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Role of Sustainable Development Goals in Combating Youth Unemployment: A Case Study of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract

Globally, inequality has persisted with especially the youths excluded from full participation in economic, political and social activities. Relatedly, youth unemployment has been known to undermine economies, threaten the peace and destabilize communities, if unchecked. This study investigates youth unemployment, using the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria, as a case study; with a randomly selected sample size of 1,000 unemployed persons, in the 18–49-year-old age group. It examines the causes of youth unemployment as well as levels of awareness of the UN's SDG-4 (Quality Education) and SDG-8 (Decent Work) in the working-age population, and the roles of these SDGs and government in combatting unemployment. Frequency and average-mean descriptive statistics of the factors causing youth unemployment indicated low levels of education, lack of employable skills and experience, and poor policies, etc., as predominant causative factors. Regarding the SDGs, the results revealed a low level of awareness and attainment in the population sampled. Education is central to achieving the SDGs; which can, in turn, mitigate unemployment and impel decent work. The introduction of private sector-driven, government-initiated mandatory one-year skills acquisition and developmental schemes for the youths as well as the provision of soft loans for participants to facilitate entrepreneurial ventures are recommended to reduce youth unemployment and promote economic development.

Keywords: education, LMIC, social inequalities, sustainable development goals (SDGs) awareness, well-being, youth unemployment

1. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a call to universal action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity (Jeffrey, 2012; Kubiszewski, Mulder, Jarvis, & Costanza, 2021; Sachs et al. 2019; Szetey et al. 2021). All 17 SDGs are integrated in that one action in one area will affect the outcomes in other areas and that development must balance social inclusion, economic growth and environmental protection (UN, 2015a). Swain and Yang-Wallentin (2020) have reported on the significance of these three underlying SDGs pillars for both developed and developing countries but noted that whilst the magnitude of increase in sustainable development was highest from the social and environmental pillars, in developed nations, the gains from the environment pillar, in the developing nations, were relatively smaller in magnitude and statistically insignificant, in the short term. They, therefore, encouraged developing countries to continue their focus on the economic and social pillars of the SDGs but without detriment to the environment pillar due to the interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs between the three pillars (Swain & Yang-Wallentin, 2020; Warchold, Pradhan, & Kropp, 2021).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiative is the successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and is widely known as "Agenda 2030"; involving the "five Ps" agenda: people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnership, which are for all countries and peoples of the world (Jeffrey 2012; Tremblay, Fortier, Boucher,

Riffon, & Villeneuve, 2020). Young people face numerous challenges against their development and well-being; with unemployment, underemployment and the lack of decent work on the top-end of these challenges. It is notable that many countries are engaged in a continuous struggle to address these problems and, in spite of the progress made in raising basic literacy rates, have been unable to provide their youth populations with quality education and requisite skills for the work place (UN, 2018).

The SDGs declaration recalls that "unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern" (UN, 2015a). Likewise, youth employment is not just about jobs; it can be "decent" only if it incorporates the other dimensions of decent work, such as rights, protection, voice and representation (Soremekun, 2016). As the global youth population continues to increase, greater investment is required to enhance youth education and employment opportunities to leverage their human capital (OECD, 2019). Without such investment, quality education (SDG-4) and decent work (SDG-8) will remain out of reach for youths in many countries. The UN predicts that by 2050, Nigeria will be the third largest population in the world. Although the increased population could potentially offer the country key human capital for development, millions of Nigerian youths could remain uneducated or poorly educated; portending for unemployable youths.

Sustainable development is only useful if it leads to the improved welfare of ordinary people; be it through education or economic empowerment (Prieto-Jiménez, López-Catalán, López-Catalán, & Domínguez-Fernández, 2021). Education, as a concept, is to increase the knowledge of a person and to plant ideas, ideals and culture. SDG-4 adopts a lifelong learning approach to education and introduces vocational and tertiary education into the global agenda whereas SDG-8 promotes sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (OECD, 2019). In essence, SDGs 4 and 8 overlap to underscore the acquisition of knowledge and requisite skills for employment and decent work especially because the two SDGs, combined, hold sufficient indicators to track young people through their journey from education to employment and can, therefore, act as salient catalysts to sustainable growth in any country (Fonseca, Domingues, & Dima, 2020; Tremblay et al., 2020).

Education is crucial to sustainable development as it creates a basis for improvement and stability in other spheres of human endeavor as health, climate change, international collaborations and conflict resolution (Agbedahin, 2019; Biesta, 2015). This is in tune with the statement of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that "sustainable development cannot be achieved by technological solutions, political regulation or financial instruments alone since we need to change the way we think and act. This requires quality education and learning for sustainable development at all levels and in all social contexts" (UN, 2015b).

Inclusive and sustained economic growth is also a prerequisite for sustainable development as generating more decent jobs that provide for living wages and social protection as well as workers' rights and improved livelihoods is the best way to promote the three components of sustainable development of economic growth, social cohesion and environmental sustainability (Odunuga, 2015). Unemployment is a global challenge, but worse in developing countries, with attendant social, economic, political and psychological consequences. It engenders low gross domestic product (GDP), increase in crime and violence, and can lead to political instability and adverse effects on health (Njoku & Ihugba, 2011). These problems are particularly severe amongst young people, with youth unemployment rates exceeding 50% in many Sub-Saharan African countries. This is compounded by the poor quality of jobs that are available to young people (ILO, 2015). Specifically, Nigeria's vast, rapidly growing population of approximately 200 million people, with an increasing youth bulge of about 123.4 million youths (NBS, 2019), which account for 63% of the population, portends for one of the highest unemployment scenarios.

Youth unemployment is increasingly being recognized as a driver of instability and violence in many African countries, and has been exacerbated by the escalating rate of unemployment amongst professionals. According to a report by Akintoye (2008), graduate unemployment accounted for less than 1% of the unemployed in Nigeria in 1974 but had risen to 4%, by 1984, for urban areas and 2.2% in the rural areas. This has quadrupled since 2015 to become one of the worst globally as the rate of unemployment and underemployment amongst the 15–34-year-olds in Nigeria had reached 42.5% and 22.8%, respectively, at the end of 2020 (NBS, 2021). Moreover, in FCT Abuja, over 40% of the working age group is unemployed (NBS, 2021).

High rates of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among the young, are often associated with anti-social behavior; including crime and drug use, and the rise of political extremism (AU, 2011). These constitute a threat to stability and sustainable development, and are ameliorated in most developed countries by social security provisions. However, in developing nations, such as Nigeria, where unemployment benefits are non-existent, the unemployed are left to fend for themselves (Salami, 2013). Furthermore, young people are likely to join rebellions as an alternative way of generating income when faced with stark realities of unemployment and poverty (Urdal,

2006). Karongo (2012) has also posited that inequality plays a significant role. For instance, the mismatch between high rates of economic growth and job creation can widen income inequalities (Jianu et al., 2021; OECD, 2011), which can, in turn, ultimately fuel social tensions.

The transition from education to work can be a difficult period for many young people. The risks associated with job insecurity, low-paid or temporary contracts and uncertainties associated with living independently can prove daunting (OECD, 2019). Besides, youths are relatively more exposed to the risks of unemployment and precarious employment compared to adults because the former are oftentimes less specialized and more prone to dismissals; when firms are in distress and may find themselves in "experience traps", where they are somewhat disenfranchised on the grounds of inexperience (Dolado, 2015).

The challenges of youth employment are closely related to the more general, qualitative and quantitative employment situation in a country but with its own particularities, such as the age-specific difficulties that young (wo)men face in making the transition from school to work place (Adesina, 2013). Nonetheless, having decent work is crucial for young people and their futures. The present challenge, however, lies in simultaneously creating jobs for the bulging youth population and addressing related concerns, such as the skills mismatch and the suboptimal school-to-work transition situation (Tremblay et al., 2020). It is, therefore, imperative that national development frameworks adopt a comprehensive, rights-based approach to issues pertaining to the productive and decent employment of young people (de Miguel Ramos and Laurenti, 2020). These frameworks must promote pro-employment economic policies, sound educational and training systems, gender-sensitive programs as well as measures to ensure that young people have access to good healthcare and a voice in governance (ILO, 2011).

Nigeria has seen one of its worst economic slumps since 2015; two recessions between 2016 and 2021, driven by the collapse in oil prices, government's economic policies and Covid-19 pandemic. The economic challenges have affected people across the age brackets but the effect on youth employment has been more than disquieting (Akinwotu, 2021). 20.5% and 38% of youths (aged 15–24 years) were not in education, employment or training in 2017 and 2018, respectively, for example; indicating a doubling of the 2017 figures from 26.8 million to 70.7 million in one year (OSSAP-SDGs, 2020). The corollary is that the number of available jobs shrinks while the number of job seekers continues to rise daily; with as many remaining underemployed.

Consequently, it is vital to obtain comprehensive data on the variables on unemployment to provide a guide for stakeholders and policymakers on the pathway to solving the problem of youth unemployment and chart requisite directions for further research. Using FCT Abuja, Nigeria, as a case study, therefore, this study explores youth unemployment and causes as well as the level of awareness of SDG-4 and SDG-8, among youths, and the implications of these SDGs towards ameliorating the employability and employment of young people.

2. Heuristic Framework

The framework, shown in Figure 1, was designed to explore the inter-relationship between the causative factors of youth unemployment and possible solutions via the sustainable development goals (SDGs 4 and 8) apparatuses and analyze the pathways from education (SDG-4) to stable employment (SDG-8). Dietrich (2003) has suggested that unemployment episodes are not merely seen as transitional episodes like others but can be interpreted as possible outcomes at the end of each status episode within the school-to-work transition process. Thus, the number and types of status episodes within the school-to-work transition vary among individuals and social groups. Each individual transition is, therefore, connected to an individual and episode-specific risk of becoming unemployed.

Figure 1, therefore, highlights the connectivities between youth unemployment and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as how the SDGs can be utilized in tackling this problem of youth un(der)employment. The diagram depicts how factors, such as obsolete curricula, the mismatch of qualifications and skills, and outdated policies, etc., play significant roles in youth unemployment. Notably, formal education as well as formal and informal training contribute to the quality of human capital. Moreover, changing societal and technological requirements typically inform the need for treating education and learning of valuable skills as worthy investments to be made by all sectors of the society as focusing on education alone may not yield the necessary results since people differ in their capacities to acquire different skills. The SDG-4, which recognizes quality education as the precursor of SDG-8's decent work and economic growth, necessitates the support of all concerned. It advocates that the focus of education should not be in ensuring that graduates are just lettered enough but must have the requisite skills to be able to not only get decent work but also be able to create decent work that can contribute to the economic growth of the nation (OECD, 2019).

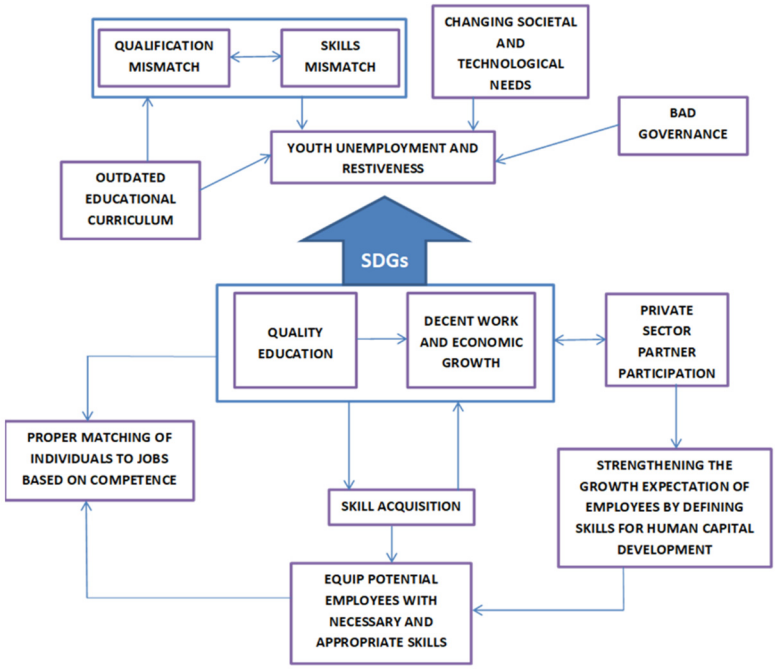

Figure 1. Framework for analyzing the inter-relationship of the roles of SDGs 4 and 8 in combating youth unemployment

From an empirical perspective, individual characteristics such as gender, general and vocational qualifications, social backgrounds; including social class, family and household formation or sociocultural background; measured in terms of nationality, and migration background or ethnicity, not only affect access to and outcomes from education and employment but also affect the risk of becoming unemployed at the next transition. Most countries have developed labor market systems, such as additional qualifications or training and employment schemes, to help young people into the labor market. However, the design of active labor market policies for young people and the instruments implemented have varied significantly between countries (Jianu et al., 2021; OECD, 2011).

The dual sustainable development goals of quality education and decent work and economic growth can endue relevant and valuable skills acquisitions, which will in turn equip prospective employees with matching skills and competences to make them attractive to employers and employable (Vladimirova and Le Blanc, 2016).

3. Method

3.1 Study Area

Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja is the capital city and seat of government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. FCT Abuja lies between 8º 27'–9º 20' N and 7º 25'–7º 45' E (Figure 2) and is located in the center of Nigeria, with a land area of 8,000 sq. km. It is bordered by the States of Nasarawa (East), Kaduna (North), Niger (West) and Kogi (South) and situated at an elevation of 476 m above sea level (Oluwafemi and Oluwayinka, 2020; Owolabi, Ogunsajo, Bodunde, & Olubode, 2020). The study area lies between Latitude 8º 56' 48'' N and 9º 1' 48'' N and Longitude 7º 17' 00'' E and 7º 22' 12'' E.

The 2006 census ascribed the eighth most populous city in Nigeria to FCT Abuja, with a population of 1,406,239 (NBS, 2019). Boumphrey (2010) also reported that Abuja experienced a 139.7% growth between 2000 and 2010; making it one of the fastest growing cities in the world. The city continues to experience annual growths as it continues to witness huge influxes of people, leading to the emergence of satellite towns, such as Karu Urban Area, Suleja, Gwagwalada, Lugbe, Kuje and other smaller settlements. The urban agglomeration centered on Abuja had an estimated population of 2,959,199 in 2014 and the was estimated in 2016 to inhabit 3,564,126 persons, out of which 2,215,000 (62.1%) were youths (NBS, 2019). A working age population of 2,940,209 and 663,931 unemployed persons were recorded for the metropolitan area of Abuja, by the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, for the fourth quarter of 2020; rendering rates of unemployment and underemployment at 40.4% and 13.1%, respectively (NBS, 2021).

FCT Abuja has been chosen as a case study because of its representative nature; it is fast-growing, metropolitan and government-centric as well multicultural and demographically diverse. In addition, the Abuja Declaration on Sustainable Development and Education in Africa was evoked there by the Association of African Universities in 2009 (Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, Huisingh, & Lambrechts, 2013).

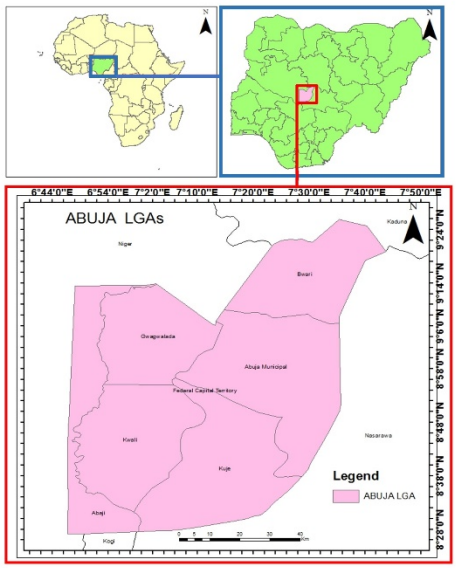

Figure 2. Map of the study area, FCT Abuja, Nigeria (adapted from Google Earth with ArcGIS® 10.3)

3.2 Data Collection

The data was collected using structured and validated questionnaires. The questionnaires were primarily administered to the target population during a face-to-face interview via a multi-stage sampling technique. A comparative case approach was employed, which focused on the six area councils in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. The key areas examined were how stakeholders' diversities, voices, commitments, knowledge and resources were consistent with the achievements and implementations of the SDGs 4 and 8.

To determine the number of questionnaires to be distributed in each of the six selected area councils in FCT Abuja, the ratio estimator technique (Thomson, 2012) was adapted as follows. The total youth population was summed up and then each individual population per local government council was divided by the total population and multiplied by the number of questionnaires prepared, according to equations 1 and 2.

$$\frac{Sample\ \ Size}{Total\ \ Sample\ \ Size} \quad x \quad No\ \ of\ \ Prepared\ \ Questionnaires \tag{1}$$

That is

$$\frac{Area\ \ Council\ \ Population}{2{,}215{,}000} \quad x \quad 1000 \tag{2}$$

This gave the number of questionnaires each selected local council received (Table 1). No questionnaire was returned unanswered. Those who declined were not recorded.

The data were analyzed statistically and null hypotheses were tested at the end of the investigation to address the research questions and descriptive statistics was applied. The data are presented in frequency and percentage tables and the average mean score (AMS) technique was used. The derived value (DV) was obtained from the average of the scale points (1 and 2), where "yes" and "no" were assigned weighted values of 2 and 1, respectively (eqn. 3).

$$DV = \frac{2+1}{2} \quad = \frac{3}{2} = 1.5 \tag{3}$$

The computed values were obtained from a summation of the frequency multiplied by the scale point and divided by the summation of the frequency:

$$CV = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum f} \quad (4)$$

where f = frequency and x = scale point

The computed values (CV) were later compared with the derived value (DV) of 1.5. For analysis, when CV was greater than DV, the answer was regarded as positive whereas when the converse was the case, the answer was regarded as negative.

4. Results

The questionnaires were prepared and distributed according to equations 1 and 2. The breakdown is enumerated in Table 1. The Abuja Municipal Area Council, which is the most metropolitan of the six area councils sampled, received over 50% of the questionnaires.

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaires

S/N.	Area Council	Youth Population Size (2016 Estimates)[a]	Questionnaire Distribution	%
1.	Abuja Municipal	1,250,000	564	56.4
2.	Bwari	380,000	172	17.2
3.	Gwagwalada	240,000	108	10.8
4.	Kwali	150,200	68	6.8
5.	Kuje	146,200	66	6.6
6.	Abaji	48,600	22	2.2
	TOTAL	**2,215,000**	**1,000**	**100**

[a]Source: National Population Commission/National Bureau of Statistics; https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/

Some of the demographics of the sampled youth population in FCT Abuja are shown in Table 2. 84.1% of the population sampled were in the active working age bracket of 25–40 years but 26.9% had been out of employment for less than six years.

Table 2. Some social demographics of respondents in the study area

S/N.	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Age (years)	18–24	100	10
		25–30	480	48
		31–40	361	36.1
		41–49	59	5.9
2.	Marital Status	Single	159	15.9
		Married	620	62
		Divorced/Separated	221	22.1
3.	Religion	African Traditional Religion	150	15
		Christianity	479	47.9
		Islam	271	27.1
		Others	100	10
4.	Level of Highest Education	Primary School	130	13
		Secondary School	144	14.4
		Tertiary Education	456	45.6
		No Formal Education	270	27
5.	Years Out of Employment	< 6	269	26.9
		6–10	251	25.1
		11–15	258	25.8
		16–20	192	19.2
		21–30	30	3

The responses to the research questions, which sought to explore the causative factors of youth unemployment and the effects of salient factors, such as diversity, stakeholders' participation and commitment, and youth involvement, amongst others, in combating unemployment in line with the SDGs are recorded under four broad categories, viz: migration, education, labor and governance, in Tables S1–S5 (supplementary tables).

The computed values (CV) for the six area councils of FCT Abuja, based on their perceptions of the causative factors of youth unemployment, are collated in Tables 3a–e, under different broad categories, such as migration (a), education (b), labor (c), governance (d) and miscellaneous (e) whereas the responses of the sampled unemployed youths to the questions designed to gauge their levels of awareness of the sustainable development goals, SDG-4 and SDG-8, are shown in Table 4.

Table 3. (a) Computed values for the six area councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria

Parameter	**Area Councils**						**Remark**
(a) MIGRATION	**AMAC[a] CV[b]**	**Bwari CV[b]**	**Gwagwalada CV[b]**	**Kwali CV[b]**	**Kuje CV[b]**	**Abaji CV[b]**	**(DV = 1.5)**
Rapid population growth	1.4	1.6	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.5	Factor deemed significant by all except in AMAC
Rural–Urban Migration	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.6	1.6	Factor deemed significant by all.
Lack of social infrastructure make rural life unattractive	1.8	1.7	1.9	2	1.9	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Concentration of social amenities in the urban centers	1.9	1.7	2	1.9	1.9	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Ethnic background contributes to unemployment	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.5	Factor deemed significant by all.
High rate of geographical mobility	1.8	1.6	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.7	Factor deemed significant by all.

[a]AMAC = Abuja Municipal Area Council; [b]CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)

Table 3. (b) Computed values for the six area councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria

Parameter	**Area Councils**						**Remark**
(b) EDUCATION	**AMAC[a] CV[b]**	**Bwari CV[b]**	**Gwagwalada CV[b]**	**Kwali CV[b]**	**Kuje CV[b]**	**Abaji CV[b]**	**(DV = 1.5)**
Outdated school curriculum	1.8	1.9	2	1.7	1.7	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Rapid expansion of the educational system	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.6	1.6	1.5	Factor deemed significant by all except in AMAC and Gwagwalada.
Low levels of education among youths	1.4	1.2	1.9	1.5	1.7	1.7	Factor deemed significant by all except in AMAC and Bwari.
Lack of vocational education and technical skills	2	1.9	2	1.6	1.8	1.6	Factor deemed significant by all.
Early school-leaving age	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.7	1.5	Factor deemed significant by all except in Kwali.
Lack of job-hunt skills	1.4	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.7	Factor deemed significant by all except in AMAC.
Lack of economic mobility	1.6	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.8	Factor deemed significant by all.
Lack of career information and business potentials	1.7	2	2	1.9	1.8	1.8	Factor deemed significant by all.
Skills mismatch	1.8	1.5	1.8	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.

[a]AMAC = Abuja Municipal Area Council; [b]CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)

Table 3. (c) Computed values for the six area councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria

Parameter	**Area Councils**						**Remark**
	AMAC[a]	**Bwari**	**Gwagwalada**	**Kwali**	**Kuje**	**Abaji**	
(c) LABOR	**CV[b]**	**CV[b]**	**CV[b]**	**CV[b]**	**CV[b]**	**CV[b]**	**(DV = 1.5)**
Lack of employable skills	1.5	1.7	1.9	1.5	1.5	1.7	Factor deemed significant by all.
Increase in the supply of educated manpower	1.7	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.7	Factor deemed significant by all.
Lack of entrepreneurial skills	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.6	Factor deemed significant by all except in Kwali and Kuje.
Supply of skilled youths is higher than demand	1.3	2	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.9	Factor deemed significant by all except in AMAC.
Lack of vibrant manufacturing sector to absorb the youths	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Poor macroeconomic and business environments	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
High wage demands by inexperienced youths	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.5	Factor deemed significant by all.
Excessive labor market regulations and employment legislations	1.4	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.7	Factor deemed significant by all except in AMAC.
Lack of growth of labor demands	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.9	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Sizeable proportion of expatriates in employment	1.5	1.6	1.9	1.6	1.8	1.7	Factor deemed significant by all.
Behavior of employers and job seekers	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.7	Factor deemed significant by all.

[a]AMAC = Abuja Municipal Area Council; [b]CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)

Table 3. (d) Computed values for the six area councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria

Parameter	Area Councils						Remark
	AMAC[a]	Bwari	Gwagwalada	Kwali	Kuje	Abaji	
(d) GOVERNANCE	CV[b]	CV[b]	CV[b]	CV[b]	CV[b]	CV[b]	(DV = 1.5)
Gap between government policies and implementation	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Corruption	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Leadership/Managerial Problems	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Inaccurate public policies relating to employment	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Lack of adequate youth development programs	1.7	2	1.9	1.8	1.7	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Lack of formal recruitment channels and awareness	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Poor enabling environment to encourage entrepreneurship	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Lack of steady and sustainable power supply	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
High and multiple taxations paid by companies	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Poor human resources planning	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.8	Factor deemed significant by all.
Low rate of economic growth and recession	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.5	Factor deemed significant by all.
Bureaucracy in processing job applications	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
VIPs influencing available jobs	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Neglect of the agricultural sector	1.9	2	1.6	1.9	2	1.8	Factor deemed significant by all.
Lack of foreign direct investment inflows	1.7	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.5	Factor deemed significant by all except in Bwari
Infrastructural deficit to promote job creation	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Untimely economic policies, e.g., SAP (Structural Adjustment Program)	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Unstable political environment	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Non-involvement of youths in decision-making processes	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Labor market policies	1.8	1.5	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.8	Factor deemed significant by all.
Failure of government policies to stimulate private sector	1.2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all except in AMAC
More emphases on university certificates than entrepreneurial skills	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.

[a]AMAC = Abuja Municipal Area Council; [b]CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)

Table 3. (e) Computed values for the six area councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria

Parameter	**Area Councils**						**Remark**
(e) MISCELLANEOUS	**AMAC[a] CV[b]**	**Bwari CV[b]**	**Gwagwalada CV[b]**	**Kwali CV[b]**	**Kuje CV[b]**	**Abaji CV[b]**	**(DV = 1.5)**
Poverty	1.8	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Marital status	1.5	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.9	Factor deemed significant by all.
Social status and family background	1.6	1.8	1.9	1.5	1.3	1.7	Factor deemed significant by all except in Kuje.
Environmental factors	1.2	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.6	Factor deemed significant by all except in AMAC.
Inadequate credit facilities	2	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Long period of initial unemployment among graduates	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.5	Factor deemed significant by all.
Perception of youths about employment	1.5	2	1.6	1.8	1.7	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Qualification mismatches	1.6	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Formal and informal sectors' differentials	1.9	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.7	1.7	Factor deemed significant by all except in Bwari and Kwali
Gender discrimination by employer	1.6	1.9	1.9	1.6	1.8	1.8	Factor deemed significant by all.
Business cycles contribute to youth unemployment	1.5	2	2	2	2	2	Factor deemed significant by all.
Graduates' attitudes to some jobs	2	1.9	2	2	1.7	2	Factor deemed significant by all.

[a]AMAC = Abuja Municipal Area Council; [b]CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)

Table 4. Level of awareness of the SDGs

Questions to measure awareness	Options						CV	Remarks		
	No (1)	fx	Yes (2)	fx	Σfx	Σf	$\left(\frac{\Sigma fx}{\Sigma f}\right)$	CV v DV[a] (DV = 1.5)	No (%)	Yes (%)
K1. Have you ever heard of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?	900	900	100	200	1100	1000	1.1	CV < DV	90	10
K2. Have you ever participated in any program or workshop that is related to this?	879	879	121	242	1121	1000	1.1	CV < DV	88	12
K3. Do you know the year the SDGs were adopted by the United Nations (UN)?	950	950	50	100	1050	1000	1.1	CV < DV	95	5
K4. Do you know any of the objectives of SDG?	980	980	20	40	1020	1000	1.0	CV < DV	98	2
K5. Are you ready to invest time and effort in learning about the SDGs?	938	938	62	124	1062	1000	1.1	CV < DV	94	6
K6. Is SDG the same as MDG?	990	990	10	20	1010	1000	1.0	CV < DV	99	1
K7. Are you aware of any youth development program by the government?	420	420	580	1160	1580	1000	1.6	CV > DV	42	58
K8. Have you been a beneficiary of any of these programs?	870	870	130	260	1130	1000	1.1	CV < DV	87	13
K9. Do you know any beneficiary of any of these programs?	970	970	30	60	1030	1000	1.0	CV < DV	97	3
K10. Do you know how the SDGs can be made to succeed in Nigeria?	230	230	770	1540	1770	1000	1.8	CV > DV	23	77

[a]CV < DV = insignificant; CV > DV = significant.

These responses to gauge the levels of SDG-4 and SDG-8 awareness or otherwise, of the youths polled, are pictorially represented in a bar chart in Figure 3; with the blue portion of each bar representing percentage non-awareness of the respondents to each of the questions (K1–K10) posed to assess their knowledge of the UN sustainable development goals, particularly SDG-4 and SDG-8.

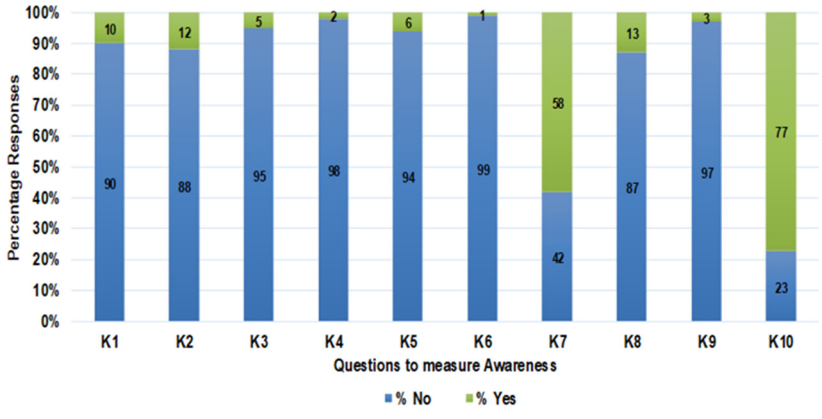

Figure 3. Levels of awareness vs. non-awareness of the SDGs expressed in percentages

To get more insight into the respondents' level of SDGs' awareness, the sources of information for the respondents, who answered in the affirmative to question K7 (58%) were probed and presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Sources of information for K7

Source	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Newspapers/Magazines	100	17.24
Radio	140	24.14
Television	80	13.79
Friends/Family	40	6.90
Academic/Scientific Journals	48	8.28
Religious Institutions	60	10.34
Social Media/Internet	50	8.62
No Response	62	10.69
TOTAL[a]	**580**	**100.00**

[a]No. of Respondents who chose the "Yes" option = 580

5. Discussion

The last few decades have seen an increased awareness of human capital as one of the driving forces of economic development. Similarly, investments in skills remain vital to keeping pace with technological changes. It is, therefore, pertinent to invest in education and training, which are vital to improving the existing pool of skills and enhancing economic growth (Berchin, de Aguiar Dutra, & Guerra, 2021; Yuan, Yu, & Wu, 2021).

In the same vein, youth employment in Nigeria is critical to economic development insomuch as achieving full employment is considered one of the essential components of realizing the economic objectives of a nation. It is an important measure of a country's economic performance. In spite of the drive to create jobs and eradicate unemployment, the country faces significant levels of unemployment with the youths bearing the brunt. In FCT Abuja, for instance, 663,931 of the 2,940,209 persons of working age (40.4%) are unemployed (NBS, 2021). Unemployment can lead to poor health, increased dependency and rural–urban migration as well as social isolation, loss of self-esteem, depression, inadequate sources of income and a host of other ills, which typically affect a nation's development (Bell and Blanchflower, 2011).

An analysis of the returned questionnaires enumerated in Table 1 shows that the Abuja Municipal Area Council accommodated over half of the respondents while Kwali, Kuje and Abaji area councils contributed to only about 16% of the total questionnaires administered. This suggests that more than 50% of the respondents were cosmopolitan and therefore representative of the knowledgeable pool.

The demographics of the sampled youth population in the study areas were collated in Table 2, with the 25–30 years' age bracket constituting almost 50% of the population sampled; followed by those in the 31–40 years' age range (36.1%). 45.6% possessed third-level education whereas 27% had no form of formal education. It is noteworthy that almost half of the youths sampled were educated to the tertiary level of education. This underscores the robustness of the data collected and affirms the above-average comprehension levels of the participants polled. Conversely, It is instructive to note that 73.1% had been out of employment for more than six years. Potentially, this could result in dependence and scarring effects on the unemployed (Luijkx & Wolbers, 2009; Manzoni & Mooi-Reci, 2011), harm economic, environmental and social sustainability (Jianu et al., 2021; Kieselbach, Beelmann, Stritzl, & Traiser, 2001; Swain & Yang-Wallentin, 2020) and, ultimately, derail the SDGs. Additionally, Table 2 shows that 62% of the respondents were married and would typically have at least one dependent; implying that unemployment would be relatively more daunting.

The responses to the research questions, which sought to explore the causative factors of youth unemployment and the effects of salient factors, such as diversity, stakeholders' participation and commitment, and youth involvement, amongst others, in combating unemployment in line with the SDGs are recorded under four broad categories, viz: migration, education, labor and governance, in Tables S1–S5 (supplementary tables). In general, many of the respondents across the six area councils were in agreement on some of the causes of youth unemployment and possible solutions to mitigate the situation. For instance, all the people sampled were in concurrence that the prevailing lack of a vibrant manufacturing sector; also observed by Luken, Mörec, and Meinert (2020), to absorb the skilled youths, and poor macroeconomic and business environments were detrimental to youth employment (*cf.* Supplementary Table S3); just as the non-existence or inadequate provision of credit facilities are damaging to entrepreneurship (*cf.* Supplementary Table S5).

Of the broad parameters examined, governance (Supplementary Table S4) recorded the most answers in the affirmative as a major contributor to youth un(der)employment. The respondents were unequivocal in implicating the government for gaps between government policies and their implementations, corruption and leadership/managerial problems as well as the lack of steady and sustainable power supply. Policymakers were also accused of placing more emphases on university certificates than entrepreneurial skills, not enabling requisite infrastructure to promote job creation and fermenting an unstable political environment, amongst others.

A glaring takeaway from the foregoing is that unemployed youths appear to be tied to the government's apron strings. This is in consonance with the "disconnected youth" concept (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2015), which central assumption is that young people tend to lack strong social networks, capable of providing assistance in the form of job connections and other supports, such as housing and financial assistance (Pfeiffer & Seiberlich, 2010). Surprisingly, the respondents from Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) did not think that the failure of government policies to stimulate private sector was significant (CV = 1.2; Supplementary Table S4a) in contrast to the responses from the other five area councils.

Furthermore, respondents in Bwari and Gwagwalada area councils returned that the low levels of education among youths and rapid expansion of the educational system, respectively, are insignificant causative agents of youth unemployment (*cf.* Supplementary Table S2a). Likewise, AMAC, Kwali and Kuje did not consider the notions of skilled youths' supply outweighing demand and lack of entrepreneurial skills as significant enough to cause youth unemployment (*cf.* Supplementary Table S3). Other insignificant parameters (CV < DV) reported include "formal and informal sectors' differentials" (in Bwari and Kwali), "social status and family background" (in Kuje) and "environmental factors" (in AMAC), as shown in Supplementary Table S5.

Consequently, the computed values (CV) for the six area councils of FCT Abuja, based on their perceptions of the causative factors of youth unemployment, are collated in Table 3 under different broad categories, such as migration, education, labor and governance, etc. Most of the factors investigated were deemed significant (i.e., CV > DV) across the various parameters of migration, education, labor and governance, with a few exceptions. For example, Bwari recorded exceptions in education and governance whereas Gwagwalada did not deem one parameter in education (rapid expansion of the educational system) to be significant (i.e., CV < DV). Similarly, for the poser on "formal and informal sectors differentials", under Miscellaneous (*cf.* Table 3e), Bwari and Kwali area councils returned computed values of 1.2 and 1.3, respectively. It is worthy of note that respondents in Abaji area council deemed all the parameters investigated to be significant (i.e., CV ≥ DV) whereas AMAC returned exceptions (CV < DV) in migration, education, labor, governance and other parameters examined (Table 3).

It is also notable that factors, such as the neglect of the agricultural sector, rural–urban migration and corruption with its attendant embezzlement of funds as well as rapid population growth, low economic activities and lack of political will are culpable for the current state of unemployment, in FCT Abuja (*cf.* Table 3). Other causes include: poverty, low investments, leadership and managerial problems and outdated school curricula; rendering some Nigerian graduates unemployable. Besides, wrong impressions about technical or vocational education/training, lack of adequate youth development programs and increase in the supply of educated manpower; as a result of producing more graduates than available jobs as well as the gradual collapse of the manufacturing sector are also contributing factors. These results are in agreement with the earlier findings of Adesina (2013), Njoku and Ihugba (2011), and Salami (2013).

In the responses of the sampled unemployed youths to the questions designed to gauge their levels of awareness of the sustainable development goals, SDG-4 and SDG-8, shown in Table 4, it was observed that the computed values (CV) for the ten questions, with the exception of K7 and K10, were lower than the derived value (DV) of 1.5 for all the area councils in FCT Abuja. 58% of the participants were aware of at least one government-sponsored youth development program whereas only 23% of those sampled were unable to volunteer suggestions on how to successfully attain the SDGs. The responses to K7 and K10 were significant (CV > DV); implying that the young unemployed people sampled in FCT Abuja were amenable and welcoming of SDGs programs that could ameliorate their situations but were unwilling to invest the requisite time and effort in learning about the SDGs (*cf.* K5; Table 4). These responses could be interpreted as the respondents been receptive of government (and not personal) support in this area or that they lacked an appreciation of the benefits of the SDGs towards combatting their states of unemployment. The latter supposition is supported by the responses to K1, which indicated that 90% of the respondents were unaware of the SDGs (-4 and -8).

These responses to gauge the levels of SDG-4 and SDG-8 awareness or otherwise, of the youths polled, are pictorially represented in a bar chart in Figure 3; with the blue portion of each bar representing percentage non-awareness of the respondents to each of the questions (K1–K10) posed to assess their knowledge of the UN

sustainable development goals, particularly SDG-4 and SDG-8 (*cf.* Table 4). Pertinently, K6 is the exception here as its blue portion of 99% indicates SDG awareness insofar as the respondents were able to distinguish the SDG from its predecessor MDG.

The low level of awareness of the SDGs was unexpected in view of the fact that the SDG program was launched in Nigeria about five years ago, in 2016 (OSSAP-SDGs, 2020). Besides, 88% of the respondents have not participated in any program or workshop to enlighten them on the SDGs (*cf.* K2; Table 4). This might be contributing to the poor performance levels of the SDGs in Nigeria (Halisçelik & Soytas 2019). Conversely, in a global public opinion survey, involving 13 countries from five continents; except Australia and Antarctica, to measure the awareness of the SDGs against the MDGs, conducted in 2016, Nigeria recorded levels of awareness of 30% and 26%, respectively, for the SDGs and MDGs (GlobeScan, 2016). The European Union-approved 2015 Eurobarometer survey had similarly revealed that more than one third of the Europeans surveyed were aware of the SDGs (36%); relative to the 2013 Eurobarometer survey result of 22% for MDGs' awareness (Polack, 2016). Closer home, a study of 450 respondents in a university community in Southwestern Nigeria reported a 43% level of SDGs' awareness, with 4.2% of the respondents exhibiting a good knowledge of the SDGs (Omisore, Babarinde, Bakare, & Asekun-Olarinmoye, 2017).

About one-tenth of the respondents in this study recorded that they had heard about SDG-4 and SDG-8, and participated in related programs; both lower than previous reports. It's noteworthy that this study examined the levels of awareness of specific SDGs among mostly literate, unemployed youths of working age and might explain the low level of awareness. It is also plausible that their preoccupation with job-hunting and unfamiliarity with the numerous alleviating roles of the SDGs in unemployment has endued the status quo. Whatever the pretexts, nonetheless, it calls for great concern since the achievement of the SDGs is reportedly defined by the level of people's awareness because inadequate public awareness makes holding pertinent stakeholders accountable more difficult (Nashash, 2013). A low level of awareness of the SDGs in FCT Abuja undoubtedly portends a danger to the attainment of the SDGs, within and without.

Accordingly, the importance of the educational system as the focal point of enlightenment on the SDGs cannot be overemphasized (Biesta, 2015; OECD, 2019; Prieto-Jiménez et al., 2021). The aim of such education is to make all people aware of their rights and responsibilities with respect to the SDGs, amongst others. It does not bode well, however, that 94% of the respondents sampled were not prepared to invest time in learning about the SDGs. Perhaps, the solution lies in the indigenization of the SDGs, as suggested by Degai and Petrov (2021), since the relevance, representation and power of these goals will not only improve but attain greater equity. It will also expand the knowledge base of sustainable development.

To gain more insight into the respondents' level of SDGs' awareness, the sources of information for the respondents, who answered in the affirmative to question K7 (58%) were investigated. The result delineated in Table 5 highlights the bases of the respondents' awareness of the SDG themes. Interestingly, 10.7% of the respondents could not pinpoint their sources of information but recalled having prior knowledge. Nevertheless, it was not entirely surprising that radios came tops as the main source of information; with a lead of 24.1%. Traditionally, the radio remains the leading source of information dissemination in this part of the world because of its reach, potability, low power requirements and relatively low cost. The data collected in Table 5 is pictorially represented in Figure 4.

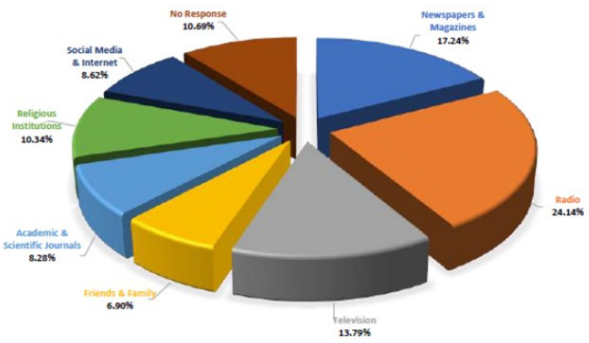

Figure 4. Pie chart depicting the sources of information on SDGs awareness (Question K7)

It is also understandable that newspapers and magazines were recorded as the second highest sources of information on the SDGs due to the high number of bureaucratic and learned communities, such as parastatals and tertiary institutions, present within FCT Abuja. It is, however, surprising that the internet, as a source, was as low as 8.6% since social media is fast becoming more widespread and a veritable avenue of information dissemination. If truly no one is to be left behind, as envisaged by the founding fathers, in the successful attainment of the SDGs then conscious efforts must be made to integrate the overarching tenets of the SDGs into all spheres of human endeavor, particularly the learning and working environments, to ensure their effective implementation and full realization.

Consequently, there is an urgent need to bring young people to a better appreciation of the SDGs, especially SDG-4 and SDG-8, by highlighting, amongst others, their enormous benefits toward promoting quality education and decent work and, by extension, mitigating un(der)employment by catalyzing sound, "right-fit" education, requisite skills acquisition and, in synergy with other SDGs, enduing a conducive environment for peace and prosperity. The results of this study have shown that government has a huge role to play in not only providing the enabling ambience but in also ensuring a fit-for-purpose educational system and the provision of requisite jobs, with commensurate pay and respect for workers' rights, for the youths. Making SDG-4 and SDG-8 the fulcrum of developmental and strategic plans in education and employment, respectively, will also bode well.

6. Conclusions

The causes of youth unemployment and underemployment in a low-to-medium-income country (LMIC) metropolis, exemplified by FCT Abuja, have been espoused and possible solutions advanced. The levels of awareness of the United Nations Organization's Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG-4 (Quality Education) and SDG-8 (Decent Work), in the working-age population in FCT Abuja were also examined, and the roles of these SDGs and government in combatting unemployment amongst the youths were surveyed. Surprisingly, the results revealed a low level of awareness and attainment in the unemployed, young population sampled.

The importance of the roles of the SDGs in helping to combat youth unemployment cannot be overstated. The results of this study have, however, shown that a lot of work still remains to be done to maximize the benefits of these SDGs, especially in youth empowerment vis-à-vis sound education and employment. The SDGs (-4 and -8) relating to quality education and decent work and economic growth, respectively, are the pivots on which national growth and development are hinged. Practical steps toward the implementation of these goals must be, therefore, vigorously pursued to ensure a sustainable future for our youths.

It is recommended that the enabling environment for private sector participation be improved, capacity-building for the public sector be strengthened and good governance be vigorously promoted. The overhaul of outdated curricula and inclusion of relevant vocational and entrepreneurial training schemes to suit the economy as well as the establishment of direct government intervention programs that carter to the welfare of youths and job-seeking institutions, to ensure that educational skills are matched with requisite job skills, should be intensely pursued. Furthermore, the diversification of the economy to include non-oil sectors should be accorded adequate priority. Engaging in massive investments in infrastructure, energy, transportation and communications are also germane. The government should equally resolve to provide good governance and promote security and political stability in order to create the enabling environment for attracting foreign investments to Nigeria. Lastly, a periodic review of the Employment Act on matters of job creation for the teeming skillful youths, with a view to properly matching individuals to jobs based on competencies will augur well for youth employment. Suffice it to add that the foregoing and more are doable under and in cooperation with the SDGs' universal action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity.

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Electronic Supplementary Materials: The following are available online: Supplementary Tables S1–S5: Data for the six Area Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria, under the parameters of migration, education, labor, governance and miscellaneous, respectively, and Supplementary Table S6: Level of awareness of the SDGs for the six Area Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

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Supplementary Data (Tables)

Table S1. (a) Migration Data for Abuja Municipal, Bwari and Gwagwalada Area Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Parameter	Abuja Municipal (Σf = 564)				Bwari (Σf = 172)				Gwagwalada (Σf = 108)			
MIGRATION	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)
Rapid population growth	200	364	764	1.4	108	64	280	1.6	92	16	200	1.9
Rural–Urban Migration	300	264	864	1.5	100	72	272	1.6	80	28	188	1.7
Lack of social infrastructure make rural life unattractive	443	121	1,007	1.8	120	52	292	1.7	96	12	204	1.9
Concentration of social amenities in the urban centers	511	53	1,075	1.9	124	48	296	1.7	108	0	216	2.0
Ethnic background contributes to unemployment	322	242	866	1.6	102	70	274	1.6	91	17	199	1.8
High rate of geographical mobility	450	114	1,014	1.8	99	73	271	1.6	98	10	206	1.9

Table S1. (b) Migration Data for Kwali, Kuje and Abaji Area Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Parameter	Kwali (Σf = 68)				Kuje (Σf = 66)				Abaji (Σf = 22)			
MIGRATION	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)
Rapid population growth	38	30	106	1.6	48	18	114	1.7	16	6	34	1.5
Rural–Urban Migration	52	16	120	1.8	50	16	116	1.6	14	8	36	1.6
Lack of social infrastructure make rural life unattractive	66	2	134	2.0	59	7	125	1.9	22	0	44	2.0
Concentration of social amenities in the urban centers	58	10	126	1.9	66	4	128	1.9	22	0	44	2.0
Ethnic background contributes to unemployment	38	30	106	1.6	34	32	100	1.5	12	10	34	1.5
High rate of geographical mobility	46	22	114	1.7	38	28	104	1.6	15	7	37	1.7

Table S2. (a) Education Data for Abuja Municipal, Bwari and Gwagwalada Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Parameter	Abuja Municipal (Σf = 564)				Bwari (Σf = 172)				Gwagwalada (Σf = 108)			
EDUCATION	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)
Outdated school curriculum	454	110	1,018	1.8	156	16	328	1.9	108	0	216	2.0
Rapid expansion of the educational system	244	320	808	1.4	82	90	254	1.5	24	84	132	1.2
Low levels of education among youths	204	360	768	1.4	42	130	214	1.2	100	8	208	1.9
Lack of vocational education and technical skills	556	8	1,120	2.0	158	14	330	1.9	111	3	225	2.0
Early school-leaving age	254	310	818	1.5	46	126	298	1.7	64	44	172	1.6
Lack of job-hunt skills	212	352	776	1.4	140	32	312	1.8	88	20	196	1.8
Lack of economic mobility	342	222	906	1.6	156	16	328	1.9	102	6	210	1.9
Lack of career information and business potentials	326	328	980	1.7	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Skills mismatch	424	140	988	1.8	86	86	258	1.5	84	24	192	1.8

Table S2. (b) Education Data for Kwali, Kuje and Abaji Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Parameter	Kwali (Σf = 68)				Kuje (Σf = 66)				Abaji (Σf = 22)			
EDUCATION	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)
Outdated school curriculum	50	18	118	1.7	56	10	112	1.7	22	0	44	2.0
Rapid expansion of the educational system	44	24	112	1.6	42	24	108	1.6	12	10	34	1.5
Low levels of education among youths	34	34	102	1.5	44	22	110	1.7	16	6	38	1.7
Lack of vocational education and technical skills	55	13	110	1.6	50	16	116	1.8	13	9	35	1.6
Early school-leaving age	30	38	98	1.4	49	17	115	1.7	11	11	33	1.5
Lack of job-hunt skills	46	22	114	1.7	36	32	104	1.6	15	7	37	1.7
Lack of economic mobility	53	15	121	1.8	33	33	99	1.5	17	5	39	1.8
Lack of career information and business potentials	60	8	128	1.9	54	12	120	1.8	18	4	40	1.8
Skills mismatch	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0

Table S3. (a) Labor Data for Abuja Municipal, Bwari and Gwagwalada Area Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Parameter	Abuja Municipal (Σf = 564)				Bwari (Σf = 172)				Gwagwalada (Σf = 108)			
LABOR	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)
Lack of employable skills	282	282	846	1.5	122	50	294	1.7	95	13	203	1.9
Increase in the supply of educated manpower	410	154	974	1.7	158	14	330	1.9	100	8	208	1.9
Lack of entrepreneurial skills	390	174	954	1.7	162	10	334	1.9	83	25	191	1.8
Supply of skilled youths is higher than demand	184	380	748	1.3	170	12	352	2.0	90	18	198	1.8
Lack of vibrant manufacturing sector to absorb the youths	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Poor macroeconomic and business environments	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
High wage demands by inexperienced youths	400	164	964	1.7	137	35	309	1.8	94	14	202	1.9
Excessive labor market regulations and employment legislations	220	344	784	1.4	113	59	285	1.7	98	10	206	1.9
Lack of growth of labor demands	444	120	1,008	1.8	159	13	331	1.9	96	12	204	1.9
Sizeable proportion of expatriates in employment	300	264	864	1.5	101	71	273	1.6	102	6	210	1.9
Behavior of employers and job seekers	454	110	1,018	1.8	163	9	335	1.9	97	11	205	1.9

Table S3. (b) Labor Data for Kwali, Kuje and Abaji Area Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Parameter	Kwali (Σf = 68)				Kuje (Σf = 66)				Abaji (Σf = 22)			
LABOR	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)
Lack of employable skills	35	33	103	1.5	35	31	101	1.5	16	6	38	1.7
Increase in the supply of educated manpower	47	21	115	1.7	47	19	113	1.7	15	7	37	1.7
Lack of entrepreneurial skills	19	49	87	1.3	23	43	89	1.3	13	9	35	1.6
Supply of skilled youths is higher than demand	57	11	125	1.8	49	17	115	1.7	20	2	42	1.9
Lack of vibrant manufacturing sector to absorb the youths	66	2	134	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Poor macroeconomic and business environments	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
High wage demands by inexperienced youths	38	30	106	1.6	45	21	111	1.7	11	11	33	1.5
Excessive labor market regulations and employment legislations	45	23	113	1.7	59	7	125	1.9	16	6	38	1.7
Lack of growth of labor demands	52	16	120	1.8	60	6	126	1.9	22	0	44	2.0
Sizeable proportion of expatriates in employment	39	29	107	1.6	52	14	118	1.8	15	7	37	1.7
Behavior of employers and job seekers	55	13	123	1.8	33	33	99	1.5	16	6	38	1.7

Table S4. (a) Governance Data for Abuja Municipal, Bwari and Gwagwalada Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Parameter	Abuja Municipal (Σf = 564)				Bwari (Σf = 172)				Gwagwalada (Σf = 108)			
GOVERNANCE	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)
Gaps between government policies and implementation	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Corruption	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Leadership/Managerial Problems	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Inaccurate public policies relating to employment	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Lack of adequate youth development programs	418	146	982	1.7	168	4	340	2.0	99	9	207	1.9
Lack of formal recruitment channels and awareness	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Poor enabling environment to encourage entrepreneurship	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Lack of steady and sustainable power supply	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
High and multiple taxations paid by companies	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Poor human resources planning	440	124	1,004	1.8	144	28	292	1.7	73	35	181	1.7
Low rate of economic growth and recession	520	44	1,084	1.9	154	18	326	1.9	75	33	183	1.7
Bureaucracy in processing job applications	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
VIPs influencing available jobs	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Neglect of the agricultural sector	504	60	1,068	1.9	171	0	343	2.0	62	46	170	1.6
Lack of foreign direct investment inflows	404	160	968	1.7	74	98	246	1.4	58	50	166	1.5
Infrastructural deficit to promote job creation	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Untimely economic policies, e.g., SAP (Structural Adjustment Program)	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Unstable political environment	564	0	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Non-involvement of youths in decision-making processes	20	544	1,128	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Labor market policies	424	140	988	1.8	89	83	261	1.5	78	30	186	1.7
Failure of government policies to stimulate private sector	222	342	786	1.2	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
More emphases on university certificates than entrepreneurial skills	560	4	1124	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0

Table S4. (b) Governance Data for Kwali, Kuje and Abaji Area Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Parameter	Kwali (Σf = 68)				Kuje (Σf = 66)				Abaji (Σf = 22)			
GOVERNANCE	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)
Gap between government policies and implementation	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Corruption	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Leadership/Managerial Problems	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Inaccurate public policies relating to employment	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Lack of adequate youth development programs	53	15	121	1.8	45	21	111	1.7	22	0	44	2.0
Lack of formal recruitment channels and awareness	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Poor enabling environment to encourage entrepreneurship	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Lack of steady and sustainable power supply	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
High and multiple taxations paid by companies	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Poor human resources planning	36	32	104	1.5	53	13	119	1.8	18	4	40	1.8
Low rate of economic growth and recession	56	12	124	1.8	56	10	122	1.8	12	10	34	1.5
Bureaucracy in processing job applications	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
VIPs influencing available jobs	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Neglect of the agricultural sector	63	5	131	1.9	64	2	130	2.0	18	4	40	1.8
Lack of foreign direct investment inflows	42	26	110	1.6	40	26	103	1.6	12	10	34	1.5
Infrastructural deficit to promote job creation	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Untimely economic policies, e.g., SAP (Structural Adjustment Program)	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Unstable political environment	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Non-involvement of youths in decision-making processes	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Labor market policies	60	8	128	1.9	56	10	122	1.8	18	4	40	1.8
Failure of government policies to stimulate private sector	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
More emphases on university certificates than entrepreneurial skills	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0

Table S5. (a) Data for Abuja Municipal, Bwari and Gwagwalada Area Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria (Miscellaneous).

Parameter	Abuja Municipal (Σf = 564)				Bwari (Σf = 172)				Gwagwalada (Σf = 108)			
MISCELLANEOUS	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)
Poverty	450	114	1,014	1.8	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Marital status	262	302	826	1.5	156	16	328	1.9	88	20	196	1.8
Social status and family background	364	200	928	1.6	141	31	313	1.8	92	16	200	1.9
Environmental factors	122	442	686	1.2	98	74	270	1.6	86	22	194	1.8
Inadequate credit facilities	562	2	1,126	2.0	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Long period of initial unemployment among graduates	414	150	978	1.7	88	84	260	1.5	54	54	162	1.5
Perception of youths about employment	292	272	856	1.5	167	5	339	2.0	68	40	176	1.6
Qualification mismatches	350	214	914	1.6	172	0	344	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Formal and informal sectors' differentials	508	56	1,072	1.9	42	130	214	1.2	54	54	162	1.5
Gender discrimination by employers	344	220	908	1.6	155	17	327	1.9	92	16	200	1.9
Business cycles contribute to youth unemployment	430	134	860	1.5	166	6	338	2.0	108	0	216	2.0
Graduates' attitudes to some jobs	544	20	1,108	2.0	161	11	333	1.9	108	0	216	2.0

Table S5. (b) Data for Kwali, Kuje and Abaji Area Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria (Miscellaneous).

Parameter	Kwali				Kuje				Abaji			
MISCELLANEOUS	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)	YES (2)	NO (1)	Σfx	CV ($\Sigma fx/\Sigma f$)
Poverty	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Marital status	50	18	118	1.7	35	31	101	1.5	20	2	42	1.9
Social status and family background	35	33	103	1.5	20	44	84	1.3	15	7	37	1.7
Environmental factors	49	19	117	1.7	49	17	115	1.7	13	9	35	1.6
Inadequate credit facilities	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Long period of initial unemployment among graduates	34	34	102	1.5	47	19	113	1.7	11	11	33	1.5
Perception of youths about employment	53	15	121	1.8	46	20	112	1.7	22	0	44	2.0
Qualification mismatches	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Formal and informal sectors' differentials	20	48	88	1.3	46	20	112	1.7	16	6	38	1.7
Gender discrimination by employers	43	25	111	1.6	51	15	117	1.8	18	4	40	1.8
Business cycles contribute to youth unemployment	68	0	136	2.0	66	0	132	2.0	22	0	44	2.0
Graduates' attitudes to some jobs	68	0	136	2.0	44	22	110	1.7	22	0	44	2.0

Table S6. Level of Awareness of the SDGs for the Six Area Councils of FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

	Area Councils												Total	
	AMAC[a]		Bwari		Gwagwalada		Kwali		Kuje		Abaji			
Number of Questionnaires	564		172		108		68		66		22		1000	
Questions to measure awareness	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
K1. Have you ever heard of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	23	541	16	156	14	94	18	50	15	51	14	8	**100**	**900**
K2. Have you ever participated in any program or workshop that is related to this?	65	499	16	156	14	94	12	56	10	56	4	18	**121**	**879**
K3. Do you know the year the SDGs were adopted by the United Nations (UN)?	16	548	10	162	8	100	6	62	6	60	4	18	**50**	**950**
K4. Do you know any of the objectives of the SDGs?	4	560	4	168	4	104	4	64	2	64	2	20	**20**	**980**
K5. Are you ready to invest time and effort in learning about the SDGs?	17	547	13	159	10	98	8	60	8	58	6	16	**62**	**938**
K6. Is SDG the same as MDG?	3	561	3	169	1	107	1	67	1	65	1	21	**10**	**990**
K7. Are you aware of any youth development program by the government	408	156	52	120	18	90	46	22	46	20	10	12	**580**	**420**
K8. Have you been a beneficiary of any of these programs?	62	502	33	139	13	95	10	58	8	58	4	18	**130**	**870**
K9. Do you know any beneficiary of any of these programs	7	557	5	167	6	102	5	63	4	62	3	19	**30**	**970**
K10. Do you know how the SDGs can be made to succeed in Nigeria	437	127	119	53	90	18	54	14	54	12	16	6	**770**	**230**

[a]*AMAC = Abuja Municipal Area Council.*