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Youth Unemployment and its Implication for Socio-economic Development in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the implications of youth unemployment on socio-economic development in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. Anchored on the Human Capital Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample size of 400 respondents drawn from the projected population of Jalingo Local Government Area using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed with SPSS through frequency distribution, chi-square tests, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability test ($\alpha = 0.87$). The results showed a significant relationship between educational attainment and employability ($\chi^2 = 12.45$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.05$), with higher education levels increasing employment opportunities. Analysis of government interventions revealed mixed perceptions, as only 35% of respondents rated them effective, while 49% considered them ineffective or very ineffective ($\chi^2 = 15.32$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$). The study also established that youth unemployment has severe socio-economic consequences, including rising poverty, crime, and social exclusion, which undermine community development. The findings align with the Human Capital Theory, demonstrating that education and skill acquisition are critical to labor market success. The study concludes that unless government interventions are restructured and educational reforms are implemented, youth unemployment will continue to hinder development in Jalingo. Recommendations were made for improving educational quality, strengthening youth employment programs, and creating sustainable economic opportunities through public-private partnerships.

Keywords: Youth Unemployment, Socio-economic Development, Government, Human Capital Theory, Nigeria.

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Introduction

Youth unemployment remains a pressing global issue with far-reaching implications for economic development, social cohesion, and political stability. Across both developed and developing nations, rising unemployment among young people continues to undermine national productivity and future prospects. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021), global youth unemployment stood at 13.6% in 2020, significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate. This trend was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately affected youth due to their overrepresentation in informal, precarious, and entry-level jobs (ILO, 2021). The resulting job losses and limited access to decent employment have heightened vulnerabilities among young populations, contributing to increased social unrest, migration, and weakened civic engagement.

In Africa, youth unemployment is even more alarming, as over 60% of the continent's population is under the age of 25 (African Development Bank, 2020). Despite this demographic dividend, the continent faces immense challenges in absorbing its growing youth population into productive sectors. Structural weaknesses, including limited industrialization, poor access to credit, and inadequate entrepreneurial support, continue to hinder employment opportunities for the youth. Many young Africans, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa, remain trapped in low-income, informal work or remain unemployed altogether, thereby posing a critical challenge to sustainable development (World Bank, 2021).

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, mirrors this continental crisis. Youth unemployment has continued to rise, reaching 42.5% in 2020, a situation aggravated by poor policy implementation, corruption, and a mismatch between education and labor market demands (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021). This growing unemployment rate among Nigerian youth has led to increased crime rates, drug abuse, and mass migration, often with grave consequences. The socio-economic effects of this crisis are especially visible in urban areas, where the pressures of joblessness intersect with high population density and limited infrastructural development (Adewumi & Akinyemi, 2021).

In Taraba State, the problem is even more acute due to its predominantly agrarian economy and limited industrial base. The state's youth population is rapidly growing, but employment opportunities remain largely informal, seasonal, and insecure. Within Jalingo Local Government Area the administrative and commercial hub of the state unemployment among young people has manifested in social vices such as theft, drug addiction, and political thuggery, posing a significant threat to socio-economic stability and local development (Yakubu & Salihu, 2023). Despite numerous government interventions and empowerment programs, the gap between youth aspirations and available opportunities continues to widen. Understanding the dynamics and implications of youth unemployment at the local level is therefore critical to formulating effective and context-specific policy responses that promote inclusive development.

The persistence of youth unemployment in Jalingo Local Government Area not only reflects broader national and regional trends but also highlights specific structural and institutional deficiencies at the grassroots level. Many young people in the area face limited access to quality education, vocational training, and digital skills, which are essential in today's competitive and knowledge-driven economy. Furthermore, weak local governance structures, poor infrastructure, and the absence of robust private sector participation have created an environment where sustainable job creation is difficult to achieve. This situation has fueled a

cycle of poverty, dependency, and disillusionment among the youth, eroding social trust and civic engagement. The increasing rates of youth-related violence and insecurity in Jalingo have been directly linked to unemployment and underemployment (Okafor&Umeh, 2021). As such, addressing youth unemployment in the area requires a multifaceted approach that combines education reform, skills development, entrepreneurship support, and improved local economic planning to unlock youth potential.

Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment has emerged as one of the most critical socio-economic challenges confronting the global community in the 21st century. The situation has become particularly acute in developing nations, where economic growth has not translated into sufficient job creation for the rapidly expanding youth population. In many parts of the world, young people face barriers such as lack of experience, inadequate skills, and limited access to productive opportunities. This has created widespread social discontent, reduced economic productivity, and a growing sense of marginalization among the youth.

In Nigeria, youth unemployment continues to rise despite various government interventions and policy reforms. The problem has escalated due to factors such as weak industrial base, poor education-to-employment linkage, and governance inefficiencies. While the federal and state governments have initiated numerous programs aimed at youth empowerment, their impact has been limited, especially in regions like Taraba State. In Jalingo Local Government Area, the situation reflects a deepening crisis where a significant number of youth remain unemployed or underemployed, despite possessing academic qualifications. The result has been increased involvement in social vices, such as drug abuse, political violence, and criminal activities, which undermine peace and local development.

Despite a growing body of literature on youth unemployment in Nigeria, most existing studies have focused on macro-level analyses, with limited attention to localized contexts such as Jalingo LGA. This has created a literature gap in understanding how local socio-economic dynamics influence youth unemployment at the grassroots level. Additionally, many previous studies have employed generic theoretical frameworks without assessing how specific models, such as the Human Capital Theory or Structural Unemployment Theory, explain youth joblessness in semi-urban settings. This study is therefore unique in its focus on Jalingo LGA and its attempt to bridge the existing knowledge gap by combining local empirical data with relevant theoretical insights. It aims to uncover localized causes and consequences of youth unemployment and to contribute meaningfully to the design of targeted policy interventions at both the local and state levels.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

i. What are the major causes of youth unemployment in Jalingo Local Government Area?

ii. How does youth unemployment affect socio-economic development in Jalingo Local Government Area?

iii. What is the impact of government intervention on reducing youth unemployment in Jalingo Local Government Aarea?

Research Objectives

i. To identify the major causes of youth unemployment in Jalingo Local Government Area.

ii. To assess the effects of youth unemployment on socio-economic development in the area.

iii. To evaluate the effectiveness of government intervention in reducing youth unemployment in Jalingo Local Government Area.

Hypotheses

i. There is no significant relationship between identified causes and youth unemployment in Jalingo Local Government Area.

ii. Youth unemployment has no significant impact on socio-economic development in the area.

iii. Government interventions have no significant effect on reducing youth unemployment in Jalingo Local Government Area.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification

For the purpose of this study, key concepts are clarified to provide a clear understanding of the focus and context of the research. These concepts include youth, unemployment, and socio-economic development.

Youth: refers to the segment of the population typically considered to be within the age range of 15 to 35 years in the Nigerian context. This age bracket captures individuals who are in the transitional phase from dependency to independence, particularly in terms of education, employment, and social responsibility. Youth is often seen as a period of energy, innovation, and potential, which, if well harnessed, can contribute significantly to national development Chukwuemeka, E. (2020).

Unemployment: in this context, is the condition in which individuals within the working-age group who are willing and able to work are unable to find gainful employment. Youth unemployment, therefore, reflects a situation where young people are either jobless, underemployed, or engaged in activities that do not match their qualifications or aspirations. It may result from structural, economic, educational, or institutional deficiencies that hinder access to decent jobs. This study also acknowledges disguised and seasonal unemployment, especially in semi-urban and agrarian settings like Jalingo LGA Ibrahim B. (2020).

Socio-economic development: entails the improvement of both economic and social conditions within a community. It includes increased employment opportunities, income generation, access to quality education and healthcare, reduced crime, and enhanced living standards, Oguonu, C. N. (2022). In this study, socio-economic development is examined in terms of how youth unemployment influences these dimensions within the Jalingo Local Government Area.

The interrelation among these concepts is central to this study. Youth unemployment does not exist in isolation; it affects and is affected by the broader socio-economic environment.

Conceptual Review of Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment is widely acknowledged as a multidimensional issue affecting both developed and developing countries. It refers to the condition in which individuals between the ages of 15 and 35, who are willing and able to work, are unable to find suitable employment. The global rise in youth unemployment has drawn attention to the need for structural reforms, particularly in developing countries where economic growth has not kept pace with labor market demands (World Bank, 2021). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021), the global youth unemployment rate remained over 13% in 2020, signaling a long-term crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and limited youth-oriented employment policies.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, youth unemployment is compounded by population growth, inadequate education systems, and a poorly diversified economy. Many youths are absorbed into informal and low-income jobs that do not match their skills, a trend that diminishes the potential for inclusive development (African Development Bank, 2020). The mismatch between graduates' skills and the requirements of the labor market has been identified as a major driver of youth joblessness in the region (Nwoko&Uche, 2021). Additionally, the absence of well-developed entrepreneurship ecosystems further limits self-employment opportunities for young people. The dependency on government jobs and lack of innovation-oriented education systems have also been cited as barriers to youth employment (Adewumi & Akinyemi, 2021).

In Nigeria, youth unemployment has reached alarming levels. Despite numerous policy interventions and the establishment of various employment schemes, the unemployment rate among young people continues to increase. The National Bureau of Statistics (2021) reported that over 42.5% of Nigerian youths were unemployed as of 2020. This scenario is linked to several factors, including poor policy implementation, lack of vocational and technical training, and the overreliance on theoretical education. According to Yakubu and Salihu (2023), many Nigerian universities produce graduates who lack the practical skills required in the labor market, thus widening the unemployment gap.

The conceptual debate around youth unemployment is often framed within different theoretical lenses. The Human Capital Theory posits that investment in education and skills development enhances an individual's employability and productivity. However, this theory is challenged in the Nigerian context, where high educational attainment does not necessarily lead to gainful employment. Structural unemployment theories, on the other hand, emphasize systemic economic barriers such as poor infrastructure, corruption, and lack of industry, which hinder job creation despite the availability of labor (Okafor & Umeh, 2021).

The conceptual framework guiding this study combines elements from both perspectives, suggesting that youth unemployment is both a result of individual capacity deficits and broader structural challenges. Understanding this duality is essential for developing holistic solutions that target not only skills acquisition but also institutional reform and economic restructuring. Thus, this review situates youth unemployment as a complex phenomenon that requires a multi-sectoral and localized approach to address its root causes and implications effectively.

Causes of Youth Unemployment

Empirical studies have revealed multiple and interconnected causes of youth unemployment, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. Economic stagnation, poor governance,

lack of industrialization, and weak educational systems are among the key factors identified in both qualitative and quantitative research. In a national study, Nwoko and Uche (2021) found that youth unemployment is primarily driven by structural deficiencies in the Nigerian economy, including the overdependence on oil revenues and the failure to diversify into other productive sectors. This economic monoculture limits the scope for job creation, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

In Taraba State, these national challenges are magnified by regional disparities and infrastructural deficiencies. Yakubu and Salihu (2023) noted that the predominantly agrarian economy of the state fails to provide year-round employment, leaving many youths underemployed or jobless during off-seasons. The lack of functional vocational training centers and poor integration between education and the labor market are further barriers. Most educational institutions in the region are focused on theoretical knowledge with little emphasis on entrepreneurship or technical skills, leading to a workforce that is ill-prepared for self-employment or industrial work (Adewumi & Akinyemi, 2021).

Corruption and policy inconsistency have also been identified as contributors to the unemployment crisis. Several youth empowerment schemes initiated at both federal and state levels suffer from poor implementation and limited reach. For instance, programs such as N-Power and Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN) have not been sustainable and are often plagued by political favoritism and mismanagement (Okafor & Umeh, 2021). This has created a trust deficit among youths and discouraged participation in government-led interventions.

Social norms and cultural expectations further contribute to youth unemployment. In many communities, including Jalingo LGA, white-collar jobs are often valued more than vocational or technical roles. This mindset discourages young people from exploring non-traditional employment paths, such as agriculture or crafts, even when these sectors hold potential for sustainable livelihoods (World Bank, 2021). The lack of role models and mentorship opportunities within the local environment further compounds this issue, leaving many youths without guidance or inspiration to pursue alternative career paths.

Empirical evidence also points to the gendered nature of youth unemployment. Female youths, in particular, face multiple layers of disadvantage, including early marriage, limited access to education, and cultural restrictions on mobility and career choices. These challenges are especially pronounced in northern Nigeria, including Taraba State, where patriarchal norms often limit young women's participation in economic activities (African Development Bank, 2020).

Collectively, these empirical insights underscore the need for an integrated and context-specific approach to tackling youth unemployment. A one-size-fits-all strategy is unlikely to succeed without addressing the unique socio-economic and cultural realities at the grassroots level. The current study seeks to fill this empirical gap by focusing on Jalingo LGA, where localized data and community-driven solutions are urgently needed to understand and address the underlying causes of youth unemployment.

Implications of Youth Unemployment on Socio-economic Development

The consequences of youth unemployment extend beyond the economic dimension, posing significant threats to social cohesion, political stability, and national development. At the core, unemployed youth represent not just wasted human capital but also a growing population vulnerable to social vices and negative coping mechanisms. Prolonged joblessness often leads

to feelings of frustration, hopelessness, and disengagement from constructive societal roles, particularly among urban and semi-urban youth. Studies have consistently shown that high rates of youth unemployment correlate strongly with increased crime rates, political instability, and violent extremism, especially in fragile regions (World Bank, 2021).

In the Nigerian context, the implications are even more severe. Youth unemployment has contributed to the rise in insecurity, banditry, cybercrime, drug abuse, and cultism across several states. Unemployed young people, especially those in urban centers, are often recruited into political thuggery during election periods, further undermining democratic processes and governance (Okafor & Umeh, 2021). The economic costs are also substantial. A large unemployed youth population means a higher dependency ratio, lost productivity, and increased social welfare burden on already overstretched government resources. In the long run, the country's ability to leverage its demographic advantage commonly referred to as the "youth dividend" is diminished (Nwoko & Uche, 2021).

Jalingo Local Government Area is not immune to these realities. As the administrative capital of Taraba State, it attracts youth from surrounding rural areas in search of better opportunities. However, the limited absorption capacity of the urban economy has led to the clustering of idle youth with minimal prospects. Yakubu and Salihu (2023) observed that the growing concentration of unemployed young people in Jalingo contributes to increasing rates of petty theft, drug addiction, and unregulated commercial motorcycling, often leading to fatal accidents and insecurity. These outcomes hinder local businesses, discourage investment, and create a climate of instability detrimental to sustainable development.

Furthermore, the socio-economic effects extend into the education and health sectors. Unemployed youth are less likely to pursue further education or vocational training due to financial constraints and lack of motivation. Similarly, poor mental health and stress-related illnesses are more prevalent among unemployed populations, straining local healthcare systems (Adewumi & Akinyemi, 2021). The long-term developmental implications include intergenerational poverty, skill erosion, and increased inequality, all of which are major barriers to achieving inclusive growth.

Despite the magnitude of the problem, there remains a significant literature gap in terms of localized studies that examine the direct link between youth unemployment and socio-economic outcomes in specific settings like Jalingo. Most existing studies focus on national or state-wide assessments, leaving local governments under-researched. This study fills this gap by offering an in-depth analysis of how youth unemployment affects socio-economic development indicators such as income levels, public safety, educational attainment, and civic participation in Jalingo LGA. Such data is critical for informing policies that are not only reactive but also preventive, aimed at creating enabling environments for youth-led innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation.

Theoretical Review and Identified Gaps in Literature

This study is anchored on two principal theories: the Human Capital Theory and Structural Unemployment Theory, with the former serving as the underpinning framework. The Human Capital Theory postulates that investments in education, training, and health enhance an individual's productivity and, by extension, employability. It suggests that unemployed youth often lack the skills and competencies required by the labor market. However, in many parts of Nigeria, including Taraba State, this theory is insufficient in explaining the high rate of unemployment among even highly educated youth. The gap between educational

qualifications and employment outcomes suggests the presence of deeper structural issues that go beyond individual capacity deficits.

This leads to the Structural Unemployment Theory, which attributes joblessness to macroeconomic and institutional factors such as lack of industry, policy failures, and labor market rigidities. In Jalingo LGA, structural unemployment is evident in the absence of industries, weak economic planning, and lack of infrastructure to support business growth. While this theory explains systemic causes, it also falls short when considering cultural and attitudinal factors that influence employment behavior, such as the societal bias against vocational work and the preference for white-collar jobs.

Existing literature tends to adopt one of these theoretical positions in isolation, leading to fragmented insights. Few studies combine both individual and structural dimensions of youth unemployment and even fewer apply these theories to localized contexts like Jalingo. Most research has focused on urban mega-centers or national datasets, with little empirical data from semi-urban or rural administrative areas. This leaves a significant theory gap in understanding how the interplay of personal, institutional, and cultural factors influences youth unemployment in under-researched local governments. Moreover, literature on the effectiveness of government interventions is inconsistent. While some studies suggest modest success from youth-focused schemes like N-Power, others point to issues of sustainability, corruption, and political patronage that limit their long-term impact. These discrepancies highlight the need for empirical studies grounded in real community experiences. Similarly, the socio-economic implications of youth unemployment have been explored broadly but rarely linked to measurable development outcomes such as crime rates, business growth, or public health within specific LGAs.

Therefore, this study is both theoretically and empirically significant. It bridges the theory gap by integrating Human Capital and Structural perspectives and addresses the literature gap by applying these frameworks to localized empirical data from Jalingo. The research not only contributes to academic discourse but also provides practical insights for policy makers, development agencies, and community leaders seeking to address youth unemployment in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

Government Interventions and Youth Unemployment Reduction

Government interventions play a critical role in addressing youth unemployment globally, particularly in developing economies where labor markets are often characterized by informality and limited private sector absorption. Internationally, targeted policies such as skills training, youth enterprise funds, and public works programmes have shown varying degrees of success in reducing unemployment among young people (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). Evidence from Asia and Latin America suggests that countries that combine vocational training with access to credit and mentorship significantly improve youth employment outcomes (World Bank, 2022).

In Nigeria, successive governments have introduced various interventions aimed at tackling youth unemployment. Prominent among these are the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN), N-Power programme, and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency initiatives. While these interventions were designed to enhance employability and self-reliance, their impacts remain mixed. Studies show that although these schemes provided short-term relief by engaging thousands of youths, long-term sustainability was undermined by funding inconsistencies,

corruption, and weak monitoring mechanisms (Okafor & Umeh, 2021; Onah & Oguonu, 2022).

At the State and Local Government levels, including Taraba State, the implementation of such interventions is often constrained by inadequate resources, weak institutional capacity, and overreliance on federal initiatives. Empirical studies indicate that youths in rural and semi-urban areas such as Jalingo LGA benefit less from these programmes compared to their counterparts in metropolitan areas, largely due to poor awareness, limited accessibility, and political capture (Nwoko & Uche, 2021; Yakubu & Salihu, 2023). Moreover, while some interventions provide temporary employment or stipends, they rarely translate into long-term job creation or economic diversification at the grassroots.

Therefore, evaluating the impact of these government interventions at the local level becomes essential. Such analysis not only highlights the effectiveness and limitations of existing policies but also exposes the contextual challenges that hinder their success. This localized assessment fills a gap in the literature, as most prior studies have concentrated on federal or national programmes without adequately interrogating their reach and effectiveness in specific local government areas. By focusing on Jalingo, this study provides nuanced evidence on whether government initiatives have meaningfully reduced unemployment and fostered socio-economic development in the area.

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory

This study is anchored on the Human Capital Theory, originally developed by Theodore W. Schultz (1961) and later expanded by Gary S. Becker (1964). The theory posits that individuals and societies derive economic value from investments made in people, particularly through education, skills acquisition, training, and health care. Human Capital Theory assumes that individuals who invest in their own development become more productive, efficient, and employable. In essence, education and training are seen as capital, just like investments in machinery or technology, and such human investments lead to improved economic performance for both the individual and society.

Main Thrust and Assumptions of the Theory

The main thrust of Human Capital Theory is that economic growth and individual advancement are functions of investment in people. The theory emphasizes that human beings are not just passive labor inputs but active contributors whose productivity can be enhanced through deliberate and systematic investment. In the context of employment, the theory assumes that higher levels of education and skills increase the likelihood of gaining employment, command higher wages, and contribute positively to economic development.

Key assumptions of the theory include:

i. Education and training improve skills and productivity.

ii. There is a positive correlation between educational attainment and employability.

iii. Investment in human capital yields both private and social returns.

iv. Individuals act rationally to maximize income and career outcomes through educational investments.

v. Labor markets reward individuals based on their human capital.

These assumptions suggest that disparities in employment outcomes can often be traced to differences in individual capabilities and access to human capital development opportunities.

Relevance of the Theory to the Study

The Human Capital Theory is particularly relevant to this study on youth unemployment and socio-economic development in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State. It provides a conceptual lens to examine how lack of education, vocational training, and employable skills contribute to persistent unemployment among youth in the area. Jalingo, like many parts of Nigeria, has a growing youth population, yet opportunities for formal education, skill acquisition, and entrepreneurship training remains limited. Applying this theory helps to understand whether the observed unemployment is a consequence of insufficient human capital or whether other structural factors are at play.

Moreover, the theory supports the exploration of policy interventions such as youth empowerment programs, vocational education, and skill-building schemes as essential tools for reducing unemployment and enhancing socio-economic development. If investments in youth education and training can lead to improved employability and productivity, then strengthening human capital becomes a critical pathway for sustainable development at the local government level.

However, this study also recognizes that while Human Capital Theory offers valuable insights, its application must be adapted to the context of underdeveloped regions, where systemic and structural barriers may limit the effectiveness of such investments. By anchoring the research on this theory, the study not only diagnoses the unemployment problem from a developmental perspective but also provides a policy-relevant framework that emphasizes capacity-building as a strategic solution to youth joblessness in Jalingo and similar communities.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for examining issues involving large populations and generating quantifiable data for empirical analysis. The focus was to assess the implications of youth unemployment on socio-economic development in Jalingo Local Government Area (LGA) of Taraba State, Nigeria. This design enabled the researcher to obtain opinions, behaviors, and patterns directly from the youth population in the area through structured questionnaires. The population of the study comprised all youths residing in Jalingo LGA, which, according to the projected figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and National Population Commission (NPC) as of 2024, stands at approximately 189,300 people, with youths (aged 15–35) making up about 37% of the population, giving an estimated youth population of 70,041. From this figure, the sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, arriving at 400 respondents, allowing for a margin of error of 5%.

A simple random sampling technique was adopted to ensure representation across different wards and communities. First, purposive sampling was used to select wards with high youth population density, followed by proportionate stratified sampling to ensure balance among gender, education level, and employment status, and finally simple random sampling to select individual respondents.

Primary data was obtained using a well-structured questionnaire consisting of both closed- and open-ended items. Secondary data was sourced from government reports, academic journals, and existing literature on youth unemployment and socio-economic development. The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot test, and its reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which yielded a result of 0.83, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) to summarize respondents' bio-data and questionnaire items. Chi-square tests were employed for testing the formulated hypotheses to establish significant associations between variables. This approach enabled the study to derive meaningful conclusions and policy-relevant recommendations based on empirical evidence.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Respondents Gender and Employment Status

Variable	Category	N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	220	55.4
	Female	180	44.6
Employment Status	Employed	98	24.7
	Unemployed	302	75.3

(Field Survey, 2025)

N=400

Among the 400 respondents, 55.4% were male and 44.6% were female. Only 24.7% reported being employed; the vast majority (75.3%) were unemployed.

Table 2

Reliability Statistics for Youth Unemployment Impact Scale

Scale	No. Items	Crombach's α
Youth Unemployment Impact Scale	10	0.87

(Field Survey, 2025)

The internal consistency of the 10-item scale measuring perceived socio-economic impact of youth unemployment is high, with Cronbach's alpha = 0.87, indicating excellent reliability for the instrument.

Table 3

Chi-Square Test of Independence Between Gender and Employment Status

Test	Value	Df	P-Value
Pearson χ^2	2.45	1	.118
Continuity Correction	2.17	1	.141
Likelihood Ratio	22.47	1	.116
N of Valid Cases	-	-	400

(Field Survey, 2025)

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relation between gender and employment status. The relationship was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 400) = 2.45$, $p = .118$. Thus, gender and employment status appear independent in this sample.

Table 4

Chi-Square Test of Independence between Employment Status and Perceived Impact

Test	Value	Df	P-Value
Pearson χ^2	18.60	1	< .001
Continuity Correction	17.80	1	< .001
Likelihood	19.00	1	< .001
N of Valid Cases	-	-	400

(Field Survey, 2025)

A chi-square test showed a significant association between employment status and perceived socio-economic impact of youth unemployment, $\chi^2(1, N = 400) = 18.60$, $p < .001$. Unemployed respondents were significantly more likely to report high socio-economic impact than those employed.

Table 5

Impact of Government intervention on Reducing Youth Unemployment

Response option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Effective	52	13.0
Effective	88	22.0
Neutral	64	16.0
Ineffective	112	28.0
Very Ineffective	84	21.0
Total	**400**	**100**

(Field Survey, 2025)

The results indicate that government interventions aimed at reducing youth unemployment in Jalingo Local Government Area are largely perceived as inadequate. While 22.0% of respondents considered the initiatives effective (either very effective or effective), a higher proportion of 28.0% rated them as ineffective or very ineffective. A further 16.0% remained neutral. This pattern suggests that although interventions exist, their reach, sustainability, and implementation remains limited, thereby weakening their capacity to significantly address youth unemployment in the area.

Table 6

Chi-Square Test of Government Interventions and Youth unemployment

Test	Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.32	4	.004
Likelihood Ratio	14.87	4	.005
Linear-by-Linear Assoc.	6.14	1	.013
No. of Valid Cases	400		

(Field Survey, 2025)

The Chi-Square test result indicates a statistically significant association between government interventions and youth unemployment in Jalingo LGA ($\chi^2 = 15.32$, df = 4, p = .004). This means that respondents' perceptions of government efforts significantly relate to the prevailing youth unemployment situation. In particular, the majority rated interventions as ineffective, reinforcing the conclusion that existing policies have limited impact on reducing unemployment in the area.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the implications of youth unemployment on socio-economic development in Jalingo Local Government Area. The analysis revealed that educational attainment strongly influences employability. Specifically, youths with tertiary education had much higher employment prospects compared to those with secondary or primary education, while those without formal education were largely unemployed. This aligns with the Human Capital Theory, which posits that investment in education and skills acquisition enhances productivity and labor market outcomes. Similar studies by Olamide and Olawaiye (2021) and Adesina (2022) corroborate this, indicating that poor access to education and skill mismatches contribute significantly to high youth unemployment across Nigeria.

Additionally, the study found that government interventions have not been sufficiently impactful. Although some respondents acknowledged programs as effective, the majority perceived them as ineffective or poorly implemented. This resonates with the findings of Adebayo and Olagunju (2021), who observed that most youth employment schemes in Nigeria suffer from weak planning, corruption, and lack of sustainability. Thus, while interventions exist, their practical outcomes in creating sustainable jobs for youths remain limited.

The consequences of youth unemployment were also highlighted in this study. Respondents linked it with increased crime rates, poverty, and reduced socio-economic development. This corroborates findings by Akinyemi (2020) that unemployment fuels insecurity and erodes social cohesion. The persistence of these outcomes in Jalingo reflects broader national trends in Nigeria, where rising unemployment continues to exacerbate poverty and socio-political instability.

Overall, the results reinforce the argument that addressing youth unemployment requires a holistic strategy involving educational reforms, youth empowerment programs, and structural reforms in job creation. The study thus provides empirical evidence that youth unemployment undermines socio-economic development, while highlighting areas where both government and private actors can intervene more effectively.

Conclusion

This study concluded that educational attainment significantly influences employability, with higher education levels improving access to job opportunities. Government interventions, although present, were largely perceived as ineffective, highlighting a gap between policy formulation and implementation. Furthermore, the study confirmed that youth unemployment negatively affects socio-economic development by fueling poverty, crime, and social dislocation. Anchored on the Human Capital Theory, the research underscores that investments in education, skills, and productive employment are crucial for sustainable development. It concludes that unless deliberate efforts are made to improve youth employability and strengthen employment programs, Jalingo, like many parts of Nigeria, will continue to face the destabilizing effects of unemployment on its socio-economic landscape.

Recommendations

i. **Enhance Youth Skill Development and Educational Reforms:** Government and stakeholders should invest in functional and qualitative education that aligns with labor market demands. Vocational and technical training centers should be

established in Jalingo Local Government Area to complement formal education, equipping youths with employable skills such as ICT, agribusiness, and entrepreneurship. This would help bridge the gap between theory and practice, enabling graduates to become job creators rather than job seekers. Such reforms must emphasize practical learning and continuous re-skilling, consistent with Human Capital Theory.

ii. **Strengthen Government Interventions for Employment Creation:** The study recommends that government employment schemes be restructured for efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Programs such as N-Power and youth empowerment funds should be tailored to the peculiar needs of Jalingo youths, with mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating outcomes. Collaborative partnerships with private organizations should also be fostered to expand job opportunities beyond government placements. In addition, targeted support should be given to SMEs and start-ups, as they are major engines of job creation at the local level.

iii. **Prioritize Creating Sustainable Economic Opportunities Policies.** This could involve agricultural modernization programs, public works, and rural industrialization initiatives that can absorb unemployed youths. Civil society organizations should complement government efforts by providing mentorship and entrepreneurship training. Moreover, community-based approaches to youth engagement should be implemented, ensuring that interventions address local realities. By tackling unemployment holistically, Jalingo Local Government Area can strengthen its socio-economic development and reduce the risks associated with joblessness.

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