Nigeria. The research indicates that the government does not prioritize the educational system, resulting in many individuals seeking to pursue higher education elsewhere. Just like Eyitayo and Oreofe (2022), Ossai et al. (2020) found in their study at a medical school in southeast Nigeria that many students plan to move abroad for specialized training after graduating. This is because of the inadequate equipment and facilities for training in Nigeria or to enhance their skills.

**Table 1: Labor Market Status by Education, Sex, Age, and Urban-Rural Q4 2022 and Q1 2023**

			Employed	Unemployed	Out of Labour Force
Q4 2022		<b>National</b>	<b>73.6</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>22.3</b>
	By sex	Female	69.0	4.9	26.1
		Male	78.4	3.3	18.3
	By Educational Attainment	None	76.3	3.1	20.6
		Primary	74.5	3.1	22.4
		Junior secondary	52.6	2.9	44.5
		Upper secondary	75.2	4.8	20.0
		Post secondary	81.6	8.1	10.3
	By Age	15-24	54.9	5.0	40.1
		25-34	81.3	6.1	12.7
		35-44	88.6	3.3	8.1
		45-54	89.1	2.3	8.5
		55-64	85.8	1.4	12.8
		65+	60.8	1.1	38.1
By Urban-Rural	Rural	76.0	3.2	20.8	
	Urban	71.7	4.8	23.5	
Q1 2023		<b>National</b>	<b>76.7</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>20.1</b>
	By Sex	Female	74.6	4.0	21.4
		Male	78.8	2.5	18.6
	By Educational Attainment	None	81.2	2.7	16.2
		Primary	77.3	2.6	20.1
		Junior secondary	53.1	2.3	44.7
		Upper secondary	77.5	3.9	18.7
		Post secondary	84.2	5.6	10.2
	By Age	15-24	56.8	4.2	39.0
		25-34	84.6	4.5	10.9
		35-44	92.8	2.3	4.9
		45-54	92.8	1.6	5.6
		55-64	87.3	1.7	10.9
		65+	60.3	1.8	37.9
By Urban-Rural	Rural	80.6	2.4	17.0	
	Urban	72.7	4.1	23.1	

*Source: NBC, 2023*

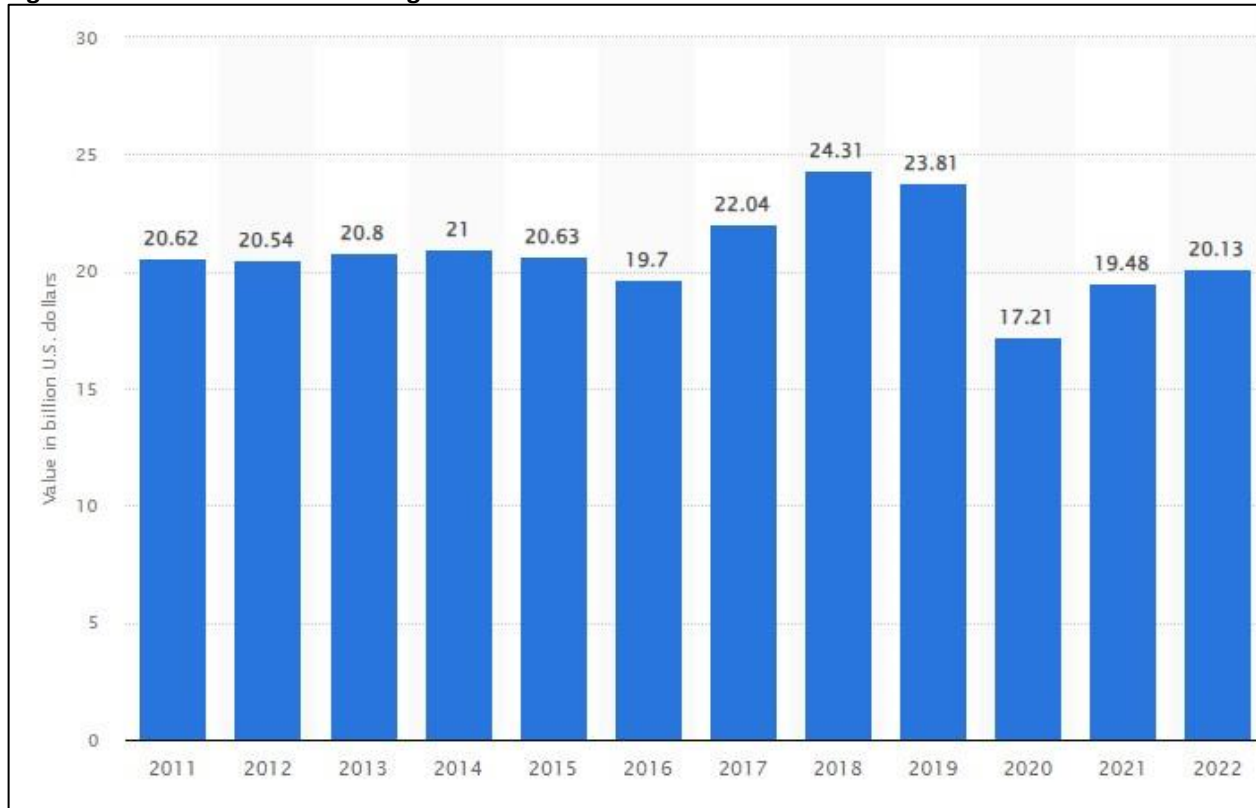
***Economic factors***

Economic problems and high rates of young unemployment are also recognized as factors contributing to emigration in Nigeria. Research conducted by Rufai et al. (2019) indicates that the typical family in Nigeria survives on less than 2 dollars per day. The paper also noted that Nigeria has substantial young unemployment. In Nigeria, due to unfavourable economic situations, young people choose to emigrate in quest of better possibilities (Rufai et al., 2019). Results of the NLFS of 2023 as reflected on Table 1 above revealed that young people are the most impacted by unemployment and economic hardships that motivate them to seek greener pastures abroad.

### *Remittance factors*

Studies have shown a correlation between emigration and remittances. One of them is Afaha (2013), while the other is Asogwu et al. (2019). Research conducted by Afaha in 2013 found that about \$10 billion was sent from foreign countries to Nigeria in 2010. The quantity of remittances has increased twofold during the last ten years (See Figure 4 below). Oreofe and Eytayo (2022) literature indicates that almost 23 billion dollars were sent by 2019, a significant increase from 2010. Oluwafemi and Ayandibu (2014) conducted research using World Bank data, which shows that Nigeria is the leading recipient of remittances in Africa. Oreofe and Eytayo (2022) found that 33% of remitted funds in Sub-Saharan Africa are sent to Nigeria.

**Figure 5: Remittance Inflow in Nigeria**



Source: Statista, 2023

### **4.4 Discussion of Findings**

The analysis under Theme 1 on policy alignment and youth unemployment aligns with the findings from Tunji-Olayeni et al. (2021) that most Nigerian youth prefer employment in the formal services sector rather than entrepreneurship. The critique that policies emphasize skills training while neglecting job creation also echoes Oyinlade and Chimezie's (2019) conclusions on the lack of focus on demand-side constraints. However, Emeh (2012) presents a contrasting perspective in highlighting some positive impacts of youth skills programs on addressing unemployment. This contrasts with the theme's emphasis on the policy limitations and misalignment with youth aspirations.

Under the second theme, the educational factors driving youth emigration align with the studies by Ossai, Onyenakzi, and Nonwu (2020) and Eytayo and Oreofe (2022), which also established aspiration for overseas education opportunities as a major driver. The economic motivations for migration also concur with Rufai et al.'s (2019) findings on high youth unemployment and lack of economic opportunities propelling migration. However, some studies like Kazeem (2022) argue that insecurity and violence have surpassed economic factors as migration motivations in Nigeria. This contrasts with the theme's framing of decent work as the primary driver.

While the findings generally concur with the literature on policy gaps in unemployment and education/economics as migration motivators, some contradictory perspectives warrant further examination and integration into the analysis. This highlights the complex, multifaceted nature of these issues.

## **5. Policy Recommendations**

### **5.1 Recommendation 1: Promoting Vocational Skills and Training Capacity**

The challenges of unemployment are too serious to be left to the government or one stakeholder alone to handle (Ram et al., 2022). The collaboration of multiple stakeholders is needed especially in terms of promoting Technical and vocational skills training to match the skills gaps. Expanding vocational training capacity aligned with high-growth sectors can help bridge skills mismatches contributing to youth unemployment (Chege & Wang, 2020). Assessments of growth areas with labor shortages such as technology, construction, healthcare, agriculture, and light manufacturing can inform the expansion of vocational and technical training institutes focused on skills needed in these industries. One such successful collaboration was between GIZ, the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) when implementing the SKYE program. Omoju et al suggest that such partnerships ensured curriculum matches that took cognizance of the supply side of job creation and the demand for skills (Omoju et al, 2023). Sequel to this is the need to institute strong monitoring and evaluating mechanisms to ensure that vocational training in Nigeria is up to date with the current and emerging needs on the labor market.

### **5.2 Recommendation 2: Promote Public-Private Policy Dialogue and Synergy**

The government is a critical stakeholder as far as job creation is concerned (Siebold, 2021). In Nigeria, several ministries are engaged in the fight against youth unemployment. The Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Budget and National Planning, the Presidency, the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management etc. were at one time or other involved in job creation initiatives (Amah & Oyetunde, 2020). As a result of this duplication of functions and absence of coordination and sustainability of policies, the unemployment efforts of successive governments have been largely unsuccessful (Okuwa, 2020). Therefore, the need to institute an inter-ministerial taskforce can also facilitate more coordinated and integrated policy formulation and implementation on youth employment. By bringing together key ministries spanning skills, industry, investment, economic planning, and labor, a unified strategy can be devised that tackles the multifaceted drivers and solutions for unemployment and underemployment among young Nigerians. Such dialogue can also encourage capacity building for other intermediary partners and commitment from private and international partners. With a clear mandate and effective leadership, policy coordination will diminish the fragmented initiatives and improve the outcomes of various initiatives through implementation and monitoring mechanisms.

### **5.3 Recommendation 3: Improve Economic Pull Factors to Reverse the Migration Trend**

To reverse the migration trend in the Country, it is recommended that an enabling environment for Job creation is put in place by the government. This can include investments in infrastructural development, technical and vocational training, and promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation. The practice and experience of Germany and Austria on TVET should be a good example of how to develop and promote innovative pilot models for formal and non-formal TVET (Edel, 2022). Nigeria has a huge Agricultural sector and can use the sector to solve a lot of the youth unemployment milieu (Mghenyi et al., 2022). While it is true that Youth Nigerians prefer formal wage employment (NBS, 2023), Agriculture can be incentivized and promoted to raise the interest of young people in this sector, which can become a wealth-generating venture and a means of creating massive jobs. Precedence can be taken from the work of (Dinye, 2013) who studied the Tono Irrigation Scheme that was implemented in the Kassena Nankana district in the Upper East region of Ghana. According to Dinye (2013), the Tono irrigation scheme has immensely provided employment opportunities and led to high productivity in the agricultural sector within the region.

### **5.4 Recommendation 4: Remittances and the Place of Diaspora in Reversing Migration**

It has been established that a significant amount of Nigeria's foreign exchange comes from diaspora remittances. In 2018 alone diaspora remittances to Nigeria amounted to US\$25 billion, which is 6.1% of Nigeria's GDP, translating into 83% of the 2018 Federal government budget (Adeseye, 2021). It is, therefore, imperative for the government to intensify works and efforts with the Diaspora Commission, to encourage Nigerians abroad to invest in Job creation ventures, to prepare for their return home when the economic and security fortunes are turned around (Idemudia et al, 2020). The popular myth that life is better outside Nigeria made worse by dire economic realities in the country makes this a daunting task (Obi-Ani et al., 2020). However, with the proper political will and concerted efforts, the migration trend can be reversed through a gradual and comprehensive approach.

### **5.5 Recommendation 5: Overhaul the Security Network**

Nigeria's insecurity challenge is a menace that has multidimensionally crippled the economy. This problem is a national concern that has adversely impacted the employment opportunities and development process of the country. The security of a country should be a top priority of any government because it determines the performance of the different facets that contribute to the development of a nation. (Adejumo, 2006) posits that "Security is the demonstration of keeping peace inside the overseeing regions". Undoubtedly, the businesses that create employment opportunities and enable an economy to thrive can only flourish in an atmosphere that gives an assurance of protection of lives and properties. In Nigeria, organized crimes, assaults, and other forms of heinous acts committed by members of the Boko haram terrorists and their cohorts have made life unbearable for Nigerians across every part of the country (Jelilov et al, 2018). Again, (Jelilov et al., 2018) further observed that the various aspects of the country's instability and poor performance attributed to the security challenges have a direct implication of sabotaging investment activities due to the fear of disruption of livelihood and properties. The reassurance of a peaceful atmosphere is a prerequisite for investment promotion, business funding, and human capital availability that can fuel the employment of youths and improve their means of livelihood.

## 6. Conclusion

This policy brief examined the impact of unemployment on youth migration and development in Nigeria. The study developed two key questions related to youth unemployment and migration in Nigeria. These include 1) What factors are responsible for massive youth unemployment, and how does this influence migration; and secondly, how effective are government policies on unemployment in ameliorating migration trends?

On the first question, the analysis found that multiple socioeconomic factors beyond just a lack of jobs are driving high youth unemployment and associated migration. These encompass skill mismatches between education systems and labor market needs, lack of economic opportunities in rural areas, infrastructure deficits constraining enterprise competitiveness, and weak institutional support for young entrepreneurs. Sub-nationally, stark differences between states drive internal migration patterns, while globally, limited higher education and career prospects incentivize emigration. The findings align with studies underscoring the multiplicity of drivers ranging from educational shortfalls to governance challenges to regional inequality. Youth have aspirations for viable livelihoods which current systems fail to offer, resulting in exit options through internal and external migration.

Regarding the second question on policy effectiveness, the findings were critical of the status quo. While numerous youth employment programs exist, they are often misaligned with realities on the ground. There is an overemphasis on microenterprises when youth prefer formal jobs; skills training mismatches labor demand; scale is inadequate compared to needs; and monitoring and evaluation are weak. Unemployment policies also focus more on supply-side skills rather than spurring job creation and growth. Some studies offer more positive perspectives, but the prevailing theme was gaps in strategic alignment and implementation capacity given the complexity of challenges.

Key recommendations include establishing integrated labor market information systems to inform localized interventions; competency-based vocational training tailored to market needs; an inter-ministerial taskforce to coordinate multi-sectoral strategies; and reforms to ease business registration and tax burdens for youth-owned enterprises.

Regarding the contribution of this policy brief to the existing literature on this subject, it is ideal to observe that numerous scholarly works on this topic have been carried over the years, but this brief in my humble opinion will be one of the few policy assessment documents that attempted to find the correlation of youth unemployment and youth migration within the context of other attendant educational, economic and social considerations.

However, there are limitations to this brief. The analysis relied more on secondary documentary sources rather than primary data collection which could provide direct youth perspectives. The thematic analysis was subjective and findings context-specific to Nigeria, limiting wider generalizability. Integrating mixed methods and ground-truthing with field research could enrich the analysis. Nonetheless, a synthesized review of credible information sources offers useful insights on aligning youth employment policies with realities and aspirations.

In conclusion, Nigeria's youth have tremendous potential but lack pathways for economic participation and social mobility. The resultant exit through migration has socioeconomic costs. Creative solutions rooted in evidence, localized realities, and youth perspectives can put the country's young demography on the path to inclusive prosperity. But this requires political will for deep systemic reforms in education, public institutions, infrastructure, and economic governance. The policy brief aimed to

support such reforms through nuanced analysis of challenges, review of gaps, and recommendations to inform strategies. Sustainable progress will depend on ongoing engagement between policymakers, young Nigerians, and other stakeholders to co-create adaptive solutions for the nation's future.

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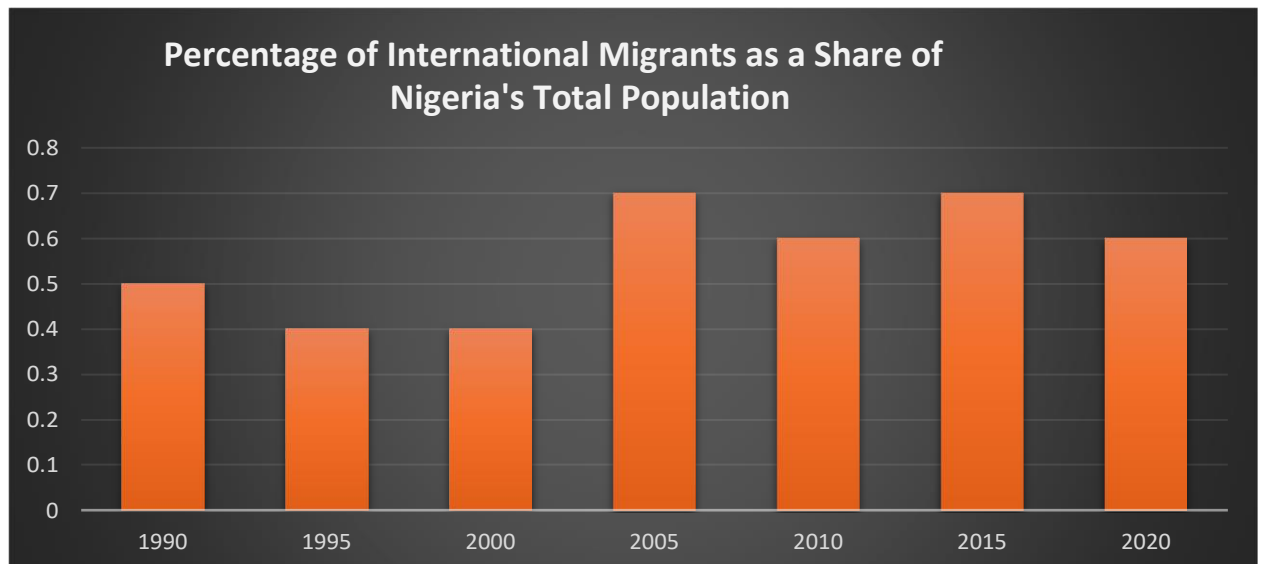
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## APPENDICES

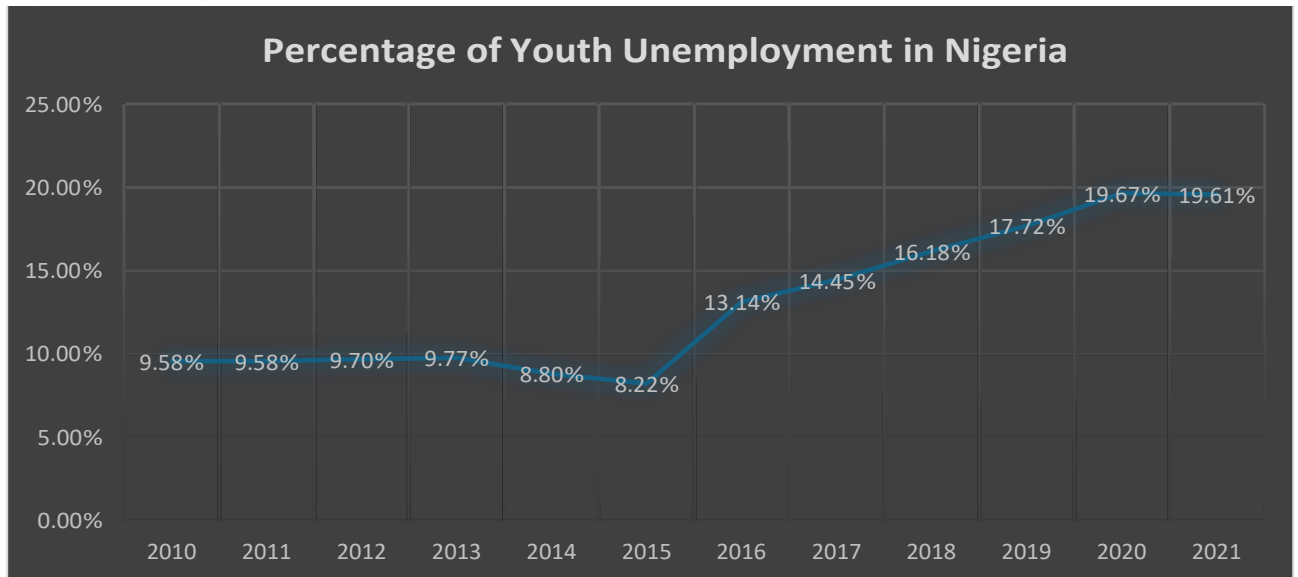
### Figures

**Figure 1: International Migration in Nigeria**



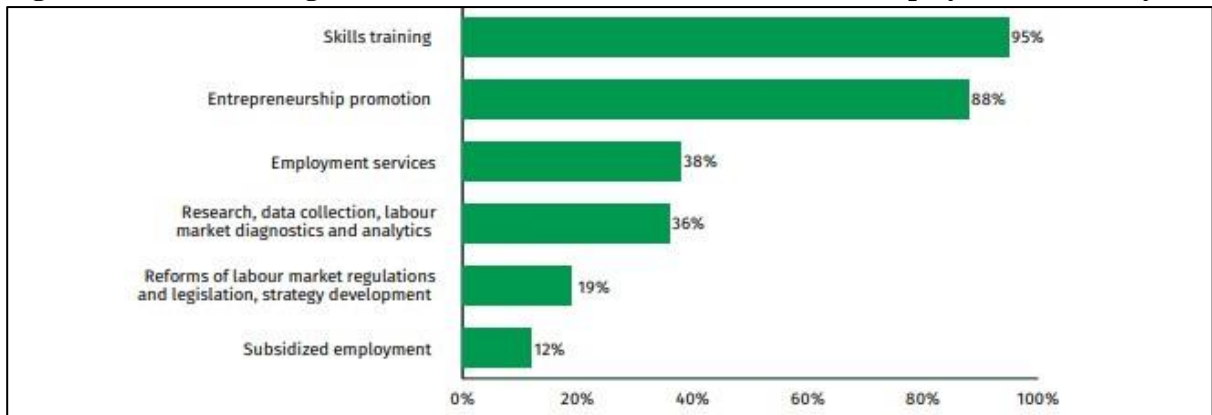
Source Statista 2020

**Figure 2. Unemployment in Nigeria from 2010 – 2021**



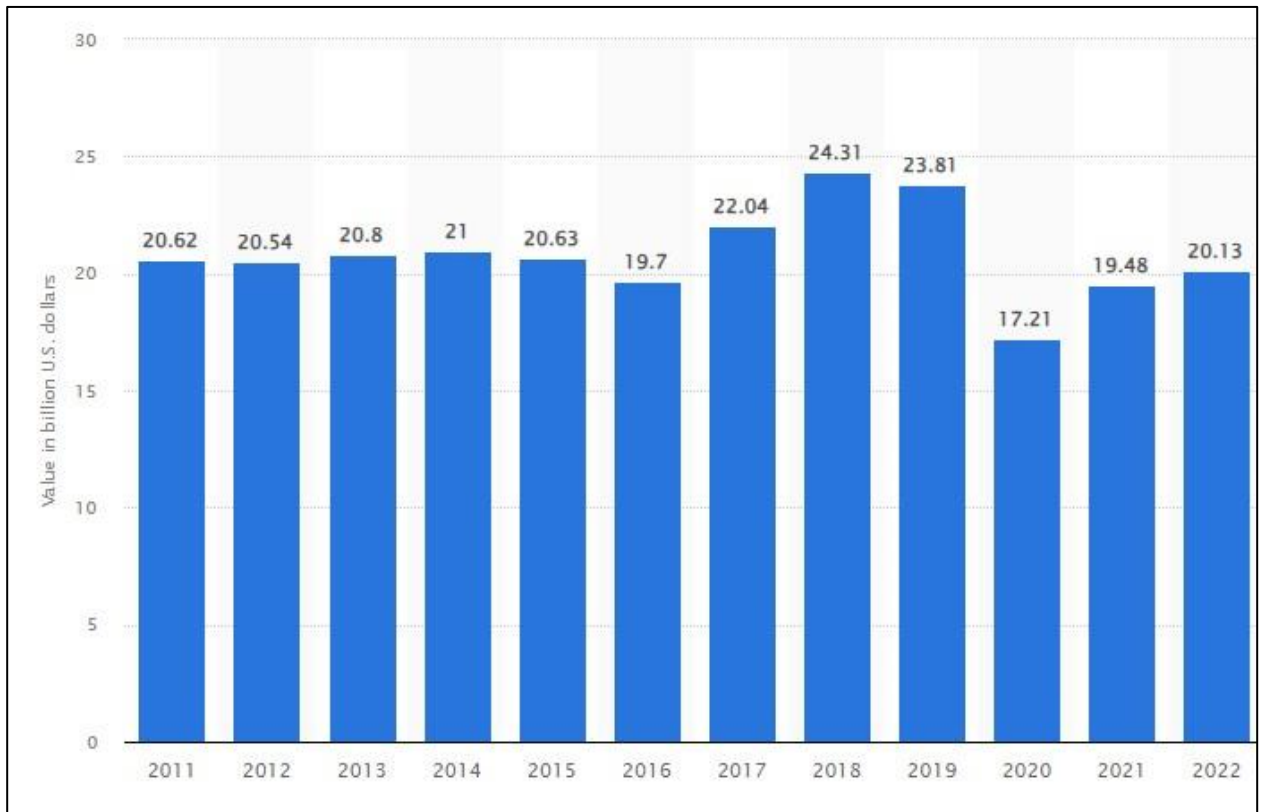
Source: Statista, 2022

**Figure 3: The main categories of interventions included in the Youth Employment Inventory**



Source: Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan (NYEP) 2021-2024

**Figure 4: Remittance inflow in Nigeria**



Source: Statista, 2023

Tables

**Table 1: Labor Market Status by Education, Sex, Age, and Urban-Rural Q4 2022 and Q1 2023**

			Employed	Unemployed	Out of Labour Force
Q4 2022	By sex	National	73.6	4.1	22.3
		Female	69.0	4.9	26.1
		Male	78.4	3.3	18.3
	By Educational Attainment	None	76.3	3.1	20.6
		Primary	74.5	3.1	22.4
		Junior secondary	52.6	2.9	44.5
		Upper secondary	75.2	4.8	20.0
		Post secondary	81.6	8.1	10.3
	By Age	15-24	54.9	5.0	40.1
		25-34	81.3	6.1	12.7
		35-44	88.6	3.3	8.1
		45-54	89.1	2.3	8.5
		55-64	85.8	1.4	12.8
		65+	60.8	1.1	38.1
By Urban-Rural	Rural	76.0	3.2	20.8	
	Urban	71.7	4.8	23.5	
Q1 2023	By Sex	National	76.7	3.3	20.1
		Female	74.6	4.0	21.4
		Male	78.8	2.5	18.6
	By Educational Attainment	None	81.2	2.7	16.2
		Primary	77.3	2.6	20.1
		Junior secondary	53.1	2.3	44.7
		Upper secondary	77.5	3.9	18.7
		Post secondary	84.2	5.6	10.2
	By Age	15-24	56.8	4.2	39.0
		25-34	84.6	4.5	10.9
		35-44	92.8	2.3	4.9
		45-54	92.8	1.6	5.6
		55-64	87.3	1.7	10.9
		65+	60.3	1.8	37.9
By Urban-Rural	Rural	80.6	2.4	17.0	
	Urban	72.7	4.1	23.1	

Source: NBC, 2023



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