



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### YOUTH BULGE AND NATIONAL SECURITY: AN ASSESSMENT OF YOUTH-TARGETED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS IN KANO STATE, NIGERIA

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#### ABSTRACT

Nigeria is facing a critical demographic challenge known as the youth bulge, where a disproportionately large segment of the population comprises individuals in the age bracket 15-35. While this presents an opportunity for accelerated economic growth, it also poses significant risks to national security if not effectively managed. Using both primary and secondary data, this study assesses the articulated strategies adopted by the Nigerian government in taming the negative consequences of youth bulge in country to establish whether these strategies are yielding the desired results or not. It examines key initiatives and various education and vocational training efforts geared towards productively empowering the youths. Despite the existence of several programs, the assessment reveals that poor implementation, policy inconsistency, under-funding and limited youth engagement continue to undermine their effectiveness. Security-focused interventions like counter-radicalization and de-radicalization programs also face community mistrust and coordination challenges. Elite theory guides the analysis in the paper as it provides a compelling lens to understand why youth-targeted policies in Nigeria often fail to mitigate negative consequences of the youth bulge in the country. The study concludes that unless government actions are more inclusive, data-driven and sustainably financed, youth bulge will remain a source of instability rather than a demographic dividend. Strategic recommendations are offered to enhance youth development and mitigate security threats. These include the re-invigoration of family institution performs its socialization role for societal stability; sincere commitment to the implementation of social investment policies meant to empower Nigerian youth and reduce unemployment; entrepreneurship and self-dependence education; diversification of the economy for more job opportunities; constitutionally empowering traditional rulers; and youth social and psychological reorientation.

**Keywords:** Assessment, policies, youth bulge, demographic dividend, national security.

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## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

The youth population in Nigeria is disproportionately large and it presents both opportunities and significant challenges for national security. Youth population in any given society can either be an advantage or a disadvantage to its sustainable development depending on how the expanding population is utilized by the state. When the number of working individuals increases alongside employment, youth bulge becomes a demographic dividend which consequently may lead to the overall expansion of labor and economic growth. On the other hand, when a large number of youths are idle, underutilized and cannot find gainful employment in a country, youth bulge may become a demographic bomb (Rogers & Kitchin, 2013).

Demographic dividend is when the population of a given state is nurtured, harnessed, and employed to serve the aims and objectives of the state therefore fostering the state toward the path of development, while demographic bomb is when the increasing population becomes a source of threat to the society in terms of insecurity and underdevelopment. Population growth specifically in the context of youth increases the possibility of violent conflict (Kaplan, 1994) thereby reaching an unprecedented threshold. Even though the youth are significantly affected by unemployment, they are better educated to be self-reliant on the one hand and to leave them wallowing in poverty on the other (Mueller & Thurlow, 2019).

Countries that are generally regarded as the Asian tigers because of their economic development like Malaysia, Singapore, Korea and China have created millions of job opportunities and at the same time relocating young workers from agricultural activities with low productivity to higher productivity of manufacturing without experiencing the problems connected with high unemployment since 1970 (International Labor Organization, 2018). This is as a result of the concerted economic reforms initiated in the late 1970s in China and Korea and other advanced countries worldwide. This was how the East Asian countries turned their youth bulge into a demographic dividend but European countries like Spain, Italy and Greece are facing serious challenges in terms of youth unemployment.

more so, Japan is facing the crisis of aging population (United Nations, 2007). Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq were in serious crisis of over 30 percent unemployment rate in 2015 (United Nations, 2015). In 2015, Latin America and Europe have stable youth population sizes but Asia and Africa were in the midst of substantial changes in the size of their young populations. United Nations (2015) reported that 19 percent of the global youth population live in Africa and by 2030, it is projected that the number of youth will increase by 42 percent.

The World Bank survey conducted in 2011 and reported in 2012, revealed that 60% of the youth in Africa are unemployed and 40% of them that joined violent activities do so as a result of unemployment and idleness. Thereby resulting in the upsurge in Youth-State confrontation “to an extent that raises serious regional security concerns in the fashion of the Arab Spring” (Tlou, 2014: p 4). Considering how revolutions were held and spearheaded by the youth in the Middle East, such as Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, it signifies a deviation of African long existing tradition of politics. Also, other countries such as Somalia, Kenya and Sudan have experienced instances of youth restiveness. The increasing population of the youth clearly indicates a serious implication on peace, security and stability in the African continent. The leaders see the demands and yearning of the youth as unrealistic



and undisciplined and then as a result of this, the youths are coerced by security operatives (Tlou, 2014).

There are numerous challenges facing the Nigerian youths today ranging from the problem of unemployment, limited access to basic qualitative education, lack of economic opportunities, inadequate access to educational facilities, high poverty rate, poor health care delivery system, poor governance, insufficient infrastructure, the spate of Almajiri (Street begging) phenomenon among others. These challenges show how the government at all levels ineffectively addressed the youth bulge and thus, insecurity is strongly related to youth bulge not just in Nigeria but in many countries that fails to utilize the thriving youth population. This is because crisis such as militancy in the Niger-Delta, insurgency in the North-East, kidnapping and banditry in the North-West and herders-farmers conflict in some parts of the South-West, North-West and North-Central zone are orchestrated by the youth.

Studies have shown that the youth question is the major causative factor responsible for the deterioration of peace and spreading of violence (Kwaja & Owonikoko, 2020). Crimes such as kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, piracy, cultism, street begging (Almajiranci of today), insurgency, social and ethical conflicts, political violence, cybercrimes, drug abuse, religious crisis, child labor, gender-based violence, women trafficking, suicide, and so on are tied to unemployment and poverty in the country, which negatively affects national security and national development at large (Adebayo, 2013). This paper assesses the Nigerian government's policies and strategies targeted at addressing this crisis and their impact on national security.

## **2.0. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Conceptualization**

#### **Youth Bulge**

Youth bulge is the product of low infant mortality and high fertility rate. It is a situation when the large share of societal population are young adults. Youth bulge is a relative increase in the population of youthful age. It is often referred to as a stage of development in terms of population rise. It is a transition of a society from its historical background into a modern society. According to Lin (2012) youth bulge is a stage in a society where infant mortality is low while fertility rate is rising. This means the largest number of the population comprises of children and young adults. Generally, it is an overall enhancement and betterment of health in the society. Ruby (2006, p 2) sees youth bulge as an "extraordinary large youth cohorts relative to the adult population".

Youth bulge is a representation of historical transition of a society to a modern civilization. In every journey to modernization, the society changes from having its largest population in the adult and aged group to young population (youth bulge) and then neutralizes to a normal state before it disappears finally. And this is why it seems logically understanding as to how Urdal (2006) perceive youth bulge as just a relative youth cohort size rather than a part of the youth cohort size in the total population. Also, Apolte and Gerling (2015) believe that the surrounding politico-economic institutions determine how youth bulge translates. The interplay in the labor market conditions determines the outcome of youth bulge. In other words, the demographic number of the youths does not guarantee or count on the positive outcome or otherwise of youth demography but the relationship that exists between the



youth bulge and structure of the politico-economic institutions. Therefore, youth bulge does not ordinarily result to insecurity but the negative change in the above mentioned relationship brings about conflict and insecurity (Apolte & Gerling, 2015).

### **National Security**

The basic requirement for every state to survive is national security. National security can be in form of economic power, diplomacy and political power. National security is all about protecting the citizens from both internal and external attack. It is the duty of the government to provide national security which does not necessarily entails military dimensions. Another means of confirming national security is the absence of foreign dictatorship and control. National security has been traditionally perceived as the protection of sovereignty, internal stability and territorial integrity with the focus on preserving the power of the state. It is from this perspective that Holmes (2015) defines national security as the safeguarding of a nation.

Dimensionally, national security involves four main elements namely power, military strength, force and national defense. The ultimate aim is to protect the entire nation and its people from both internal and external aggression by maintaining the armed forces. However, national security has taken a new dimension in the contemporary times. In this era of globalization the complex and interrelated states face different threats such as pandemic, climate change, and terrorism. (Chandra & Bhonsle, 2015). National security therefore, needs an all-encompassing approach that captures all essential elements of national life such as leadership. These elements serve as a yard stick of measuring the national security with appropriate structures that need constant revitalization to ensure national defense (Chandra & Bhonsle, 2015).

The dimensions of national security include political security, economic security, cyber security, energy and natural resources security, environmental security and most importantly, the human security. National security, therefore entails both national defense and the protection of economic and other interests of a country. Foreign policies and defense policies are been determined by national security (Holmes, 2015).

National security has remained an area where several scholars contest and argue over. The contestation arise when expressing the idea of who, what and is to be secured. In fact, even national policies are geared towards answering national security questions (Anwar & Rafique, 2012). National security is so important that it needs to incorporate multi-dimensional approaches to its stability and these approaches include environmental, economic, political, societal and traditional military approaches (Buzan, 1991).

### **2.2. Theoretical Discourse**

Elite theory guides the analysis in the paper. Vilfredo (1848–1923) popularizes the concept of elite. Other cofounders or scholars who developed Italian school of elitism are Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941), Robert Michels (1876–1936), Burnham (1905-1987), Floyd Hunter (1912-1992), C. Wright Mills (1916-1962), Thomas R. Dye (1935 till date), G. William Domhoff (1936 till date) and Robert D. Putnam (1941 till date) (Ekundayo, 2017). According to Vilfredo, there is a need to divide the people into two groups according to their level of indices i.e. the haves and the have nots; namely the lower stratum (non-elites) and the upper stratum (the elites). Gaetano Mosca further reaffirmed



Vilfredo's division of the society. In addition, the elites were divided into two: the governing elites and the non-governing elites. Vilfredo critically explains how the whole elites can be replaced with a new one. He further divided the power elites into two: the foxes who are strong and diplomatic and the lions who use force (Delican 2012). The theory originated around the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20th century and it seeks to understand and explain the relationship of power in the contemporary society.

Vilfredo explains the elite theory in the following categories: Power is concentrated, the elites are unified, the non-elites are diverse and powerless, and the elites have a unified interest because of their common background and position. Some of the main assumptions of the elites theory include that all men like power and can go to any length in order to hold on to it. Also, it stresses on inequality rather than equality this is because the elites are fully loaded with personal resources as social skills, special interest in politics and intelligence and they are the highest accomplishers in the society. The relationship between the ruling class and the ruled is determined by power because politics is all about power sharing. The power elites are those who rule the society. In every society, the minority rules over the majority. The minorities are mostly organized, cohesive and powerful while the majority are unorganized. Elites and non-elites are not stable. They change over time. The ruling elites will always have a portion of supporters among the non-elites in order to have a degree of cooperation and smooth running of their activities. The relationship between the elites and non-elites and its outcome is inevitable.

Mosca who developed the doctrine of political class (1896) came up with the concept of the sub-elite in the elite theory. The sub-elite composed of civil servants, managers of industries, scientists and scholars which is also called a 'new middle class' (Mondal, 2020). In democratic regimes, middle class that tend to be very important will decline, regimes in democratic countries turn to a plutocratic dictatorship, or bureaucratic dictatorship. In general terms, Mosca asserted that the decline of the middle class as referred by Karl Max, is the genesis of crisis in the democratic regimes.

A portion of Nigerian youths are only used for selfish interests of the powerful elites, especially, for their political interests/purposes and activities. And the kind of power relationship that exists between the elites and non-elites (masses) is best explained by the elite theory. As earlier asserted by Mosca, the decline of the middle class and as referred by Karl Max, is the genesis of crisis in Nigeria. The gap between the rich and the poor in the country is getting wider by the day. As unemployment and poverty become more severe, there is a high tendency for the idle youth to engage in violence and organized crimes in order to survive. As a result, insecurity sets in and becomes a national problem. Youth bulge in Nigeria, is utilized negatively by the elites and the government seems not to be committed to helping the situation.

### **3.0. METHODOLOGY**

The entire Kano State was used as a case study. The population density of Kano makes it ideal for the study as it involves the highest rising population of the youths in Nigeria with over 1.42 million unemployed people (15-60years) who are willing and able to work (NBS, 2020).



Furthermore, population of the study can either be finite or infinite. Finite population is when the exact number of the population size is known and infinite population is when the exact number is unknown. In the cause of this study, Kano State has a finite population presently. Even though it is been long since the last population census was conducted in 2006, yet, projections are made on number of populations in the state. According to National Population Commission (Brinkhoff, 2020), Kano State has a total population of 9,401,288 in 2006 and it is projected to be 13,076,900 in 2016 with 3.4% annual population increase.

The six selected local government areas from the three Senatorial Zones are Bagwai, Bichi, Dala, Rogo, Nassarawa and Wudil have a total population of 265 949, 457 680, 688 066, 374 302, 980 900 and 310 790 respectively based on the projected population of 2022 (National Population Commission of Nigeria). The study intends to cover all the areas in the State i.e. the three senatorial zones that represents the urban, semi-urban and rural areas. The sample size for the study is determined and calculated based on the population size of the study area and the Senatorial Districts. Kano has three Senatorial Districts namely Kano South, Kano North and Kano Central.

In this context, two local governments are selected from each Senatorial Zone based on their population size and this include the most populous local government, moderately populated area and the lowest populated area. The six local government areas are Dala (Urban), Nassarawa (Urban), Rogo (Rural), Bichi (Semi-urban), Wudil (Semi-urban) and Bagwai (Rural) which makes the total number of 3 077 687. The number of respondents sampled from each district makes a total number of the sample size for the study.

The study adopted the hybrid sampling technique in the sense that both probability and non-probability technique will be used. Qualitative data was collected specifically through the snowball sampling and purposive sampling techniques while quantitative data was acquired through the cluster sampling and simple random sampling.

So, in this study, Interviews, Focus Group Discussions and Questionnaires were conducted as well as many secondary data such as Books. Therefore, both primary and secondary data were utilized. In other words, questionnaire, focus group discussion and interviews were adopted primarily while other secondary sources such as Books, Journals and articles were utilized also.

#### **4.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **Assessment of Policies/ Strategies Aimed at Addressing Youth Bulge in Nigeria**

Policies and interventions don't last long in Nigeria. In other words, lack of continuity makes certain policies less impactful. For instance, Buhari administration had implemented four different programs (Conditional Cash Transfer, P-YES, Trader Moni Empowerment and N-Power) intended to address the problem of poverty and promote economic development. These have seized to be mentioned again after Buhari's administration ended in May, 2023. The short duration of such interventions is the reason why very few people feel the impact, an interviewee lamented. (KII: Youth/School Teacher,



Dala LGA, Kano State, 2023). As Onuoha (2014) suggests, addressing youth unemployment is critical to reducing insecurity. Another interviewee has this to say:

*Aids and loans are not given to those who genuinely need them at the grass root. Even in terms of subsidy, the real targets don't often benefit rather, people closely related to the policy makers benefit more or sometimes those who benefit, lack the knowledge of how to invest the funds received. For instance, I know of some young men and women who end up buying new phones and accessories with the supposed capital they were given to start up new business. Lack of awareness especially in the rural areas has further made Governmental interventions less impactful (Mal.Abubakar, Youth/Business Owner, KII, Nasarawa LGA, 2023).*

Unfortunately, Nigeria is said to be a country where things are done in your favor only if you know someone in power (Nura, Social Welfare Consultant, KII, Nasarawa LGA, 2023). In his words:

*'Many politicians bring up flashy programs before and during campaigns but most of these programs fail to exist after elections. Sometimes, they share Sewing machines, Grinding machines, Live Stock, Grains and some certain amount of money in the name of capital' (Nura, Social Welfare Consultant, KII, Nasarawa LGA, 2023).*

Nura observes further that governmental policies are not only weak, but they lack the capacity to impact on a large population. To him, the only way to manage youth bulge crisis is to address the root causes of disenfranchisement and radicalization in Northern Nigeria. His submission is in agreement with Page & Matfess (2017) who recommend expanding access to quality education, promoting moderate religious teachings and creating economic opportunities for young people to prevent extremist recruitment.

There are so many interventions from both state and federal government in different forms that were made purposely for the youths, but inconsistency and lack of continuity seriously hinder the implementation and progress of the interventions (FGD participants 2, May 2023). To the participant, sometimes even Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) offer certain interventions which tend to be more impactful and sustainable than that of the government.

Also in 2023, a Representative of Wudil LGA in the National Assembly (Hon Abdulhakeem Kamilu Ado) introduced a football competition match among physically challenged street baggers in the area where both winners and losers were given substantial amount of capital to start up their personal business (Imam, Religious Leader, KII, Wudil LGA, 2023). However, most of the beneficiaries did not utilize the money productively.

Subsidies and palliatives are often given by the Government at certain point in time to ease the hardship citizens are going through. For instance, Student Loan was introduced and implemented in February 2024 by the Federal Government. This intervention is mainly target the youths even though it has been criticized (by Pressure Groups such as ASUU) to have so many restrictions that could render the scheme inaccessible for many.



Some FGD participants asserted that they have never witnessed any program/intervention meant to cushion the effect of youth bulge on national security in their areas. A young farmer and FGD participant from Rogo LGA asserted that:

*“I have heard about certain Government interventions especially in the agricultural sector from the Radio Stations but I don’t think it’s real because I’ve never seen a beneficiary in our area. And I think the main target of such interventions if only they exist should be us”* (Farmer, FGD, Rogo LGA, 2023).

The above assertion proves that a significant number of youth are not aware of governmental policies and interventions simply because of their location. Majority of respondents who are aware of such interventions are either located in the urban or semi-urban regions but those in the rural areas such as Rogo and Bagwai are totally unaware.

**Table 1: Analysis of Impact of Government policies/interventions**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	34	8.9
Moderate	94	24.5
Low	44	11.5
Don’t Know	212	55.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork (2023).

The study shows different categories of policy/intervention impact on the youths in relation to National security particularly in Kano State. Less than ten percent of the respondents (8.9 percent), felt the high impact of policy/interventions targeting the youth while slightly less than twenty five percent (24.5 percent) were moderately impacted. Less than fifteen percent (11.5 percent) had a low impact and more than half of the respondents (55.2 percent) have never felt the impact of such policies/interventions.

One of the FGD participants in Nasarawa LGA affirmed that he benefited from the intervention scheme recently given to the youths popularly known as N-power during Buhari’s regime and another participant from Bichi LGA also affirmed that he also benefited from TraderMoni Empowerment Scheme which was meant for market traders, artisans and farmers at zero interest rates (Names Withheld, Youth, Nasarawa LGA, 2023).

The impacts of these policies and interventions are impeded by challenges of the educational system in Kano, where poor infrastructure, overcrowded schools and limited access to quality education restrict opportunities for youth keeping them in poverty, making them susceptible to criminal activities and being used for political violence by the elites to consolidate their privileged status in the society (Muhammad & Zubair, 2015). Another major obstacle hindering Nigeria from reaping the benefits of its current population structure i.e. youth bulge is low enforcement of law and order. Nigeria is regarded as the least country that respects law and order in Africa (Badi’a, 2024). Even though Nigeria is the most populous country in the continent, the legal system is facing serious challenges therefore negatively affecting the youths who are meant to move the society forward.



Even the fertility rate in Nigeria can only be controlled by not only law making and implementation but by enforcing the law. This problem is worsened by acute poverty and political instability. Law and order is the backbone of every society as justice and fairness is the key to development. Unfortunately, law makers, law enforcers and interpreters, are all involved in disobeying the law by abusing their powers to have their way. So if lawyers, judges and police officers fail to lead by example in respecting the law, the general public will suffer the consequences and face the wrath of poor governance (Ibrahim, 2024).

The judiciary in Nigeria is weak. Lack of independence of the judicial officers coupled with their few numbers when compared to the State’s population, also affects their performance (Oji, 2022). Most law courts are highly congested with trials as there are a lot of cases awaiting trial in the State. In fact, A Prison Warder from Nasarawa LGA asserted that there are over 5000 prisoners in a single prison but about 3500 are awaiting trial. Unfortunately, this is the prison that is only supposed to accommodate not more than 1500 Inmates (PRO Prison Services, KII, 2023).

From the study conducted, respondents have different level of awareness with regards to whether legal actions are taken against culprits in the state or not. The results presented in **Table 2** revealed that more than sixty percent (64.8 percent) of the respondents are aware of legal actions taken against suspects while slightly above thirty percent (35.2 percent) have never witnessed any apprehension or detention of culprits in their area. Almost all the 35 percent respondents who are not aware of legal actions taken against culprits based in the rural area while most of those respondents who are aware mostly based in the cities (Urban area).

**Table 2: Awareness of any Legal Action against Young Culprit**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	249	64.8
No	135	35.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Authors’ Fieldwork (2023).

The study clearly indicates that cities have more law enforcement agents than the rural areas. Interviews and FGD sessions conducted have proved the above assertion. Clearly, Legal actions are always taken against criminals publicly and are seen over Mass and Social media. An interviewee from Bichi LGA opined that:

*“Security operatives are always on surveillance in our area. There is a Police Station in almost every ward in this Local Government and they always run to our aid when the need arises. Even though their number is not sufficient, yet they are trying their best”* (Musa, Social Welfare personnel, KII Bichi LGA, 2023).

Two FGD participants, each from Nasarawa and Dala LGAs added that:

*Other security agents like NDLEA, FRSC, VIO, Customs, Immigration and Community Vigilante groups are helping the police in handling the current security challenges. The Vigilante group serve as the first emergency contact in our areas*



*before the Police. Fortunately, the group members comprise of people from the same area, so they are always around and they know virtually most culprits in the area. So even the culprits find it difficult to hide from them. Most social disputes are settled almost immediately unless they are criminal in nature (Security Personnel, FGD, Dala & Nasarawa LGAs, 2023).*

With the aid of current advanced technology, Mass media and Social media broadcast conflicts and criminal offences faster than in the olden days. Information travels in speed of seconds from one part of the world to another (Mijah, 2020). And this is why people are more aware of the happenings around them and far away. But this is only seen in advanced societies like urban areas and cities. Gambo & Abubakar (2019) in their article discussed how limited youth empowerment initiatives in Kano contribute to socioeconomic challenges for the youth. They argue that inadequate government support for skills training and entrepreneurship puts youth at risk of poverty, crime and dependency on informal and unstable work. Mal. Audu from Rogo LGA in an interview opines that:

*“Sincerely speaking, uncountable number of crimes have been committed in this our area but you can hardly witness any arrest by the security operatives. In fact we hardly see Police officers around because they are few and far away. So whenever there is a problem, the culprits must have absconded before Police’s arrival. And this also, has to do with the poor communication system in our area” (Mal.Audu, Village Head, KII, Rogo LGA, 2023).*

The study also confirmed that the number of Police officers in the State is much less than required. The results tend to reveal why the Police Officers available are overloaded with work. Corruption coupled with poor communication channel also slows down the arrest of culprits on time.

This finding corroborates Jega’s (2007) observation that poor governance, weak institutions and political corruption have limited Nigeria’s social and economic progress. Jega argues that Nigeria’s social structure, instead of fostering development, has been undermined by ineffective governance, leading to widespread poverty and inequality. The finding also aligns with Gambari’s (2008) argument that governance issues across Africa is hampered by corruption, lack of visionary leadership, and weak institutions which prevent the continent from harnessing its social potential. Regrettably, as observed by Zenn (2013), government response to issues such as poverty, unemployment and lack of prospects for the youth, has often been insufficient, failing to address the root causes of instability.

From the Feminist perspective, Mama (1995) critiques the marginalization of women in Nigeria’s social structure, arguing that gender inequality prevents Nigeria from harnessing the full potential of its population structure. According to her, patriarchal norms limit women’s participation in the economy and governance, hindering national development and the benefits of an inclusive social structure.

Slightly more than half of the respondents (50.5 percent) suggested provision of job opportunities as a lasting solution while youth empowerment solution constitutes one quarter of the respondents (25 percent). Thirteen percent (13.8 percent) of the respondents suggest enlightenment as a way forward. Slightly above ten percent (10.7 percent) believe that good governance will solve the problem.



**Table 3: Analysis of Preference options for Addressing the Crisis of Youth Bulge in Nigeria**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Job Opportunities	194	50.5
Youth Empowerment	97	25
Enlightenment	53	13.8
Good Governance	41	10.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Fieldwork 2023**

The problems affecting the development of the youth in Kano State is also affecting the society at large. These challenges can only be addressed using multidimensional approach. The study made various suggestions on how to tackle youth challenges in the State. Most FGD participants and interviewees across the six Local Government Areas offered the same suggestions. They all agree that Nigerians are very good in policy making but lack the determination. For instance, Mal. Nura, a retired and experienced teacher who has undergone diverse training in the foreign countries, from Nasarawa LGA opined that:

*The major way out of this mess is social reorientation. Our mindset needs to change for the better. Even though the economic situation in the country is hard, parents have to step up to their responsibilities and only give birth to children they can take care of. Sometimes all what these children need is motivation and encouragement from their parents. Sacrifices of resources have to be made by the government, elites, parents and other community stakeholders. We should understand that everybody in the society must contribute towards the development of our children and youth (Nura, Social Welfare Consultant, KII, Nasarawa LGA, 2023).*

Based on the trainings Nura had in the foreign countries, his experiences and knowledge, he added that even the NGOs that give aids to our communities have now shifted and diverted their attention to health issues like Cancer awareness, Maternal mortality, etc. rather than social problems. This observation aligns with the view of Suleiman & Aka (2012) who recommend that policies to manage Nigeria’s population growth, should include investments in health care and reproductive health services. They suggest further that government and non-governmental organizations need to work together to promote family planning and public awareness campaigns on the benefits of smaller family sizes. As succinctly put by Malam Nura:

*Education is the key to development. Change in Educational system and delivery is very important. We shouldn’t stick to old educational system when there is room for improvement. Other countries have move forward. Youth should join studies and engage in side jobs in order to learn how to be independent. In countries like India, China and Ghana children and youth follow their parents to shops and markets after school hours. Gone were those days when children roam about the street and play with friends after school as they have nothing to do. Skill acquisition centers for youth should be provided and maintained. Youths should understand that school is not final. It is a means of acquiring knowledge but not to seek employment only (Nura, Social Welfare Consultant, KII, Nasarawa LGA, 2023).*



Another interviewee from Rogo LGA showed his displeasure on how government neglects the rural areas and pay more attention on the urban areas. He lamented that the only time people from the rural area become important is during elections and the politicians leave with a lot of empty and unfulfilled promises. He suggests that:

“White elephant projects should be stopped by the government and the rural area challenges should be taken care of as a matter of urgency. Good infrastructures and basic essentials such as electricity, clean water, good hospitals and most importantly, defense and security should be provided for the people. These are the things people are in need of and not flyovers and token of money distributed as capital” (Musa, Social Welfare Personnel, KII, Bichi LGA, 2023).

Malam Musa’s view affirms Madueke (2018) recommendation that the government should focus on social inclusion policies that provide youth with a sense of belonging. He advocates for community-based programs that engage youth in productive activities, prevent their marginalization and promote dialogue to reduce conflict and violence. During the FGD session, a participant from Bichi LGA opined that:

“Economic diversification in our society is the only way forward. Even the government should diversify the economy. We should move towards more production and decrease consumption. Sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, mining, tourism, innovation and technology. Ultimately, a rapid expansion of both outputs and exports will create jobs, increase income level and economic growth and sustainability will be ensured “(Youth Business Owner, FGD, Bichi LGA, 2023).

This view aligns with that of Akanle and Edewor (2014) who argue that promoting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) could help address youth unemployment. They recommend that Nigerian government should provide financial support, training, and mentorship for young entrepreneurs. They also emphasize the importance of formal education reform to equip youth with relevant skills for the job market.

## **5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study identified certain possible solutions to youth bulge crisis as it affects national security in Nigeria as most respondents agree that youth bulge in Kano State is posing a security threat. Almost all KIIs and FGD participants have offered one solution or the other which have been categorized according to the responsibilities of each stakeholder in the community and these stakeholders include Parents, Government, Traditional Rulers, Religious Leaders, Teachers, Security Personnel, Business Owners, NGOs, and the Youths. All the respondents agree that no solution can aid the development of youths and solve the threat of youth bulge on national security unless, a collective effort is made to address the issue.

From the angle of parents, marriage institution should be well respected and maintained according to Islamic principles. Couples must be educated and aware of the responsibilities that come with the institution before engaging in it. This will drastically reduce the level of marriage breakups and



divorce which certainly leads to street and stranded children in the State. The already surviving children in the community should be given equal adequate care and concern. Moral behaviors and attitudes should be reinstated in children by their parents. Criminal offences should not be condoned and tolerated by parents. Security personnel should be given room to enforce the law without the interference of relatives. Priority should be given to engaging youths in productive activities such as petty trading, vocational training and entrepreneurship (Nura, 2023).

The government should make and implement good policies that impact on basic lives of the people. Infra-structural facilities such as hospitals, schools and good roads should be given an utmost priority. Health and educational sector should be given more attention as they are the key to every societal development. Emphasis given to paper qualification rather than skills and talents should be changed so that the youths will shift their energy from acquiring certificates to entrepreneurship and self-dependence. As Onuoha (2014) recommends, Nigeria should implement job creation programs especially for high-risk areas like Northern Nigeria, and invest in skills acquisition programs that align with local market demands. Emphasis should be placed on effective vocational training.

Diversification of the economy will fasten the socio-economic growth and development the entire society and more job opportunities shall be provided. Also, almost all closed-down industries in the state can be revived with the assistance of the government and this will create other job opportunities. Skill acquisition centers should also be provided efficiently. Transparent governance and the fight against bribery and corruption shall go a long way to sanitize the socio-political system that will enhance development. The need for effective governance reforms to achieve inclusive development in Nigeria (Gambari, 2008).

Traditional leaders have a vital role to play in the state. Considering the fact that traditional leaders are closer to the people than the government. The responsibilities of traditional leaders include settling of small disagreements and disputes, checkmating the origin of new settlers in the State because of insecurity issues, giving advice to the people and to serve as intermediary between policy makers and the public. Unfortunately, the development of democracy in Nigeria, has drastically reduce the power of traditional leaders.

Religious leaders should take the responsibility of preaching and guiding the populace in the right path. Fortunately, Kano State is a state where Islamic religion has a huge impact. And that is why religious leaders can easily influence the indigenes to the desired direction. People should be encouraged to only give birth to children they can cater for in order to reduce the threat and burden on the entire community. Even though this is a highly debatable issue, certain ways should be deployed by Muslim clerics to address the issue squarely.

The vital role major business owners should play in the State is to offer assistance to small entrepreneurs in every way possible. Instead of offering gifts and charity to friends and relatives, expanding the existing businesses and creating new ones will yield positive outcome. By so doing, more jobs will be created and more youth will be engaged. Teachers have one of the most vital roles to play. Restructuring educational service delivery is the key. Modification of character and impacting knowledge on the youths is the sole responsibility of teachers. Also, teachers should make the



students understand the importance of education and that school is a means to life and not an end to be achieved. People need to be educated in order to have a good life and the essence of education is not just to be employed and earn a living but, to use it as a tool for better life.

Youths must be engaged in addressing the problem. A serious social and psychological reorientation is needed to change the mindset of the youths. They should understand that building a life needs to start from simple steps to complex ones. The get money quick syndrome should switch to building self-confidence and renewed hope for a better society. The youths seriously need capacity building. Following the good footsteps of our parents and past leaders will create a brighter future for children who are yet to come.

All stakeholders shouldn't work unilaterally but must work together in order to achieve the desired level of peace and stability that will lead to multi-dimensional growth and development in our society. As Gisselquist (2013) it is important to address regional inequalities in Nigeria to mitigate youth unrest. As such, her recommendations that investment in infrastructure, education, and job opportunities in underserved areas, especially in the North, to address disparities and provide more equal opportunities for youth should be considered by the concerned stakeholders. Most importantly, promoting reproductive health services (Family planning) to slow population growth and reduce future demographic pressures is a necessity at this stage of Nigeria's development. In a nutshell, the study suggests that all stakeholders in the state should come together and work collectively in order to solve the problems of the youth bulge.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest in this manuscript.

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