

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Economics



Master's Thesis

**The Impacts of University Education on Nigerian Youth and
Its Effects on Poverty**

Ramonu Olawale

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DIPLOMA THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Olawale Ramonu, BSc (Hons)

Economics and Management

Thesis title

The impact of university education on Nigerian youths and its effect on poverty

Objectives of thesis

The research questions are:

What is the influence of university education on Nigerian youths and their impact on economic development?

What are the effects of university policies on the educational system in Nigeria?

Methodology

The preparation of the thesis can be divided into several sub-steps. The titles of the chapters may be different, but they must meet their objectives in terms of content.

In the introduction, the author briefly introduces the topic and explains why the topic is relevant for processing.

In the following chapter, entitled "Objectives", the author specifies the research question, the aim of the work and the hypotheses associated with the processing of the work. At the same time, he explains the potential contribution of his work to the current research or practical application.

The creation of a literary search will follow. This section will provide a detailed overview of the literature and the current state of knowledge, focusing on education and economic development. It will include a critical analysis of the most important studies, including the methods used, the results found and, where appropriate, the problematic points. Methodically, this part of the work will be the analysis of documents.

The literary search will provide a basis for the author to specify the methods used for the analytical part of the work. The chapter entitled "Methodology" will present in detail all the methods used; it will also include the source of the data, their description and the process of their preparation for the analysis.

In the next step (analytical part), the author applies the knowledge gained during the literature study to analyse the obtained data using the methods specified in the methodology. This part is a core component of the thesis. This part of the thesis will contain the analysis results and a comparison of the results with other authors focused on the same topic (discussion). This part may also contain recommendations for policy makers or other interested parties.

In the final part (Conclusion), the author will summarise his findings, mention the limitations of the research and indicate possible possibilities for further research.

The proposed extent of the thesis

60 – 80 pages

Keywords

Education, development, poverty, Nigeria, university, inequality

Recommended information sources

- Adejumo, O. O., Asongu, S. A. and Adejumo, A. V. (2021) 'Education enrolment rate vs employment rate: Implications for sustainable human capital development in Nigeria', *International Journal of Educational Development*. Elsevier Ltd, 83. doi: 10.1016/j.ijedudev.2021.102385.
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The Diploma Thesis Supervisor

doc. Ing. Irena Benešová, Ph.D.

Supervising department

Department of Economics

Electronic approval: 4. 9. 2023

prof. Ing. Lukáš Čechura, Ph.D.

Head of department

Electronic approval: 3. 11. 2023

doc. Ing. Tomáš Šubrt, Ph.D.

Dean

Prague on 18. 03. 2024

Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my master's thesis titled "The Impacts of University Education on Nigerian Youth and Its Effects on Poverty" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the master's thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on 31.03.2024

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The Impacts of University Education on Nigerian Youth and Its Effects on Poverty

Abstract

This study investigates the complex interactions between university education, youth development, and poverty in Nigeria. The findings of this study reveal that there is a positive correlation between government spending on university education and youth unemployment, indicating that the university education is experiencing challenges beyond funding. Similarly, the study finds that economic growth reduces poverty, although university education plays an insignificant positive role in influencing poverty and economic growth in the short run. There are several challenges impeding the effectiveness of the university education to alleviating poverty in Nigeria, and this study explores them through the theoretical and practical parts. The study, therefore, provides a foundation for future research and policymaking towards reforming the university education system and developing youth to drive economic growth and poverty reduction.

Keywords: University Education, Poverty, Youth, Economic Growth, and Unemployment.

Dopady vysokoškolského vzdělávání na nigerijskou mládež a její dopady na chudobu

Souhrn

Tato studie zkoumá komplexní interakce mezi univerzitním vzděláním, rozvojem mládeže a chudobou v Nigérii. Zjištění této studie odhalují, že existuje pozitivní korelace mezi vládními výdaji na univerzitní vzdělávání a nezaměstnaností mládeže, což naznačuje, že univerzitní vzdělávání čelí problémům, které přesahují financování. Podobně studie zjistila, že ekonomický růst snižuje chudobu, i když vysokoškolské vzdělání hraje v krátkodobém horizontu nevýznamnou pozitivní roli v ovlivňování chudoby a ekonomického růstu. V Nigérii existuje několik problémů, které brání efektivitě vysokoškolského vzdělávání při zmírňování chudoby, a tato studie je zkoumá prostřednictvím teoretické a praktické části. Studie proto poskytuje základ pro budoucí výzkum a tvorbu politik směřujících k reformě univerzitního vzdělávacího systému a rozvoji mládeže, aby byl motorem hospodářského růstu a snižování chudoby.

Klíčová slova: Vysokoškolské vzdělání, Chudoba, Mládež, Ekonomický růst a Nezaměstnanost.

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Glossary

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

ASUU – Academic Staff of University Union

NBS – National Bureau of Statistics

WDI – World Development Indicators

TETFUND – Tertiary Education Trust Fund

R & D – Research and Development

QS - Quacquarelli Symonds

1.0 Introduction

For decades, there has continued to be empirical arguments about the role education plays in a country's economic growth and development. Many of these studies have focused on the productivity aspects of education, whether education provides basis for productivity and economic development or not (Pavlova, 2014; Pillay, 2011; Pillay, 2010; Lutz et al., 2008). Similarly, there is a myriad of empirical evidence that the proportion of a country's population with improved education correlates with the levels of economic prosperity (Carneiro et al., 2011; Arcidiancono et al., 2010; Aghion et al., 2009). That is, the lower the level of education, the lower the level of economic prosperity. Similarly, a country with lower quality education may suffer slower economic development. Also, the question about the relationship between education and poverty reduction has widely been answered; that is, there exists a strong relationship between both concepts. There is a sort of empirical consensus that unemployment is a concept central to poverty and can be significantly solved through higher education attainment on a micro-level (Ukwueze & Nwosu, 2014). While university education is one of the most significant however underestimated tools for economic development and poverty reduction, its impacts on productivity and economic growth are existential in the developed world as they are inexplicably considered a luxury in the developing countries (Adebayo, 2012).

However, amidst growing unemployment rates in the country, especially after gaining university education, and the dwindling investments in university education, the quality of education and its relevance has significantly decline in Nigeria (Branch et al., 2021). Although the country still produces thousands of graduates annually, the value higher education in the country has been reduced dramatically due to growing unemployment, dwindling economic growth, bad policies and governance, and low investment in the tertiary education sector in Nigeria. This teething

problem of rising unemployment, emanating from the incongruity between labour market requirements and educational outputs, questions the value of higher education in improving youth development and further reducing poverty (Nnadozie et al., 2022). Therefore, the problem faced in Nigeria as regards the value of higher education, and its impacts on youth and poverty, raises the doubts that this study aims to provide empirical evidence to clear.

2.0 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Goal

This study focuses on exploring the realities of the Nigerian university education and its impacts on youth development and economic development. The study aims to find empirically proven relationship between higher education and poverty in Nigeria while also finding how relevant is the higher education. Similarly, the government intervention in higher education and its impact on the relevance, value, and impacts of university education in achieving improved economic growth.

2.2 Research Objectives

The key study objectives are the following:

1. To measure the influence of university education on Nigerian youths development as a factor of Economic growth
2. To analyse the effect of university education on poverty reduction in Nigeria.
3. To highlight the challenges faced by low-income university students during their course of study.

2.3 Research Questions

The following are the research questions for the thesis:

1. How does the university education in Nigeria affect youth development as a factor of the Nigerian economy growth between 2013-2022?
2. What are the effects of university education on poverty reduction in Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges affecting university education in Nigeria?

2.4 Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

H0: University education has no significant influence on Nigerian youths as a factor impacting economic development.

H1: University education has a significant influence on Nigerian youths as a factor impacting economic development.

Hypothesis 2

H0: University policies have no significant effects on the educational system in Nigeria.

H1: University policies have significant effects on the educational system in Nigeria.

3.0 Literature Review

The chapter two presents the critical evaluation of previous relevant studies, concepts, and perspectives around the impacts of the university education, youth development, and poverty, particularly in Nigeria. The chapter explores the historical context of the Nigerian university education, the impacts of university education on sustainable youth and national development, as well as shed light on perceived challenges faced by the university education.

3.1 Introduction to the Research Topic

Poverty, in Nigeria, is a serious socio-economic problem eating deep into the world's fifth most-populated country (Ucha, 2010). In Nigeria, the case of poverty can be likened to a paradox, meaning despite all the economic and wealth the country possesses, she is still faced with huge difficulties in her pursuit to alleviate poverty (Baje, 2022). Nigeria's poverty situation has continued to fluctuate; however, it has remained in the world's top ranks for decades. While less than 10% of the world's population are in extreme and abject poverty, 63%, about 133 million people of the Nigerian population experience multidimensional poverty (acute poverty and deprived health, education, income, and other core living standards indicator) (NBS, 2022) and about 44.7% of the country's populace live in extreme poverty in 2022 (Sasu, 2022). The implications of this high percentage of poverty (Figure 1) suggests that poverty incidence in the country is extremely high, despite the abundance of human and natural resources and her constant struggle through poverty reduction policies and strategies.

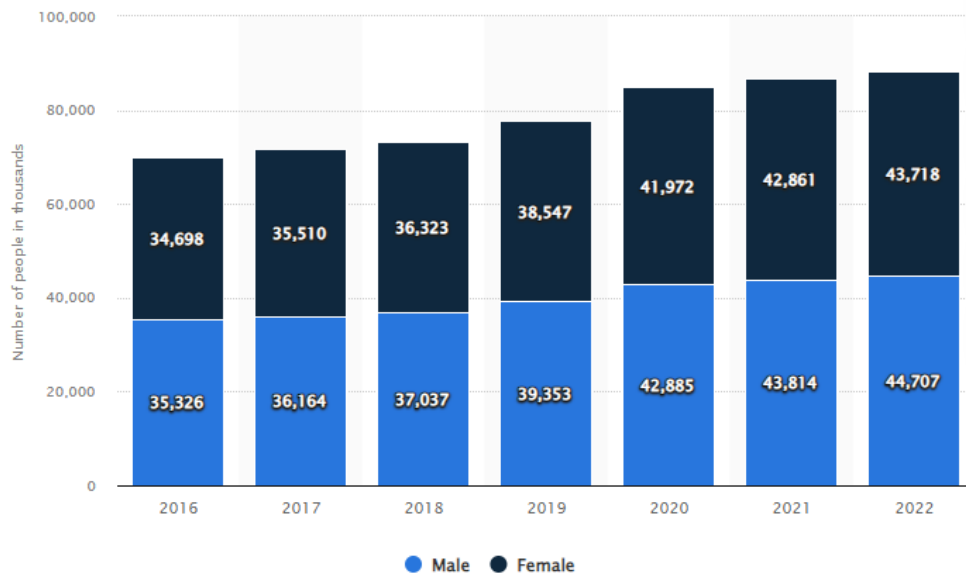


Figure 1. Poverty Rate by Gender (Sasu, 2022)

In Africa, with Nigeria inclusive, poverty follows the notion of vicious cycle (Figure 2) (Omar & Inaba, 2020); that is, people with low income and consumption level experience low levels of poverty-eradicating socio-economic opportunities; hence, they are bound to remain poor. Similarly, quality education, which has been seen as a tool for poverty eradication, has always been a challenge for the poor population; thus, compounding the difficulties in exiting the poverty line (Ozurumba et al., 2020).

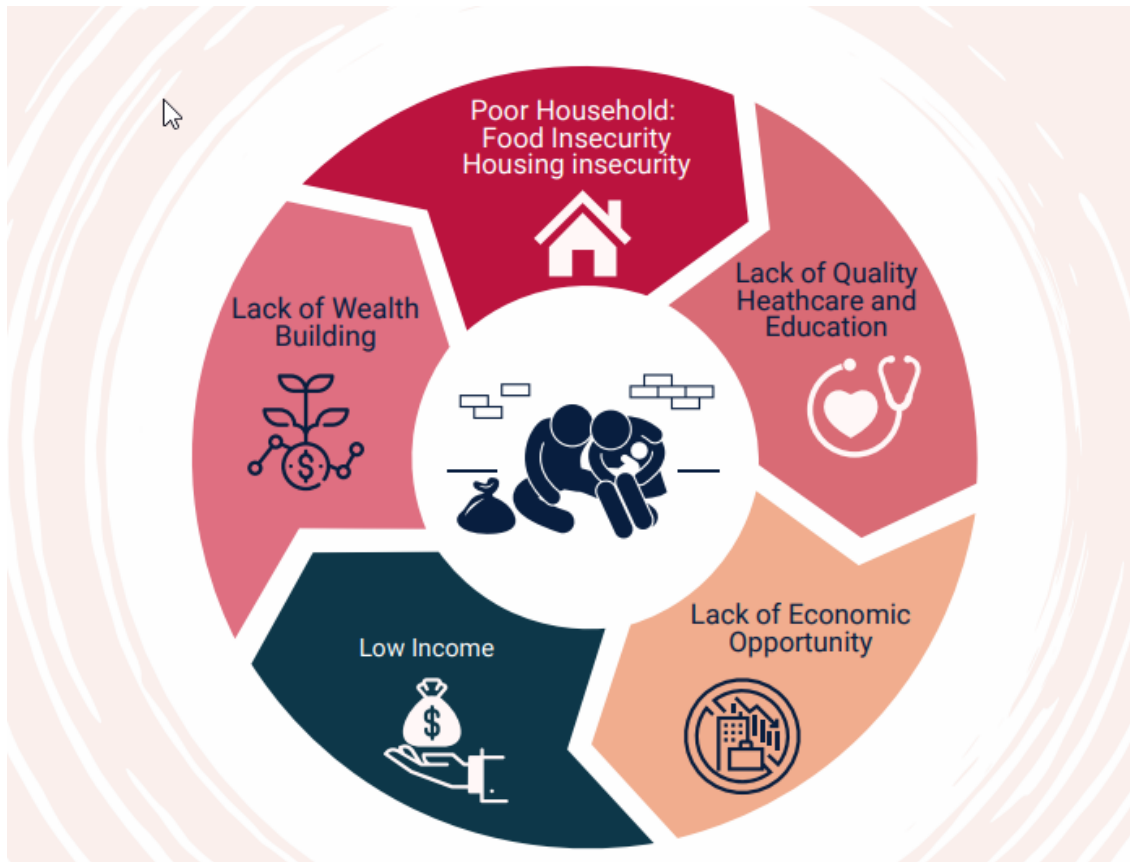


Figure 2. Vicious Cycle of Poverty (FIU Metropolitan Centre, 2022)

Undoubtedly, education is a fundamental human right; however, tertiary education is not (Marmolejo, 2016). It is a luxury that the government should make accessible and affordable enough to its citizens irrespective of their social class or status (King, 2011). Education, especially up till tertiary level, is viewed as a change agent, presenting a firm transition for the empowerment and transformation of a country's citizens (Grant, 2017). Education is an essential instrument for national development (Asmal, 2002). Similarly, education is an empowerment tool for the youth development and an important yardstick for sound social living. Education, according to Ukwueze & Nwosu (2014) and Sparreboom & Staneva (2014), is not typically a luxury but an essential part of life, providing required expertise to all sectors of the economy, including governance, education, health, private sector development, and the larger environment. The linkages between education

and economic development may not be too directly related; however, government has consistently invested in education as a strategy to reduce poverty in the long run (Adebayo, 2012). The investment in education enhances the human capital development through skills development and productivity enhancement among households (Woessmann, 2015). From a different perspective, poverty is also seen as a constraint to acquiring quality education and attaining educational heights that guarantees increased productivity and skills development, both at the micro-level (poor household find it difficult to acquire proper education) and the macro-level (poor countries experience lower investment in education and also enrolment) (Amzat, 2010). In the same vein, education has been instrumental in the confrontation of several socio-economic challenges such as poverty eradication, environmental degradation, and social dislocation (Okoli & Oranusi, 2011).

Since unemployment is central to poverty and university education is a major factor in job creation and employment in Nigeria, the connection between poverty and higher education can be established (Ukwueze & Nwosu, 2014); however, the impacts are first on young people, who are at the receiving ends of higher education and poverty (Ibrahim & Bitiyong, 2020). With a significant percentage of Nigerian population, 70% of them, are below the age of 30 (Figure 3) and categorised as an essential portion of the working population, the labour market, the power of the young people is recognised as the commonwealth of the nation. The youth of any country form a formidable force and cannot be neglected (Adebayo, 2012). Although the economic impacts of the youth are not well documented in the literature, their role in economic development and the direction a country paddles in terms of socio-economic growth cannot be overemphasised (Odoh & Okechukwu, 2014). However, youths in Africa, especially in Nigeria, share a greater proportion of the country's poverty (Anyawu, 2013).

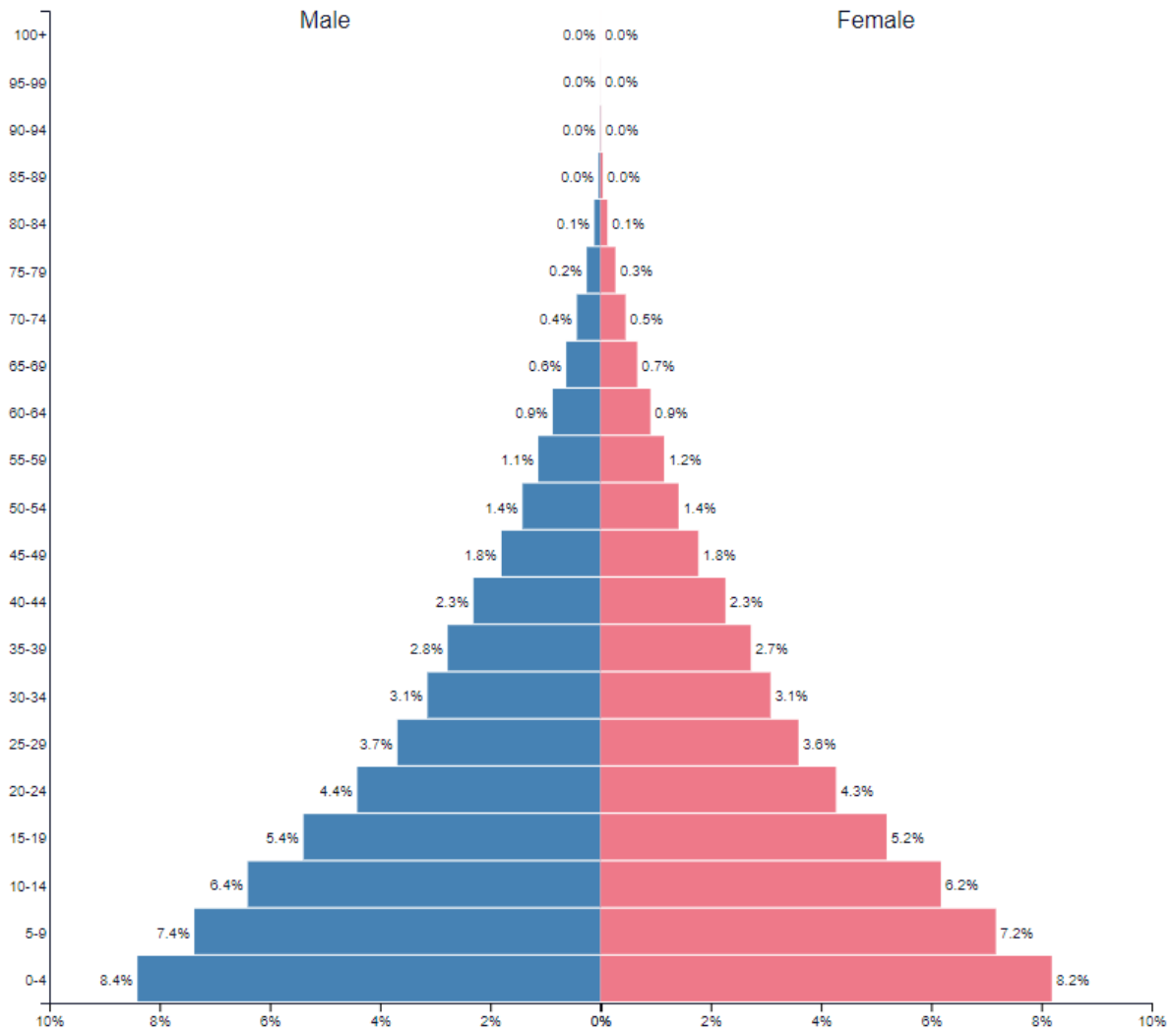


Figure 3. Nigeria Population Pyramid (Population Pyramid, 2023)

While lack of access to university education can be seen as the problem to some portion of the poor youth population, others are experiencing multidimensional pattern of poverty such as lack of access to economic support, unemployment, discrimination, and underemployment, and the lingering effects of bad governance and policies (De Salvo et al., 2021). The link between university education, youth development, and poverty persistence cannot be simply established, although there seem to be a direct cyclical link, which means these concepts and realities are causal factors and effects of one another. While university education improves and informs a youth to

take economic opportunities, improve productivity and reduce poverty, poverty restricts a great portion of youths meaning to attain such academic height of university education, causing more gap between the economic opportunities and developed youths to take advantages (Ukwueze & Nwosu, 2014).

Therefore, this study focus on how the university education impacts youth development as much as affect poverty eradication in Nigeria. While the links are not clearly established, this study offers a critical analysis of relevant concepts and empirical evidence to show the connection between university education, youth development, and poverty in Nigeria.

3.2 The Nigerian University Education Evolution

The early development of the Nigerian modern education can be attributed to the years between 1882 and 1929, when missionary activities and growth were at a high rate throughout the southern part of the country (Fafunwa, 1974; Maiyeri et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the northern regions of the country accepted the modern education less enthusiastically due to religious and political reasons, and the reality today is not entirely different (Maiyeri et al., 2021; Chukwunta, 1978). With the intervention of the colonial government, the first education legislative policy, the Nigerian Education Ordinance of 1887, was passed and implemented (Sulaiman, 2012). Also, the Elliot Commission on Higher Education in West Africa was established between 1943 and 1945 with the primary goal of reporting on the organisation and facilities of the existing higher education centres in British colonies in West Africa, while it makes recommendations for future development in the area (Maigida, 2018). Similarly, in 1920, the Phelps-Stoke Commission was established to review the need for indigenisation of western education.

Similarly, Ashby Commission was established at the core of Nigeria's independence, and its turn came in 1959 (Maigida, 2018). This commission's primary goal was to investigate Nigerian's

needs for the next twenty years regarding higher and postsecondary education. In the same vein, Asquith Commission was set up to consider the principles guiding the promotion of higher education, research and development, and learning in Nigerian universities. According to Maiyeri et al. (2021), the commission’s report recommended an establishment of a university college in Ibadan – the University College of Ibadan (Figure 4). It is noteworthy to state that Yaba Higher College has been established earlier 1934. This commission also laid the foundation for the establishment of the eastern region university (University of Nigeria, Nsukka) in 1959, the Western region’s University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in 1962, and the north’s University of Zaria. Other universities that were established as a result of the Ashby Commission include the University of Lagos and University of Benin (Adamu, 2010). These universities were the foremost, and set the structure for further establishment across other regions of the country. These establishments made sure the universities were present in the Western, Northern, and Eastern region of the country, to begin with.

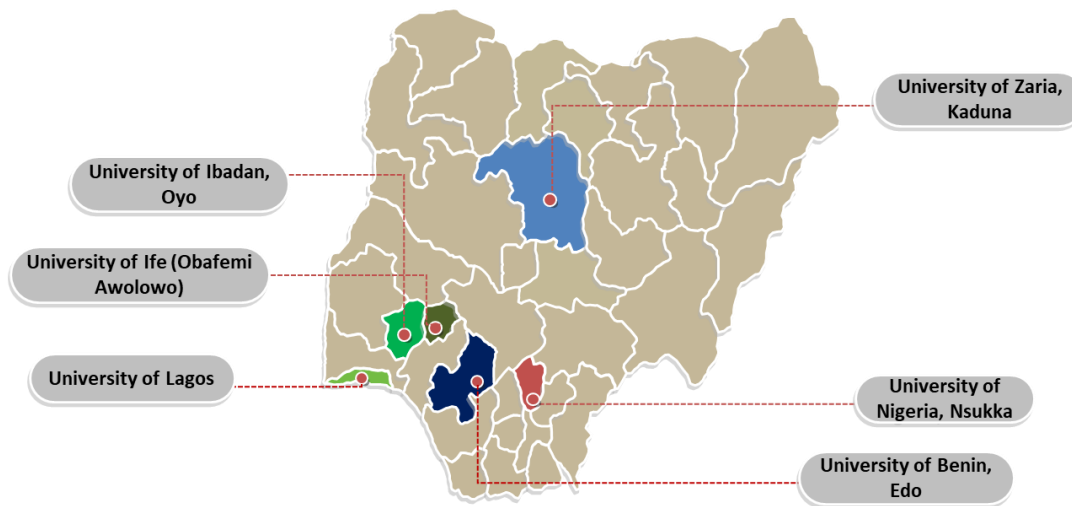


Figure 4. Map Illustrating Universities Established in 1960s (Author’s Compilation, 2023)

During this period, all the universities were closely supervised by the Nigerian government. Further in the 1970s, newer federal universities surfaced, including University of Ilorin, Calabar, Sokoto, Port Harcourt, Maiduguri, Jos, and Ado Bayero University of Kano (Figure 5).

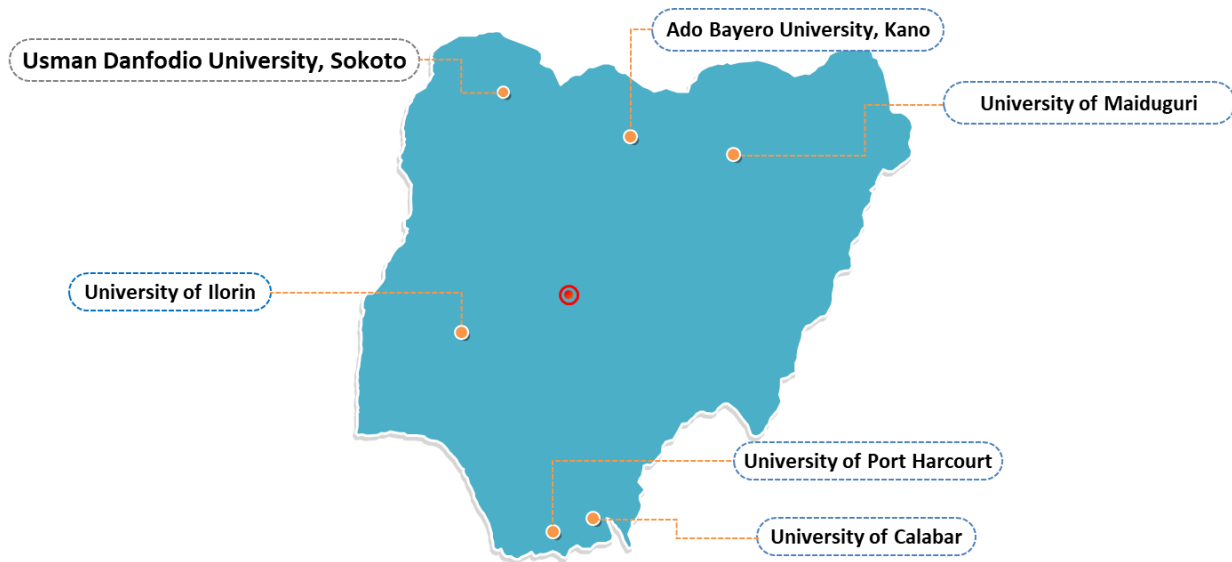
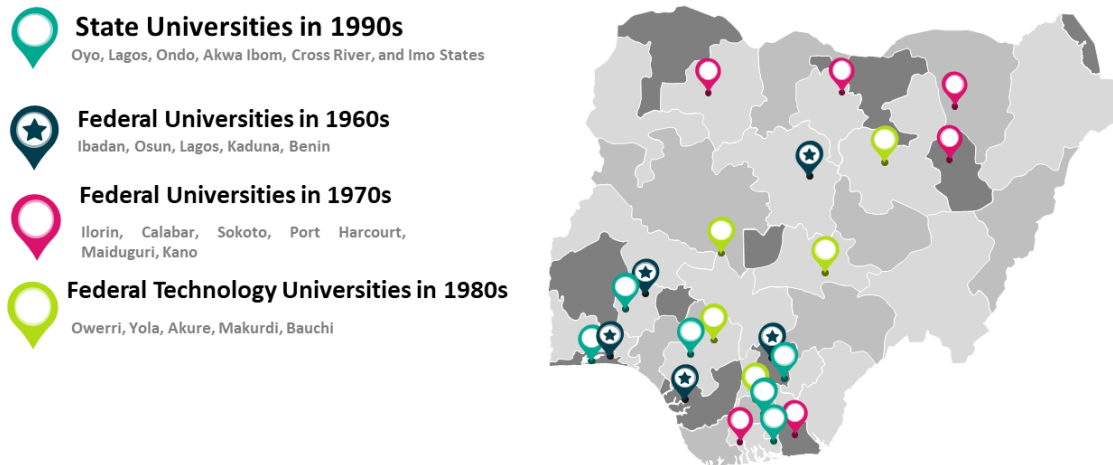


Figure 5. Second Generation of University Establishments in 1970s (Author's Compilation, 2023)

In the 1980s, federal universities of technology were established across several states in Nigeria (Figure 6), including Owerri, Yola, Akure, Makurdi, and Bauchi. Also, this period experienced the establishment of state universities in Oyo, Lagos, Ondo, Akwa-Ibom, Cross-River, and Imo states. Meanwhile, since 1990, the Nigerian university education experiences consistent influx in the establishment of private and state universities, open universities, and the upgrade of technical higher education institutions into universities (Maiyeri, 2021).



*Figure 6. First Establishments of Federal, States, and Federal Technology Universities in Nigeria
(Author's Compilation, 2023)*

3.2.1 The Nigerian Educational System

Education in Nigeria is largely a public affair with the high level of government active participation and dynamic intervention (Amaghionyeodiwe & Osinubi, 2006). According to the education policy in Nigeria, education is perceived by the national government as a tool to achieving national development (FRN, 2004). Since the fundamental discourse about education is its ability to drive socio-economic changes in the country, Nigerian government has continuously developed and evolutionalised education policies to see to the development of education and drive expected changes (Odukoya et al., 2018). Nigerian education policies have evolved, gearing towards individual and national efficiency, self-realisation, and national unity, among others. At the same times, these policies has emphasised investment in education to achieve social, economic, cultural, political, technological, and scientific development (Okoroma, 2006).

The structure of the Nigeria educational system, before 1984, was a 6-5-4 structure, translating to six in elementary school, five years in secondary school or teacher training college while university education takes a minimum of four years and a maximum of 7 years (Uwaifo & Uddin, 2009). However, since 1985, the Nigeria educational structure transformed into a 6-3-3-4 structure, with a two-year pre-primary education (kindergarten), a six-year primary education, six years secondary education split into two three years of junior and senior secondary education, and a minimum of four years of higher education (Lelei, 2019). In 2023, the educational system has been revitalised to a 9-3-4 system which translates to a nine-year basic education, with the inclusion of three years in junior secondary school, a three-year secondary education, and a minimum of four-year tertiary education (Uwaifo & Uddin, 2009).

Furthermore, the educational system in Nigeria has a sequence to its higher education levels. One of these sequences assumes that a university graduate must have passed through the NCE education. The other two sequences, which are more popular, assume that a university graduate only went through the secondary school and polytechnic before their admission into the university (Amaghionyeodiwe & Osinubi, 2006). These assumptions are grounded on experiences from the nation's workforce and the number of years used in each level of the tertiary education, placing a much significant value on the university, polytechnic, and NCE, in that chronology (Figure 7).

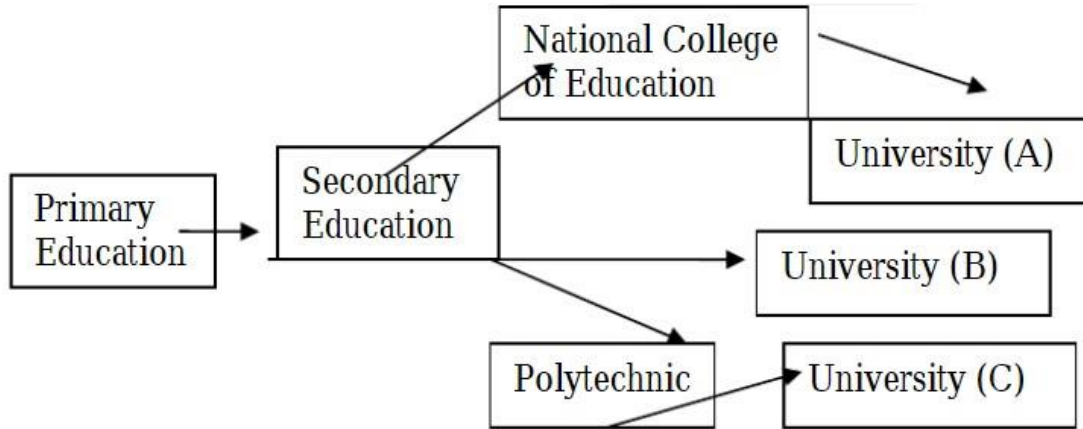


Figure 7. Possible Channels to Higher education in Nigeria (Amaghionyeodiwe & Osinubi, 2006)

Second, and as an alternative, there are various higher educational levels (Nigerian polytechnics and colleges of education) that one might pursue after completing secondary school (Figure 8).

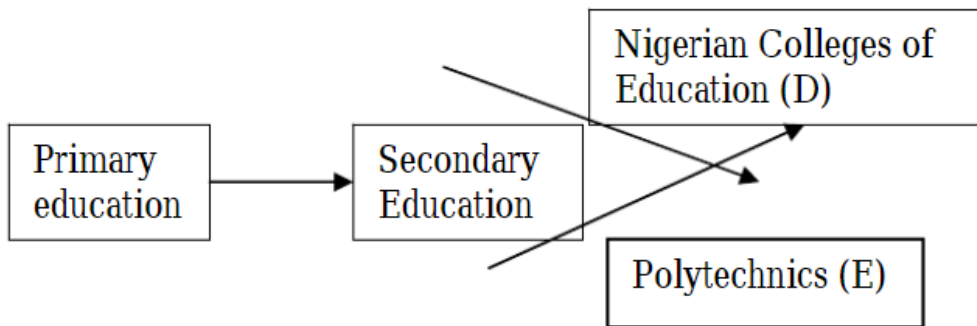


Figure 8. Alternative Routes to Tertiary Education (Amaghionyeodiwe & Osinubi, 2006)

3.3 Poverty and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria

With almost half of the poor people living in Sub Sahara Africa reside in Nigeria and four other countries – Ethiopia, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Madagascar (World Bank, 2020), Nigeria is regarded as one of the world’s poverty hub despite its richness in human capital, mineral resources, and innovative youths (World Bank, 2022), with a 40% poverty headcount rate

in 2019 (see Figure 9). Poverty in Nigeria is a widespread reality of lack in basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and others (Kolawole, 2021).

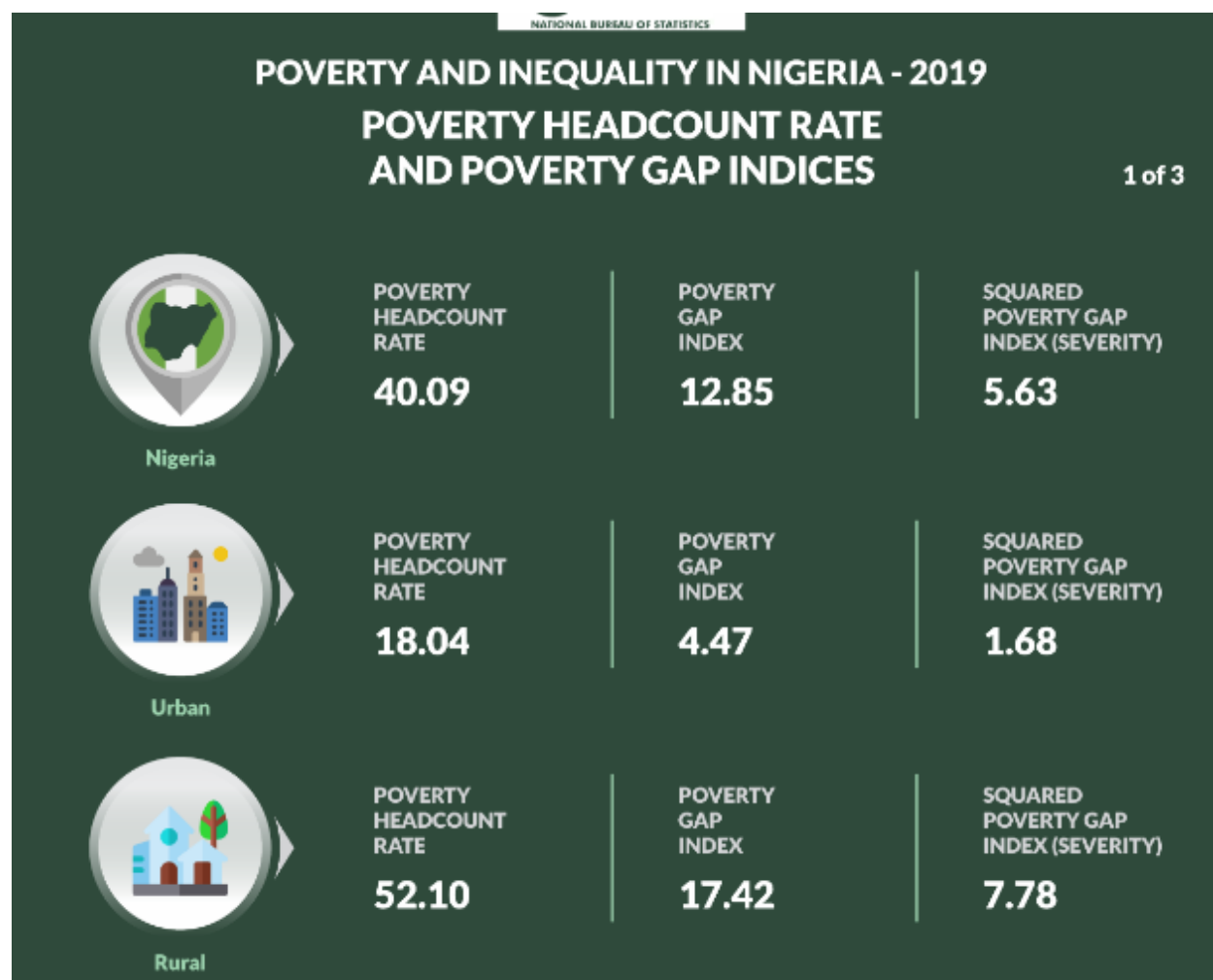


Figure 9. Poverty Headcount Rate and Gap Indices (NBS, 2020)

With several successive governments in Nigeria, the country has experienced a long list of policies and programmes targeted at reaching and meeting the special needs of the poorer and vulnerable population. For instance, National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), National Land Agricultural Development (NALDA), Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), and Green Revolution, focusing on increase food production and development of the rural economy

through agriculture and infrastructure (Akinyosoye, 2005), premised on the basis that healthy living, a bedrock for agile and productive population, is determined by the quality of food.

Other direct poverty alleviation schemes and plans include National Directorate of Employment, responsible for tackling unemployment through providing self-employment and empowerment as a means to self-sustain for youths and school leavers. Similar to this were the People's Bank, Community Bank and Small-Scale Business Industries Credit Scheme, and National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) directed to provide funding for small businesses with better repayment options (Akinlade et al., 2011). The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Family Advancement Economic Programme (FEAP), Family Support Programme (FSP), and National Economic Empowerment and Development Scheme (NEEDS) were directly involved in alleviating poverty through family support, direct incentives to families with lower socio-economic status poor families, and promotion of economic sustainability.

In spite of the multivarious programmes developed and adopted by the Federal Government of Nigeria and the regional leadership to alleviate poverty, Nigeria currently still ranks as one of the world's poverty hubs, with multidimensional poor population (Okoroafor & Nwaeze, 2013) (Figure 10). However, Preece (2006) argued that poverty is subjective, and as a concept and reality of people, education stands a chance in addressing the socio-economic issues associated with poverty. While sustainable development emphasises the importance of preservations of resources for the future generation as people of the present thrives to survive and make a living for themselves; however, the case in Nigeria is different. The youths are suffering from consequences of lack of sustainable allocation of resources and greediness of the older generation in the helms of political and economic affairs. Despite the myriad of poverty alleviation programmes, youths are still, in magnitude, on the streets seeking jobs and causing social unrest due to lack of

employment (Okoroafor & Nwaeze, 2013). Many amidst the poverty alleviation programmes developed and implemented in Nigeria did not achieve the ultimate goal of alleviating poverty before every presidential tenure expiration due to continued changes in government and policies (Olagunju, 2020).

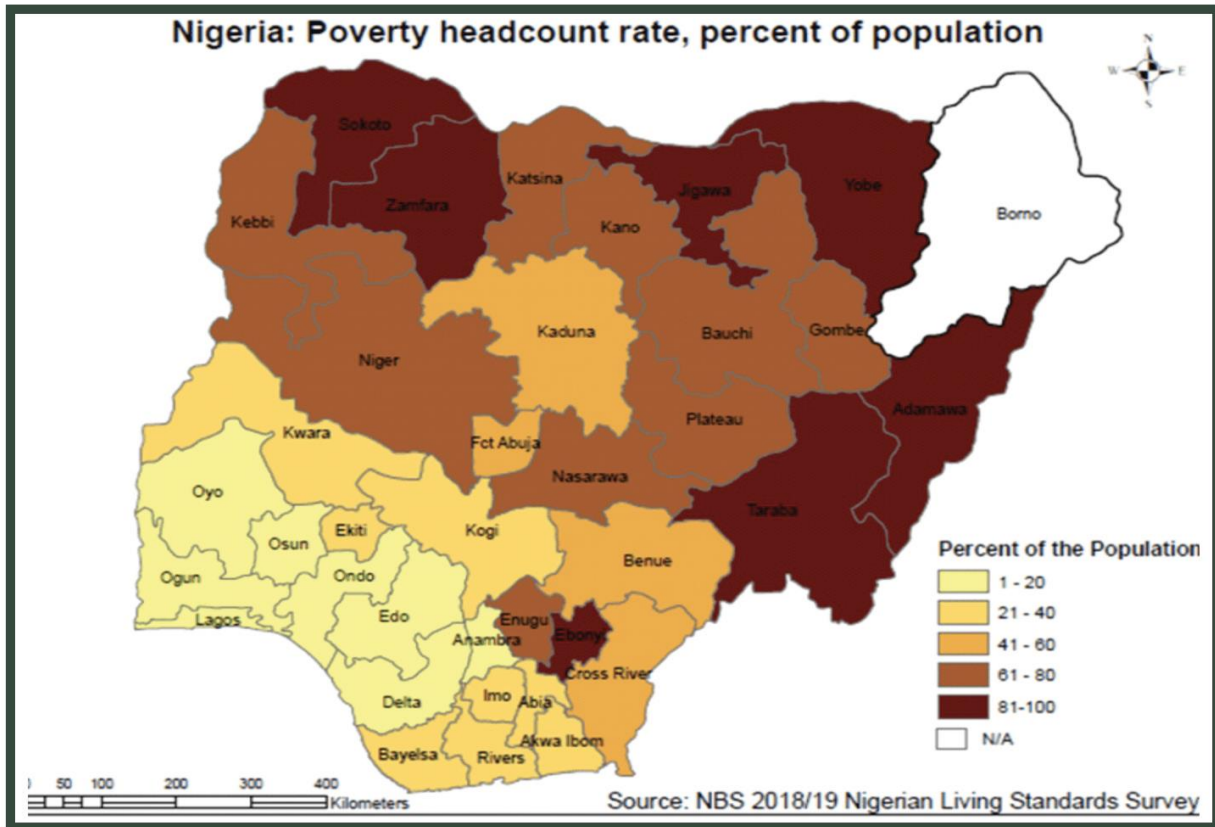


Figure 10. Poverty Headcount Rate, percentage of the population (NBS, 2019)

3.4 The University Education and Youth Development

Youth empowerment is an ongoing process of human growth and development; a framework for youth that focuses on their capacities, strengths and developmental needs (Edginton & deOlivera, 1995). According to the United Nations (2020), youth development promotes greater participation and involvement of youth in the socioeconomic and public affairs of the community. Through

empowerment, youths are provided with opportunities to develop the competencies they need to become successful contributors to their communities (Odoh & Innocent, 2014; Pittman & Wright, 1991). As Okoli and Oranusi (2007) explain, the youth constitutes a formidable force in every society. Similarly, the Nigerian youth is perceived to be industrious, ambitious, and promising, as well as most vulnerable due to the rapid changes they experience (Uzoma et al., 2016). It is widely believed that the activities of the youth have ripple effects of national and social development in any nation.

According to theory of human capital development, education is seen as a tool that develops and improves individual's productive capacities (Almendarez, 2011). Education is recognised as the foundation for national development across the globe since it is the force driving the socio-economic development through the development of human capital, who serves a controller and manager of other economic factors (Nwosu, 2016). In the same way, Adesina (1985) describes education as an integrative tool for the youth to effectively blend into the society as self-realised, and in turn, develop the national consciousness, strive for economic, social, cultural, scientific, technological breakthroughs while promoting unity in national and global spaces. Education, when acquire by young people, the society is blessed with youths who think innovatively, and usher in new developments that are beneficial to their respective countries and the globe. This is in line with the claims of Al-Qudah (2006), stating that a successful development a nation's youth is the bedrock of a prosperous future and failure to ensure youth development through education may drive a nation to its imminent doom. Thus, as much as education is important to the development of the young people, it serves similar role in promoting socio-cultural development of any society. Ekpo and Is'haq (2011) view university education as a weapon for the youth to acquire necessary skills, competence, and knowledge to thrive in an ever-changing and challenging world.

According to Ofor-Douglas (2022), one of the finest strategies to increase young empowerment may be achieved through high-quality university education. In a similar vein, Ololube (2007) suggested that a university education aids in a person's development of personality as a person, acquisition of skills and professional abilities for life endeavours, development of the proper types of attitudes, understanding, concepts, and values, and being a productive member of his or her society. Therefore, it is thought that youth empowerment is assured with the implementation of high-quality university education (Obanya, 2002; Amedeker, 2005; Onuselogu, 2008). Unfortunately, there are several problems with university education in Nigeria that lower quality and prevent young empowerment. Some of these issues affecting the higher education in the country includes inadequate financing, brain drains, lack of infrastructure, and the socio-economic status of citizens (Asiyai, 2013).

Moreso, Ekpiken and Ukpabio (2015) explain that young people enrolled in higher education are the major leaders, decision-makers, and members of society in the future. Therefore, college and university students must acquire the knowledge and abilities necessary to function in a more globally interconnected society and a market that prioritises sustainability (Nyoni, 2009). It takes particular abilities and competencies related to anticipatory thinking, systems thinking, diversity, strategic management and action, emotional intelligence, and normative aspects (Ploum et al., 2018; Wiek et al., 2011), as well as the ability to tolerate frustration (Rieckmann 2012) and deal with uncertainty (Tauritz, 2012), to deal with the increasing complexity and uncertainty of global issues, which are frequently referred to as "super wicked problems" (Levin et al., 2012). Therefore, the university serves as an avenue to instil relevant skills that promote sustainable development among young people, directly and indirectly impacting global and national economy issues. To this end, the educational experiences of young people, according to Okpete (2005) must be

conducive and effective in order to promote the full individual development, adequate inculcation of knowledge, behaviours, attitudes, and professional skills, and individual personality development that are useful in advancing the economic and social progress.

3.5 The Impacts of University Education on Sustainable National Development and Poverty

The potential for higher education to support development is rather high (Owens, 2017; Boni and Walker, 2016; McCowan, 2016, 2019; Oketch et al., 2014; Castells, 1994). Higher education institutions have been crucial to society throughout history because they have trained the elite and produced ground-breaking discoveries in the humanities and sciences. The potential for higher education to contribute to societal progress has increased as university enrolment has expanded beyond the elite. Universities train people to be activists, teachers, physicians, engineers, philosophers, attorneys, politicians, citizens, and artists in order to promote the growth of inclusive, just, and peaceful communities. Universities can carry out fundamental and applied research to advance our comprehension of life and provide useful uses for scientific knowledge (Owens, 2017).

Similarly, a higher standard of education results in better life outcomes and benefits the community as a whole (Samuel & Wale-Odunaiya, 2021). This improved self-awareness translates into more efficient working methods, creative talents, and progressively develops entrepreneurial qualities that ultimately result in faster technological advancement. The goal of all of these is to raise educated people's earning potential and lessen poverty and the propensity toward economic disparity. Reducing poverty and income disparity has been shown to be an excellent method to boost economic growth (Tabassum & Majeed, 2008; Lahouij, 2017). Education serves as the centre, which all economic and social development revolves around since it is linked to boosting labour efficiency, enhancing the productive potential, and earning power of the educated. In line

with this, Edeh et al. (2018), discover that the government spending on education does not significantly reduce poverty in Nigeria; however, an additional year of education per child reduces the chances of falling under the poverty bracket. While the connection between education and poverty was established, the impact of higher education was not explored.

Higher education is widely recognised to educate young people for their future roles in society, either as citizens, consumers, professionals, or entrepreneurs (Lambrechts et al., 2013; Cortese, 2003). The academic field of higher education for sustainable development is frequently defined by defining and conceptualising skills (Rieckmann, 2012; Wiek et al., 2011; Barth et al., 2007). A competency, according to Rychen and Salganik (2003), is the ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context through the mobilisation of psychological prerequisites (including both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects). As a result, the competence definition encompasses skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values (Baethge et al. 2006; Rychen & Salganik 2003). Thus, the role of university education in fostering sustainable national development is rooted in its ability to generate competent young capable of addressing the world's and individual nations' complicated requirements.

Several competence frameworks comprised of individual sustainability and development competencies have been explored by researchers (Ploum, 2018; Rieckmann, 2012; Wiek et al., 2011; Barth et al., 2007; de Haan, 2006), but many of these frameworks were criticised as ordinary, lacking holistic integration of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes (Lambrechts & Van Petegem, 2016; Wiek et al., 2011). Wiek et al. (2011) provide a framework of "sustainability research and problem-solving competence," which contains five important skills for sustainable development: systems-thinking competence, anticipatory competence, normative competence, strategic competence, and interpersonal competence. Several more competency frameworks

(Rieckmann, 2012, offering twelve competencies) and conceptual modifications (e.g., Ploum et al., 2018, presenting six competencies; Perez et al., 2018, examining the role of intervention competence) have been offered ever since.

The study of Chankseliani et al. (2021) provides an understanding of the contribution of higher education in development in terms of essentialist and anti-essentialist viewpoints, based on a growing body of research on how university-based teaching and research could assist accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Essentialism distinguishes between essence and accident by considering certain aspects of a situation or happening to be essential and others to be non-essentials (Yablo 2016; Ellis, 2002). In the essentialist paradigm, society's modernisation and the increase of human capital are viewed as essential components of progress. As a result, in the essentialist understanding of the relationship that exists between higher education and development, universities' contributions to the development of human capital and the upgrading of societies are classified as essentials (Chankseliani et al., 2021). The anti-essentialist viewpoint, on the other hand, is "amoeba-like" (Ziai, 2004); it makes no explicit assumptions about the linkages between development and higher education. As a result, varied ideas on how universities have the potentials to assist people's knowledge and that of the society at large to understand their human rights and seek the form of freedom they value, which can be incorporated into the anti-essentialist framework. This can occasionally entail higher education's potential to free bodies and minds, which in turn can free whole societies. Because the essentialist and anti-essentialist conceptions of development are mutually reinforcing, a full understanding of university contributions to development would take into account both viewpoints on this important but empirically ambiguous connection (Chankseliani et al., 2021).

University education operates in a heterogeneous way and serves broader purposes within the international, national, and local jurisdictions (glonacal). In the national jurisdictions, the purpose of university education is to develop the nation in itself while it has no specific purpose on the global space; however, universities, on their own, are their own purposes – to offer empowerment and education and develop itself to accommodate and produce graduates who forge ahead to contribute to national, local, and international development. The glonacal analytical framework, employed by Chankseliani et al. (2021) in their study, experimentally connects and distinguishes the missions and roles of the university in the international, regional, and local landscape, establishing the role of university education and providing comprehensive insights on how it contributes to development. Since the United Nations expanded its global goals for sustainable development, particularly in the area of education, to include higher education, international bodies and dimension have begun to recognise the importance of university education, which before then, is missing in the global development goals, evident in the Millenium Development Goals and Education for All. While the sustainable development goals (SDGs) encompass robust global objectives targeting improvements in areas such as the environment, socio-economy, and technology, one of the objectives of SDGs -goal 4 – is focused on access to education, emphasising the importance of equal and inclusive access to quality education and the advancement of learning opportunities of a lifetime for every individual. One of the main assumptions of Chankseliani et al. (2015) study was that university education plays a more active role in reaching the SDGs as an institution promoting the achievement of goals on broader level.

3.6 The Nexus: University Education, Youth, and Poverty

3.6.1 University Education as a Tool for Poverty Alleviation

University education is viewed as an asset that may be measured as wealth (e.g., capital, labour, social welfare assistance) in addition to being a tool for reducing poverty (in the sense of raising productivity and earnings). According to the World Bank (1995) education helps to alleviate poverty by raising the productivity of the impoverished, lowering fertility, enhancing health, and providing the necessary skills for full participation in the economy and society.

Human development guarantees proper human capacity building and the development of people's self-reliance; hence, investment in humans enhances growth and promotes employment for dynamic engagement in social, cultural, and productive activities (Arimah, 2001). Hence, education is recognised as the "par excellence" instrument for effective national development in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). This phrase implies that education is a powerful instrument that can be utilised to solve the majority of a nation's issues. Effective educational administration requires, among other things, that education at all three levels meet its set goals. According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004). The effective management of education is reflected when students become literate, trained in crafts and trades, prepared for university education where vocational, technical, and other relevant skills for employment, self-employment, and research.

In the absence of a robust and excellent higher education system in place, countries cannot thrive. Long-standing misconceptions exist regarding the contribution of higher education to sustainable development. The reason why poverty reduction efforts in higher education, at all levels, are still failing is a lack of sufficient and ongoing funding. While it is challenging to continue the task of developing stable, high-quality higher education institutions in all nations, it should be evident

why poverty cannot be eradicated without the advantages of higher education (Ramphela, 2003). In the past, higher education has aided in development by giving economies the human resources they need, but it has come under fire for failing to address the root causes of poverty (Ramphela, 2003). Increasing economic production and people's earning potential both depend on education. According to Vener (2004), greater worker education results in higher-value production, which is essential for both economic expansion and the decrease of poverty. It is well recognised that education not only improves human capital but also builds social capital since it may foster social cohesiveness and the transmission of cultural themes. The advantages to the people who receive the investment are more immediate, even though the investment in education has a slow and favourable impact on economic growth (Vener, 2004).

3.6..2 The Transformative Power of Education: A Path to Poverty reduction and Sustainable Growth

According to Ferreira et al. (1998), another poverty research conducted in Brazil in 1996, a household's likelihood of experiencing poverty was largely determined by its level of education. An additional factor contributing to poverty is age, size of family, race, and rural residence. Economists have talked a lot about the connection between education and reducing poverty. Everything they have discussed has led to the same conclusion: education lessens poverty. Education is crucial to a person's growth. Additionally, it guarantees the growth of families, local and national communities, and the global community. In addition to being universally beneficial for gender equality, poverty reduction, and hunger eradication, education also improves health. Thus, advancement in other social sectors is both a prerequisite for and an effect of higher levels of more pertinent learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2012).

Earnings between individuals with bachelor's degrees or above and those who drop out typically differ significantly, and this difference in income translates into radically different opportunities

and resources for the children growing up in these families (Carnevale, 2012). It is widely acknowledged and reasonably evident that education and training have both short- and long-term consequences on life-course patterns, at least with regard to an individual's career and (life) earnings.

3.6.3 Empowering Youth: Navigating Challenges in Pursuit of Growth and Stability

In general, youth empowerment has been expanding quickly, since the youth now make up around 60% of our communities' overall population. Eliminating unemployment, lack of information access, poor education levels, susceptibility to HIV and AIDS, lack of engagement in governance, and human rights concerns via effective youth empowerment leads to growth and peace building in our nations while security is guaranteed. When young people are denied the opportunity to contribute to the nation's development and peace-building efforts, they become more prone to violence because they are divided and marginalised (Okeke & Emenalo, 2010). The current sociopolitical violence in various areas of Nigeria serves as evidence of this developing paradigm (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2021). The rise in unemployment, specifically among the young people, gives rise to the uncertainty surrounding youth empowerment in Nigeria. The lack of a decent living, opportunities, coupled with unemployment, among young people in Nigeria has become a cogent issue plaguing the achievement of sustainable development of communities across the country. Although the recent clamour for youth empowerment has shown positive development among youths (Abdullahi et al., 2022); hence, youths are becoming to realise that there is a need to acquire required skills to lead a decent life and be able to live independently and make free choices.

The uncertainty that beclouds the self-development of youths is explained in a study by ESTO and RWFO (2014) in a different cultural background. In Rwanda, underemployed and unmarried

young males make up a large portion of the labour force. The young people are rather anxious about how they will be able to settle down in life as a result of this. In Nicaragua, there is a high percentage of female maltreatment, school dropout rates, and job market possibilities that are constrained. Violence occurs in families on a social level. The other E-9 nations—Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and Pakistan—have subpar educational systems and uncertain employment prospects in the wake of obtaining a completion certificate.

In every way, Sub-Saharan Africa has the most challenges when it comes to youth education. The region's educational status is made worse by a number of variables, including significant population growth, natural catastrophes, armed conflicts, diminishing per capita income, and mounting foreign debt. There are 108.4 million forcibly displaced people across the world, and 35.3 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2022), and only 3% of them are enrolled in a higher education, and have access to completing their education to the degree they had desired (Martin & Stulgaitis, 2022). There is no denying the detrimental consequences of poverty on young people. For example, the young people are unruly, they succumb to the pressure of their peer groups, they encourage cults, and they intimidate the general public by shooting and abduction. The scenario in Nigeria, where young people are joining terrorist organisations, kidnapping people at random, and holding them captive until a large ransom is paid, is a prime example. They have recently taken to murdering everyone who tries to stop them. These young people are responding to the conditions of poverty—underemployment, unemployment, illiteracy, etc.—that they have been thrust into.

3.7 Challenges of the Nigerian University Education

The Nigerian university education is yet to operate at its optimal level due to series of problems peculiar to its operations, guiding policies, and institutional bottlenecks. These challenges are multifaceted and may impact the quality of education offered in these academic institutions.

Similarly, these challenges play a significant role in slowing down national development through inadequate human capital development. According to Udida et al. (2009), one of the problems facing the Nigerian university education is lack of funding. The decreasing amount of public finance being allotted to higher education in Nigerian endangers the development of the educational system and par excellent human capital development, despite the increasing demand for and rising costs of university education. The higher education institution's expansion and work performance are impacted by the inability to receive adequate funding. Without proper finance, higher education institutions cannot function at their best (Odigwe & Owan, 2019). This situation necessitates greater financial initiative from the government and educational players in order to maintain the pace and expansion of the education sector. The performance and sustainability of higher education are adversely affected by the Nigerian government's incapacity to impartially adopt and execute the UNESCO-recommended 26% financing formula for education (Odigwe & Owan, 2019; Eme & Ike, 2017). As a result, it is now clear that Nigeria's disregard for the financing formula has a negative impact on the growth goals and performance of university education, as excellent performance is a vital component of the educational system. Because of this negligence, there are now significant issues affecting all higher education systems, since effective teaching, research, and service are no longer being conducted (Ebi & Ubi, 2017). According to Akinola (1999), the Nigerian higher institution education systems are in dire need of money to cater for both their capital and recurrent needs. For a few years prior, the federal government had been reducing the budget annually (Figure 11). Lack of funding for university education in Nigeria is as a result of several causes, including inadequate financial planning, a lack of political will to support higher education, corruption, and a decline in national revenue (Odedeji et al., 2023).

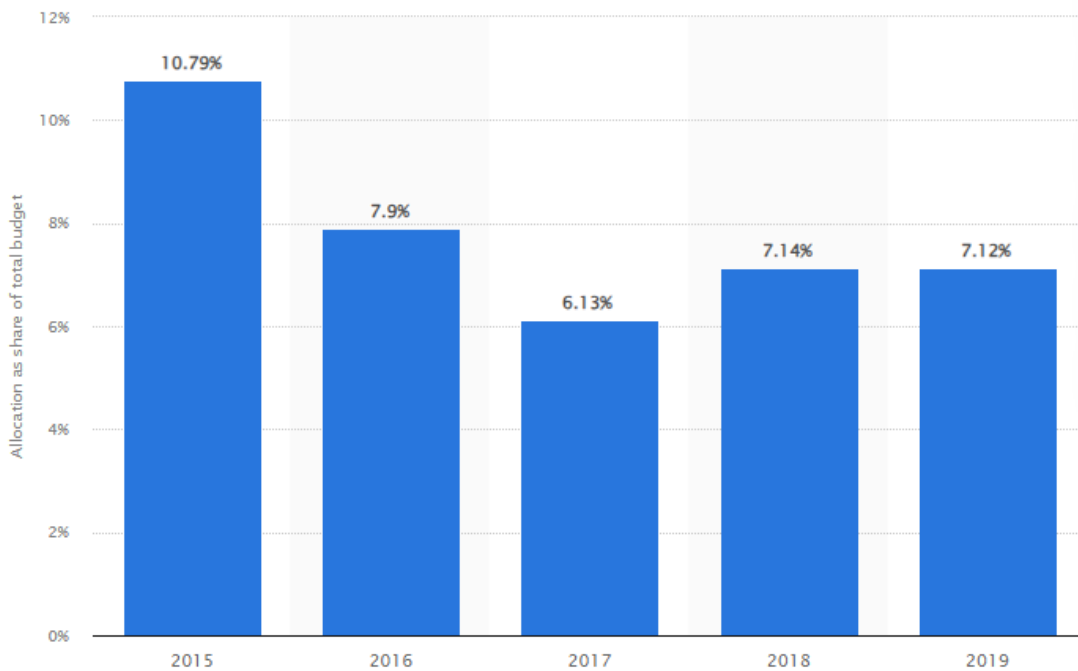


Figure 11. Government Expenditure on Higher Education % of GDP (Statista, 2022)

Similarly, the absence of proper infrastructure in Nigerian universities has caused major setbacks in the attainment of higher education goals, according to Udida et al. (2009). In an establishment without sufficient classrooms, staff rooms, resource rooms, lab equipment, computers, and similar amenities, effective and efficient teaching and learning cannot take place. Ogunode (2020) stated that one of the biggest issues facing the management of Nigeria's public institutions is a lack of suitable infrastructure. Facilities that support the provision of academic and non-academic services at educational institutions are referred to as structural facilities. Libraries, labs, meeting spaces, offices, administrative buildings, dormitories, road infrastructure, water and energy supplies, and the internet are infrastructures that facilitate effective learning environment (Subair et al., 2012); however, a large number of Nigerian public institutions lack sufficient structures and facilities for both students and faculty (Ogunode & Adamu, 2021). Salisu (2001) found that there is a considerable difference between students' academic performance in institutions with appropriate

facilities and those with poor facilities. The performance of the system and its sustainability are threatened by the absence of suitable facilities or the resources to repair collapsing structures; as a result, education is somewhat suffering from poor standards (Daniel et al., 2019).

According to Ahaotu and Ogunode (2021), there are significant differences between Nigerian universities and their international counterparts, with one main obstacle for administrators of higher education in Nigeria being the lack of academic and non-academic employees. For example, Harvard University has a staff-to-student ratio of 1:4, Massachusetts Institute of Technology has a ratio of 1:9, and the University of Cambridge has a ratio of 1:3. According to Ogunode & Musa (2020) and NEEDS (2014), all Nigerian higher education institutions are grappling with a major issue of insufficient lecturers. There are not enough professors at many higher education institutions to staff all of the institutions for instruction. The majority of Nigeria's higher education institutions' subpar instruction is caused by a professor scarcity. Poor manpower planning, insufficient budget, corruption, and inadequate teaching institutions are the root causes of the shortage of human resources in Nigeria's higher education institutions.

It is well known that students in Nigerian universities are frequently subjected to industrial strikes carried out by their respective academic and non-academic staff unions. This was noted by Okoli et al. (2016). The impasse that typically interrupts the academic calendar is caused by the government and unions' disagreement or lack of understanding stemming from the non-implementation of the agreement struck. Long-term suspension of academic activities resulted in a decline in student's academic proficiency and general development as youths. Most of the time, this makes students more interested in certifications than in knowledge. Different forms of strike action at Nigeria's higher education institutions can be attributed to a number of issues, including poor agreement execution, insufficient finance, and weak negotiation abilities. Furthermore,

student riots and other problems lead to strikes or the temporary closure of universities, endangering the stability of these establishments and negatively impacting the general performance of both staff and students as well as the output of these universities.

Furthermore, Ogunode (2020) highlights the brain-drain issue as another issue impeding the efficient management and ultimate outcomes of university educational system in Nigeria. Brain-drain, described as the exodus of experts seeking better employment opportunities in affluent nations from underdeveloped ones, has become a rising situation in the universities educational system as professors and researchers are being lured from public universities to other nations with better employment offer. According to Tribuneonline (2020), the president of Academic Staff of University Union (ASUU), which oversees all academic employees of Nigerian universities, stated that a significant number of Nigerian university lecturers and professors are already employed in South Africa, Ghana, Egypt, and other countries. Ethiopia has already hired almost a thousand professors from the country and more than 3,000 Nigerians, the majority of whom were professionals excelling in their chosen fields, were said to be residing in Ethiopia. According to Ogunode (2020), academic personnel is crucial to the execution of university programs and youth empowerment through education, hence their widespread departure from Nigerian public institutions is having an impact on the level of education imparted in students. Ogunode and Abubakar (2020) maintain that the brain drain issue in Nigerian universities factors such as low motivation, an unfavourable work environment, insecurity, inadequate financing, and political meddling. Similarly, Akinwale et al. (2023) concluded that the implications of brain-drain in Nigerian universities include a high student-teacher ratio, a lack of lecturers, and subpar instruction. Furthermore, the brain drain seems to be a common occurrence in Nigeria when academic talent leaves the educational sector for other fields due to political or economic motives.

4.0 Research Methodology

4.1 Research Philosophy

This research project combines positivism and rationalism as its research philosophy. The choice of these perspectives is crucial to establish a foundation, for the study ensuring objectivity and enabling an exploration of the cause-and-effect relationships between university education, the Nigerian youth, and poverty.

One of the reasons for selecting positivism as a research philosophy is its focus on empirical observation, quantification, and systematic data analysis (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). This aligns well with the objective of this study, which aims to identify and measure the impacts of education on Nigerian youth in relation to reducing poverty. By adopting an approach this research aims to uncover patterns and correlations between achieving higher education and reducing poverty. This will lead to conclusions that are based on evidence and empirical findings.

Additionally using positivism allows for the application of research methods such as surveys, statistical analysis, and experiments (Park, Konge, and Artino, 2019). These methods enable the collection of data that can be objectively analysed and interpreted to gain insights, into how higher education affects poverty among Nigerian youth. By adhering to the principles of positivism this study strives to overcome bias and subjectivity in order to ensure valid findings.

Moreover, the research project includes rationalism as a research philosophy to improve our comprehension of the underlying mechanisms and causal factors that connect university education with the reduction of poverty. Rationalism highlights the significance of using reason and logical deduction to gain knowledge and understand phenomena (Shah et al., 2020). In the context of this

study, rationalism will assist in the formulation of theoretical frameworks and a-priori expectations that explain how university education impacts poverty.

By employing rationalist principles, this research seeks to uncover the underlying theoretical concepts and logical structures (Markie and Folescu, 2023) that explain why higher education has the potential to affect the socio-economic status of Nigerian youth and subsequently impact poverty levels. Through this approach, the study aims to contribute to a deeper comprehension of the processes through which university education can be utilised as an effective tool in poverty reduction strategies.

In conclusion, the choice of positivism and rationalism as the research philosophy for this study is a fair and thorough examination of the effects of higher education on Nigerian youth and their relationship to poverty. This study seeks to provide insightful understandings into the connection between higher education and poverty by incorporating empirical observation, rigorous data analysis, and logical deduction, ultimately assisting Nigerian attempts at social development and evidence-based governance.

4.2 Research Design

While it is widely accepted that qualitative research designs are fit for establishing theories (Mohajan, 2018), quantitative research maintains its efficiency in testing hypotheses and previously existing theories while establishing new knowledge and explorations of those scholarly claims (Grant and Osanloo, 2014). Quantitative research concerns itself with the objective measurement of data through numerical computations. It is a systematic approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation in order to understand, test, predict, and describe social phenomena (Ahmad et al., 2019). With statistical techniques and quantifiable variables, research outcomes are more likely to be reliable since it is free from subjective judgements (Mohajan,

2020). Therefore, research results are a reflection of the data gathered and analysed, irrespective of the results' alignment with preconceived theory. The efficiency, speed, and reliability of quantitative studies make it an attractive design of research (Rahman, 2017). In line with the philosophical basis which this study is built upon, quantitative research allows for objective investigation with human intervention in the process. Hence, this study employs a quantitative approach to explore the impacts of university education on Nigerian youth and its consequences on poverty. The quantitative data and method adopted are well established in the sections that follow.

4.3 Method of Estimation

This research, firstly, conducted descriptive statistics, to find the data averages, the spread of averages, and the minimum and maximum data recorded for each variable during the period covered in the study. Additionally, a comparative analysis was conducted to evaluate evaluate the higher education and economic variables against those of Nigeria's peers – Ghana, South Africa, and Egypt. With a result showing that all variables are stationary at level, the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) estimation technique was employed to estimate relationship between variables. Here, correlation matrix evaluated the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable as well as relationship between each independent variable. The primary aim for the correlation analysis is to ascertain the relationship between every variable and check if their relationships are not too high to cause problems of multicollinearity for the regression analysis. Lastly, regression analysis was introduced to check the impacts of university education on Nigerian youth and the effects on poverty in Nigeria.

4.4 Data Requirements and Sources

Since the study adopts a secondary data collection to quantitatively analyse the impacts of higher education attainment on the Nigerian youth and its effect on poverty.. The necessary data were gathered from world development index and Nigeria's Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) websites. The research employs a time-series data, gathering relevant data for ten years to examine the most current effects of university education.

4.5 Model Specification

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the impact of tertiary education on Nigerian youth and its effect on poverty. While this study adopts a quantitative approach, the method of analysis employed is adapted from a number of previous literature (Ehigiamusoe, 2013; Machmud and Ahman, 2017; Bello and Roslan, 2010; Awan et al., 2011) who have explored the impacts of education on economic growth and youth development to explain poverty level. The following models were employed in an attempt to investigate the general influence tertiary education have on the Nigerian youth and its consequential effects on poverty in the country.

Youth Unemployment = f (Tertiary Expenditure, Researchers, Gross Expenditure on R & D, QS University Ranking Average Score, and GDP (2015 Constant))

Headcount Poverty = f (Tertiary Expenditure, Researchers, Gross Expenditure on R & D, QS University Ranking Average Score, and GDP (2015 Constant))

That is:

$$YouthUnemp = \alpha + \beta_1 InTerExpEdu + \beta_2 Research + \beta_3 GERD + \beta_4 QSRank + \beta_5 GDP + \mu$$

$$PovHeadCount = \alpha + \beta_1 InTerExpEdu + \beta_2 Research + \beta_3 GERD + \beta_4 QSRank + \beta_5 GDP + \mu$$

Where:

A is the intercept of the equation

$\beta_1 - \beta_5$ are the coefficients of the value of the variables and

μ is the error term

Hence, below is table 1, presenting the definition of variables and their sources.

Table 1. Variables, their Definitions and Sources

Variable	Description	Unit of Measure	Data Source
GDP	Gross Domestic Product at base-year (2015) is the Real GDP, referred to as constant-price GDP and it tells more about whether the economy is growing.	US Dollars (Billions)	World Development Indicator, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)
TerExpEdu	Tertiary education expenditure is the total amount of money spent by the government on tertiary education, which the university	US Dollars (Billions)	World Development Indicator and Nigeria's Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND)

	education takes a large proportion.		
Research	This is the level of research outputs by graduates and academicians in universities and other tertiary institutions	Index	World Development Indicator
GERD	The amount of government spending on research and development.	US Dollars (Millions)	World Development Indicator
QS Ranking	QS University Ranking is a portfolio of comparative world university and college rankings developed by Quacquarelli Symonds, a global higher education analytics firm.	Ranks	World Development Indicator
Unemployment Rate	This is the percentage of unemployed	Percentage	World Development Indicator

	population. That is, qualified citizens who seek but do not have job.		
Poverty Headcount	This is the percentage of citizens living below the poverty line in a country.		World Development Indicator

Source: Author’s Compilation, 2023.

A-Priori Expectations

This depicts the expectations about the estimated parameters based on previous studies or on common sense (where previous studies are disunited). The expected signs of the coefficient of the regressors are mathematically denoted as follows:

For Equation 1 (Youth Unemployment)

$\beta_1 < 0$: this is because ‘The coefficient is expected to be negative.

$B_2 < 0$: this is because with increased research, tertiary education should improve the level of employment; thus, reducing youth unemployment. The coefficient is expected to be negative. This is backed up by human capital theory which states that increased investment in education is an indicator for increased individual skills and productivity (Goldin, 2016).

$B_3 < 0$: this is because research and development is expected to improve the quality of tertiary education and economy; thus, the coefficient is expected to be negative.

$B_4 < 0$: this is because world ranking of university should imply an improvement in the educational system and employment rate; thus, the coefficient is expected to be negative.

$B_5 < 0$: this is because improved GDP should imply improvement in employment rate; therefore, the coefficient is expected to be negative.

For Equation 1 (Poverty Headcount)

$\beta_1 < 0$: this is because tertiary expenditure imply improvement to the tertiary education system and should imply decrease in poverty. The coefficient is expected to be negative.

$B_2 < 0$: this is because with increased research, tertiary education should improve the economy; thus, reducing youth unemployment. The coefficient is expected to be negative.

$B_3 < 0$: this is because research and development are expected to improve the quality of tertiary education and economy; thus, the coefficient is expected to be negative.

$B_4 < 0$: this is because world ranking of university should imply an improvement in the educational system and economy; thus, the coefficient is expected to be negative.

$B_5 < 0$: this is because improved GDP should imply reduction in poverty rate; therefore, the coefficient is expected to be negative.

5.0 Research Results

This section presents and analyses the data obtained from various statistical sources, which include the World Bank’s World Development Indicators (WDI). The chapter presents a regression analysis to examine **the impact of Higher Education on Nigerian Youth and Its Effect on Poverty in Nigeria**. To carry out this study, this research work begins with a summary statistics analysis, and then a correlation analysis is carried out before the regression analysis is ultimately used to examine how higher education impacts Nigerian youths and poverty in the country.

5.1 Comparative Analysis: -Nigeria versus peers

Understanding Nigeria’s positioning in Africa and how higher education is affecting youth and the poverty rate across Africa.

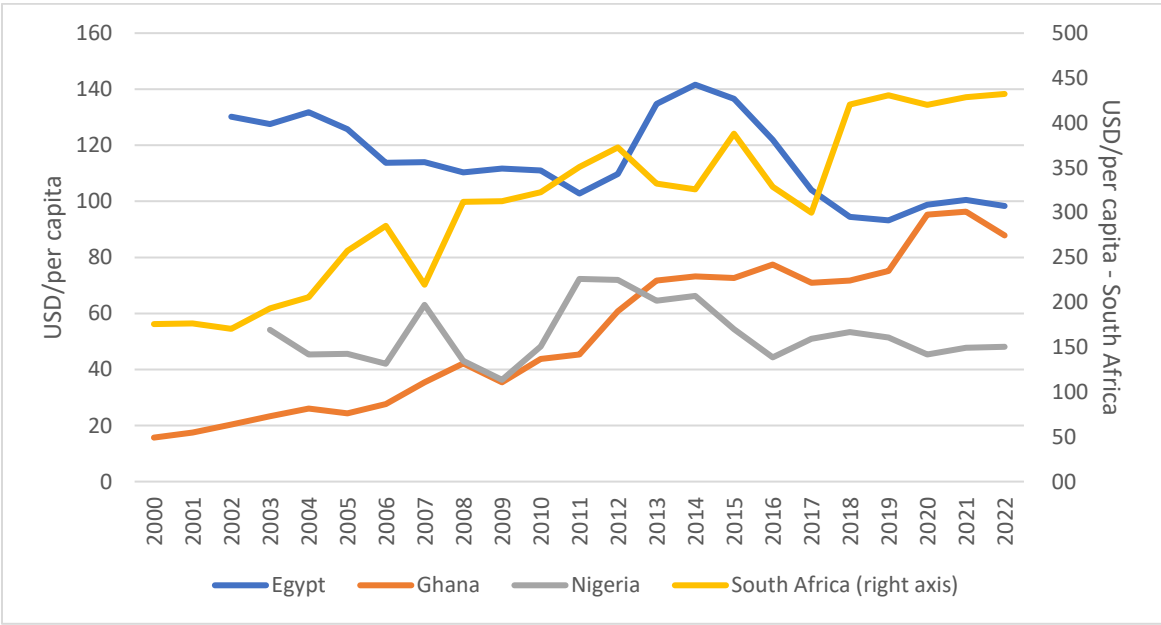


Figure 12. Government Expenditure on Education (Authors compilation, 2023)

According to chart above (Figure 12), Nigeria since 2011, experiences a downward trend in the amount spent on education while Egypt only begun the downward flow in 2014. However, South

Africa and Ghana continue to record an increase in government expenditure on education. Nigeria’s government expenditure on education has been the lowest since 2012 among its peers – Ghana, Egypt, and South Africa. This data explains the comparison between the four African nations and demonstrates their governments commitment to developing its human capital through education. Nonetheless, this data alone does not comprehensively explain the commitment of the government, neither does it provide extensive explanation for the role of education in each country’s poverty rate, youth development, and economic growth as several other factors, like corruption, and research and development play significant roles.

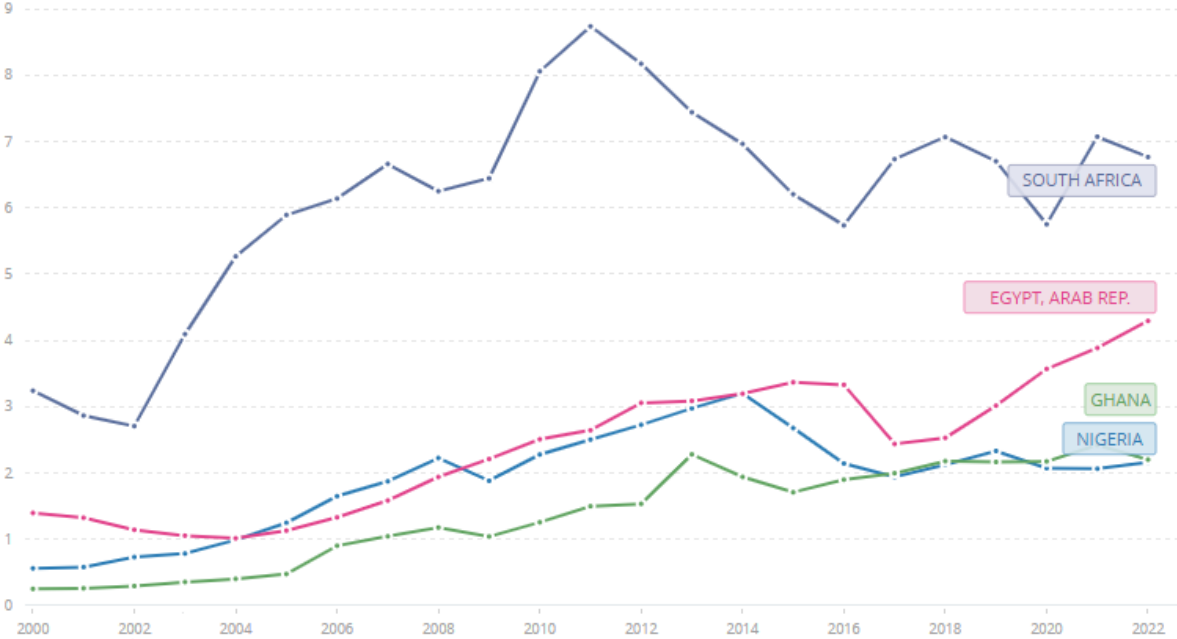


Figure 13. GDP Per Capita (World Bank, 2023)

The figure 13 above illustrates the economic growth of the four countries – Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, and South Africa. Here, it is observed that Nigerias GDP per capita is the lowest across all the years observed, while South Africa has the highest since 2000. Although the GDP per capita has consistently increased, showing an upward trend, Nigeria does poorly in its economic growth,

through the GDP per capita, when compared to other countries like South Africa, Ghana, and Egypt.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis of Nigeria vs Egypt, South Africa, and Ghana (2023)

Variable	Nigeria	Egypt	Ghana	South Africa
Education Attainment Indicator	113	76	91	74
Assessment in reading, mathematics, and science	109	76	99	92
Tertiary enrolment	120	54	114	50
Research and development (R&D)	38	38	38	38
Researchers	72	51	72	39
Gross expenditure on R&D (GERD)	112	93	96	77
QS university ranking: average score of top 3 universities	110	93	91	67
Unemployment rate (%)	33.30%	6.96%	4.70%	29.80%
Poverty rate (%)	30.90%	1.50%	25.20%	20.50%

Source: World Development Indicators, 2023

The table 2 above presents a current comparison between Nigeria and other African countries – Ghana, South Africa, and Egypt. The data describes the current educational and economic situations in these African countries. While education The table is an overall representation of relevant data that are carefully dissected in the following paragraphs with corresponding charts and figures. In 2022, Nigeria ranked highest in education attainment indicator among Egypt, Ghana, and South Africa with a score of 113 compared to 76, 91, and 74, respectively (See Table 2). This indicator is used to represent the highest level of education completed by 25 to 64 years old population.

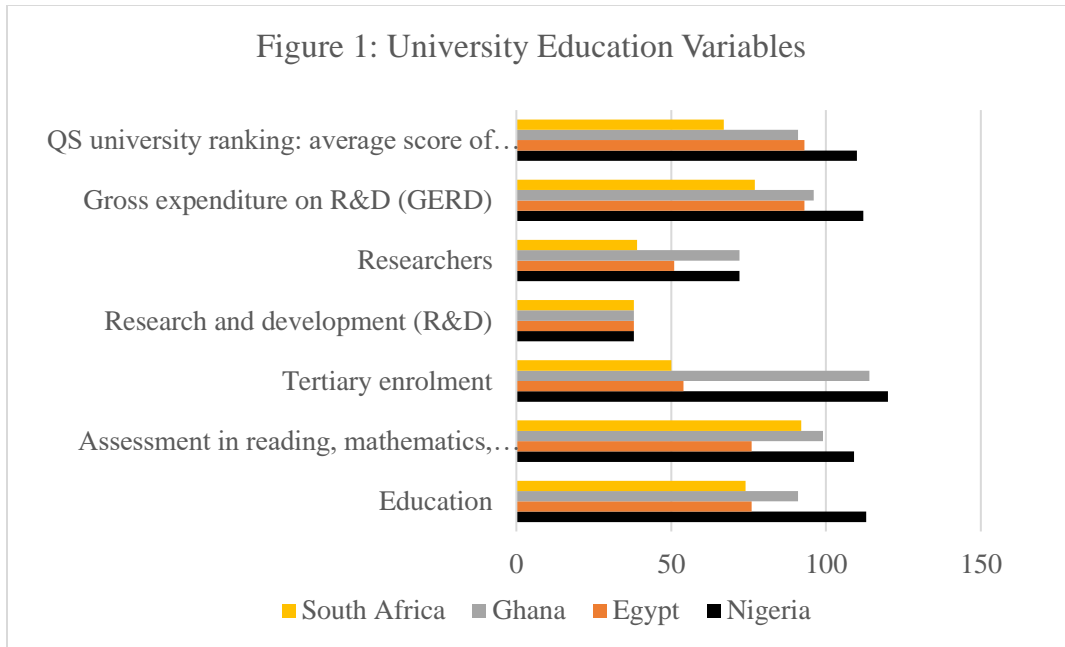


Figure 14. Comparing Education Variables by Country (Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, and South Africa) (Authors, 2023)

Nigeria has the highest number of 25 – 64 years who reached the highest level of education among peers (figure 14), which may be due to higher population. Higher tertiary enrolment, with Nigeria ranking highest (120), is further evidence of this position. This compares to 54 in Egypt, 114 in Ghana, and 50 in South Africa. Also, Nigerian universities rank higher than universities in Egypt, Ghana, and South Africa in Africa, with an average score point (QS university ranking) of 110, beating Egypt’s 93, Ghana's 91, and South Africa's 67 points. Overall, the university education, based on the variables presented in Figure 14, have more enrolment, ranking, researchers and educational reach compared to Egypt, South Africa, and Ghana. One of the major factor for this feat can be linked to the larger population in Nigeria. Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa, with the youth populace reported as the largest in the continent.

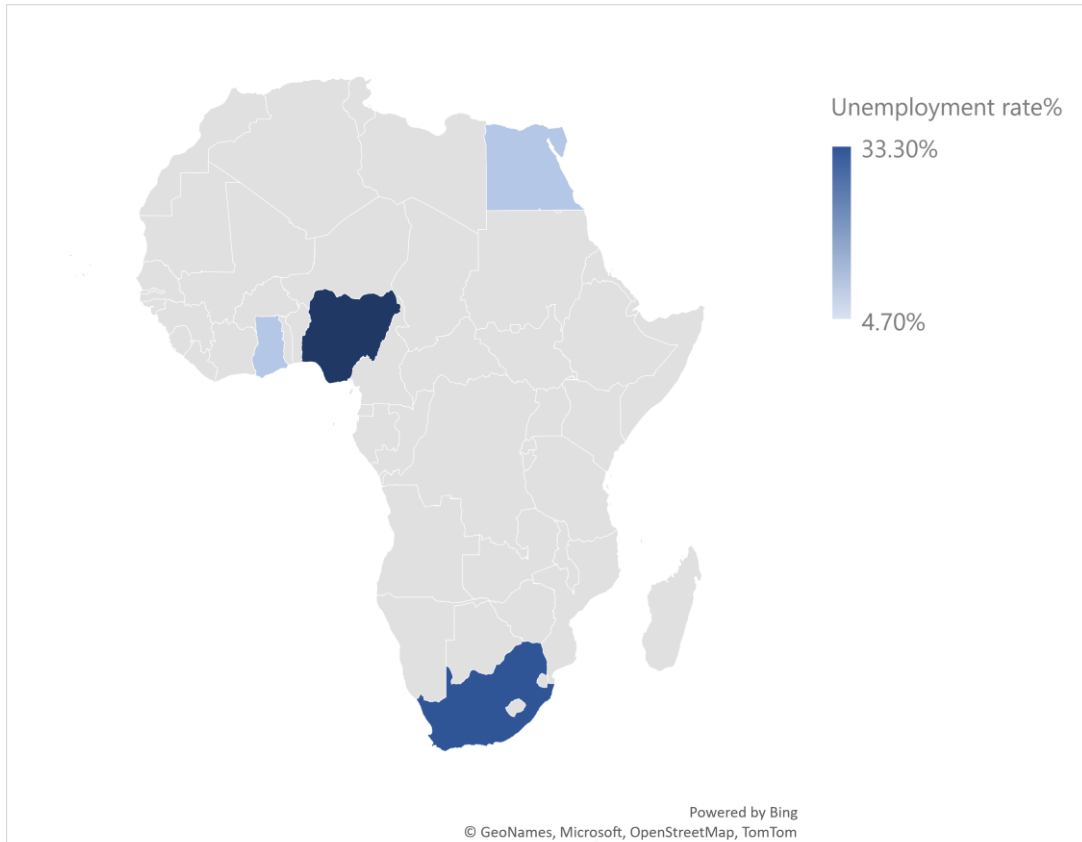


Figure 15. *Unemployment Rate Comparison between Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, and South Africa) (Author, 2023)*

On the unemployment front, Nigeria (33.3%) has the highest unemployment rate among the four African countries. In 2022, Nigeria’s unemployment rate stood at five times that of Egypt (6.96%). Nigeria’s unemployment rate is among the highest in the world, although it has one of the largest youthful populations in the world (figure 15).

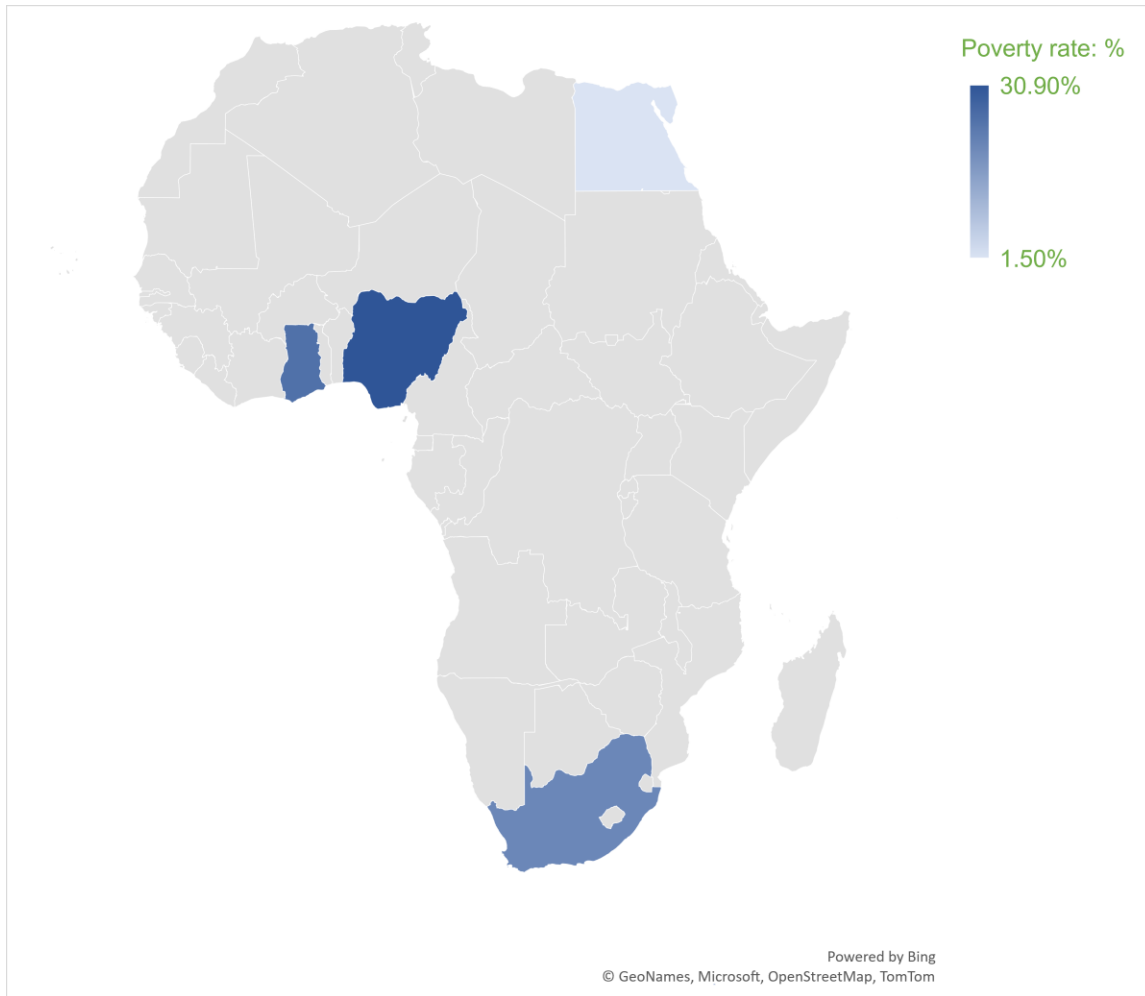


Figure 16. Poverty Headcount Ratio by Country (Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Egypt)(Author, 2023)

The poverty rate in Africa is among the highest anywhere in the world. According to Figure 16, Nigeria's poverty rate of 30.9% shows that 30% of its population lives below \$3.75 per day. Egypt, on the other hand, has a poverty rate of 1.5% of its 109 million population living below the poverty line. While Ghana and South Africa have poverty rates of 25.5% and 20.5%, respectively.

Overall, this comparative analysis shows that although Nigeria has higher tertiary education enrolment and rating among peer countries, this has not necessarily translated into employment, increase in standard of living and declining poverty rate in the country.

5.2 Summary Statistics

Table 3 illustrates the summary statistics as the average value of variables across the specific time (mean), spread from this average behaviour (standard deviation), the highest documented during the time (maximum) and the lowest documented during the time (minimum).

Table 3. Summary Statistics Results for Nigeria

	<i>Unemployment, youth total %</i>	<i>Tertiary educ spending</i>	<i>Researchers</i>	<i>Gross expenditure on R&D (GERD)</i>	<i>QS university ranking average score of top 3 universities</i>	<i>GDP per capita (constant 2015 US\$)</i>	<i>Poverty Headcount</i>
Mean	19.67	25.30	79.93	86.79	92.43	2,499.59	64.80
Standard Error	3.37	0.14	5.14	6.45	6.48	27.19	0.48
Median	13.08	25.44	86.00	86.00	92.50	2,497.84	64.30
Mode	9.85				70.00		
Standard Deviation	12.62	0.51	19.24	24.13	24.25	101.75	1.81
Sample Variance	159.18	0.26	370.23	582.34	588.11	10,352.36	3.29
Kurtosis	(1.16)	(0.08)	0.71	(0.15)	(1.90)	(0.50)	(0.25)
Skewness	0.75	(0.88)	(1.18)	(0.33)	0.00	0.51	0.69
Range	34.34	1.77	60.00	79.00	64.00	329.55	6.20
Minimum	7.66	24.25	40.00	43.00	60.00	2,350.00	62.30
Maximum	42.00	26.01	100.00	122.00	124.00	2,679.55	68.50
Sum	275.43	354.19	1,119.00	1,215.00	1,294.00	34,994.26	907.20
Count	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00

Source: Author's Computation, 2023

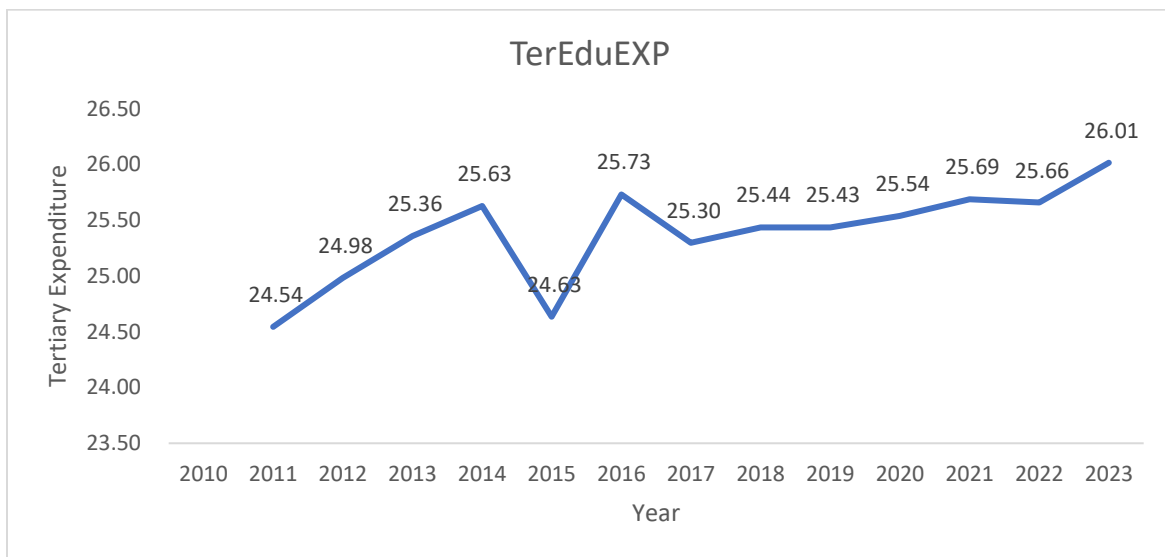


Figure 17. Nigeria's Tertiary Education Expenditure (2013-2022) (Author, 2023)

Tertiary education spending, according to the results indicated in Table 2 above, has a mean value of 29.3 billion Nigerian Naira over the period (2013 – 2022), a standard deviation of 0.5 billion naira, a minimum of 24.25 billion naira, and a maximum of 26 billion naira (figure 17). From the chart above, there was a sharp drop in tertiary education expenditure in 2015. This can be largely associated with the declining real GDP as depicted in the figure (13).

The unemployment rate during the period had an average rate of 19.67% over the period, a standard deviation of 12.62 percent, a minimum of 7.6 percent, and a maximum of 42 percent. These indicate that the average unemployment rate in Nigeria has remained elevated at double digits, showing a low level of employment for Nigeria's youthful population.

Gross spending on research and development also had a mean value of 86.8 billion naira over the period, a standard deviation of 24 billion naira, a minimum of 43 billion naira, and a maximum of 122 billion naira. These indicate that Nigeria's cumulative spending on research and development has been on the increase during the period under investigation.

The QS university ranking average score was also included as an explanatory variable. Interestingly, the average score ranking for the top 3 universities in Nigeria globally is 92 points. Of the top 3 universities in Nigeria, the highest-ranked of them ranks 124 points globally, while the lowest of the 3 top universities in Nigeria had a score of 60 points over the period under this study.

Since it is shown that the level of GDP also affects the level of education in any society, the GDP per capita is employed as a proxy to measure how the standard of living impacts Nigerian youth and poverty. Overall, the average GDP per capita recorded during the period under study was

\$2499. The highest GDP per capita under record during this period is \$2680, while the minimum GDP per capita under record is \$2350.

The poverty headcount ratio of \$3.65 a day (2017 PPP) (% of population) is the variable used to assess poverty in the country. Accordingly, the poverty headcount ratio at \$3.65 a day (2017 PPP) (% of population) increased dramatically from 66% in 2010 to 70% in 2023. During the period, the poverty headcount ratio averaged 64.8% of the population, with a minimum and maximum of 62% and 68%, respectively. This shows that of the country’s population, a larger percentage are the youth, who languish in poverty and live below \$3.65 per day.

5.3 Correlation Analysis

The correlation coefficients present the relationship between Education, Poverty, unemployment, and of every other variable measured in this study. The relationship among explanatory variables is also measured and presented through the correlation coefficients. The primary aim of the correlation coefficient is to verify the relationships among explanatory variables and ensure that they are not too high to the point of leading to problem of multicollinearity in the regression model.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix of Variables

	Unemployment, youth total %	Poverty headcount ratio at \$3.65 a day (2017 PPP) (% of population)	InTerEduEXP	Researchers	Gross expenditure on R&D (GERD)	QS university ranking average score of top 3 universities	GDP per capita (constant 2015 US\$)
Unemployment, youth total %	1.00						
Poverty headcount ratio at \$3.65 a day (2017 PPP) (% of population)	0.76	1.00					
InTerEduEXP	0.64	0.26	1.00				
Researchers	-0.60	-0.26	-0.39	1.00			
Gross expenditure on R&D (GERD)	0.61	0.73	0.20	-0.11	1.00		
QS university ranking average score of top 3 universities	0.64	0.30	0.40	-0.73	0.37	1.00	
GDP per capita (constant 2015 US\$)	-0.68	-0.77	-0.10	0.43	-0.43	-0.13	1.00

Source: Author’s Computation, 2023

The results of correlation analysis in Table 4 show that tertiary education spending has positive correlation coefficients with research and development (R&D), the QS university ranking average score of the top 3 universities, poverty, and unemployment, but has negative correlation coefficients with the number of researchers in the country. This signifies that the relationship between real GDP and each of the other variables, such as population growth, gross capital formation, savings, government expenditure, and interest rate, is statistically significant. This implies that tertiary education spending moves in the same direction as research and development, the QS university ranking average score of the top 3 universities, and poverty. If expenditure on tertiary education goes up, we should see improvements in research and development, the QS university ranking average score of the top 3 universities, poverty, and unemployment. Although poverty and unemployment might exceed a priori expectations, this might be due to the low quality of Nigeria's tertiary education, with a large number of graduates being unemployed or underemployed, further contributing to the rising poverty rate in the country.

The result also shows the relationships that exist among other variables. Since the essence of these relationships measured is to confirm that any of the correlation coefficients have no high relationship among them. While the outcomes of all correlation coefficients, presented in Table 2, of the explanatory variables are under 0.8, the general rule agrees that the issue of multicollinearity is avoided if the correlation coefficients is lower than 0.8. Therefore, all the variables measured in this analysis are statistically fit and safe for regression model without the possibility of severe multicollinearity.

5.4 Regression Analysis

This section presents the regression analysis to examine the impact of higher education on Nigerian youths and poverty in Nigeria. The models for this study are divided into two: the first examines

how higher education impacts unemployment, while the second examines the impact of higher education on the poverty rate in Nigeria. The independent variables for both models are tertiary education spending, the number of researchers in the country, expenditure on research and development, the QS average score for the top 3 universities in Nigeria, and the level of GDP per capita in Nigeria. The Ordinary Least Squares method was used to estimate the parameters of the model.

Table 5. University Education and Unemployment Rate

SUMMARY OUTPUT						
Dependent Variable - Unemployment						
<i>Regression Statistics</i>						
Multiple R						0.98
R Square						0.96
Adjusted R Square						0.93
Standard Error						3.32
Observations						14.00

ANOVA						
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>	
Regression	5.00	1,980.96	396.19	35.84	0.00	
Residual	8.00	88.42	11.05			
Total	13.00	2,069.38				

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>
Intercept	-100.25	56.01	-1.79	0.11	-229.41	28.90
InTerEduEXP	10.85	2.02	5.39	0.00	6.21	15.50
Researchers	0.15	0.10	1.50	0.17	-0.08	0.38
Gross expenditure on R&D (GERD)	0.04	0.06	0.79	0.45	-0.09	0.17
QS university ranking average score σ	0.27	0.08	3.58	0.01	0.10	0.44
GDP per capita (constant 2015 US\$)	-0.08	0.01	-5.67	0.00	-0.11	-0.05

Source: Author’s Computation, 2023

Hypothesis 1

H0: University education has no significant influence on Nigerian youths as a factor of economic development.

H1: University education has a significant influence on Nigerian youths as a factor of economic development.

The OLS regression result is presented in the Table 5 above, examining the impacts of university education on Nigerian youth through youth unemployment rates. The model's reported R-squared indicates that the model explains about 96% of variations in unemployment in Nigeria. On the same vein, the model's reported F-statistic depicts a value of 35 with a p-value of 0.0000, which indicates that the independent variables in the model are statistically significant. Thus, the overall model has a good fit and it statistically significant.

Evaluating the independent variables of the model, only tertiary education spending, QS university ranking average score, and GDP per capita are significant variables with p-values of 0.000, 0.01, and 0.00, respectively. All the explanatory variables have positive coefficients in the result, except GDP per capita, with a coefficient of -0.08. The lower p-values of the coefficients of tertiary education spending, QS university ranking average score, and GDP per capita indicate that they are statistically significant in affecting unemployment at 5% significance levels, while the higher p-values of the number of researchers and gross spending on R&D indicate that they are not statistically significant in affecting the unemployment rate in Nigeria.

The significant positive coefficient of tertiary education spending indicates that on average, a 10 billion naira increase in public and private spending in tertiary education (universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education) in Nigeria would increase unemployment by 1%. Also, the other statistically significant variables suggest that by improving the QS ranking score of Nigerian universities by 0.27 points, there is a tendency that on average, unemployment will decline by 1%. Lastly, GDP per capita shows that declining GDP per capita will improve the unemployment rate in Nigeria. Conclusively, the results of this regression show that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, as university significantly have an effect on youth development (measured by youth unemployment), which further affects economic growth.

Table 6. University Education and Poverty Rate

SUMMARY OUTPUT						
Dependent Variable - Poverty Headcount %						
<i>Regression Statistics</i>						
Multiple R						0.9239
R Square						0.8537
Adjusted R Square						0.7622
Standard Error						0.8842
Observations						14.0000
ANOVA						
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>	
Regression	5.0000	36.4855	7.2971	9.3335	0.0034	
Residual	8.0000	6.2545	0.7818			
Total	13.0000	42.7400				
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>
Intercept	66.8194	16.3651	4.0830	0.0035	29.0814	104.5573
lnTerEduEXP	0.6559	0.5296	1.2384	0.2507	-0.5654	1.8771
Researchers	0.0336	0.0250	1.3429	0.2161	-0.0241	0.0913
lnGross expenditure on R&D (GERD)	2.0717	1.0431	1.9860	0.0823	-0.3338	4.4771
QS university ranking average score of top 3 universities	0.0197	0.0191	1.0340	0.3314	-0.0243	0.0637
GDP per capita (constant 2015 US\$)	-0.0129	0.0034	-3.7694	0.0055	-0.0208	-0.0050

Source: Author’s Computation, 2023

Hypothesis 2

H0: University policies have no significant effect on reducing poverty in Nigeria.

H1: University policies have significant effectson reducing poverty in Nigeria.

The OLS regression conducted to analyse the impact of university education on poverty rates in Nigeria is presented in Table 6. The model’s reported R-squared shows that the model explains about 85.3% of variations in poverty among Nigerian youths. The reported F-statistic shows a value of 9.33 with a p-value of 0.0034, which indicates that the independent variables in the model are jointly statistically significant. Therefore, the overall model has a good fit and is statistically significant.

Evaluating the independent variables of the model, all the independent variables have positive coefficients in the result except GDP per capita, which has a coefficient of -0.0129. Looking at the independent variables statistically, only GDP per capita is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.0055. The lower p-value of the coefficient of GDP per capita indicates that it is statistically significant for Nigeria's poverty rate at 5% significance levels, while the higher p-values indicate that it is not statistically significant in affecting the poverty rate in Nigeria.

The significant negative coefficient of GDP per capita indicates that a percentage point increase in Nigeria's GDP per capita will reduce the poverty rate in Nigeria and vice versa. This result is in line with a priori expectations, as a rise in GDP per capita indicates a rise in the standard of living and ultimately will reduce the poverty rate in Nigeria. Conclusively, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0), implying that the university education in Nigeria have significant impacts on poverty reduction in the country.

Overall, both regression models establish how higher education in Nigeria will impact the poverty rate, unemployment, and standard of living in Nigeria. However, there needs to be improvement in the standard of education at the tertiary education level, empowering graduates with relevant technical and soft skills to grow, create jobs, and be able to create jobs locally and internationally.

6.0 Discussion

With the findings in the preceding chapter of this research, connection between university education, youth development and unemployment, poverty, and the Nigerian economic development have been established statistically and explained. Moreso, there is a need to critically discuss these findings in relations to the research objectives and questions of this study to provide a comprehensive understanding of these connections in more specific contexts and allow for efficient conclusion. These research questions include:

1. What are the influences of university Education on Nigerian Youths and their impact on Economic development?
2. What are the effects of university education on poverty reduction in Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges affecting university education in Nigeria?

6.1 Influences of University Education on Nigerian Youths and Economic Development

According to previous literature and theories such as human capital theory (Woessmann, 2015), university education is a means to develop the populace of any nation, especially the youths, to promote their contribution to the growth of the economy. However, the findings of this study go against the several findings of other previous studies explored in the theoretical part (Ukwueze & Nwosu, 2014; Adebayo, 2012; Okoli & Oranusi, 2011; Amzat, 2010). According to the findings of this study, there exists a positive correlation between government expenditure on university education and youth unemployment, which seem counterintuitive and does not follow the a-priori expectation stated in the methodology. It is expected, according to human capital, that increased expenditure on university education should reduce youth unemployment and increase their contribution to the economic growth of the country. The increased expenditure on university

education increases the acquisition of skills and knowledge and empowers graduates of university education for employment. However, the result of this study demonstrates otherwise. To explain this contradiction, the quality of university education in Nigeria and the educational system operated do not adequately prepare and empower graduates for the labour market. The mismatch in graduate skills and knowledge and the requirements of the labour market can be explained through the inability of millions of Nigerian graduates to secure employment because they lack the required skills. Similarly, some previous studies (Muo, 2016; Pitan & Adedeji, 2012) have identified a mismatch in the skills and knowledge taught in universities and the needed skills for employment, which can result in a higher rate of unemployment. Additionally, corruption plays a critical role in the employment gap experienced in Nigeria. Previous studies have linked the rate of unemployment to corruption; that is, the higher the corruption rate, the higher the unemployment rate. In context, employment in Nigeria is unequally distributed, and academic merit does not entirely guarantee employment, as favouritism, federal allocation of government jobs, and the inability of government to provide abundant jobs and a business-enabling environment negatively impact the employment distribution in Nigeria. This finding, indicating an increased in government expenditure on tertiary education does not reflect a reduction in youth unemployment, corroborates with Nigeria's university situation of increasing number of graduates, which reflects an increased government expenditure; however, the unemployment rate increases due to the other factors such as mismatch in skills and knowledge, inadequate mismanagement, overcrowded lecture rooms, and insufficient research output (Okoduwa, 2023; Haliru, 2017; Adamu, 2015). These issues can be linked to the incessant lower ranking of the Nigerian universities in the global space, expressed in the findings of this study. Nigerian universities have continued to rank low in the global space and have been associated with a number of problems.

According to the result of this study, the positive coefficient between unemployment and QS university ranking average scores depicts that when universities in Nigeria climbs up the ranks, the youth unemployment reduces. This is in line with the understanding of some existing studies that universities recognised as prestigious often offer better education, empowerment, and improves graduates' chance at employment opportunities (Mikhaylov & Mikhaylova, 2018; Dembereldorj, 2018; Thakur, 2007). Therefore, this research agrees that when Nigerian universities are improved, both in quality and global reputation, youth employment might be affected positively.

6.2 Higher Education, Nigerian Economy, and Poverty

According to the result of this study, GDP per capita has a significant negative coefficient to the poverty rate in Nigeria. This result is in line with the economic theories that argue that an increase in economic growth would lead to a reduction in rate of poverty. This is reflected in the study's finding as the growth of Nigeria's GDP per capita is linked with poverty reduction. The growth of an economy leads to creation of employment and income generation opportunities, which in turn leads to poverty reduction (Ezeanyejji et al., 2019; Sinding, 2009; Khan, 2005, Islam, 2004). This research aligns with the broader academic consensus that a sustainable economic growth is fundamental to lifting people out of poverty (Ayoo, 2022; Fagbemi et al., 2022; Mansi et al., 2020; Bicaba et al., 2015). Although this finding discovers that university education, assumed to be a crucial instrument in reducing poverty, does have a weak significant impact on economic growth. The insignificance is explained as the difference between long-term and short-term impacts of university education on poverty reduction through economic growth. Although this study finds that there is a negative relationship between university education and poverty, explained as an increase in the quality and spread of university education will reduce the rate of poverty in Nigeria,

the contribution of higher education to the economic growth does not have substantial immediate effects on poverty. Thus, the significant effect of university education can only be felt in the long run.

6.3 University Education Challenges

From the findings presented in this research, it is clear that the Nigerian university education faces a number of challenges that are significant in affecting its effectiveness and efficiency in promoting youth development, economic growth, and reducing poverty. One of these issues as highlighted by the result is the positive correlation between government expenditure on university education and unemployment rates in Nigeria. The problem therein indicates that funding is not the only critical problems impeding the effectiveness of the tertiary education in Nigeria. Thus, this suggests that the university education may not be providing the adequate and up-to-date skills and knowledge required in the labour market. Problems such as outdated school curricula, excessive theoretical learning and inadequate practical training, and a mismatch with industrial requirements are contributing to the challenges faced by the Nigerian university education (Muhammad, 2022; Okolo & Gregory, 2021; Joshua et al., 2015). Moreover, graduates of Nigerian universities, despite an increased public spending on tertiary education, face employability gap (Pitan, 2016; Sodipo, 2014), which means the gap between employable skills and acquired skills through university education. Also, while the study elementarily focuses on youth unemployment as a measure of youth welfare and development, underemployment is a worthy mention, standing as a problem in the Nigerian context. Due to low economic prosperity and high poverty rate in the country, many university graduates in Nigeria may find themselves in jobs where their skills and knowledge are fully put to use, contributing to the youths' dissatisfaction and sense of underutilisation.

Similarly, the positive impacts of a higher global ranking average score on promoting employment and poverty reduction suggests that Nigerian universities face issues in achieving higher rankings and global recognition. While these QS ranking are based on the quality of educational services and many other important factors, the findings in this research establishes that Nigerian universities are lagging in providing quality educational services to its patronage – the youth. Issues such inadequate international collaboration, limited research outputs, mismanagement, and underfunding are hindering the global reputations that Nigerian universities (Muhammad, 2022; Okolo & Gregory, 2021; Joshua et al., 2015). It is important to highlight that the some of the problems affecting the quality of education offered in Nigerian universities and their effectiveness in reducing unemployment rates in the country is linked to the problem of educational infrastructure and resources. Students attending Nigerian universities study in educational institutions lacking conducive and adequate lecture theatres and rooms, libraries, laboratories, and teaching resources (Ogunode, 2021). While the findings do not comprehensively explore these challenges, previous studies have maintained that these inadequacies in the Nigerian universities hinder the research capabilities and learning experiences of students and graduates. In the same vein, the findings of this study emphasise the importance of relevant curricula that eradicate the gap in the skills and knowledge imparted in Nigerian universities and the labour market requirements.

It is important to highlight the challenges faced by Nigerian students and youths from lower socio-economic backgrounds, which covers a significant percentage of the total Nigerian population, in accessing quality university education. while this study does not comprehensively and explicitly explore the issues of access and equity in university education. the issues of access to higher education and problems of equity in resources and enrolment are serious problems in the Nigerian

universities. The Nigerian universities do not offer access to all students, despite that Nigeria has a large number of public universities, quality higher education is not relatively cheap and cannot be afforded by a significant part of the population (Adewuyi & Okemakinde, 2013).

Ultimately, the findings in the practical part of this study underscore the complex relationship between higher education, youth unemployment, poverty, and economic development in Nigeria. The findings highlight the importance of both quality and relevance in higher education, while also accentuating the role of broader economic policies, which includes educational promotion, in reducing the poverty rate in Nigeria. Additionally, this chapter explores the challenges facing the Nigerian universities and how its affect youth development, economic growth, and poverty reduction in the country. Challenges associated with the relevance and quality of university education, as well as the employability and research capability problems of graduates of Nigerian universities are highlighted. Overall, this study explores the impacts of university education and establishes that while public spending on university education does not reflect reduction in unemployment in Nigeria, the lower ranking of Nigerian universities explains the quality concerns of the university education in Nigeria and how it impedes poverty reduction. Although it discovers that university education has a long-term positive impact on economic growth even if it is not significant in the short run.

6.4 Limitations

The study is not without limitations. The limitations encountered in the process of this research include data limitations and simplifications in the regression models; the research covered limited years, which may have impacted the quality of the research findings. The research also focused on short-term correlation between higher education, poverty, and youth development; thus, the overall contribution of university education is not thoroughly explored. Additionally, the study over relied

on statistical analysis to find explore the relationship between the variables, missing the various perspectives of relevant stakeholders like lecturers, students, the government, and university managements, which can provide a broad insight into their connections. Therefore, further research into this area should delve deeper into the relationship between these research variables by exploring the effects in the long run, integrating qualitative research, and ensuring a broad scope of variables.

6.5 Policy Implications and Recommendations

Based on the results of the analysis in this research, these policy implications and recommendations emerge:

Nigerian universities should consistently update their curricula to meet the changing demands of the labour force and the technological advancements. Similarly, improving the quality assurance techniques is crucial to monitoring the advancements and quality of education and educational resources in Nigerian universities.

The government and relevant policymakers should prioritise economic policies that promote employment, reduce poverty, and ensure human capital development.

Nigerian universities should collaborate internationally to enhance their global recognition, reputation, and acquire new knowledge on how to promote the quality of university education.

Collaborations with industries should be integrated in the curricula of Nigerian universities to enhance skills development of graduates.

Government and Nigerian university managements should make efforts to promote access to university education, especially to the poor population in Nigeria.

7.0 Conclusion

This chapter provides a concluding recap and overview of the findings of this research.

Quality and Relevance of Higher Education: The findings of this study revealed a positive relationship between public expenditure on university education and rates of unemployment in Nigeria. This result hints that that it is important for the Nigerian universities to address relevant issues impeding the quality, effectiveness, and relevance of education in relation to unemployment reduction, promoting economic growth, and alleviating poverty. The research, however, finds that an increased government expenditure on university education will not reduce youth unemployment since the challenges the Nigerian universities are attached to its inability to empower graduates to be the perfect demand of the labour force, thus, leading to a high level of graduate unemployment.

Inadequacy of Skills and Knowledge in Nigerian Universities: The positive relationship between public investment on university and unemployment rates indicates that one of the current university education problems is that it is not adequate enough to address the unemployment issues of the country. This is basically because there is a mismatch in the skills and knowledge offers by Nigerian universities and the demands of the labour force. Thus, this research found that there is a need for Nigerian universities offer up-to-date knowledge and skills that are in demand in the labour market.

Global Ranking and Recognition of Nigerian Universities: The result of this study revealed that higher QS university ranking average score have a positive impact on reducing unemployment rate establishes an argument that quality and international reputation of Nigerian universities are a way to measure the effectiveness of university education. The ranking average score highlights that the Nigerian university education struggles to address its multivariant issues impeding its development

and promotion of the educational quality it offers to students. Thus, when Nigerian universities are recognised internationally and ranked high, there are possible chances that youth unemployment will reduce.

University Education, Economic Growth, and Poverty: The finding of this research established that there is a weak positive connection between university education and economic growth in the short run. This weak connection can be explained through the impacts of university education, which is not immediate on economic growth and poverty. The significant effects of university education can be well established in the long run.

7.2 Ending Notes

This research has shed light on the multifarious challenges facing the university education in Nigeria and their broad impacts on youth development, economic growth, and poverty reduction. The findings, therefore, explored the impacts of university education in promoting youth development, economic development, and alleviating poverty. This research provided comprehensive insights on the complex issues surrounding the Nigerian universities and their role in youth development and poverty alleviation and offer a roadmap for improvement and reform.

According to this research, it can be deduced that Nigeria's youth population are with immense potentials which can be unlocked and harnessed by quality higher education and employment opportunities. Therefore, there is a need for concerted efforts from the university managements, Nigerian governments, and policymakers to revitalise the university education and address the challenges facing it. By addressing these challenges, the Nigerian university education can empower its youth to contribute significantly to the growth of the economy through increasing employment rates and ultimately reducing poverty. The commitment of the Nigerian government, policymakers, and university managements to enhancing the quality, relevance of university

education, including closing the gap between the university and the real-life skills and promoting inclusion and accessible university education will ensure its effectiveness in promoting economic and youth development and alleviating poverty.

8.0 References

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9.0 Appendix

Government Expenditure on University Education

Year	Unemployment, youth total %	Poverty headcount ratio at \$3.65 a day (2017 PPP)	InTerEduEXP	Researchers	Gross expenditure on R&D (GERD)	QS university ranking average score of top	GDP per capita (constant 2015 US\$)	InUniEXP	InPolyEXP	InCOEEXP	Human capital and research	Education	Expenditure on education	School life expectancy	Tertiary education	Tertiary enrolment	Graduates in science and engineering	Research and development
2010	10	66	24.25	90	85	60	2,397	23.55	22.86	22.86								
2011	10	64	24.54	95	87	62	2,456	23.85	23.24	23.06								
2012	10	65	24.98	98	89	70	2,490	24.29	23.59	23.59								
2013	10	64	25.36	100	90	80	2,586	24.67	23.97	23.97	140	132		120	135	109	119	
2014	8	64	25.63	99	84	70	2,677	24.94	24.24	24.24	134	127		120	123	107	108	
2015	8	63	24.63	87	73	124	2,680	23.94	23.25	23.25	128				109		95	
2016	12	63	25.73	85	45	73	2,571	25.04	24.34	24.34	121						90	
2017	14	62	25.30	89	43	75	2,527	24.61	23.92	23.89	98				104		95	
2018	18	64	25.44	40	78	114	2,512	24.75	24.05	24.03			108	91		103	88	
2019	30	65	25.43	78	122	111	2,505	24.85	24.14	23.65		113				[120]	43	
2020	32	66	25.54	42	77	124	2,401	24.86	24.14	24.14	-	114	105	-	-	[121]	-	
2021	32	67	25.69	74	120	116	2,430	24.99	24.30	24.30	-	115	-	120	-	123	-	
2022	40	68	25.66	72	112	110	2,412	24.96	24.27	24.27	-	113	-	119	-	120	-	
2023	42	69	26.01	70	110	105	2,350	25.32	24.63	24.63								

Year	Unemployment, youth total %	Poverty headcount ratio at \$3.65 a day (2017 PPP)	InTerEduEXP	Researchers	Gross expenditure on R&D (GERD)	QS university ranking average score of top	GDP per capita (constant 2015 US\$)	InUniEXP	InPolyEXP	InCOEEXP	Human capital and research	Education	Expenditure on education	School life expectancy	Tertiary education	Tertiary enrolment	Graduates in science and engineering	Research and development
2010	10	66	24.25	90	85	60	2,397	23.55	22.86	22.86								
2011	10	64	24.54	95	87	62	2,456	23.85	23.24	23.06								
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2013	10	64	25.36	100	90	80	2,586	24.67	23.97	23.97	140	132		120	135	109	119	
2014	8	64	25.63	99	84	70	2,677	24.94	24.24	24.24	134	127		120	123	107	108	
2015	8	63	24.63	87	73	124	2,680	23.94	23.25	23.25	128					109		95
2016	12	63	25.73	85	45	73	2,571	25.04	24.34	24.34	121							90
2017	14	62	25.30	89	43	75	2,527	24.61	23.92	23.89	98					104		95
2018	18	64	25.44	40	78	114	2,512	24.75	24.05	24.03			108	91		103	88	
2019	30	65	25.43	78	122	111	2,505	24.85	24.14	23.65		113				[120]	43	
2020	32	66	25.54	42	77	124	2,401	24.86	24.14	24.14	-	-	114	105	-	-	[121]	-
2021	32	67	25.69	74	120	116	2,430	24.99	24.30	24.30	-	115	-	120	-	123	-	41
2022	40	68	25.66	72	112	110	2,412	24.96	24.27	24.27	-	113	-	119	-	120	-	38
2023	42	69	26.01	70	110	105	2,350	25.32	24.63	24.63								