



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

## Assessing the Interplay Between Career Advancement, Career Intentions, and Government Policy in Reducing Unemployment in Nigeria

Suleiman, R<sup>1</sup>., Jinjiri, K. R<sup>2</sup>., & Gorondutse, A. H<sup>3</sup>

Email: [rsgkn@gmail.com](mailto:rsgkn@gmail.com)

<sup>1,2</sup>Maryam Abacha American University of Niger, Maradi, Niger Republic.

<sup>3</sup>Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil, Kano State

### Abstract

Unemployment remains a major socio-economic challenge in Nigeria, despite numerous government interventions aimed at reducing its prevalence. This study evaluates the interplay between career advancement, career intentions, and government policy in addressing unemployment reduction. Drawing on Human Capital Theory, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Policy Feedback Theory, the study employed a cross-sectional survey design with a sample of 460 respondents drawn from youths and graduates across Nigeria, including beneficiaries of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF). Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that career advancement had both significant direct and indirect effects on unemployment reduction through government policy, while career intentions influenced unemployment only indirectly via government policy. Government policy itself was found to play a critical mediating role, confirming that policy interventions are essential for transforming individual career development and aspirations into tangible labor market outcomes. The model explained 70.3% ( $R^2 = 0.703$ ) of the variance in unemployment reduction, indicating strong explanatory power. The study concludes that unemployment in Nigeria cannot be addressed solely by individual career efforts or government interventions in isolation, but requires integrated strategies that align personal career development with enabling policy frameworks. It recommends strengthening national programs such as NDE and NYIF, aligning education with labor market needs, and expanding access to finance and entrepreneurial opportunities. These findings provide theoretical, policy, and practical insights for addressing Nigeria's unemployment crisis and advancing inclusive growth.

**Keywords:** Career Advancement, Career Intentions, Government Policy, Unemployment Reduction, Nigeria, PLS-SEM

### Introduction

Unemployment has remained one of Nigeria's most pressing socio-economic challenges, with millions of youths and graduates unable to secure decent and sustainable jobs (Akinbola, 2024). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), the unemployment rate continues to fluctuate at alarming levels, exacerbating poverty, insecurity, and social unrest. While education is often regarded as a pathway to employment, studies have revealed a persistent mismatch between academic qualifications and labor market requirements, creating a gap that hinders smooth school-to-work transitions (Adejumo, Asongu, & Adejumo, 2021; Adely et al., 2021). This



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

highlights the importance of examining how individual career advancement and intentions interact with institutional mechanisms like government policy in shaping employment outcomes.

Career advancement, which involves the development of skills, competencies, and work experiences, is widely recognized as a key driver of employability. In Nigeria, entrepreneurship education, vocational training, and skills acquisition initiatives have been promoted as strategies to equip young people with employable skills (Aleru & Isi, 2024; Isa & Inuwa, 2024). However, the actual translation of career advancement opportunities into reduced unemployment depends not only on individual efforts but also on the enabling environment shaped by government policy. Without appropriate policies to support industries, regulate labor markets, and stimulate enterprise growth, career advancement alone may not produce the expected outcomes in unemployment reduction. Career intentions, which reflect the aspirations and planned career paths of individuals, also play an important role in employment dynamics. Nigerian youths often aspire to either secure public sector jobs or pursue entrepreneurship, yet such intentions are often hindered by structural barriers, lack of financial access, and weak institutional frameworks (Ojo & Okwilagwe, 2024; Osabohien et al., 2023). While intentions may be positive, without alignment with labor market realities and government policy support, such career orientations may fail to yield sustainable outcomes. Therefore, it becomes critical to assess the extent to which career intentions contribute directly or indirectly to unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

Government policy serves as a crucial mediating factor in addressing unemployment challenges. Policies targeting entrepreneurship development, skills acquisition, and job creation have been introduced in Nigeria, yet their effectiveness remains contested (Agunowei & Blanchard, 2022; Salami, Ekakitie, & Ebinim, 2023). Initiatives such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) have sought to bridge the unemployment gap, but implementation challenges and governance weaknesses often limit their impact (Amuzie, 2024; Fajimi, 2025). Furthermore, comparative evidence from other countries shows that government expenditure and supportive policies can significantly reduce unemployment when effectively implemented (Abouelfarag & Qutb, 2021; Mawutor, 2024).

Given these realities, understanding the interplay between career advancement, career intentions, and government policy becomes essential in tackling Nigeria's unemployment crisis. This study therefore seeks to evaluate how career-related factors interact with policy frameworks to influence unemployment reduction outcomes. Hence, it not only highlights the direct and indirect effects of career advancement and career intentions on unemployment but also emphasizes the pivotal role of government policy as a mediating force. Insights from this study are expected to provide practical commendations for policymakers, educational institutions, and labor market stakeholders in developing integrated approaches to reduce unemployment in Nigeria. Despite multiple interventions, unemployment in Nigeria remains persistently high, raising questions about the effectiveness of existing policies and career development initiatives. While several studies have examined the role of education, skills, and entrepreneurship in addressing unemployment, limited empirical attention has been given to how career advancement and career intentions interact with government policies to shape employment outcomes (Aleru & Isi, 2024; Osabohien et al., 2023). This lack of integrated analysis creates a knowledge gap in understanding whether individuals' career pathways, combined with policy support, actually contribute to meaningful reductions in unemployment.



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

Moreover, evidence suggests that career intentions alone may not guarantee employment outcomes if not matched with supportive government frameworks and economic opportunities (Ojo & Okwilagwe, 2024; Agunowei & Blanchard, 2022). For instance, while young Nigerians increasingly pursue entrepreneurial intentions, structural constraints such as poor access to finance, weak institutional support, and governance inefficiencies hinder the realization of these aspirations (Metu & Nwogwugwu, 2024; Bello, Yahaya, & Adamu, 2024).

Despite the vast literature on unemployment in Nigeria, limited empirical attention has been given to how career advancement and career intentions interact with government policy to influence unemployment reduction (Udochukwu, 2024). Most studies examine these variables in isolation, thereby neglecting the interplay between personal career factors and institutional frameworks that mediate labor market outcomes (Bello, Yahaya, & Adamu, 2024; Aniebonam, 2023). Addressing this gap is critical, as evidence suggests that intentions and advancement efforts require enabling environments to produce sustainable employment results. Over the past five years, Nigeria's unemployment rate has shown fluctuating yet generally declining trends, underscoring the timeliness of this research. According to recent data, the unemployment rate stood at 5.74% in 2020, 5.45% in 2021, 3.82% in 2022, 3.07% in 2023, and 2.99% in 2024 (NBS, 2025). Although these figures suggest improvement, underemployment and informal work remain widespread, masking the real severity of labour market distress. These statistics reinforce the need to understand how career advancement opportunities, entrepreneurial intentions, and supportive government policies can jointly drive sustainable employment and economic growth in Nigeria.

Therefore, this study evaluates the interplay between career advancement, career intentions, and government policy in addressing unemployment challenges in Nigeria. Specifically, it investigates the direct and indirect effects of career-related factors on unemployment reduction, with government policy positioned as a mediating mechanism. Thus, integrating human capital perspectives with policy feedback insights, the study contributes to both theory and practice, offering implications for policymakers, educational institutions, and labor market stakeholders.

## Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Unemployment in Nigeria has persisted despite numerous interventions, highlighting the need to examine both individual and institutional factors that shape employment outcomes. Career advancement and career intentions are increasingly recognized as critical drivers of employability, yet their effectiveness is often constrained by structural barriers and limited policy support. Government policy serves as a mediating mechanism that can transform individual aspirations and skills into tangible labor market participation. Prior studies in Nigeria and other developing economies suggest that integrated approaches are more effective than isolated interventions in tackling unemployment. This section therefore reviews the conceptual, empirical, and theoretical foundations linking career advancement, career intentions, and government policy to unemployment reduction.

## Career Advancement and Employment Outcomes

Career advancement, which encompasses the acquisition of skills, training, and professional growth opportunities, is a critical determinant of employability and sustainable economic participation. In the Nigerian context, entrepreneurship education and skills acquisition



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

programs have been deliberately implemented to foster self-reliance, innovation, and enterprise creation among graduates (Aleru & Isi, 2024; Isa & Inuwa, 2024). This study takes the position that career advancement plays a pivotal role in reducing unemployment, as individuals with enhanced competencies are better equipped to either secure formal employment or create their own economic opportunities. Nevertheless, the translation of these initiatives into tangible employment outcomes has been undermined by weak institutional support and inconsistent policy implementation. As Bello, Yahaya, and Adamu (2024) argue, the effectiveness of entrepreneurship and career programs depends largely on the presence of a coherent policy environment and adequate access to financial and infrastructural resources. Therefore, this study asserts that without strategic government backing and policy coherence, career advancement efforts will continue to yield limited impact on unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

### **Career Intentions and Labor Market Participation**

Career intentions, defined as individuals' aspirations and planned employment paths, play an important role in shaping labor market outcomes. Nigerian graduates often express strong intentions toward entrepreneurship or public sector employment, but these intentions are hindered by financial exclusion, weak institutional support, and mismatches between aspirations and market realities (Ojo & Okwilagwe, 2024; Osabohien et al., 2023). Evidence from comparative studies suggests that while career intentions positively influence entrepreneurial engagement, they require enabling mechanisms such as access to credit and structured policy frameworks to translate into sustainable employment (Aniebonam, 2023). Thus, in the Nigerian context, intentions alone may be insufficient, making it necessary to examine how they interact with government policy in influencing unemployment reduction.

### **Government Policy and Unemployment Reduction**

Government policy remains a decisive mediating force in shaping labor market outcomes and determining the success of career development initiatives. Effective policy frameworks not only stimulate enterprise growth and job creation but also serve as the crucial link between education, skills acquisition, and employability (Agunowei & Blanchard, 2022; Salami, Ekakitie, & Ebinim, 2023). This study takes the position that government policy is the primary catalyst for translating individual career advancement into measurable reductions in unemployment. In Nigeria, although programs such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and youth empowerment schemes have been launched, their impact has been constrained by weak implementation and inadequate monitoring mechanisms (Amuzie, 2024; Fajimi, 2025). Evidence from other developing economies reinforces this stance: Abouelfarag and Qutb (2021) demonstrated that public spending in Egypt significantly reduced unemployment, while Mawutor (2024) found that strategic youth employment policies in Ghana produced similar effects. Therefore, this study argues that the effectiveness of career advancement and entrepreneurship efforts in Nigeria is contingent upon a consistent, well-funded, and performance-driven policy environment capable of bridging the persistent education–employment divide.

### **Empirical Studies in Nigeria and Developing Economies**

Empirical research on unemployment in Nigeria consistently shows that the education-to-employment pipeline is weak and requires deliberate policy intervention. Adejumo, Asongu, and



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

Adejumo (2021) found that while education enrollment rates have risen substantially, they do not automatically translate into higher employment outcomes due to poor alignment between curricula and market needs. Aleru and Isi (2024) further emphasized that entrepreneurship education among graduates in Rivers State improved awareness and skill acquisition, but the absence of enabling policies limited its long-term impact on unemployment reduction. Similarly, Isa and Inuwa (2024) reported that skill acquisition programmes implemented by the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Taraba State contributed to job creation but were constrained by inadequate funding and lack of scalability. These findings resonate with Salisu (2024), who examined the Ringim Skills Acquisition Center in Jigawa State and found that despite success in training youths, weak monitoring and limited government support undermined its effectiveness. Collectively, these studies suggest that while career advancement interventions exist, they often fail to achieve their intended outcomes without supportive policy frameworks.

Comparative evidence from other developing economies reinforces the importance of government policy in mediating career advancement and intentions. Abouelfarag and Qutb (2021) demonstrated that government expenditure in Egypt significantly reduced unemployment when strategically allocated to labor-intensive sectors. Similarly, Mawutor (2024) highlighted how Ghana's National Builders Corps (NABCO) and National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Plan (NEIP) successfully reduced graduate unemployment by integrating skill development with policy-backed job placements. Amoa-Gyarteng and Dhliwayo (2024) found that in South Africa, globalization and entrepreneurial development could only reduce unemployment when mediated by supportive institutional environments. In Nigeria, Osabohien, Worgwu, Adediran, and Soomro (2023) argued that social entrepreneurship holds promise for addressing future employment challenges, while Bello, Yahaya, and Adamu (2024) linked youth entrepreneurship to improved security outcomes. The World Bank (2023) similarly affirmed that Nigeria's unemployment problem persists largely due to institutional weaknesses, such as poor access to finance and weak enforcement of entrepreneurship policies. Drawing from these findings, this study asserts that effective, stable, and targeted government policy is the indispensable mediator through which career advancement and entrepreneurial intentions can translate into meaningful, sustainable unemployment reduction in Nigeria and comparable developing economies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on three interrelated theories that provide a robust foundation for analyzing unemployment dynamics in Nigeria. First, Human Capital Theory argues that education, skills, and training enhance individual productivity and employability, thereby contributing to income generation and economic growth (Adejumo, Asongu, & Adejumo, 2021). In the Nigerian context, skill acquisition programs under the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and entrepreneurship education initiatives have been promoted to build human capital, yet their outcomes often fall short due to weak institutional linkages with labor market opportunities (Isa & Inuwa, 2024; Aleru & Isi, 2024). Second, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) highlights how career intentions—driven by attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms—predict employment-related actions. However, in developing economies such as Nigeria, these intentions are often constrained by external barriers including access to finance, infrastructure, and governance weaknesses (Ojo & Okwilagwe, 2024; Osabohien, Worgwu, Adediran, & Soomro, 2023).

Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

Third, Policy Feedback Theory emphasizes that government interventions do more than allocate resources—they shape individual expectations, behaviors, and opportunities in the labor market (Agunowei & Blanchard, 2022). Effective policies such as the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) or targeted entrepreneurship support can convert aspirations into sustainable employment outcomes, while weak or poorly implemented policies limit their impact (Amuzie, 2024; Fajimi, 2025). By integrating these three perspectives, this study provides a multidimensional framework that explains not only how career advancement and intentions influence unemployment reduction, but also why government policy serves as the critical mediator. Such a theoretical synthesis is particularly relevant for Nigeria, where unemployment persists despite large investments in human capital and youth empowerment initiatives (World Bank, 2023; National Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

**Conceptual Framework**



Figure 1 Research Framework

**Methodology**

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to examine the interplay between career advancement, career intentions, and government policy in reducing unemployment in Nigeria. The survey approach was chosen because it allows for systematic data collection from a large population within a short timeframe, providing generalizable insights into the relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The target population comprised Nigerian youths and graduates across the six geo-political zones who were either in the labor market, beneficiaries of government employment interventions such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), or recipients of entrepreneurial support through the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF). These groups were selected because they represent the most active segment of Nigeria’s labor force and the primary targets of government unemployment reduction policies. According to official reports, the NDE has trained over 4.2 million Nigerians since inception, while the NYIF has disbursed loans to approximately 77,000 youths between 2020 and 2023. In total, the study considered a national population base of over 4.27 million individuals as the effective frame for analysis. Using Yamane’s formula (1967) at a 5% margin of error, the minimum required sample size was estimated at 400 respondents. To account for attrition and incomplete responses, the sample size was increased to 460 respondents, proportionally distributed across the six geo-political zones (North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-West, South-East, and South-South). Stratified sampling was used to ensure representation from participants engaged in vocational training, entrepreneurial funding, and small-scale enterprise initiatives. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale measuring constructs such as career advancement, career intentions, perception of government policy, and unemployment reduction.



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

Validity of the instrument was established through expert review and pilot testing, while Cronbach’s alpha confirmed internal consistency, with all constructs exceeding the 0.70 threshold. Secondary data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), World Bank (2023), and official reports on NDE and NYIF complemented the survey findings. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) v. 3.9, an approach well-suited for testing complex relationships and mediation effects (Hair et al., 2022). This analytical framework enabled the study to evaluate the direct and indirect pathways through which career advancement and career intentions influence unemployment reduction in Nigeria, with government policy as the mediating variable.

**Results**

Out of the 460 questionnaires distributed across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria, 428 were returned, representing a 93% response rate, which is considered highly adequate for survey-based studies. The demographic profile of respondents revealed a relatively youthful sample, with 62% aged between 18–30 years, 28% aged 31–40 years, and only 10% above 40 years. In terms of gender distribution, 55% were male and 45% female, reflecting a fairly balanced representation. Educational attainment showed that the majority (64%) held a bachelor’s degree or higher, 26% had diploma-level qualifications, while 10% reported secondary education as their highest level. Employment status indicated that 47% were unemployed graduates actively seeking work, 32% were self-employed or engaged in small businesses, and 21% were employed in either public or private organizations. Regional distribution showed proportional coverage across all six geo-political zones, ensuring national representativeness. These characteristics highlight that the sample effectively captured the active youth labor force in Nigeria, which aligns with the study’s focus on career advancement, career intentions, and government policy as drivers of unemployment reduction.

**Assessment of Measurement Model**

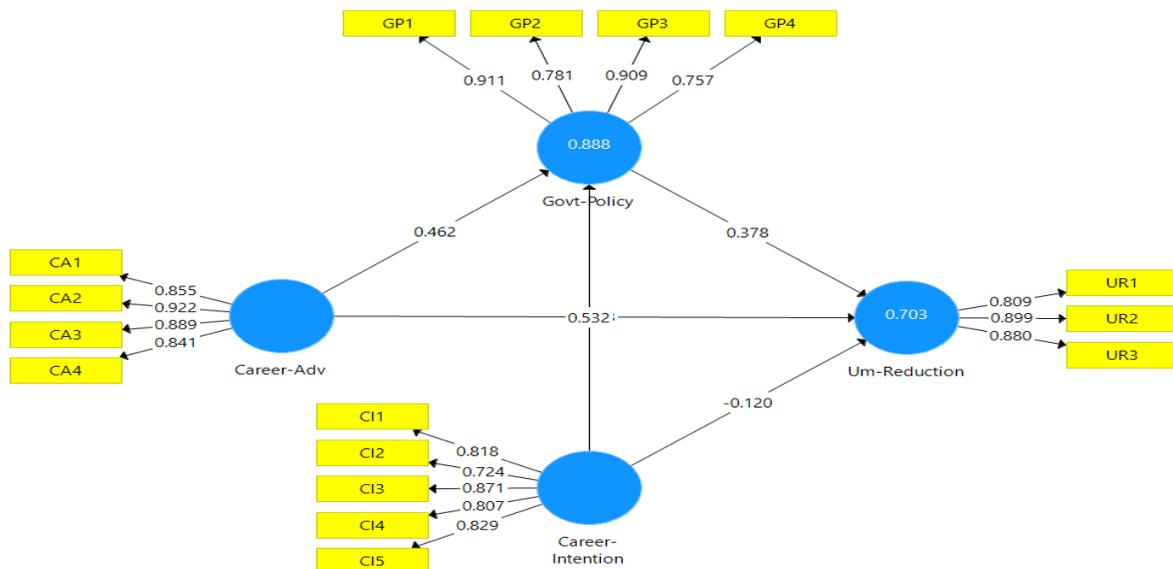


Figure 2 Measurement model

Table 1 Internal Consistency and Convergent Validity



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
CA1	0.855	0.93	0.77
CA2	0.922		
CA3	0.889		
CA4	0.841		
CI1	0.818		
CI2	0.724		
CI3	0.871		
CI4	0.807		
CI5	0.829		
GP1	0.911	0.907	0.71
GP2	0.781		
GP3	0.909		
GP4	0.757		
UR1	0.809	0.898	0.746
UR2	0.899		
UR3	0.88		

Table 1 presents the results of the measurement model assessment, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity across all constructs. Career Advancement (CA) items loaded strongly between 0.841 and 0.922, with a Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.93 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.77, exceeding the recommended thresholds of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively. Career Intention (CI) demonstrated acceptable reliability, with loadings ranging from 0.724 to 0.871, CR of 0.906, and AVE of 0.658, confirming adequate construct validity. Government Policy (GP) also showed strong item loadings (0.757–0.911), CR of 0.907, and AVE of 0.71, while Unemployment Reduction (UR) exhibited loadings between 0.809 and 0.899, CR of 0.898, and AVE of 0.746. These results confirm that all constructs demonstrated both high internal consistency and convergent validity, establishing a robust foundation for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 2 Fornell and Larcker Criterion

	Career-Adv	Career-Intention	Govt-Policy	Um-Reduction
Career-Adv	<b>0.877</b>			
Career-Intention	0.797	<b>0.811</b>		
Govt-Policy	0.386	0.123	<b>0.842</b>	
Um-Reduction	0.427	0.689	0.791	<b>0.863</b>

Table 2 shows the Fornell–Larcker criterion results, which confirm discriminant validity among the study constructs. The square root of the AVE values, displayed on the diagonal (0.877 for Career Advancement, 0.811 for Career Intention, 0.842 for Government Policy, and 0.863 for Unemployment Reduction), are all greater than their corresponding inter-construct correlations. For instance, Career Advancement (0.877) is higher than its correlations with Career Intention



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

(0.797), Government Policy (0.386), and Unemployment Reduction (0.427). Similarly, Government Policy (0.842) exceeds its correlations with Career Advancement (0.386), Career Intention (0.123), and Unemployment Reduction (0.791). These results indicate that each construct is distinct from the others, satisfying the Fornell–Larcker criterion and confirming that the model possesses adequate discriminant validity for subsequent structural analysis.

**Assessment of Structural Model**

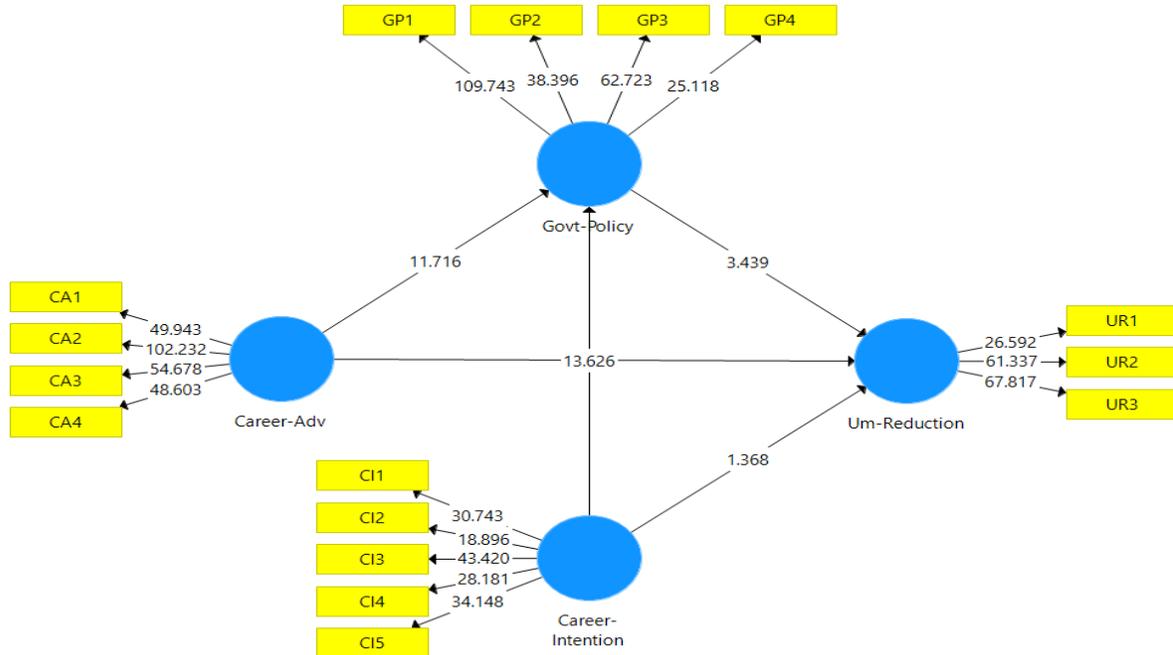


Figure 3 Structural Model  
Table 3 Test of Hypotheses

	Beta	Mean	STDEV	T Stat	P Values	Decision
Career-Adv -> Govt-Policy	0.462	0.462	0.039	11.716	0.000	Support
Career-Adv -> Um-Reduction	0.588	0.574	0.078	7.506	0.000	Support
Career-Intention -> Govt-Policy	0.532	0.532	0.039	13.626	0.000	Support
						Not
Career-Intention -> Um-Reduction	0.12	0.113	0.087	1.368	0.172	Support
Govt-Policy -> Um-Reduction	0.378	0.387	0.11	3.439	0.001	Support
Career-Adv -> Govt-Policy -> Um-Reduction	0.175	0.179	0.054	3.255	0.001	Support
Career-Intention -> Govt-Policy -> Um-Reduction	0.201	0.206	0.06	3.366	0.001	Support

The structural model results in Table 3 demonstrate that career advancement significantly influences government policy ( $\beta = 0.462$ ,  $t = 11.716$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and unemployment reduction ( $\beta = 0.588$ ,  $t = 7.506$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that skill development, training, and professional growth initiatives not only shape perceptions of supportive government policies but also directly contribute to lowering unemployment in Nigeria. These findings are consistent with Isa and Inuwa



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

(2024) who reported that skill acquisition programs under the NDE enhanced employability among youths, and align with Adejumo et al. (2021) who emphasized the role of human capital in addressing Nigeria's unemployment crisis.

Similarly, career intentions significantly predict government policy ( $\beta = 0.532$ ,  $t = 13.626$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that individuals' aspirations and career goals can influence the demand for, and responsiveness of, policy interventions. However, the direct path between career intentions and unemployment reduction was weak and statistically insignificant ( $\beta = 0.120$ ,  $t = 1.368$ ,  $p = 0.172$ ). This implies that while intentions may be strong among Nigerian youths, structural barriers such as access to finance, institutional bottlenecks, and limited economic opportunities hinder their direct translation into employment outcomes (Osabohien et al., 2023; Metu & Nwogwugwu, 2024). This result underscores the need for complementary policies that can transform career aspirations into tangible labor market participation.

Government policy itself was found to be a significant predictor of unemployment reduction ( $\beta = 0.378$ ,  $t = 3.439$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), reinforcing its mediating role. The mediation analysis revealed that government policy significantly transmits the effects of both career advancement ( $\beta = 0.175$ ,  $t = 3.255$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and career intentions ( $\beta = 0.201$ ,  $t = 3.366$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) onto unemployment reduction. This confirms that while individual-level factors are important, their effectiveness depends heavily on enabling policy frameworks. For instance, programs like the NYIF, which provide financing to aspiring entrepreneurs, illustrate how government policy can convert career intentions into real business activities that create jobs (World Bank, 2023; Fajimi, 2025).

The explanatory power of the model, indicated by an  $R^2$  value of 0.703, shows that career advancement, career intentions, and government policy collectively explain 70.3% of the variance in unemployment reduction. This is a strong effect, highlighting the robustness of the model in explaining employment dynamics in Nigeria. The results contribute both theoretically and practically by validating the mediating role of government policy within the human capital and planned behavior frameworks, while also providing evidence that policy interventions are indispensable in translating individual efforts into broad unemployment reduction outcomes. This finding aligns with comparative studies in Egypt (Abouelfarag & Qutb, 2021) and Ghana (Mawutor, 2024), further strengthening the case for integrated policy approaches in developing economies.

## Discussions

The findings of this study highlight the strong role of career advancement in shaping employment outcomes in Nigeria. The significant positive effects of career advancement on both government policy and unemployment reduction suggest that skill acquisition, vocational training, and professional growth initiatives are central to addressing Nigeria's unemployment crisis. This result supports Human Capital Theory, which argues that investments in education and skills enhance individual productivity and employability (Adejumo et al., 2021). However, the results also show that career advancement is not sufficient on its own; rather, it achieves greater impact when aligned with policy frameworks that enable the labor market to absorb skilled individuals. The results regarding career intentions present an important nuance. While career intentions were strongly linked to government policy, their direct influence on unemployment reduction was weak and statistically insignificant. This aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991),



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

which emphasizes that intentions are only precursors to behavior and require supportive conditions to translate into actual outcomes. In Nigeria, many young people aspire to entrepreneurship or public sector employment, but lack of access to finance, institutional bottlenecks, and unstable economic environments prevent these intentions from materializing into employment (Osabohien et al., 2023; Metu & Nwogwugwu, 2024). Thus, without enabling mechanisms, career intentions remain aspirational rather than transformative.

Government policy emerged as a critical mediator in this study, confirming its role as the bridge between individual efforts and unemployment reduction. The significant mediation paths demonstrate that supportive policies are required to convert both career advancement and career intentions into tangible employment outcomes. This finding resonates with Policy Feedback Theory, which suggests that policies do more than provide resources—they shape individuals’ expectations, behaviors, and opportunities (Agunowei & Blanchard, 2022). For instance, the effectiveness of initiatives such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) illustrates how government interventions can create platforms for youth empowerment, entrepreneurial funding, and job creation when properly managed.

The explanatory power of the model ( $R^2 = 0.703$ ) demonstrates that the interaction of career advancement, career intentions, and government policy explains more than 70% of the variance in unemployment reduction, a substantial contribution in social science research. This finding strengthens the argument that unemployment in Nigeria cannot be addressed through individual or institutional efforts in isolation but requires integrated strategies. Comparisons with other developing economies further validate this conclusion; evidence from Egypt (Abouelfarag & Qutb, 2021) and Ghana (Mawutor, 2024) also show that well-structured government policies amplify the effects of skills development and individual aspirations on labor market outcomes. Therefore, for Nigeria to make meaningful progress in reducing unemployment, career development initiatives must be systematically integrated with robust policy frameworks that create enabling environments for sustainable employment.

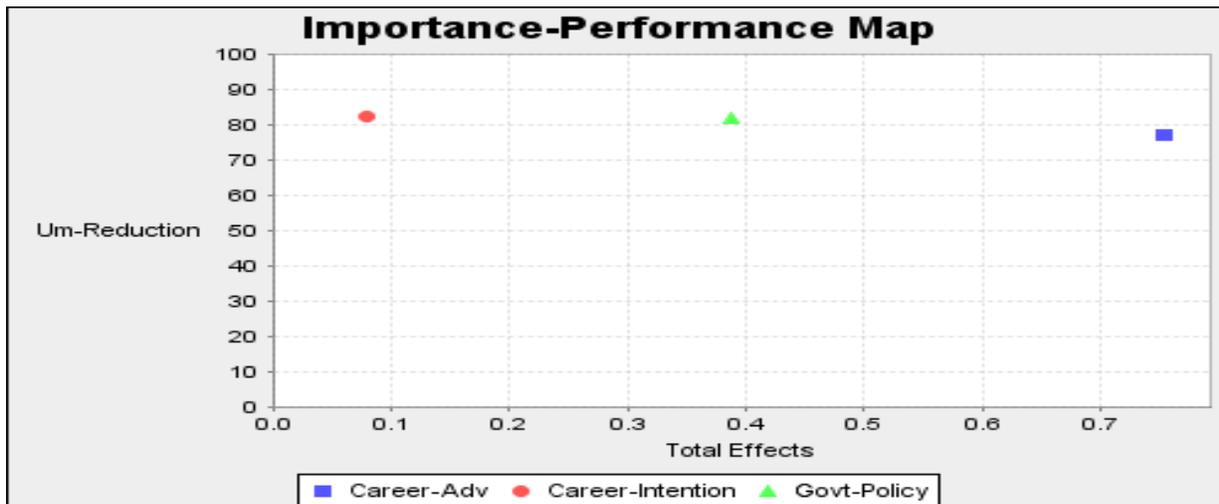


Figure 4 IPMA



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

The Importance–Performance Map reveals that Career Advancement (blue square) has the highest total effect on unemployment reduction ( $\approx 0.70$ ) with strong performance levels around 78%. This suggests that skill acquisition, vocational training, and professional growth opportunities directly and substantially contribute to lowering unemployment in Nigeria. Government Policy (green triangle) demonstrates a moderate level of total effect ( $\approx 0.40$ ) with a performance score above 80%, indicating that while policies are performing relatively well, their overall impact could be stronger if better aligned with career-related initiatives. By contrast, Career Intention (red circle) shows very low total effect ( $\approx 0.10$ ) despite high performance ( $\approx 81\%$ ), highlighting a gap between aspirations and actual unemployment outcomes. This suggests that intentions alone do not significantly translate into employment reduction without external support mechanisms.

These results stress the mediating role of government policy in linking individual career factors to labor market outcomes. Although Nigerian youths exhibit strong career intentions and relatively high participation in training programs, the weak direct influence of intentions on unemployment points to systemic barriers such as inadequate access to finance, poor institutional support, and limited job creation opportunities. The high-performance scores across variables indicate that individuals are making efforts to advance and aspire, but the differences in total effects show that only when these efforts are reinforced by effective government policies do they yield substantial results.

### Implications

1. Policymakers should focus on strengthening government interventions like NDE and NYIF to ensure that individual career advancement and intentions are effectively translated into job opportunities.
2. The weak link between career intentions and unemployment reduction suggests the need for financing mechanisms, incubation centers, and mentorship programs to convert aspirations into real enterprises.
3. Since career advancement had the strongest effect, policies should prioritize large-scale, skills-based training programs aligned with labor market demands to maximize impact.
4. The findings imply that Nigeria's unemployment challenge can only be addressed sustainably by combining individual readiness with strong policy frameworks that create enabling environments for youth employment.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the interplay between career advancement, career intentions, and government policy in addressing unemployment challenges in Nigeria. The findings revealed that career advancement has a significant direct effect on unemployment reduction and also indirectly influences outcomes through government policy. Career intentions, while strongly related to policy, did not directly reduce unemployment, highlighting the importance of enabling structures for aspirations to translate into labor market realities. Government policy emerged as a crucial mediator, confirming that effective policy interventions are indispensable in linking individual career factors to national employment outcomes.

Theoretically, the study extends Human Capital Theory by showing that skills and training alone are insufficient without supportive policies. It reinforces the Theory of Planned Behavior by



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

confirming that intentions require enabling environments to translate into outcomes. Furthermore, it validates Policy Feedback Theory, illustrating how government interventions shape the effectiveness of both career advancement and career intentions. With an explanatory power of  $R^2 = 0.703$ , the study makes a strong case for integrated models in explaining unemployment dynamics in developing economies like Nigeria.

From a policy perspective, the findings underscore the need for Nigerian government institutions to strengthen initiatives such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF). Beyond expanding funding and training, policies must address structural barriers such as access to credit, poor monitoring frameworks, and regional disparities in program delivery. Thus, creating more transparent, scalable, and inclusive policy frameworks, government interventions can better harness the potential of Nigeria's youthful labor force.

Practically, universities and training institutions should align their curricula with labor market demands to ensure that graduates acquire relevant skills that enhance employability and entrepreneurial readiness. At the same time, policymakers should design mechanisms that transform career intentions into actionable opportunities, such as tax incentives for startups, business incubation hubs, and improved access to finance. Strengthening the synergy between career development initiatives and government policy is essential for Nigeria to make meaningful progress in reducing unemployment and achieving inclusive economic growth.

### **Practical and Policy Implications**

The findings of this study highlight important policy directions for tackling unemployment in Nigeria. Results from the Importance–Performance Map and structural model show that career advancement has the strongest impact on unemployment reduction, but its effectiveness depends heavily on enabling government frameworks. This underscores the need to expand and strengthen initiatives such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF), ensuring accountability, continuous monitoring, and alignment with labor market needs. At the same time, universities and training institutions should embed employability skills, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship modules into their curricula, while fostering stronger partnerships with industries to ensure that human capital development directly addresses workforce demands.

From a practical perspective, the weak direct effect of career intentions suggests that aspirations alone are insufficient to drive employment without structural support. Nigerian youths often aspire to entrepreneurship and self-employment, yet barriers such as limited finance, poor infrastructure, and weak institutional backing hinder the realization of these goals. To address this, policymakers and private stakeholders should invest in business incubation hubs, mentorship schemes, and credit access programs that can transform career intentions into viable enterprises. Ultimately, integrated strategies that combine skills development, entrepreneurial support, financial inclusion, and good governance are essential to reduce unemployment and promote inclusive socio-economic growth in Nigeria.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies**

Despite its contributions, the study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to make causal inferences, as data were collected at a single point in time. Second, while the study employed a national sample, the focus on NDE and NYIF beneficiaries may not fully capture the experiences of unemployed youths



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

outside these schemes, which may affect the generalizability of findings. Furthermore, reliance on self-reported data introduces the risk of response bias, as participants may overstate their level of career advancement or intentions.

Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs to track the long-term effects of career advancement and government policies on unemployment outcomes. Comparative studies across different African countries would also be valuable in exploring the extent to which contextual factors such as governance quality, institutional frameworks, and cultural attitudes toward work moderate these relationships. Additionally, mixed-method approaches that combine surveys with in-depth interviews could provide richer insights into how structural barriers constrain the effectiveness of government policies in supporting career intentions. Pursuing these directions, future scholarship can strengthen the evidence base for designing sustainable employment strategies in Nigeria and beyond.

## References

- Abouelfarag, H. A., & Qutb, R. (2021). Does government expenditure reduce unemployment in Egypt? *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*, 37(3), 355–374. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEAS-04-2020-0064>
- Adejumo, O. O., Asongu, S. A., & Adejumo, A. V. (2021). Education enrolment rate vs employment rate: Implications for sustainable human capital development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 83, 102385. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2021.102385>
- Agunowei, D. I., & Blanchard, E. G. (2022). The role of politics, policy, and governance in tackling unemployment in Nigeria. *Journal of Lexicography and Terminology*, 6(1), 60–70.
- Ajayi-Nifise, A. O., Tula, S. T., Asuzu, O. F., Mhlongo, N. Z., Olatoye, F. O., & Ibeh, C. V. (2024). The role of government policy in fostering entrepreneurship: A USA and Africa review. *International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research*, 6(2), 352–367.
- Akhmad, A., Amir, A., Saleh, S., & Abidin, Z. (2022). Effectiveness of regional government expenditure in reducing unemployment and poverty rate. *European Journal of Development Studies*, 2(4), 90–99.
- Akinbola, T. M. (2024). Impact of youth unemployment on economic growth in Nigeria: A Review paper. *Development*, 7(3), 131-144.
- Aleru, G. E., & Isi, F. I. (2024). Entrepreneurship education as a tool for reducing unemployment among educational management graduate students in Rivers State universities. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(2), 2220–2235.
- Al-Omar, S., Alalawneh, A., & Harb, A. (2024). The impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention: The moderating role of perceived governmental support. *Education + Training*, 66(7), 777–800. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-07-2022-0272>
- Amoa-Gyarteng, K., & Dhliwayo, S. (2024). Globalization, entrepreneurial development and unemployment: A mediation analysis in the context of South Africa. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 31(2), 272–297. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-03-2023-0123>
- Amuzie, K. H. (2024). Entrepreneurial environment and youth unemployment in Nigeria. [Journal/Publisher details if available].
- Aniebonam, C. C. (2023). Financial development and unemployment in Nigeria (Master's thesis). University of Agder.
- Angela, C. (2024). Career counselling for women: A panacea for productivity and poverty reduction. *Educational Perspectives*, 12(3), 235–249.
- Bello, M. M., Yahaya, J. U., & Adamu, I. (2024). Nigerian youth unemployment and security issues: Evaluating the entrepreneurship option. *Wukari International Studies Journal*, 8(1), 184–191.
- Chen, C. C., & Chen, M. H. (2021). Well-being and career change intention: COVID-19's impact on unemployed and furloughed hospitality workers. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 33(8), 2500–2520. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2020-1060>
- Daniel, I., & Olusola, A. (2023). Fostering entrepreneurial finance and entrepreneurship development: The moderating role of institutional finance agencies in Nigeria. *Istanbul Management Journal*, (95), 1–11.



Assessing the Interplay between ..... (Suleiman, et al. 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v2i1.131>

- de Carvalho, C. L., Taveira, M. D. C., & Silva, A. D. (2024). Integrative review on career interventions with unemployed people: Nature, outcomes, and recommendations. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 61(1), 18–45. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joec.12235>
- Elenwo, P. M., & Ebom-Jebose, A. (2024). Assessment of entrepreneurship skills possessed by educational management undergraduates to reduce unemployment rate in Rivers State. *African Journal of Management and Business Research*, 15(1), 133–145.
- Fajimi, B. A. (2025). Roles of social workers in bridging the gap between social policy and social action in youth unemployment in Nigeria. *American Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 10(1), 30–46.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). *World employment and social outlook: Trends 2023*. Geneva: ILO.
- Isa, B., & Inuwa, B. A. (2024). Assessing the impact of skills acquisition programmes of the National Directorate of Employment in curbing unemployment in Taraba State. *Jalingo Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, 5(3), 88–104.
- Mawutor, D. P. W. (2024). The role of government in reducing graduate unemployment in Ghana: Assessing NABCO and NEIP (Doctoral dissertation). Masaryk University.
- Metu, A. G., & Nwogwugwu, U. C. (2024). Challenging factors affecting access to finance by female micro-entrepreneurs in Anambra State, Nigeria. *Journal of African Business*, 25(1), 142–154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228916.2022.2076431>
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2023). *Labour force statistics: Unemployment and underemployment report*. Abuja: NBS.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2023). *Entrepreneurship policies for developing economies: Comparative insights from Africa and Asia*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Ojo, M. B., & Okwilagwe, E. A. (2024). Assessment of entrepreneurship education knowledge acquisition, change of attitude to entrepreneurship and skills acquisition among university undergraduates in South-Western Nigeria. *European Journal of Theoretical and Applied Sciences*, 2(1), 713–723.
- Onibon, M. T. G. (2023). The roles of small enterprises in solving unemployment in Ekiti State, Nigeria. *Fuoye Journal of Management, Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 2(1).
- Osabohien, R., Worgwu, H., Adediran, O., & Soomro, J. A. (2023). Social entrepreneurship and future employment in Nigeria. *International Social Science Journal*, 73(250), 927–937. <https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12389>
- Salami, C. G. E., Ekakitie, S. E., & Ebinim, L. O. (2023). Impact of government policy on entrepreneurship growth and development of small-scale business in Nigeria. *Journal of Global Social Sciences*, 4(14), 73–102.
- Salisu, M. (2024). Examination of the activities of Ringim Skills Acquisition Center in reducing youth unemployment in Ringim Local Government Area, Jigawa State, Nigeria. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 5(3), 122–128.
- Uchechukwu, E. S., Amechi, A. F., Okoye, C. C., & Okeke, N. M. (2023). Youth unemployment and security challenges in Anambra State, Nigeria. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4, 81–91.
- Udochukwu, I. S. (2024). Topic: Youth Unemployment and National Security in Nigeria: Exploring the Impact on Socio-Economic Stability and Development. *GSI*, 12(9).
- World Bank. (2023). *Doing business in Nigeria 2023: Entrepreneurship, finance, and employment creation*. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications.