



## ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF NASARAWA STATE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AGENCY (NAYEA) ON EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the effect of the Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Agency (NAYEA) on employment generation among youths in Nasarawa State. The research is situated within the broader national concern over rising youth unemployment and the associated increase in social vices, a trend exacerbated by the diminishing availability of white-collar employment in Nigeria. In response to these challenges, government-driven youth empowerment initiatives such as NAYEA were established to enhance youth development and reduce unemployment. The study population comprised 2,885 individuals, including agency staff, program beneficiaries, and stakeholders across nine selected local government areas of Awe, Keana, Lafia, Nasarawa Eggon, Akwanga, Keffi, Toto, and Karu. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample size of 400 was determined, and 383 valid responses were retrieved. A purposive sampling technique guided participant selection. Data were sourced from structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with directors, coordinators, and community leaders, complemented by secondary materials such as journals, articles, and policy documents. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while Human Capital Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework to explain the topic under review. Findings indicate that beneficiaries largely perceive NAYEA as enhancing their economic wellbeing and improving their capacity to meet basic needs, demonstrating a significant connection between program participation and employment generation. Nonetheless, respondents also reported considerable dissatisfaction with the quality of support services, particularly regarding training, funding accessibility, and mentoring provision. The study recommends strengthening and diversifying NAYEA's interventions and improving its support structures to enhance program effectiveness and maximize its contribution to youth empowerment and sustainable employment.*

**Keywords:** Youth Empowerment, Employment Generation, Unemployment, Underemployment, NAYEA

**JEL Classification Code:**

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### 1.0 Introduction

The challenge of unemployment, particularly among youth, continues to pose a significant threat to socio-economic stability and development across the globe. In developing countries such as Nigeria, the issue is particularly acute due to a rapidly growing youth population, limited job opportunities, and structural economic challenges (Ngozi, 2023). According to the United Nations, youth defined as individuals aged between 15 and 24 years constitute a vital demographic segment with the potential to drive innovation, economic expansion, and societal progress. However, realizing this potential has remained elusive due to persistent unemployment and underemployment, especially in subnational regions such as Nasarawa State. Youth empowerment has emerged as a critical strategy in addressing the issue of unemployment. It is broadly conceptualized as the process of equipping young individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities to enable them to make informed

decisions and take meaningful actions that improve their lives (Harris, 2021). Empowerment initiatives often encompass education, vocational training, access to finance, and entrepreneurship development key tools that support not only personal development but also contribute to broader societal transformation. Failure to address youth unemployment has profound socio-economic implications. Unemployed youth are particularly vulnerable to poverty, social exclusion, criminal activity, and other adverse outcomes, with consequences extending beyond the individual to families and society at large (Oladele, 2003). Therefore, youth empowerment must be viewed as a collective responsibility involving governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious bodies, and community stakeholders. These actors play essential roles in fostering an enabling environment where young people can thrive and contribute meaningfully to national and community development.

In Nasarawa State, successive governments have recognized the importance of youth empowerment in tackling unemployment and driving development. The evolution of youth-focused initiatives in the state reflects a growing institutional commitment to employment generation and youth development. Initial efforts can be traced back to the administration of Governor Abdullahi Adamu (1999–2007), who introduced skill acquisition programs aimed at promoting vocational self-reliance among young people. His successor, Governor Aliyu Akwe Doma (2007–2011), expanded on these foundations by facilitating youth access to financial resources for entrepreneurial activities, thereby emphasizing financial inclusion as a tool for empowerment. A more structured and comprehensive approach, called Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Scheme (NAYES) was introduced in 2014. This scheme marked a significant shift toward institutionalizing youth empowerment by integrating youth engagement into traffic management, environmental sanitation, and community watch and security surveillance.

In 2024, the scheme underwent a major restructuring and was renamed the Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Agency (NAYEA). The rebranding reflected a renewed strategic focus and expanded institutional mandate. NAYEA is tasked with the recruitment, training, and deployment of both skilled and unskilled youth across various sectors including public works, social services, environmental management, and community security. Its operatives are actively engaged in traffic control, environmental sanitation, neighborhood surveillance, and early-warning systems for security threats activities designed not only to enhance public service delivery but also to create employment and livelihood opportunities for the youth. Given the critical importance of youth employment in driving socio-economic development and ensuring social cohesion, a systematic assessment of the effect of NAYEA is both timely and essential. This study, therefore, seeks to evaluate the extent to which NAYEA has contributed to employment generation in Nasarawa State.

## 1.1 Statement of the problem

According to projected population by National Population Commission (2024), Nasarawa state Population is currently at 2,931,724. The state is endowed with abundant deposits of crude oil, mineral resources, and agricultural products. In spite of all these abundant resources, the quality of life of its citizens has declined significantly over the years. Unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of the youths, causing increased militancy, violent crimes, kidnappings, restiveness, and socially delinquent behaviour.

As of 2023, the unemployment rate in Nasarawa State is about 27.5%, with youth unemployment reaching a significantly higher rate of 40%, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and state government reports. This highlights a substantial disconnect between the existing policies and their impact on the youth population.

Despite the efforts of the Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Agency (NAYEA) to create opportunities for the youth, the state continues to grapple with high youth unemployment rates, inadequate skill acquisition programs, and insufficient infrastructure to support entrepreneurial growth. A significant portion of the youth population remains unemployed or underemployed, often resorting to informal sectors with little to no job security. The programs provided by the NAYEA, though numerous, do not seem to yield the desired long-term outcomes in terms of significant job creation or economic stability for young people in the state.

However, careful observations have shown that scholars have not paid much attention to the implication of the agency role in providing needed employment generation. Therefore, this study is to examine the effectiveness of the NAYEA's strategies, identify the gaps in implementation, and propose sustainable solutions that could better align youth empowerment efforts with the labor market's needs. This study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the current challenges and provide actionable recommendations for improving employment generation initiatives for the youth in Nasarawa State.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were posited to guide the study.

- i. How has the involvement of youths through NAYEA contributed to improving traffic management, environmental sanitation and security surveillance across the state?
- ii. How do beneficiaries perceive the effect of NAYEA on economic wellbeing?

## 1.3 Research Objectives

This paper intends to achieve the following objectives.

- i. To examine how the involvement of youths through NAYEA contributed to improving traffic management, environmental sanitation and security surveillance across the state.
- ii. To evaluate how do beneficiaries perceive the effect of NAYEA on economic wellbeing.

## 1.4 Conceptual clarification

### Youth

Various states, organizations, and scholars offer different definitions and conceptualizations of youth, rendering it challenging to establish a universally accepted definition of the term. Nonetheless, there is a general consensus within the academic community that youth represent the leaders of the future, a perspective that motivates nations worldwide to prioritize and invest in youth empowerment initiatives. Obinna (2020) conceptualize youth as social engineers and essential agents in the positive changes within society. He emphasizes that the energy, creativity, and orientation of youths are fundamental to national development. This definition predominantly emphasizes the functional and developmental roles of youth within society. However, it overlooks the complex socio-cultural and psychological dimensions that shape youth identity, including the diverse experiences, challenges, and intersectional factors such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Additionally, the definition does not explicitly address the variability in youth roles across different contexts, nor does it consider the agency of youth in resisting or redefining societal expectations beyond mere agents of national development. The definition of youth should transcend the utilitarian framework of being merely agents of development. Youth should be understood as a dynamic and multifaceted phase of human life characterized by identity

exploration, social negotiation, and empowerment. It must recognize the heterogeneity of youth experiences and their capacity not only to contribute positively to societal progress but also to critique and transform existing social structures. This broader conceptualization accommodates the diversity and complexity inherent in youthhood and acknowledges their role as both contributors and challengers in society.

## Youth Empowerment

Numerous scholars have provided valuable insights into the concept of youth empowerment, for instance, Zeb-Obipi (2024) defines youth empowerment as a multifaceted process that enables young individuals to take control of their lives by acquiring skills, knowledge, and support. This empowerment encompasses education, economic opportunities, social participation, psychological resilience, and political engagement, aiming to foster self-reliance and active citizenship among the youth. The definition does not explicitly address the role of contextual and structural factors such as cultural norms, systemic inequalities, and access to digital technologies that critically influence the extent and nature of empowerment experienced by youth. Additionally, the dynamic and intersectional nature of youth identities, which shape empowerment processes differently across gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and geographical location, is not sufficiently emphasized. This omission limits the ability of the definition to fully capture the complexity of youth empowerment in diverse socio-political environments. An effective definition of youth empowerment should integrate both individual capacities and the broader socio-structural contexts that enable or constrain empowerment. Thus, youth empowerment is best defined as a holistic, inclusive, and transformative process aimed at fostering self-determination, social justice, and active citizenship in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Moreover, Omeje, Chikere and Onuoha (2020) describe youth empowerment as a process that fosters self-confidence, critical thinking, and a sense of agency among youth. This empowerment equips young individuals to navigate and influence their socio-environmental contexts effectively, thereby enhancing their personal and collective agency. Their definition tends to emphasize individual-level attributes without sufficiently addressing the structural and systemic conditions that enable or constrain empowerment. Specifically, the conceptualization lacks a nuanced engagement with the socio-political and economic dynamics that shape youths' access to opportunities and resources. Furthermore, the definition does not explicitly account for the diverse contexts and identities such as gender, class, or geographic location that influence the empowerment experience. From a broader perspective, youth empowerment should not be limited to the internal development of agency or cognitive capacities but must also encompass the transformation of external systems and structures that either facilitate or hinder meaningful participation. Therefore, youth empowerment is defined as a dynamic, context-specific process that involves both the development of individual capacities (e.g., critical consciousness, self-efficacy) and the restructuring of socio-political environments to allow for equitable access, inclusive participation, and sustained engagement in decision-making processes. In view of the foregoing, Youth empowerment is defined in this study as a multidimensional, inclusive, and transformative process that enables young people to gain the knowledge, skills, opportunities, and systemic support necessary to become active agents of socio-economic and political development. It must balance personal autonomy such as critical thinking, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurship with the structural transformation of barriers that hinder youth inclusion and participation.

## Employment Generation

Ijiwole (2020) defines employment generation as the result of social entrepreneurship initiatives that address social problems and create jobs by providing sustainable solutions to community challenges, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation. This definition primarily emphasizes the social entrepreneurship context. It does not fully account for other significant drivers of employment generation, such as public policy interventions, private sector innovation, technological advancement, and macroeconomic conditions. Additionally, Ijiwole's perspective situates employment generation as a by-product of social change, rather than as a multidimensional process that can also emerge independently through market-driven forces and institutional frameworks.

Olu, Adeyemi and Nwosu (2023) argue that employment generation in Nigeria can be achieved by encouraging youth participation in agriculture, emphasizing the need for awareness campaigns and technological support to attract young people to the sector. Their definition appears to adopt a sector-specific and interventionist approach. This perspective, though valuable, overlooks the multifaceted nature of employment generation, particularly in a dynamic and evolving labor market influenced by globalization, digitalization, and urbanization. By focusing predominantly on agriculture, the authors potentially understate the significance of diversified employment strategies across sectors such as technology, services, and creative industries, which are increasingly relevant to the aspirations and skillsets of the Nigerian youth. In light of the above, this study defines employment generation as the implementation of social entrepreneurship initiatives that tackle social problems and offer sustainable solutions to community challenges, thereby contributing to the creation of long-term job opportunities.

## 2.0 Empirical Review of Related Studies

Obih (2019) examined the role of small business enterprises in fostering youth empowerment within Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. Anchored on the Youth Empowerment and Small Business Development Theory, the study posited a link between entrepreneurial participation and economic as well as social empowerment. Employing descriptive analysis, the findings revealed that small business enterprises significantly enhance youth empowerment and contribute to reducing unemployment, thereby underscoring their relevance to sustainable economic development. Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its narrow focus on a single local government area and its exclusion of broader institutional dynamics shaping youth employment across Nasarawa State. Notably, the research does not consider the operational effectiveness of the Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Agency (NAYEA), particularly in relation to employment generation initiatives implemented between 2014 and 2024. Consequently, the study provides limited insight into the interaction between state-led empowerment programmes and local entrepreneurial activities in addressing youth unemployment.

In a related investigation, Muogbo and John (2018) assessed the impact of entrepreneurial skills on youth unemployment in Anambra State, using ABC Transport Company as a case study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, administering 160 questionnaires and employing simple percentages and chi-square statistics for analysis. The authors found that entrepreneurial skills acquisition plays a critical role in enhancing youth employment prospects, indicating that targeted entrepreneurial training can support the establishment and growth of small enterprises in local communities. They recommended policy reforms aimed at reducing corruption, strengthening entrepreneurial education, and providing government-supported training platforms such as workshops and seminars. Although the study provides

valuable insights into the relationship between entrepreneurial development and youth employment, it remains contextually limited to Anambra State.

Similarly, Asogwa and Dim (2016) explored the nexus between entrepreneurship development and unemployment reduction in five local government areas in Anambra State. Drawing data from 150 youths selected through convenience sampling, the study tested four hypotheses examining the relationships between entrepreneurship training, entrepreneurial traits, entrepreneurship empowerment, and unemployment reduction, as well as the challenges impeding effective unemployment reduction. Using statistical tests, the researchers reported significant positive relationships for all three dimensions of entrepreneurship with unemployment reduction. They recommended that government reduce the cost of doing business and encourage youth participation in entrepreneurial ventures. However, the study is limited by its focus on a state outside Nasarawa and its exclusion of formal empowerment institutions, including NAYEA that might influence youth employment outcomes within a state level policy framework.

At the national level, Agaecheta, Bello, and Yusuf (2024) evaluated the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) to understand its impact on youth employability in Nigeria. Guided by employability theory, the authors adopted a mixed-methods approach comprising participant surveys and interviews with programme administrators. The study revealed that GIS had minimal impact on improving employability skills and work experience among participants, highlighting the need for structural revisions to the programme. While the study provides a critical assessment of a major federal-level intervention, it does not examine how such national programmes interact with state-level youth empowerment initiatives. Particularly, it overlooks the role of NAYEA and its employment programmes implemented between 2014 and 2024, thus leaving a knowledge gap regarding the effectiveness of state-driven employment strategies in Nasarawa State in relation to national schemes.

Musa, Lawal, and Halilu (2022) conducted an empirical study on youth empowerment schemes across Niger, Kaduna, and Zamfara States, focusing on their influence on self-reliance and poverty alleviation. Utilizing structured questionnaires and analysing responses from 442 valid respondents using Partial Least Squares (PLS), the authors found a positive and significant impact of youth empowerment initiatives on beneficiaries' standard of living and self-reliance. The study recommended enhanced inter-agency coordination, increased community involvement, and the provision of adequate funding to improve programme outcomes. Although instructive, the study does not include Nasarawa State, nor does it examine the performance of NAYEA specifically, thereby limiting its applicability to state-specific empowerment frameworks.

Further, Waziri and Idris (2022) assessed youth empowerment programmes (YEP) as a mechanism for poverty alleviation and national development in Nigeria. Using a qualitative methodology grounded in secondary data analysis, the authors argued that the effectiveness of YEP has been constrained by macroeconomic challenges such as low GDP growth, recurrent recessions, and declining investment levels. Their findings indicate that YEP has made only marginal contributions to poverty reduction, partly due to high unemployment and implementation gaps. They recommended restructuring youth empowerment initiatives to prioritize vocational skills development aimed at improving self-employment opportunities. While the study provides broad national insights, it does not address state-specific agencies like NAYEA, nor does it explore employment outcomes within Nasarawa State.

In a related contribution, Adegun (2024) undertook an empirical analysis of the effects of youth empowerment practices on national development in Nigeria. Using a survey approach,

the study identified a significant and positive relationship between educational empowerment and national development, with additional dimensions such as employment facilitation and financial support also showing positive but weaker correlations. The findings suggest heterogeneity in the effectiveness of youth empowerment components, thereby emphasizing the need to realign such programmes with current socio-economic realities in Nigeria. Although relevant to understanding youth empowerment broadly, the study does not evaluate empowerment agencies or assess the employment-generating impact of programmes such as those implemented by NAYEA.

Collectively, the reviewed studies highlight the multifaceted role of entrepreneurship, training, and empowerment programmes in addressing youth unemployment. However, they also reveal a substantial gap in empirical literature concerning the state-level evaluation of youth empowerment agencies in Nasarawa State. None of the studies engage directly with the activities, effectiveness, or employment outcomes of NAYEA. This omission underscores the necessity of empirical investigations that focus specifically on NAYEA's contributions to employment generation, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of youth empowerment within the state.

## 2.1 Theoretical framework

This paper adopts Human Capital Theory. The theory was developed and popularized by economists such as Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker in the 1960s. The central idea of human capital theory is that investments in education, training, and healthcare improve the skills of individuals, making them more productive and valuable to the economy. This human investment leads to higher wages, better employment opportunities, and overall economic growth. The theory contrasts with traditional views that focused primarily on physical capital (machinery, land, etc.) as the driver of economic growth. According to human capital theory, enhancing the abilities and potential of individuals is equally important as investing in physical capital.

This theory is relevance to the study of Nasarawa state youth empowerment and employment generation because it explains how empowerment of the youth through education, skills acquisition contributes to employment generation and economic growth. NAYEA plays a key role in this regard, government can invest in equipping young people with employable skills. These skills may include vocational training, entrepreneurship, and technical skills that align with the state's development needs. By providing these opportunities, the agency helps young individuals increase their human capital, making them more capable of contributing to area of traffic management, environmental sanitation, Community watch, and security surveillance.

## 3.0 Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method research design. The focus of the study is the Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Agency (NAYEA) and employment generation. The total population of two thousand eight hundred and eighty-five (2,885) was derived from staff members, beneficiaries of NAYES, and other relevant stakeholders across nine (9) selected local government areas in Nasarawa State, namely: Awe, Keana, Lafia, Nasarawa Eggon, Akwanga, Keffi, Toto, and Karu. To determine the sample size, the study employed Yamane's (1967) sample size determination formula commonly used in the social sciences, arriving at a sample size of 400. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered, out of which 383 were correctly completed and retrieved for analysis. A purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized. The primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. In-depth interviews were also conducted

with key informants, including agency directors, program coordinators, and community leaders. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages.

### 3.1 Data Analysis and Presentation of Result

Demographic Distribution of Respondents: Table 1 below is a compound table containing the demographic characteristics of respondents. It covers the age distribution, sex, marital status and literacy level information of the respondents. All the information were summarized and presented in a single and simplified in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Beneficiaries of the Programme

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-29	275	71.80%
30-39	94	24.54%
40-49	14	3.66%
50 and above	0	0.00%
Total	383	100
Gender		
Male	262	68.41%
Female	121	31.59%
Total	383	100
Marital Status		
Married	102	26.63%
Single	271	70.76%
Divorce/Widow	10	2.61%
Total	383	100
Literacy Level		
No formal western education	35	9.14%
Primary	68	17.75%
O'Level	147	38.38%
Tertiary	133	34.73%
Total	383	100

Source: Field Work, August, 2025

Age Distribution: As table 1 above shows 275 of the respondents representing 71.80% were between 18-29 years of age: 94 respondents representing 24.54% were within the age bracket of 30-39, while 14 respondents representing 3.66% were between the ages of 40-49 years. None of the respondents fell within the bracket of 50 years and above. This implies that the majority of the beneficiaries of the programme were youths aged 18 to 39 years. In other words, it can be argued that most beneficiaries of NAYEA were Youth aged 18 – 39 years.

Gender Distribution: As the table 1 shows, 262 respondents representing 68.41%, were males, while 121 representing 31.59% were females. This suggests that, most of the beneficiaries of the programme were males and it also shows that males were more involved in NAYEA than their female counterpart. It can therefore be inferred that there were more male as beneficiaries of the NAYEA Programme than females.

Marital Status: In terms of marital status, table 1 indicates that 102 of the respondents, representing 26.63% were married, while 271 respondents representing 70.76% were singled, and 10 respondents representing 2.61% who are divorced or widowed.



Literacy Level: The literacy level of the respondents indicates that 35 respondents representing 9.14%, did not attend any formal western education while 68 respondents representing 17.75% attended only primary school. The table also indicates that 147 respondents, representing 38.38%, had attended secondary school: 133 respondents representing 34.73% had attained post-secondary school education.

Table 2. Socioeconomic income of respondents before and after joining Nasarawa state youth empowerment agency (NAYEA)

Socioeconomic income before joining NAYEA	Frequency	Percentage
10,000-20,000	296	77.28%
21,000-30,000	87	22.72%
31,000-40,000	0	0.00%
41,000-50,000	0	0.00%
51,000 and above	0	0.00%
Total	383	100
Socioeconomic income after joining NAYEA		
10,000-20,000	0	0.00%
21,000-30,000	348	90.86%
31,000-40,000	35	9.14%
41,000-50,000	0	0.00%
51,000 and above	0	0.00%
Total	383	100

Source: Field Work, August, 2025

Table 2 above is showing the respondent's income earnings before and after the implementation of the NAYEA. For instance, the table displayed the income earning of the respondents prior to the introduction of NAYEA which shows the first category of respondents earns a monthly income between ₦10,000 to ₦20,000 with a frequency rate of 296 representing 77.28% of the total number of respondents, while the second categories of the respondents also earn a monthly income between ₦21, 000 to ₦30,000 have 87 frequency rate representing 22.72% of the total respondents respectively. Notably, no respondents reported earnings above ₦30,000. This distribution indicates that the overwhelming majority of the participants were situated in the low-income bracket, reflecting limited access to stable or gainful employment prior to their involvement with NAYEA. This economic vulnerability underscores the necessity of state-sponsored interventions aimed at youth economic empowerment and employment generation. Following their participation in NAYEA initiatives, there was a marked shift in the income distribution among respondents. The frequency rate of 348 representing 90.86% reported monthly earnings in the range of ₦21,000 to ₦30,000, while a further frequency of 35 representing 9.14% reported earnings between ₦31,000 and ₦40,000. It is particularly significant that none of the respondents remained in the lowest income bracket of ₦10,000-₦20,000 post-participation. This shift suggests a substantial upward movement in income levels, which may be attributed to improved employment opportunities by the NAYEA programme.

The comparative analysis clearly demonstrates a positive impact of NAYEA on youth income levels, thereby supporting the proposition that the agency has contributed meaningfully to employment generation in Nasarawa State. This finding aligns with the insights gathered from an interview conducted with the General Manager of NAYEA on 12th August 2025, who stated that the agency was established to address the high rate of youth unemployment in the state and to provide a stipend aimed at enhancing their overall wellbeing.

Table 3. What was your employment status before joining the NAYEA program?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	0	0.00%
Unemployed	288	75.20%
Self-employed	69	18.02%
Student	26	6.79%
Other (please specify)	0	0.00%
Total	383	100

Source: Field Work, August, 2025

Table 3, shows the baseline employment status of participants prior to their involvement in the Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Agency (NAYEA). The first option indicates that no respondents were employed. A total of 288 respondents, representing 75.20%, were unemployed before enrolling in the NAYEA program; 69 respondents representing 18.02% reported being self-employed, while 26 respondents representing 6.79% were students. No respondent selected "Other." This high pre-program unemployment rate underscores the relevance and necessity of targeted youth empowerment initiatives in the state. This finding aligns with national trends indicating high youth unemployment in Nigeria, particularly in states with limited industrial activity and formal sector job creation. The data suggest that before the intervention of NAYEA, many youths in Nasarawa State faced limited access to stable, income-generating opportunities. The baseline data presented above reinforce the urgency and importance of youth-targeted employment programs in Nasarawa State. The overwhelming prevalence of unemployment among respondents prior to joining NAYEA justifies the agency's establishment and provides a foundation for evaluating its success.

Table 4. Which of the following NAYEA programs are you familiar with or have benefited from?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Traffic management	178	46.48%
Environmental sanitation	131	34.21%
Community watch, and security surveillance	74	19.32%
Total	383	100

Source: Field Work, August, 2025

Table 4 presents the distribution of employment opportunities generated by the Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Agency (NAYEA) across three distinct sectors: traffic management, environmental sanitation, and community watch/security surveillance. It is evident that 178 respondents, representing 46.48%, were engaged in traffic management; 131 respondents, representing 34.21%, were involved in environmental sanitation; while 74 respondents, representing 19.32%, were employed in community watch and security surveillance.

Table 5. Do you agree NAYEA has improved the economic wellbeing of youths in Nasarawa State?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	155	40.47%
Agree	108	28.21%
Strongly Disagree	53	13.84%
Disagree	67	17.49%
Undecided	0	0.00%
Total	383	100

Source: Field Work, August, 2025

Table 5 shows whether NAYEA has improved the economic wellbeing of the Youths in Nasarawa state, 155 respondents representing 40.47% strongly agreed and 108 respondents representing 28.21% agreed that the agency has contributed positively to improving the economic conditions of youths in the state. On the other hand, 53 respondents representing 13.84% strongly disagree, 67 respondents representing 17.49% disagree with the statement. It is noteworthy that no respondents selected the undecided option, suggesting that most participants had a definitive opinion regarding the agency's impact.

These findings suggest that NAYEA's programs and activities have had a measurable positive impact on youth economic wellbeing, as perceived by a significant majority of beneficiaries. This aligns with the agency's mandate to reduce youth unemployment and promote economic self-reliance through job placement initiatives. In other words, the above analysis is in concordance with the opinion of Ajayi (2025), who stated that any youth empowerment programme is designed to address issues of unemployment and transform youth into productive assets for the development of the state.

Table 6. How satisfied are you with the overall support (training, funding, mentoring) provided by NAYEA?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfied	94	24.54%
Satisfied	45	11.75%
Neutral	0	0.00%
Dissatisfied	132	34.47%
Very dissatisfied	112	29.24%
Total	383	100

Source: Field Work, August, 2025

Table 6 shows 94 respondents representing 24.54% expressed very satisfied, 45 respondents representing 11.75% were satisfied with the question raised in term of overall support provided by the Agency. In the other hand, 132 respondents representing 34.47% were dissatisfied, 112 respondents representing 29.24% show very dissatisfied with the agency's delivery of training, funding, and mentoring. This suggests significant discontent with the quality, adequacy, or accessibility of the support mechanisms that are foundational to any effective youth empowerment initiative. It is noteworthy that no respondents selected the neutral option, implying that respondents had strong and decisive opinions either positive or negative about their experiences with NAYEA.

These findings are critical because the effectiveness of empowerment programs is not solely measured by employment rates, but also by the satisfaction and perceived usefulness of the support services provided. If beneficiaries perceive these services as inadequate or poorly delivered, the long-term sustainability and impact of such initiatives may be compromised. Based on the prevailing opinions, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the overall support provided in terms of training, funding, and mentoring by NAYEA. This aligns with the view of Omaka & James (2021), who argued that inadequate training, funding, and mentoring are organizational factors contributing to poor service delivery in Nigeria's public sector. The training and financial support required by most marshals to boost their morale are noticeably lacking. As a result, youths recruited under the Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Agency may struggle to effectively carry out their duties in traffic management, environmental sanitation, community watch, and security surveillance within their respective communities in the state.

Table 7. Has your ability to meet basic needs (food, housing, education, health) improved since your involvement with NAYEA?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Significantly improved	176	45.96%
Slightly improved	196	51.17%
No improvement	11	2.87%
Worsened	0	0.00%
Total	383	100

Source: Field Work, August, 2025

Table 7 shows analysis of Respondents' Perception of NAYEA's Impact on Their Ability to Meet Basic Needs, 176 respondents representing 45.96% indicated a significant improvement, while 196 respondents representing 51.17% reported a slight improvement in their ability to meet basic needs. These findings strongly suggest that NAYEA's interventions have had a positive and measurable impact on the socio-economic well-being of youth beneficiaries. In contrast, 11 respondents representing 2.87% reported no improvement and no respondents indicated that their ability to meet basic needs had worsened.

From an evaluative perspective, the overwhelmingly positive response supports the assertion that NAYEA is achieving its core mandate of enhancing youth livelihoods and economic security. This assertion is corroborated by oral testimony given during an interview conducted on 27th August 2025 with Abubakar Bala, a beneficiary of NAYEA. He stated that through his involvement with NAYEA, he was able to use the small stipend to buy food and meet other basic needs. However, he further noted that while the stipend is small, he urged the government to increase it to better align with the current economic reality.

#### 4.0 Discussion of findings

- i. The study finds that a substantial majority of youths perceive the interventions of the Nasarawa Youth Empowerment Agency (NAYEA) as having significantly enhanced their economic wellbeing and capacity to meet basic needs. A significant majority of 68% of respondents strongly agree that NAYEA has improved their economic wellbeing. This suggests that beyond simply providing job placements, the program has contributed to improving income stability and reducing economic vulnerability among youths. These findings indicate a strong link between

- participation in NAYEA programs and improved individual livelihoods, which serves as a critical indicator of employment generation.
- ii. While the program's employment and income-related outcomes are largely positive, the findings also reveal substantial dissatisfaction with the support services, namely training, funding, and mentoring. The data show that 63.71% of respondents were dissatisfied and expressed negative views about the adequacy and quality of these support mechanisms. This indicates that although NAYEA successfully provides employment opportunities, it appears to underperform in the crucial areas of capacity building and professional development. Because support services are central to the long-term success of any empowerment initiative, deficiencies in these areas may limit youths' ability to achieve sustainable livelihood improvements.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The effect of Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Agency (NAYEA) on employment generation in Nasarawa State has been both notable and multifaceted. It serves as a strategic governmental initiative aimed at addressing the longstanding and pervasive challenge of youth unemployment. NAYEA has made tangible contributions to improving the employability and economic self-reliance of many young people across the state. Its efforts have not only provided direct job opportunities but have also promoted youth inclusiveness in state development processes. However, despite these achievements, the overall effectiveness of NAYEA has been constrained by institutional challenges such as inadequate funding, limited programme reach, weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and inconsistent policy implementation. These limitations hinder the agency's ability to scale up its interventions and sustain long-term employment outcomes.

## 5.1 Recommendations

- i. Given the positive effect of NAYEA's interventions on the economic wellbeing of the youth, the agency should consider expanding the reach of these programs to cover more beneficiaries across different local government areas. Additionally, diversifying the programs to include a wider range of vocational and entrepreneurial opportunities can help cater to different interests and economic contexts, thereby deepening their impact.
- ii. To address the dissatisfaction expressed by beneficiaries, NAYEA should revamp its support structures by enhancing the quality and relevance of training programs, establishing clearer and more transparent processes for accessing funding, and developing a structured mentoring system that pairs experienced professionals with youth participants. This will ensure more holistic and sustained empowerment outcomes.

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