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## Resolving Youth Marginalization and Unemployment Gap in Nigeria: The Role of Capacity Building

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### **Abstract:**

*To address the existential issues of youth marginalization and unemployment, various approaches have been employed by governments, private institutions, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies in which capacity building and incentivization were common grounds employed by these institutions. From a global perspective, the number of youths not in education, employment, and training (NEET) has commendably decreased despite the rise in the global population. This success story is, however, a facade when the world is holistically inspected. Some countries' proportion of youth unemployment has been on the rise for years with no effective strategies to curb their travesty - Nigeria is a notable example which is the focus of this study. This research write-up analyzes the current situation of Nigeria in the aspect of youth marginalization and unemployment. A comparative analysis was also elucidated to grasp the position of Nigeria in the world trajectories on youth marginalization and unemployment. This paper corroborates its expositions through a study using google forms to investigate the opinions of concerned groups of youths in Nigeria. Over 90 percent of respondents were students, of which about 50% do not believe the current educational curriculum in Nigeria can avail them of good jobs upon graduation. The groups also asserted that capacity-building training plays a major role in their personal development and career progresses. However, this paper argues that the pervasive capacity-building training and incentivization cannot be fully effective if associated hindrances such as the lack of enabling environment, political instability, and cultural disintegration are not properly addressed. Thus, this paper emphasizes the need for the commensurate provision of enabling environments by Governments and capacity builders vis-à-vis youth inclusiveness and political consistency in Nigeria*

**Keywords:** Youth Marginalization, unemployment, capacity-building, enabling environment, educational curriculum

### **1. Introduction**

The concept of youth marginalization relates to a global perennial issue. Beyond the fear of antisocial behavior, it originates from institutional, social, and cultural marginalities. The prolonged failures of the educational system, social-spatial concentrations, and lowered aspirations are notable examples. On the other hand, youth marginalization is seldomly materialistic but rather on the long-existing spatial and cultural processes that promote social exclusion. Simply, youth marginalization is the inhumane preconceived perceptions directed to individuals on the premise of their age range. (Levitas 2005; Lister 2004).

Consequently, youths are the most vulnerable to societal problems commonly tagged as a necessary experiential stage to the psychological maturity that comes with adulthood. The effects of these marginalization on youths cut across various aspects of their lives, making them victims of economic meltdown, social unrest, political instabilities, and conflict. Also, the major involvement of youths in excluded demographic groups such as the LGBTQ further strengthens their marginalization in the world today. It is no surprise that youths are the most unemployed group of people, when they have been continuously treated as the world's bane but paradoxically regarded as the most important resources of the same.

According to the International Labour Organization (I.L.O.) reports on the 2020 global youth employment trend: The number of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 is approximately 1.3 billion. Around 497 million people, which constitutes 41 percent of the global youth population, are in the labor force. Specifically, 429 million youths are employed while nearly 68 million are unemployed. More profoundly, 776 million youths are outside the labor force- this comprises students, apprentices, and those not seeking or available for jobs. For clearer representations of youth labor underutilization, the number of young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) currently stands at 267 million. The statistics further corroborate the alarming rate of youth unemployment which stems from their marginalization. It is, however, crucial to note that there has been a decline in the rate of youth unemployment, noting that an increase in the global youth population from 1 billion to 1.3 billion between 1999 and 2019 did not lead to an increase

in the number of youths in the labor force but rather a decrease from 568 million to 497 million. Despite the commendable decline in the rates, the truth is that a great number of youths are NEET (I.L.O., 2020).

Elucidated above is a concise excerpt of global youth unemployment as a consequence of their marginalization. Narrowing the unemployment of youths to sub-Saharan Africa, specifically Nigeria, reveals the shockingly paralyzed states the conservative populace has been enduring for long. Nigeria, popularly regarded as the giant of Africa on the premise of her population with an exponential growth rate, holds a central stage in the continent's youth affairs. With an estimated population of 200 million people and about 34 million youths, one of the largest populations of youths in the world (Wikipedia, 2020). It is, however, disheartening to note that 55.4% of Nigeria's youths populace are either unemployed or underemployed (N.B.S., 2020). A comparative analysis of Nigeria's unemployed youth population reveals that out of the estimated 68 million unemployed youths globally, Nigeria youths certainly comprise over 10% of this estimation. It is also quoted that about 94% of every extremist and militant in Nigeria are youths (Mazi 2016: Opinion). The marginalization via non-inclusion of youths has caused more damage as they are deprived of many opportunities resulting in massive unemployment, deprivation of education, and basic rights.

Youth unemployment is an existential threat in Nigeria that has devoid countries and their citizens of many things such as peace, harmony, basic human rights, innovations with great potential to wreak more havoc if not addressed swiftly and comprehensively. There is an urgent need to change the trajectory of Nigeria's approaches to ending youth unemployment and also creating a paradigm shift in the same issue. As such, it is crucial to understand the various perspectives contributing to this menace clearly. This will undoubtedly help governments, institutions, the private sector, civil societies, and individuals develop effective and sustainable strategies to tackle youth unemployment now and forever.

## 2. Situational Analysis: Nigeria as a Case Study

The continuous increase in the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria could be traced to numerous sources, which include constant and varying factors. Increasing population growth rate, which is currently set at 2.58% increase from 2019, cultural misconceptions which stems from extremism and lack of diversification, discontinuity in government policies by different administrations, and disbelief in the educational curriculum are notable examples of the constant factors contributing to Nigeria's youth unemployment. The varying factors are rather circumstantial, which are largely dependent on the global or the country's unexpected occurrences such as the coronavirus pandemic, natural disasters such as flooding, unforeseen recession leading to a sudden decrease in the flow of money, amongst others.

An illustrative description of the life of a youth living in Nigeria further clarifies the scourge of unemployment in the country. As a youth in Nigeria who is fortunate to have completed a tertiary education degree, you are expected to prioritize the learning process in your profession with little attachment to earning a substantial amount of money. 'Do not chase money, learn first! Money will surely follow'. These are common words among practitioners in the industry, and it's often said with little or no display of empathy for the wellbeing of the youths. Ironically, this set of professionals pay young graduates' stipends that can't cater to any other needs apart from their transportation and feeding allowances. In oblivion, the young graduates savor their accustomed pain and hope to advance to the peak of their profession soonest but eventually have to discover that most employers and supervisors are after utilizing their youthful energy as opposed to their improvements in becoming a professional. A substantial number of young graduates mostly shy away from their profession owing to the lack of enabling environment to foster their growth. This, in turn, makes them venture into other ways or approaches to making ends meet with no place for sustainability. Unfortunately, a young graduate's life is a lot better than youths not in employment, education, or training (NEET).

As of 2016, Nigeria's share of youth NEET was estimated at 21.36% (I.L.O., 2016). This segment of the youth populace suffers gross violations of human rights in the country and is dominant in the northern part of the country. The vulnerabilities of these sets of youths are utilized to promote extremism and lack of diversification, which constitute the basis of terrorism in the country. Unfortunately, these same set of youths suffer most of the consequences of their vulnerabilities as many young lives have been lost to terrorism, a great number have been displaced, and so on. Beyond the generalized marginalization of Nigerian youths, the female gender experience is horrendous as they are on the frontlines of the discrimination that affects youth. In fact, women accounted for more than 50% of the unemployed youths (N.I.S.E.R., 2013). Young women NEET are prone to early marriages, slavery, domestic violence, sexual abuse and are mostly mentally traumatized. The gender gap in Nigeria is far from ending as the country ranked 128th out of 153 countries (Global Gender Gap Report 2019). The wrong societal thinking faculty on the type of jobs suited for the female gender, patriarchal ideologies, emotional immaturity, motherhood responsibilities have long contributed to the extreme marginalization suffered by the female gender, making them the worst-hit targets of youth unemployment.

It is pertinent to note that the horrendous state of youth unemployment in Nigeria is known to all. More profoundly, children are mentally prepared for the hustling stage of their lives, which is accorded to youthful time. The normality in abnormalities that comes with the youthful era has also been recognized by the governments, non-governmental organizations, international bodies, and others with public representations of putting an end to it. Therefore, various policies have been put in place to address youth unemployment in Nigeria, by the governments and other organizations. Over the years ranging across different republics in the post-independence era of Nigeria, different administrations have introduced various policies - the Operation Feed the Nation (O.F.N.), Directorate of Food, Road, and Rural Infrastructure (D.F.R.R.I.) are notable ones in the military regime. The democratic governments also introduced policies like the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE -P), Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOU-win), Osun State Youth Employment Scheme (O'YES), among others (TunjiAkanke, 2014). The current administration of President MuhammaduBuhari has also introduced various policies since the assumption of office with a

focus on a social investment program that led to the establishment of initiatives like the N-Power, which provides young Nigerians with job training and education, as well as a monthly stipend of 30,000 Nigerian Naira (Wikipedia, 2020). With no sense of prejudice, the Nigerian governments have introduced several policies that were impactful in tackling youth unemployment in the countries. Some have been recognized by international organizations such as the O'YES, which the World Bank commended for employing a large proportion of youths in Osun State. Nigerians also commended the SURE -P Graduate Internship Scheme for the wholesome opportunities provided to young graduates.

Aside from the policies enacted by government agencies, tremendous strategies have also been implemented by non-governmental organizations specifically directed at curbing the menace of youth unemployment in Nigeria. For years, the non-governmental organizations have focused more on youths' leadership training and capacity building in Nigeria, making them globally competitive and competent enough to thrive in the 21st-century industries. The Young Professionals Bootcamp, Youth Organization Capacity Building School, Strategy for Mentoring Initiative and Leadership Empowerment (S.M.I.L.E.) are common examples. In furtherance, Nigeria has received international assistance from diplomatic relations and international affiliations. The United Nations have been on the frontier of strategies and policymaking for Nigeria and other member countries, such as the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals to help address youth unemployment and other perennial issues in the world. Looking at the cornucopia of solutions targeted at ending youth unemployment, Nigeria should have completely overcome youth unemployment and related marginalization. Sadly, the reverse is the case which is evident in the current statistics on youth unemployment. What then should be done to curb the marginalization of youths and its huge unemployment effect of the same?

(TunjiAkande, 2014) reported in his published situational analysis article that public policies directed at addressing youth unemployment have encountered various hindrances, including finances, ineffective administrative implementations, varying policies, youth disbelief in policies created, and inadequate experts in charge of the training programs. It should be noted that all of these challenges could be linked to the discontinuities that have long existed in government transitions. Each administration prefers re-strategizing with little or no preference to strategies already in place. It is even worse when the opposition party assumes office; previous strategies are prejudicially discredited to hit the preceded ruling party. Recalling that some of the effective implementation strategies in the military were mostly eliminated in the democratic government era with no published monitoring and evaluation reasons for taking such actions. Resultantly, the country is then buried in politically bureaucratic-based mechanisms in tackling youth unemployment. More so, the government's educational curriculum strategies in bridging the gap between academia and the industry have long been based on providing youths with vocational training and internship opportunities, among others.

On the other hand, no enabling environment is being created for the youths to exercise the knowledge gained under such platforms; it's more or less like training without provision for working place. No adequate loans are being given out to aspiring entrepreneurs to complete their training to further drive their innovations. This situation also affects non-governmental organizations that focus on capacity building of youths for the 21st-century jobs with limited 21st-century jobs available in the country. Leadership training for youths has been on the rise. Still, youths mostly demonstrate political apathy as they are few or no policies aimed at promoting youth participation in the country's decision-making.

Additionally, the lack of an enabling environment, which implies the lack of sufficient industries and investors, is mainly caused by the country's unstable currency and poor infrastructural facilities. 'In Africa, you know we have issues of devaluations, so we want to really preserve some of the family's wealth,' Aliko Dangote, the wealthiest person in Africa, told Bloomberg TV David Rubenstein's show in January 2020. Suppose the most indigenous investor in Nigeria is planning to invest in foreign countries, it should then not be a surprise that most foreign investors are not attracted to the giant of Africa for investments.

### 3. Comparative Analysis: Nigeria and Other Countries

As of December 2019, Nigeria ranks 56th out of 149 countries with the highest percentage of youths not in employment, education, or training (I.L.O., 2019). This clearly shows that 92 other countries are doing better than Nigeria in that aspect. As a result, a juxtaposition of Nigeria's youth unemployment status to other countries is necessary. Citing Qatar as an example situated in the western parts of Asia with a recent ranking by the C.I.A. World Factbook placing the country with the third-lowest unemployment rate in the world. It was reported that this small wealthy country achieved extremely low unemployment rates by addressing challenges and using achievement-based pillars guided by the 2030 National vision of the country. The reports further highlighted that the pillars range across human, social, economic, and environmental developments. Another intriguing approach is the country's respect for diversifications without compromising her cultures, which is a major determinant of the country's approval to host the 2022 world cup. This will undoubtedly provide numerous job opportunities for youths with massive infrastructural developments (Qatar Overseas Filipino Worker, 2019).

Realistically, the challenges experienced by the Nigerian governments are not so similar to that of Qatar. To foster a better understanding of the comparative analysis of Nigeria to other countries, Rwanda, which is part of the African continent - specifically located at the convergence point between the Africa Great Lakes and East Africa would be considered. Despite the economic meltdown experienced by Rwanda after the war and genocide with the Tutsi ethnicity group in 1994, the country has come a long way. Statistically, Rwanda has noticed a progressive decrease in the youth unemployment rate from 2014 to 2018, which stems from their governments' intensive efforts on improving the trade of the country, promoting peace and harmony in the country. Rwanda is currently regarded as one of the safest countries to

visit in Africa, which attracts foreign investors to utilize the conservative population of the country by providing decent works while simultaneously contributing to the country's economic growth.

Nigeria youth unemployment issues are largely centralized on the disproportionate rate of job provisions with the ever-increasing population growth rate. To cater to this, the country needs to emulate Qatar in prioritizing their culture and developing a unique plan that will last for a long period no matter the political party ruling the nation at the set implementation period (a sustainable indigenous solution). Also, Nigeria needs to look beyond petroleum resources by giving intensive actions to increase the nation's agricultural and technological performances to help promote diversification while preserving its culture.

#### 4. Methodology and Analysis

To further validate different assertions, theoretical background, and statistics reported above, google forms were utilized for real-time statistical evidence through a randomized anonymous survey. Leveraging on WhatsApp groups and Telegram, a total of 129 responses were recorded from the targeted sample, which comprises youths but distinguished based on their occupational status - 69.8% responses from students, 8.5% employed, 12.4% unemployed, 0.8% underemployed, 7.0% self-employed and 1.6% employers as shown in figure 1 below.

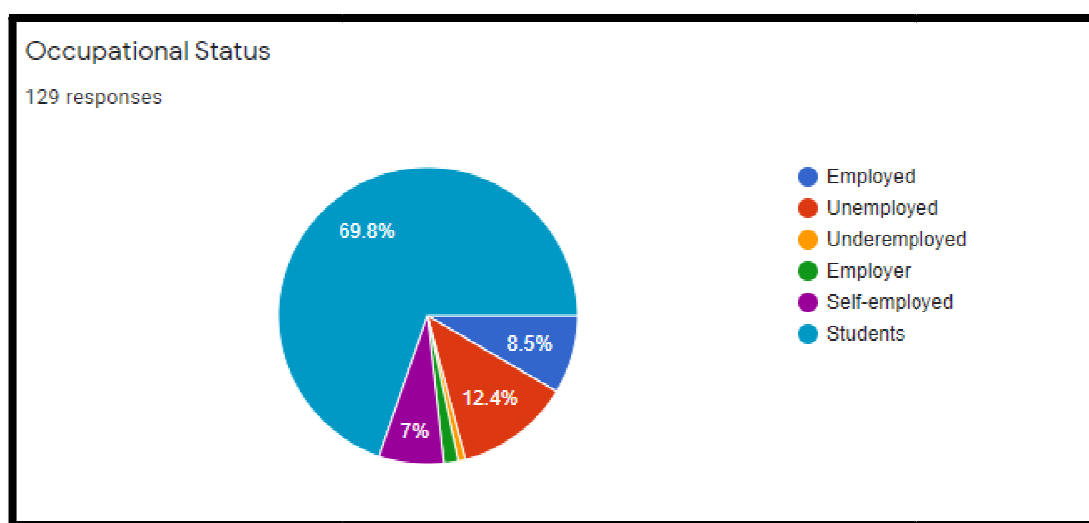


Figure 1: Categories of Respondents Used for the Study

With 90.0% of the recorded students' responses are currently in pursuit of their Bachelor's degrees, our study shows that 53.3% of the students do not think the school atmosphere provides them with the needed skills to thrive in the 21st century and 50.0% of the same group do not think that the current educational curriculum will provide them with the sufficient skills to thrive in their aspiring profession, as shown in figure 2 and figure 3 respectively. It is therefore evident that youths are mostly enrolled in schools as a necessary societal requirement with a disbelief in the educational curriculum put in place to make them employable in the nearest future.

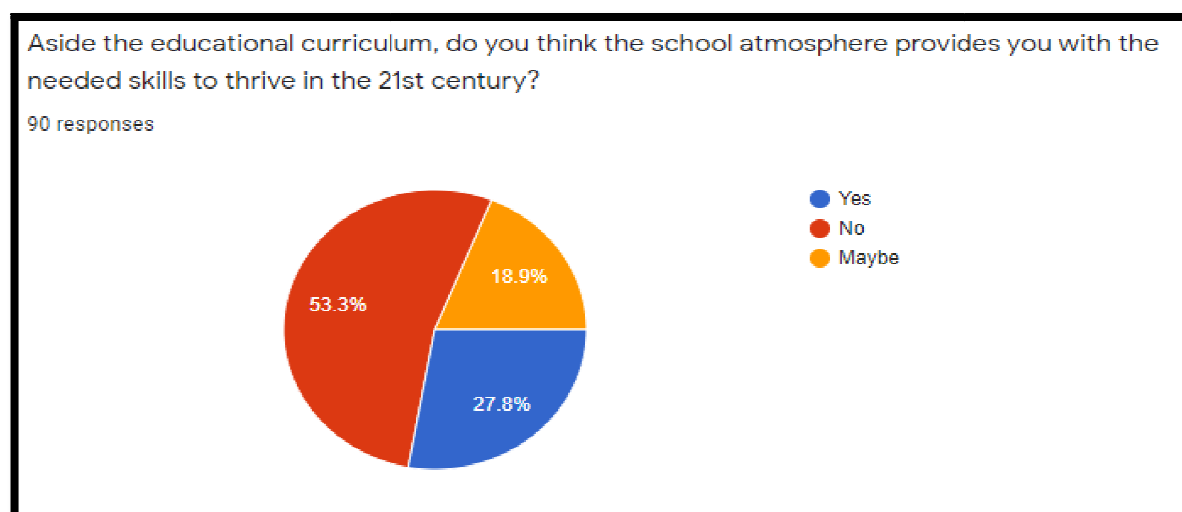


Figure 2: Responses on the Effect of Schools' Atmospheres to Skills Acquisitions

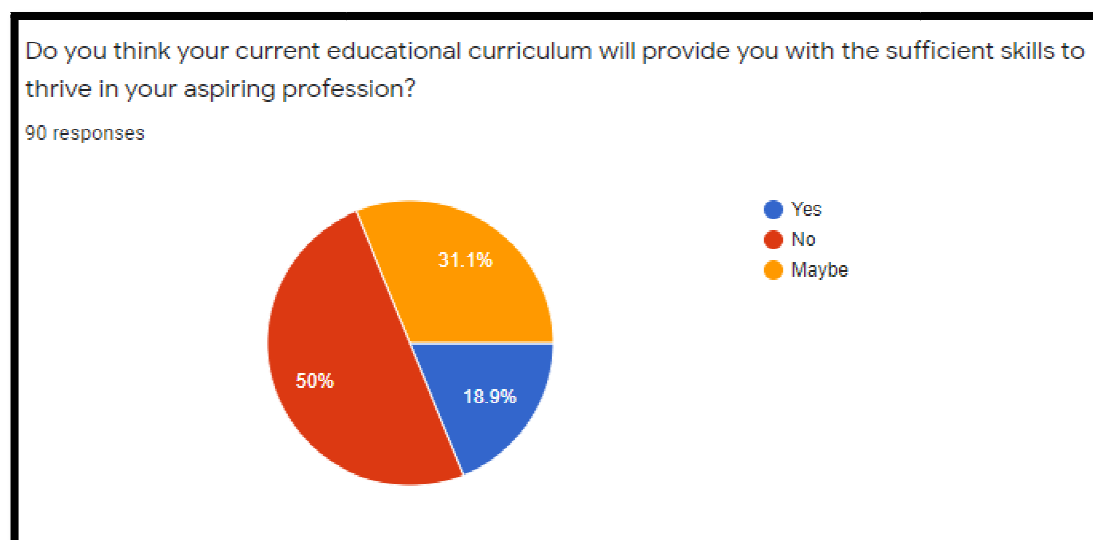


Figure 3: Students' Thoughts on the Sufficiency on the Current Educational Curriculum

The study also considered the sources of capacity building for students involved in such and it was discovered that 52.2% of the capacity building were received from N.G.O.s, 40% from private institutions, 37.8% from Educational Institutions, 29.4% from International affiliations and 11.1% from Government Institutions as shown in figure 4. This suggests that the least contributor to students' capacity building is the governments. Also, 82.2% of the students are optimistic about securing decent work in the future with dominant reasons based on self-development, capacity building, and interpersonal skills.

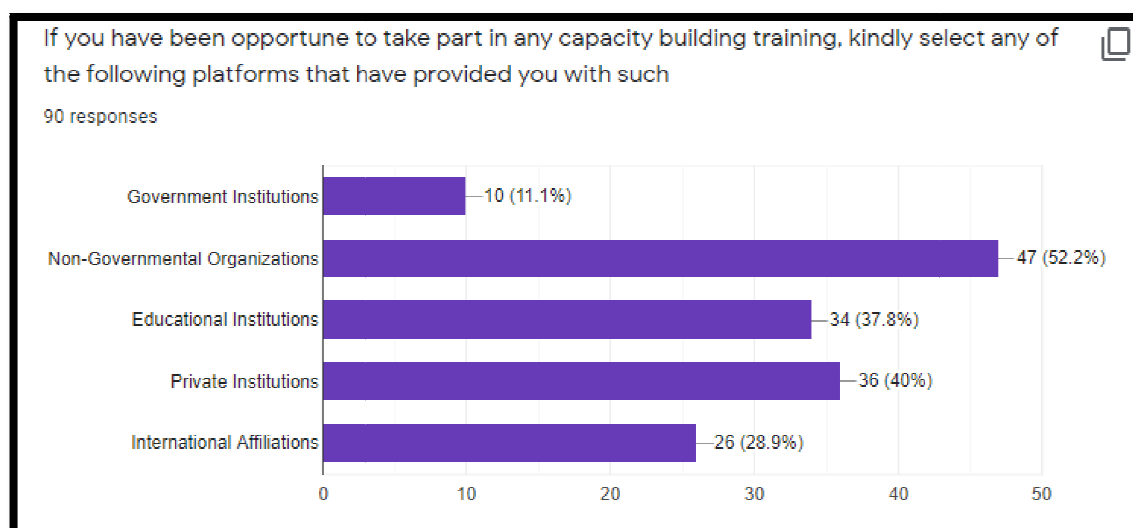


Figure 4: Responses on Institutions' Provisions of Capacity-Building

The employed youths also corroborated no significant correlation of their educational qualifications with the attainment of their current job. 55.6% do not think that their educational qualifications earned them their current jobs. The employed youths who have experienced capacity building gave credits to N.G.O.s, with 66.7% employed youths' responses having once received a capacity building training from them. Also, 45.5% were once discriminated against based on lack of experience while looking for jobs as shown in figure 5.



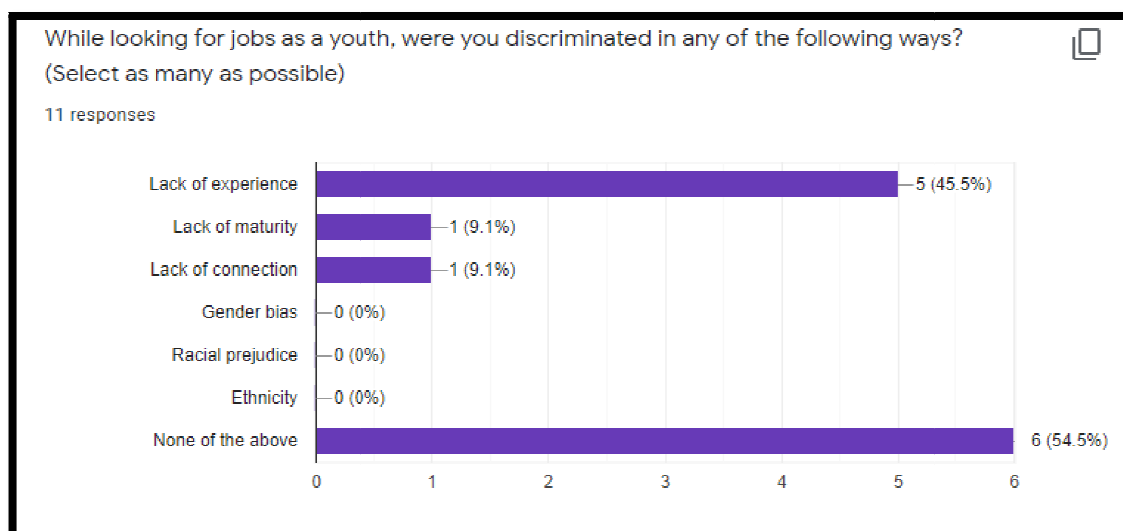


Figure 5: Responses on Youths' Discriminations during Job Search (The Employed)

In addition, 75% of the unemployed respondents hold a Bachelor's degree. However, it was discovered that 68.8% were discriminated against and marginalized based on lack of experience, while 18.8% of the respondents were also marginalized based on the lack of connections as depicted in figure 6.

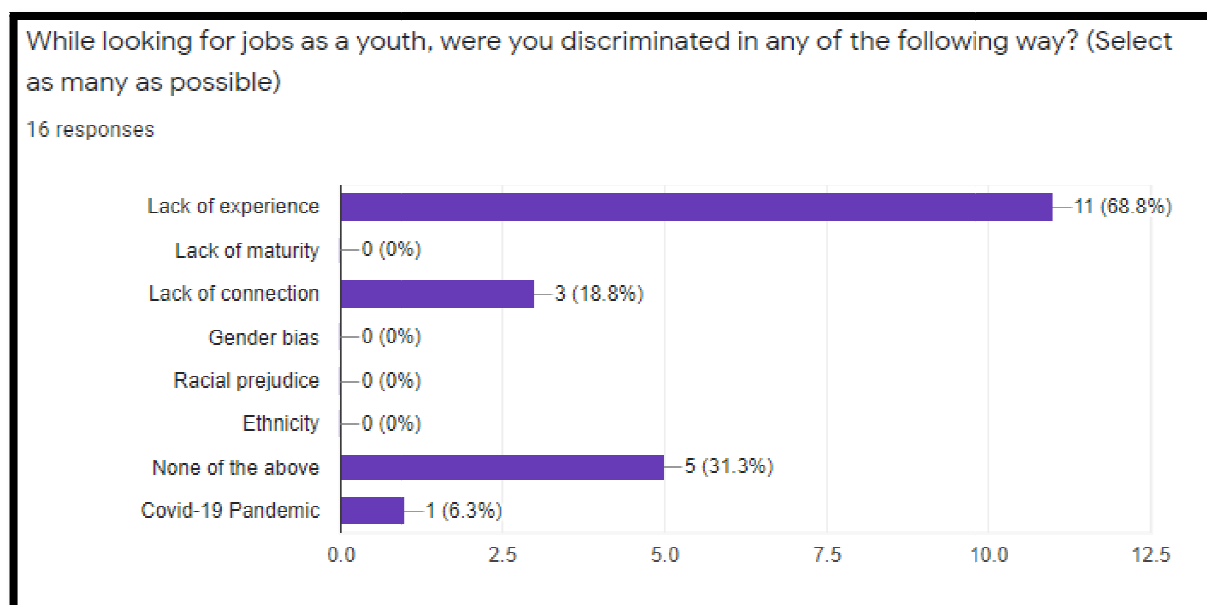


Figure 6: Responses on Youths' Discriminations during Job Search (The Unemployed)

As represented in figure 7, the employer response further consolidates the discrimination based on lack of experience as 100% of the responses checked experience and technical knowledge as a prerequisite, 0% checked academic qualifications, and 50% checked the possession of 21st-century skills and psychological maturity.

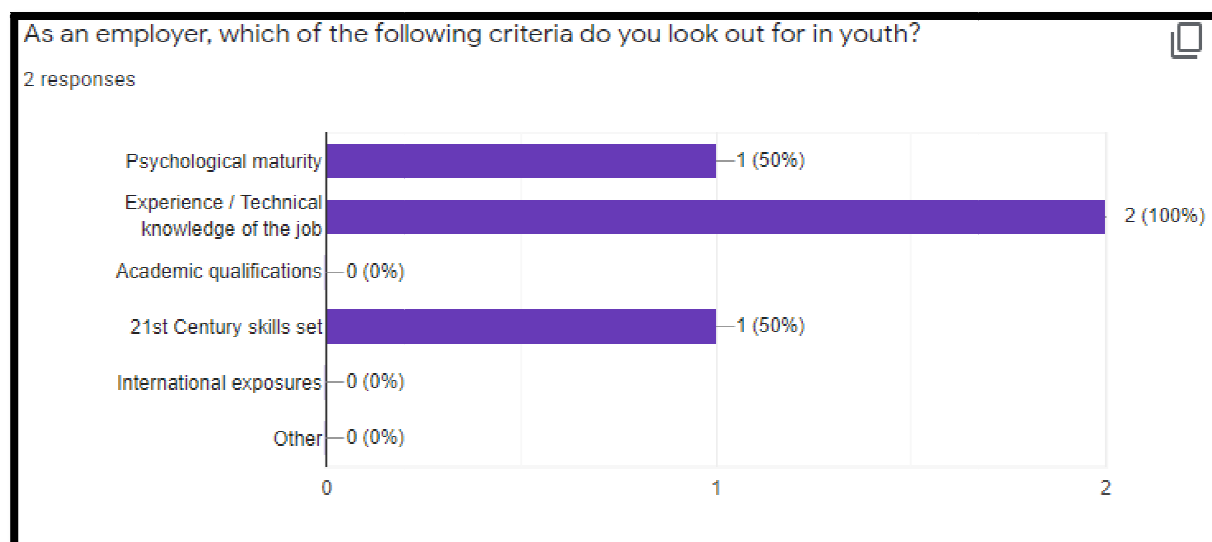


Figure 7: Responses on Employers' Youths' Discriminations during Assessments (The Employer)

The statistics obtained from the research conducted clearly show the preference given to academic qualifications by Nigerian youths. The report also shows that most youths prefer capacity building, self-development, and interpersonal relationships in shaping their future. Unarguably, there is a dire need to address the educational curriculum in our country to help boost the confidence and chance of youths securing employment through academia.

## 5. Conclusion

This write-up has given extensive insights into youths' unemployment as a consequence of their prolonged marginalization. Youths have been marginalized by the system that should be a pedestal for developing their careers. However, the 21st century is a new world order. Access to varied skills is not solely dependent on a system but can be acquired through different modes in a somewhat independent manner - the capacity building's hallmark. Truly, now is the time to ensure that Youths access needed knowledge that will aid technological advancement, design development, and entrepreneurship institutionalization. It is also mandatory that an enabling environment be created to drive the results of capacity building as it is the basis of proffering sustainable youth employment opportunities. All of these can be done in the following ways.

First, creating a national plan (an A.C.T./Bill) that will thrive irrespective of the political administration changes. This will serve as a sole pedestal in creating an enabling environment to promote an effective and sustainable policy framework in tackling youth unemployment. However, the creation of such policy should be formulated with great consideration of the cultural background of the nation, grassroots community problems encountered by youths, and gross participation of youths in the decision-making of such policies. This would undoubtedly promote social inclusion, respect diversification without compromising the cultural heritage of the country.

Furthermore, the country needs to perform better in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs comprises 169 targets and 232 indicators with a plan to end poverty and set the world on a path of peace, prosperity, and opportunity for all on a healthy planet. It is the best existing model for all-around development. It contains the ingredients/goals of quality education and strong institutions that will help inspire a positive mindset and purposeful leadership in Nigeria. Thus, there is an urgent need to make the SDGs more known and well supported such that two out of every three students in Nigerian elementary schools, high schools, and tertiary institutions will be actively involved in the SDGs awareness and implementation scheme. With this, the spirit of service, integrity, and responsible leadership will be a part of our national and global fabric. Currently, the highest office created for the SDGs is that of the Special Adviser to the President on SDGs, whose performance has long been hindered by political parochialism. If Nigeria truly wants to do better beyond the continued advocacy for the global goals, there is a need to create a separate office directly affiliated to the United Nations to help monitor and evaluate progress. It is a certainty that the achievement of the SDGs will help change the narrative of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

Fully aware of the commendable impacts of the non-governmental organizations, there is still a need for them to tackle youth unemployment in capacity building through enabling governments. Thus, assistance should be rendered to the governments in providing incubation hubs, industries, creating social entrepreneurs, and driving innovation in the country.

Conclusively, through the collaborative efforts of governments, N.G.O.s, international affiliations in making youths the driver of the decision-making process without any regard to political or bureaucratic discontinuities, a productive and sustainable course of change in addressing youth marginalization and unemployment would be charted in Nigeria. Truly, youth marginalization and unemployment are an existential threat. We must rise in solidarity in ensuring that the current tragic narrative is rewritten, such that youths are empowered and have access to limitless opportunities that will advance their career objectives and ultimately contribute to national development.

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## Appendix

**YOUTH EMPLOYMENT & CAPACITY BUILDING - THE WAY FORWARD**

This form is created for the publication of a research work titled: Resolving Youth Marginalization and Unemployment Gap in Nigeria: The Role of Capacity Building.

\* Required

**Gender \***

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Prefer not to say

**Age \***

☐ 10-19

☐ 20-29

☐ 30-39

☐ 40-49

Figure 8: Snippet of Google Forms Used to Conduct the Study