

Research Article

Youth Without Work, A Nation Without Peace: Examining the Causal Relationship Between Youth Unemployment and Restiveness in Gombe State-Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper presents an empirical analysis of the causal relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness in Gombe Metropolis, with a particular focus on the Kalare Gang. Against the backdrop of widespread youth unemployment and escalating insecurity in northern Nigeria, the study sought to explore how joblessness and socio-political marginalization contribute to the persistence of restive behaviour among youths. Using a mixed-methods research design, quantitative data were collected from 396 respondents through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were obtained from 40 purposively selected key informants via interviews and analyzed using thematic content analysis. The results indicate that unemployment ($\chi^2 = 78.75$; $p = 0.000$) has a statistically significant, though relatively weak relationship with youth restiveness, whereas political exploitation ($\chi^2 = 316.63$; $p = 0.000$) has a strong statistically significant relationship with youth restiveness, indicating that unemployment, in combined with political influence by politicians are major drivers of youth involvement in “Kalare menace”. The study also established that unemployment-induced restiveness has a strong statistically significant and negative relationship with socioeconomic development. The result further revealed that implementation challenges has a strong statistically significant and negative relationship with effectiveness of government interventions. These results are further reinforced by qualitative insights. The study concludes that youth restiveness is structurally driven by socioeconomic factors, in combined with political factor, and institutionally sustained. If the Kalare menace is not decisively and holistically addressed, it has the potential to metamorphose into a full-blown terrorist organization in the future. The study recommends the implementation of multidimensional interventions including sustainable youth employment programme, legislation, and intelligence-driven security strategies.

Keywords

Youth Unemployment, Kalare Gang, Youth Restiveness, Gombe Metropolis, Socio-economic Development

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1. Introduction

Since the turn of the 21st century, youth unemployment and associated restiveness have occupied a central, yet contested, position in both scholarly and policy discourse worldwide. The global youth population is expanding at an unprecedented rate, constituting over half of the world's population and one-third of its voting-age citizens [22], with more than 1.8 billion individuals aged 15 to 30 [45]. Yet, a persistent gap exists between the demographic weight of youth and their access to meaningful employment, as evidenced by the International Labour Organization's (2024) Global Employment Trends for Youth report, which estimates that 13.6% of young people aged 15–24 (approximately 64.9 million) are unemployed and economically disenfranchised [39]. This structural exclusion arguably incentivizes alternative, often illicit, pathways for economic survival, thereby raising critical questions about the nexus between youth unemployment, social unrest, and the broader challenges of global peace, security, and sustainable development.

In Africa, these dynamics are particularly pronounced. The continent's youth population—approximately 420 million individuals aged 15–35 is projected to double by 2050 [60], yet more than 70% of young Africans are either unemployed or underemployed, with an additional 19% economically inactive [11]. The situation is markedly severe in countries such as Nigeria, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, and South Africa, where only a fraction of youth are engaged in formal wage employment [4]. The structural exclusion of youth from meaningful economic participation is widely recognized as a contributing factor to widespread restiveness, manifesting in diverse forms across the continent—from militancy and insurgency in Nigeria to xenophobic violence in South Africa, socio-political crises in southern Cameroon, and piracy in Somalia. These patterns suggest that youth unemployment is not merely an economic issue but a politically and socially consequential phenomenon.

Nigeria exemplifies the extreme end of this trend. Recent statistics indicate that 53% of Nigerian youths aged 14–24 were unemployed in the first quarter of 2025, compared to 30% in 2020, with projections suggesting that this figure may exceed 70% by 2030 [52]. These figures underscore the structural and systemic challenges facing Nigerian youth, including the lack of stable economic opportunities and exposure to multi-dimensional socio-political pressures. From the First Republic to the present, the country has witnessed persistent youth restiveness, ranging from political violence to ethno-religious conflicts and insurgencies such as Boko Haram, Niger Delta militancy, and kidnapping networks [5, 10, 31].

In recent years, the proliferation of youth gangs and ethnic or political militias has intensified, encompassing groups such as the Odua People's Congress (OPC), Arewa Youth Movement (AYM), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and numerous regional networks involved in armed banditry, kidnapping, and communal clashes [30, 31, 42]. This trend illustrates

the contested and often overlooked intersection of unemployment, socio-political marginalization, and youth-led criminality. Gombe State in North-East Nigeria exemplifies these dynamics at a localized level. The state has witnessed persistent youth restiveness over recent decades, driven largely by a growing population of uneducated and unemployed youth, who have formed loosely organized gangs such as the Kalare Boys, engaging in arson, kidnapping, burglary, substance abuse, communal clashes, and other criminal activities [1, 7, 73, 74].

Despite the extensive literature on youth restiveness in Nigeria, a closer examination reveals a striking disconnect between research, policy, and practice, particularly in the context of North-Eastern states like Gombe. Most studies documented the drivers of youth restiveness—unemployment, poverty, socio-economic marginalization yet few interrogate the causal mechanisms linking these factors to organized youth criminality, leaving policymakers with generalized solutions that often fail in practice [12, 42, 75]. Geographically, most empirical studies are concentrated in Southern Nigeria, the Niger Delta, and urban centers such as Lagos and Bauchi [54, 60, 70], whereas North-Eastern states, particularly Gombe, remain underrepresented in scholarly analyses despite their high youth populations, persistent unemployment, and escalating youth-led criminality [1, 7, 73]. To extrapolate findings from Southern Nigeria to Gombe is not only methodologically flawed but also potentially misleading for policy design, as it ignores the region-specific socio-economic and security challenges that shape youth behavior. Furthermore, a temporal gap persists: many studies rely on data collected prior to 2020 [19, 36, 55] and therefore may not reflect the recent surge in youth restiveness. Methodologically, the literature is dominated by qualitative secondary analyses and desk reviews [12, 34, 42], with only a few studies employing mixed-method or quantitative approaches to capture both trends and underlying causes.

Against this backdrop, the present study is both timely and necessary. Gombe State, where youths constitute 65% of the population, suffers from near-total economic marginalization, with unemployment rates exceeding 70% among young people and escalating involvement in criminal activities, particularly by groups such as the Kalare Gangsters [21, 51]. Despite the implementation of multiple government programs, including the Anti-Kalare Squad, Talba Youth Rehabilitation and Re-orientation Programme, and Tolba Empowerment Scheme, youth restiveness continues unabated [16, 73]. This raises a provocative question: are government policies genuinely designed to address the structural drivers of youth restiveness, or are they merely symbolic interventions that fail to challenge entrenched socio-economic and governance inequalities?

This study seeks bridge gaps by empirically examining the causal relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness in Gombe State, with a focus on the Kalare Gangsters

between 2015 and 2024. It challenges the dominant narrative that youth restiveness is solely a consequence of unemployment, arguing instead that it is the product of intersecting socio-economic deprivation, political marginalization, and weak governance structures. By situating the analysis in a localized context, the study directly contests generalized policy prescriptions and highlights the need for evidence-based, context-sensitive strategies.

1.1. Case Study: Youth Unemployment and Restiveness in Gombe State

Gombe State is predominantly youthful, with individuals aged 15 to 35 constituting approximately 65% of the state's population. Yet, nearly 70% of these youths remain unemployed, disillusioned, or socially marginalized, and 53% lack formal education [51]. This combination of demographic pressure, limited opportunities, and socio-economic exclusion raises critical questions about the capacity of the youth to adapt to their environment, manage aspirations for wealth and social recognition, and navigate structural barriers. Consequently, an increasing number of youths have become involved in various forms of restiveness, including violent and criminal behaviors. This situation underscores the urgent need to critically examine the causal relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness to inform the development of targeted, effective, and sustainable interventions.

Recent media reports and official data indicate a disturbing escalation of youth-related criminal activities across Gombe State. According to statistics from the Criminal Investigation Department (2025), property crimes—including theft, burglary, phone snatching, and vehicle theft rose from 12,874 reported cases in 2022 to 19,263 in 2024 [21]. Crimes against persons, such as culpable homicide, armed robbery, rape, kidnapping, and grievous bodily harm, have similarly increased. Other offenses include drug possession, public disorder, and the possession of dangerous weapons. Notably, over two-thirds (71%) of arrested suspects are aged between 18 and 35, highlighting that youth are disproportionately implicated in criminality, compared to 29% of older individuals (36 years and above) [21]. These trends suggest that youth restiveness is not only persistent but also intensifying, demanding rigorous empirical inquiry into its root causes and socio-economic drivers.

Over the years, successive governments in Gombe State have implemented both kinetic and non-kinetic interventions aimed at addressing youth unemployment and restiveness. Initiatives such as the Anti-Kalare Squad, Talba Youth Rehabilitation and Reorientation Programme, Tolba Empowerment Scheme (TES), Gombe State Security, Traffic, and Environmental Corps (GOSTEC), and Hatara have been deployed to mitigate the twin challenges of crime and economic exclusion [16, 73]. Despite these efforts, evidence from the CID indicates that youth involvement in violent and criminal activities

continues to rise. This raises critical questions about the effectiveness, reach, and underlying assumptions of government strategies in curtailing unemployment and youth restiveness in Gombe Metropolis.

It is against this backdrop that the present study is warranted. By empirically examining the causal relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness, focusing specifically on the young Kalare Gangsters, this research aims to fill a significant gap in scholarly understanding of youth criminality in Gombe State. The study is motivated by the need to interrogate why government interventions have largely failed to curb youth restiveness and to generate evidence-based strategies that can enhance security, socio-economic development, and the overall efficacy of public policy. Ultimately, the findings will contribute to the design of proactive, targeted interventions that not only reduce youth criminality but also ensure that the state's infrastructural and development efforts achieve their intended impact.

1.2. Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the unemployment and the youth participation in restive activities in Gombe metropolis

H₀₂: Unemployment-induced restiveness has a significant effect on socioeconomic development in Gombe metropolis

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between implementation challenges of and its effectiveness in government interventions in mitigating unemployment and youth restiveness in Gombe metropolis

2. Literature Review: Empirical and Theoretical Underpinnings of Youth Unemployment and Restiveness

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1. Youth

The term youth remains one of the most contested concepts in both policy and academic discourse. There is no universally accepted definition of who qualifies as a youth, as interpretations vary across cultural, geographical, historical, and legal contexts. While international institutions such as the United Nations [72] and the World Bank [77] define youth within the age bracket of 15–24 years, others like the African Union (2006) and Nigeria's National Youth Policy (2019) extend this range up to 35 years, reflecting demographic realities and socio-economic differences [62]. This definitional plurality underscores the *fluidity* of youth as a category—one not merely defined by age, but by a transitional phase between dependence and independence, as argued by UNESCO [71].

In the Nigerian context, such ambiguity assumes a political and sociological dimension. For instance, cultural perceptions often extend youth identity well beyond official limits, evidenced by cases such as the election of a 60-year-old as the “Youth Leader” of a major political party [68]. This anomaly reveals the elasticity of the concept, which is frequently instrumentalized for socio-political advantage. Hence, youthhood should be understood as a *relative construct* reflecting not just chronological age but social status, economic activity, and self-identification. This study aligns with the National Bureau of Statistics (2017) definition of youth as individuals aged 15–34 years [49], recognizing the operational practicality of this range within Nigeria’s demographic and labour context.

2.1.2. Youth Unemployment

Unemployment, much like youth, is a contested concept shaped by economic theory and policy interpretation. The International Labour Organization [39] defines it as the condition in which individuals within the labour force are willing and able to work but cannot find employment. However, this seemingly straightforward definition belies the complexity of unemployment in developing economies like Nigeria. Scholars such as Fajana [28] and Okeke [61] argue that unemployment is not merely a statistical phenomenon but a reflection of structural distortions within the economy. Beyond open unemployment, underemployment and disguised unemployment where individuals engage in low-paying or skill-mismatched jobs—have become endemic features of Nigeria’s labour market [41].

Empirical data from the National Bureau of Statistics [50] reveal a persistent rise in unemployment rates from 3.76% in 2010 to 5.76% in 2022, highlighting the failure of successive policy interventions to stimulate job creation. This sustained unemployment crisis has far-reaching implications for social stability, as it breeds frustration, fuels deviant behaviours, and contributes directly to youth restiveness. Theoretically, as Oviawe [65] posits, unemployment mirrors the health of an economy where productivity declines, joblessness proliferates, and the resultant idleness becomes a fertile ground for social discontent.

2.1.3. Youth Restiveness

Youth restiveness is perhaps the most politically charged of the three concepts, often reflecting the culmination of unmet socio-economic expectations and political alienation. Although scholars define it variously as violent agitation [26], sustained protest [27], or deviant behaviour [36], a common thread is its emergence as a reaction to structural marginalization. It embodies both a *symptom* and *strategy*: a symptom of socio-economic frustration, and a strategy by which young people attempt to reclaim agency in a system that persistently excludes them [43].

In Nigeria, restiveness has evolved from spontaneous protest to organized militancy, as seen in the rise of ethnic militias

such as MEND, MASSOB, and OPC. Scholars like Ogbeifun [59] categorize these expressions into genuine agitation for rights, criminally motivated violence, and revenge-driven uprisings—all of which threaten state stability. The recurrence of such unrest underscores a deeper governance failure: the inability of state institutions to integrate youth into meaningful socio-political and economic processes. As Agina-Obu [6] contends, restiveness thrives when institutional mechanisms for addressing grievances collapse, forcing youths to seek redress through disruptive means.

The implications are profound—ranging from economic paralysis and infrastructure destruction to loss of lives and erosion of national security [46, 67]. Thus, youth restiveness must be interpreted not as mere deviance, but as a sociopolitical commentary on exclusion, inequality, and state incapacity. Its persistence challenges the moral legitimacy of governance and demands a paradigm shift from reactive policing to proactive empowerment strategies.

2.1.4. Causes of Unemployment and Youth Restiveness in Nigeria

The persistence of youth unemployment and restiveness in Nigeria remains one of the most contentious issues in development and security studies. Scholars disagree not on *whether* these problems exist, but on *why* they have persisted despite decades of policy interventions. While the Nigerian government attributes restiveness to the moral failure or impatience of young people, growing evidence points instead to a complex web of structural, political, and institutional failures that perpetuate unemployment and drive youth toward violent and antisocial behaviour.

At the core of Nigeria’s youth restiveness crisis lies the twin evil of corruption and bad governance, which have hollowed out public trust and crippled the nation’s development potential [23]. Corruption in Nigeria is not a marginal flaw, it is systemic, institutionalized, and deeply woven into the political fabric [24]. Funds intended for youth empowerment, education, and employment are routinely siphoned off by political elites who exploit ethnic and religious divisions for personal enrichment. This pervasive graft has created a governance vacuum in which young people, seeing the ostentatious lifestyles of corrupt officials, feel alienated and betrayed by the state. The inevitable result is a culture of resistance manifested in militancy, protests, cybercrime, and insurgency as youth seek alternative means of recognition and empowerment. Thus, corruption is not merely a moral issue but the structural foundation of social instability and restiveness in Nigeria, delegitimizing state authority and eroding national cohesion [24, 63].

Compounding this crisis is the government’s chronic failure in policy formulation and implementation. Over the decades, Nigeria has witnessed a parade of youth empowerment schemes: N-Power, SURE-P, YouWIN, and the Nigerian Youth Investment Fund—each launched with fanfare but

abandoned with little accountability [47]. These initiatives often fail because they are politically motivated, poorly designed, and disconnected from the realities of youth life at the grassroots [63]. Rather than serving as vehicles of empowerment, such policies have become instruments of patronage and vote-buying. In contrast to developed societies where welfare programs cushion economic shocks, Nigeria's social safety nets are weak or nonexistent, leaving millions vulnerable [33]. The problem, therefore, is not the absence of policy but the deliberate mismanagement of it—a reflection of a governance model that values political optics over genuine development [8, 37].

Unemployment, poverty, and educational failure serve as both symptoms and consequences of this systemic rot. Over half of Nigeria's youth remain unemployed or underemployed, creating fertile ground for manipulation by extremist groups and political opportunists [49]. Poverty levels have soared, with over two-thirds of the population living below the poverty line, while education ostensibly a ladder to opportunity has become another site of inequality due to poor funding and outdated curricula [48, 66]. The result is a generation trapped between aspiration and despair: educated but unemployable, ambitious yet excluded. Many resort to survivalist crimes such as internet fraud, drug trafficking, and political thuggery [14, 81]. This growing disillusionment is further worsened by the government's failure to communicate honestly with its citizens, allowing misinformation and distrust to thrive [32]. Consequently, youth restiveness in Nigeria is not a spontaneous outburst of rebellion, it is a rational response to decades of systemic exclusion, failed governance, and the betrayal of the social contract [56, 80].

2.1.5. Impact of Youth Unemployment and Restiveness in Nigeria

Youth restiveness in Nigeria has evolved into a grave national concern with far-reaching implications for the country's security, economy, and social stability. From a security standpoint, the phenomenon fundamentally erodes the role of young people as future leaders and peacebuilders, replacing it with a culture of violence and destruction. The consequences are dire ranging from mass killings, forced displacement, and human rights abuses to national insecurity and political instability. As seen in the aftermath of the Biafran War (1967–1970) and the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency, restiveness can escalate into large-scale conflict capable of fracturing the nation. Reports by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [38] and Amnesty International [13] underscore the magnitude of human suffering—millions displaced, thousands unlawfully killed, and widespread abuses by both insurgents and state actors. These facts challenge the complacency with which youth restiveness is sometimes treated, raising a crucial debate about whether the Nigerian state has done enough to address the structural injustices that fuel violent dissent.

Economically, youth restiveness undermines national

productivity and hinders sustainable growth. It destroys critical infrastructure, deters foreign investment, and disrupts production networks essential for wealth creation. The Nigerian economy's recurrent instability manifested in declining industrial output and dwindling foreign direct investment (FDI) is arguably linked to the persistence of violent youth uprisings. The Niger Delta militancy and Fulani herdsmen crises, for example, have not only crippled oil production and food supply but also deepened the nation's economic vulnerability. Between 2013 and 2015, Nigeria lost billions in FDI due to insecurity [24], with once-vibrant commercial hubs such as Kano's Kanti-Kwari Textile Market severely affected by insurgent attacks. These economic consequences expose a paradox: while unemployment fuels youth restiveness, restiveness itself worsens economic decline trapping the country in a vicious cycle that demands urgent and strategic intervention.

Socially, the costs of youth restiveness are equally devastating. It breeds normlessness, erodes community cohesion, and normalizes deviance as a mode of survival or resistance [64]. The rise of cultism, gangsterism, drug abuse, and kidnapping are symptomatic of a society losing its moral compass and failing to provide meaningful pathways for youth inclusion. In regions like the Niger Delta, youth militancy has escalated from protest to criminal enterprise, while in the North-East and North-Central zones, Boko Haram and banditry have destroyed social trust and local economies. This breakdown in social order highlights a deeper problem: restiveness is not merely a reaction to poverty but also a reflection of systemic exclusion, weak governance, and moral decay.

Taken together, the security, economic, and social consequences of youth restiveness in Nigeria form a multidimensional crisis that challenges both state authority and societal resilience. The debate, therefore, is not only about how to suppress violent expressions of youth anger but also about how to transform the underlying structures that perpetuate frustration, unemployment, and alienation. Unless Nigeria reimagines its youth policies shifting from reactive militarized responses to proactive, inclusive, and empowering strategies—the nation risks nurturing a generation more inclined to destruction than development. Thus, understanding the far-reaching impacts of youth restiveness is not just an academic exercise but a moral and political imperative for the nation's survival.

2.2. Empirical Review

In North-East Nigeria, Kinge and Maina [42] examined the socio-economic implications of youth restiveness in Borno State using a qualitative, desk-based approach anchored on the frustration–aggression theory. Their study identified structural factors such as unemployment, poverty, poor education, and weak social infrastructure as drivers of youth restiveness, arguing that the absence of economic opportunities pushes young people toward violence and criminality. The strength of this research lies in its theoretical grounding and contextual relevance to a conflict-prone region. However, its reliance on

secondary data is a significant limitation, as it prevents the authors from validating their claims through first-hand empirical evidence. Consequently, the findings though logically consistent, but remain largely inferential rather than empirically substantiated.

Across five African countries, Eberechukwu et al. [25] explored the causal link between unemployment and youth restiveness through a secondary qualitative approach. The study's strength lies in its comparative design, drawing parallels between cases of militancy in Nigeria, xenophobia in South Africa, and insurgencies in Cameroon, Mali, and Somalia. This cross-national perspective adds valuable breadth to the discourse. Yet, the study's methodological weakness stems from its descriptive orientation and absence of measurable variables, which limits causal inference. Moreover, the recommendation to address restiveness through counselling, while noble, underplays the deep-rooted structural and political dimensions of the problem in Africa.

Adopting a relative-deprivation perspective, Uzoagu [75] interrogated how socio-economic marginalization fuels youth restiveness and hinders community development. The study's major contribution is its focus on structural exclusion—linking deprivation with social rebellion. However, the study's dependence on documentary evidence without field validation weakens its empirical robustness. While it effectively argues that exclusion fosters aggression, it does not engage with counter-evidence showing cases where inclusion has failed to reduce restiveness, thus leaving the theoretical claim somewhat untested.

In a national context, Alaye [12] investigated the causal relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness during Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The study's merit lies in its broad geographical coverage, drawing insights from all major geopolitical zones. By linking socio-economic deprivation to militancy and insurgency, it provides a holistic narrative. However, like earlier studies, its overreliance on qualitative secondary sources and lack of statistical validation makes the causal relationship more speculative than demonstrable. Its critique of governmental policy failures is valid but insufficiently grounded in empirical policy evaluation.

Conversely, Ogunbiyi et al. [60] adopted a quantitative design in Lagos State, offering a rare shift from purely qualitative works. Their findings—linking youth restiveness to unemployment, corruption, and moral decay—are analytically persuasive, and the use of primary data enhances credibility. Nevertheless, the study's narrow focus on Christian congregations in Mushin limits its generalizability. Furthermore, its framing of restiveness in moral-religious terms may obscure the structural socio-economic realities underlying the phenomenon.

In Bauchi State, Umar [70] employed a mixed-methods design to examine youth restiveness and sustainable socio-economic development. The methodological triangulation strengthens the validity of findings, making this study one of the more empirically grounded in the literature. However,

while Umar's study successfully identifies unemployment and political instability as key drivers, it stops short of exploring how governance failures or corruption mediate these relationships, making the analysis somewhat linear.

Focusing on South-East Nigeria, Ofoma [58] investigated the correlation between unemployment and youth restiveness using secondary data. The study's strength lies in its temporal scope (2010–2022) and its recognition of local apprenticeship systems ("Igba boy") as potential solutions. Yet, its documentary method lacks empirical rigor, and the assumption of direct causality between unemployment and restiveness oversimplifies the multidimensional nature of youth rebellion, which can also stem from political disillusionment or ethnic grievances.

Ibeh and Igwe [34] introduced a political dimension by examining youth restiveness through Pareto's elite theory of power. Their qualitative content analysis highlights how elite dominance and youth marginalization exacerbate insecurity. This theoretical shift from economic to governance factors is a key strength. However, the study's weakness lies in its abstractness—it fails to connect elite theory to concrete case evidence, limiting its practical implications for policy reform.

From an educational lens, Njoku et al. [54] investigated the impact of Social Studies education in mitigating youth restiveness among junior secondary students in Zaria. The study's strength lies in its use of statistical tools (mean scores, t-tests), giving it a quantitative edge. Yet, the limited sample and narrow educational focus reduce its explanatory power regarding broader social and political drivers of restiveness. Similarly, Igbo and Ikpa [36] provided early quantitative evidence linking illiteracy and poor child upbringing to youth restiveness, but their reliance on National Youth Service Corps members as respondents introduces selection bias, as this group may not represent the most restive youths.

Alanamu and Oloyin [11] approached the problem through the lens of capacity building. Their study effectively connects unemployment to restiveness and proposes practical, skills-based interventions. The study's emphasis on government-led small-scale enterprise development is commendable. However, the study lacks empirical testing of these interventions' effectiveness, making its recommendations largely prescriptive. Similarly, Garba [30] introduced a psychological dimension, proposing cognitive-behavioral therapy and mindfulness as strategies for reducing restiveness. This fresh perspective expands the debate beyond structural causes. Yet, the absence of empirical validation of these psychological interventions in Nigerian contexts limits its practical utility.

In another theoretical contribution, Akpokighe and Ejovi [10] examined youth restiveness through conflict theory, highlighting the link between unemployment and social insecurity. While theoretically sound, the study remains conceptually broad and methodologically weak due to its sole reliance on documentary analysis. Likewise, Otikor [56] explored media perceptions of restiveness in Andoni, finding that low media coverage undermined public awareness. This study is original

in focus but limited in scope, as it fails to connect media narratives with behavioral outcomes among youths.

Earlier studies by Chukwuemeka and Aghara [19] and Yusuf [79] situate youth restiveness within the broader discourse of underdevelopment and insecurity, particularly in the Niger Delta. Both studies provide rich descriptive data but fall short in methodological rigor, lacking clear analytical frameworks. Similarly, Nlerum [55] and Johnson and Igbojinwaekwu [40] emphasize environmental degradation and poor governance as triggers of militancy. Their conclusions are logically consistent but rely heavily on perception-based data rather than measurable indicators of restiveness.

From a social intervention perspective, Elegbeleye [27] advanced a unique argument that recreational facilities in schools could serve as palliatives against youth restiveness. While conceptually innovative, the study is dated and lacks empirical testing. Abubakar et al. [3], on the other hand, used a quantitative approach to explore entrepreneurial and communication skills as tools for combating restiveness. The study's methodological rigor—evidenced by high reliability coefficients—marks it as a strong empirical contribution. Yet, its focus on educators rather than youth themselves limits its direct applicability.

Finally, Obasi et al. [57] examined economic empowerment and youth restiveness in Aba using a robust quantitative design. The use of multiple regression analysis provides credible statistical evidence that employment, education, and recreation significantly affect youth restiveness. However, the exclusion of social orientation variables and the urban bias of the sample weaken the study's comprehensiveness. Similarly, Agbaji et al. [5] provided a broad national perspective linking unemployment and exclusion to political instability but relied solely on desk research, limiting empirical generalization.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on Marxist theory of political economy as a framework of analysis. The theory was developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their works such as *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867). The theory explains how socioeconomic deprivation (e.g., poverty and unemployment) and political manipulation by elites drive social unrest, making structural inequalities central to understanding phenomena such as youth participation in restive or criminal activities.

The theory posits that societal structures are shaped by the relations of production, where the ruling class controls economic and political power while the working class experiences exploitation and marginalization. In this framework, socioeconomic factors such as unemployment and poverty are seen as structural outcomes of capitalist or uneven development systems, which limit access to meaningful economic opportunities for youth. The resulting economic deprivation fosters frustration, alienation, and vulnerability, making youths more susceptible to engaging in restive or illegal activities as

a form of survival or resistance.

At the same time, political factors, particularly political exploitation, reinforce this dynamic. Politicians and elites may manipulate unemployed and impoverished youth for partisan or personal gain, using them to advance political agendas, destabilize rivals, or enforce control. This combination of economic marginalization and political manipulation creates a feedback loop: youths are economically marginalized, politically instrumentalized, and socially alienated, which drives their participation in restive activities, including protests, gang formation, or involvement in illegal enterprises.

The theory posits youth restiveness as a structural product of both material deprivation and political exploitation, highlighting that the phenomenon is not merely individual deviance but a consequence of systemic inequalities in both the economy and political governance.

Marxist political economy is relevant in explaining youth restiveness in Gombe metropolis because it links social conflict to structural economic deprivation and political exploitation. The theory views unemployment and poverty as products of an unequal system that marginalizes young people from productive opportunities, creating frustration and vulnerability. This condition is further intensified when political elites manipulate unemployed youths for partisan violence and intimidation, transforming economic grievances into organized restiveness. The theory therefore explains youth involvement in the Kalare menace as a structural outcome of combined socioeconomic exclusion and political instrumentalization rather than mere individual deviance.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to generate comprehensive, robust, and contextually grounded data on the nexus between unemployment and youth restiveness. This design was particularly suitable for capturing the complexity and multidimensionality of the phenomenon, as it combined the statistical precision of quantitative analysis with the interpretive depth of qualitative inquiry. Consistent with Beiske [17] and Creswell and Creswell [20], this approach allowed for a more holistic understanding by balancing numerical trends with personal experiences, perceptions, and socio-cultural contexts shaping youth attitudes and behaviours. The qualitative component provided rich insights into participants' lived realities, revealing the meanings and motivations underlying restiveness, while the quantitative aspect enabled the identification of measurable patterns, correlations, and socioeconomic trends. In pursuit of the study's objectives, exploratory and descriptive methods were also employed—the former addressing the paucity of prior empirical research on the causal linkages between unemployment and restiveness in Gombe Metropolis, and the latter systematically documenting

and analysing emerging patterns and implications.

3.2. Target Population of the Study

The target population for this study consists of young individuals aged between 15 and 34 years. Based on the updated population projection report of the National Bureau of Statistics [53], the total population of Gombe Metropolis is estimated at 446,800 persons. Of this figure, approximately 62 per cent, representing 277,016 individuals, are below the age of 34 years. This substantial proportion of youths within the overall population underscores their demographic significance in the metropolis. Consequently, focusing on this cohort is imperative for examining the dynamics of unemployment and youth restiveness, as they constitute the most active and socio-economically influential segment of the population.

3.3. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

To get the sample size from the target population, the researcher used Yamane [78] formula to determine the sample size of the research studies. This enabled the researcher to statistically determine the sample size from the population of interest.

Thus: $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$ where

n = Sample size

N = Population size (698,800)

e = the level of precision (95% confidence level and 5% precision level is assumed)

Therefore, $n = 698,800 / ([1] + 698,800 [0.05]^2)$

$n = 698,800 / ([1] + 698,800 (0.0025))$

$n = 400.229$

$n = 400$

Therefore, four hundred (400) respondents were selected as a representative of the total youth population of 698,800, for quantitative data collection. This is equally in conformity to Morgan and Krejcie [44] sample size classification.

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed in this study to ensure a fair and representative quantitative data collection process across the administrative units of Gombe Metropolis. The procedure was executed in five sequential stages: first, six wards were randomly selected from the eleven in the metropolis using the lottery method; second, five streets were randomly chosen from each selected ward, yielding thirty streets in total. Third, systematic sampling was used to select ten households with residents aged 15 years and above from each street, resulting in 300 households. Fourth, within each selected household, eligible individuals aged 15 to 34 years were identified using a systematic approach to target the defined youth population. Finally, in the fifth stage, a simple random sampling method was used to select the actual respondent(s) from the eligible individuals, ensuring equal representation and fairness. This multi-stage design enhanced the representativeness, accuracy, and validity of the data, providing a

balanced reflection of the diverse socio-economic and demographic characteristics of Gombe Metropolis.

For the qualitative data, a purposive (non-probability) sampling technique was employed to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience on the relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness in Gombe State. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth and context-specific insights into the socio-economic implications of the phenomenon. Although purposive sampling may introduce selection bias and limit generalizability, it was deemed appropriate for capturing expert perspectives essential to the study. To mitigate potential bias, simple random sampling was also applied to select youth participants for focus group discussions, ensuring a more balanced representation.

3.4. Methods of Data Collection

The study utilized two primary research instruments: structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect comprehensive data addressing the research questions. Using multiple instruments was essential to minimize the limitations and biases associated with relying on a single tool, thereby enhancing the validity, reliability, and depth of the findings. This triangulation approach ensured that quantitative breadth and qualitative depth were effectively integrated, providing a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness in Gombe Metropolis.

A structured, closed-ended questionnaire based on a four-point Likert scale was employed to gather quantitative data from respondents. It was divided into two sections: Section A captured socio-demographic details, while Section B focused on perceptions regarding the link between unemployment, youth restiveness, and socio-economic development. Administered personally by the researcher and trained assistants, the process ensured clarity, accuracy, and high response rates, strengthening the quality of the collected data.

To enrich the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants such as internally displaced persons, community leaders, CSO representatives, and security personnel. These interviews, featuring open-ended questions, offered flexibility and depth, allowing participants to share lived experiences and insights into the causes and impacts of youth restiveness. The inclusion of diverse perspectives from individuals directly affected or involved in addressing the issue provided a contextual foundation that complemented and validated the statistical findings.

Table 1. List of Informants for Interview.

S/N	Informants	Sample Size	Category
1	Ex-Kalare Member	5	KII-A
2	Active Kalare Member	5	KII-B

S/N	Informants	Sample Size	Category
3	Community leaders	5	KII-C
4	GOSTEC officers	5	KII-D
5	Police Officers	5	KII-E
6	NSCDC officers	5	KII-F
7	Staff of the Ministry of Youth and Sport Development	5	KII-G
8	Members of CSOs	5	KII-H
Total		40	

Source: Field Survey,(October, 2025)

This table shows distribution of interview participants drawn from eight key categories to ensure diverse and informed perspectives on youth restiveness in Gombe State. These included five former and current members of the Kalare gang, five community leaders (three district heads and two ward heads), and personnel from GOSTEC, the Nigeria Police Force, and the NSCDC, including their respective senior officers. Additionally, officials from the Gombe State Ministry of Youth and Sports Development—such as the Commissioner, Directors, and the Director-General of the State Agency for Social Services—were included to provide insights on policy and programme implementation. Finally, five representatives from civil society organizations, notably the Foundation for Youth Awakening and Empowerment (FOYAE), were interviewed for their critical perspectives on government efforts to

curb youth restiveness.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis

The study adopted a systematic mixed-methods analytical framework that integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive and credible interpretation of findings. Quantitative data from structured questionnaires were analysed using SPSS Version 22, employing descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to summarise responses, while chi-square was used to test the research hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically to identify key patterns and recurring themes relevant to the research objectives. Through data triangulation, findings from both methods were compared and corroborated, enhancing validity and providing a holistic understanding of the complex causal relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness in Gombe Metropolis.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of data collected to examine the influence of unemployment on youth involvement in restive activities. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 396, were successfully retrieved and deemed valid for the study, indicating a high response rate of 99%, which enhances the reliability and representativeness of the findings.

4.1. Analysis of the Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 2. Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age Category	15–19 years	129	32.6
	20–24 years	129	32.6
	25–29 years	104	26.3
	30–34 years	34	8.6
	Mean±SD		22.54±4.80
Gender	Total	396	100.0
	Male	301	76.0
	Female	95	24.0
	Total	396	100.0
Marital Status	Single	264	66.7
	Married	118	29.8

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Educational Qualification	Widowed	9	2.3
	Divorced	5	1.3
	Total	396	100.0
	Informal Education	19	4.8
	Primary Education	64	16.2
	Secondary Education	255	64.4
	Tertiary Education	58	14.6
	Total	396	100.0
Employment Status	Employed	50	12.6
	Self-Employed	77	19.4
	Unemployed	269	67.9
	Total	396	100.0
Occupation*	Farmer	4	3.2
	Trader	20	16.0
	Civil Servant	28	22.4
	Student	61	48.8
	Others	12	9.6
	Total	125	100.0
Monthly Income (₦)	Below 50,000	262	66.3
	50,000–100,000	73	18.5
	100,001–150,000	41	10.4
	150,001–200,000	13	3.3
	200,001–250,000	7	1.8
	Mean±SD		₦25,000±₦45,679.54
	Total	395	100.0

Source: Field Survey (October, 2025)

Table 2 shows that respondents were predominantly young and economically vulnerable, which directly relates to the problem of youth unemployment and restiveness in Gombe State. The mean age of 22.54 ± 4.80 years indicates that the sample was largely composed of active youth within the high-risk age bracket for social deviance and protest behaviour. Males constituted 76.0%, suggesting that restiveness is more associated with young men who are culturally expected to be breadwinners but face limited opportunities.

A large majority were single (66.7%) and had only secondary education (64.4%), reflecting low human-capital development that restricts access to decent employment. Most critically, 67.9% were unemployed, while only 12.6% had formal jobs, confirming widespread joblessness among youths. Income levels were equally low, with 66.3% earning below ₦50,000 and a mean income of $\text{₦}25,000 \pm \text{₦}45,679.54$, indicating acute poverty and economic frustration.

4.2. Analysis of the Prevalence of the Youth Restiveness in Gombe State

Table 3. Prevalence and Experience of Youth restiveness.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Participation in Restive Activities	Yes	74	18.7
	No	322	81.3
	Total	396	100.0
Factors Influencing Involvement	Desire for Change	27	6.8
	Peer Pressure	42	10.6
	Unemployment/Lack of Opportunities	258	65.2
	Anger or Frustration	69	17.4
	Total	396	100.0
Experience of Restive Activities	Never	17	4.3
	Once	88	22.2
	2–5 times	173	43.7
	More than 5 times	118	29.8
	Total	396	100.0

Source: Field Survey (October, 2025)

Table 3 indicates that although the majority of respondents (81.3%) had not directly participated in restive activities, a significant minority (18.7%) admitted involvement, confirming the presence of youth restiveness in Gombe State. Unemployment and lack of economic opportunities emerged as the dominant driver (65.2%), followed by anger or frustration (17.4%) and peer pressure (10.6%), underscoring the central role of socioeconomic deprivation in pushing youths toward violence. Furthermore, the experience data show that restiveness is recurrent rather than isolated, as 73.5% of respondents had engaged in such activities more than once (2–5 times or above 5 times). This pattern suggests that once youths become

involved, continued participation is likely, reflecting weak social control and limited alternative opportunities.

4.3. Analysis of the Causal-relationship Between Unemployment and Youth Restiveness in Gombe Metropolis

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between the unemployment and the youth participation in restive activities in Gombe metropolis.

Table 4. Causal-relationship between unemployment and Youth restiveness in Gombe metropolis.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)	Chi-square χ^2	p-value
High unemployment increases likelihood of joining Kalare groups	Strongly Agreed	156	39.4	78.75	0.000
	Agreed	128	32.3		
	Disagreed	58	14.6		
	Strongly Disagreed	54	13.6		
	Total	396	100.0		

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)	Chi-square χ^2	p-value
Lack of vocational/technical skills causes unemployment and restiveness	Strongly Agreed	198	50.02	242.79	0.000
	Agreed	148	37.4		
	Disagreed	46	11.6		
	Strongly Disagreed	4	1.0		
	Total	396	100.0		
Poverty caused by joblessness pushes youths into restiveness	Strongly Agreed	166	41.9	92.51	0.000
	Agreed	111	28.0		
	Disagreed	86	21.7		
	Strongly Disagreed	33	8.3		
	Total	396	100.0		
Unemployed youths easily influenced by political actors for violence	Strongly Agreed	234	59.1	316.63	0.000
	Agreed	121	30.6		
	Disagreed	33	8.3		
	Strongly Disagreed	8	2.0		
	Total	396	100.0		

p-values significant at 0.05 level; df = 3

Source: Field Survey (October, 2025)

Table 4 shows that 71.7% of respondents (combining strongly agreed and agreed) affirmed that unemployment drives youths to join Kalare groups, while 87.4% indicated that the lack of vocational and technical skills perpetuates joblessness and restiveness. Additionally, 69.9% agreed that poverty caused by unemployment fuels violent activities, and 89.7% reported that unemployed youths are easily influenced by politicians to engage in unrest. The chi-square results suggest that unemployment has a statistically significant but relatively weak relationship with youth restiveness in Gombe metropolis ($\chi^2 = 78.75$; $p = 0.000$), whereas political influence by actors shows a strong statistically significant association with youth involvement in restive activities ($\chi^2 = 316.63$; $p = 0.000$). This indicates that socioeconomic deprivation alone is not the sole driver of youth restiveness; rather, it is a combination of both economic and political factors. Since all p-values are below 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected, confirming that unemployment, in combination with political influences, has a statistically significant causal relationship with youth participation in restive activities in Gombe metropolis.

Qualitative data reinforced these results, with participants consistently emphasizing that unemployment acts both as a

trigger and sustainer of restive behaviours. As insightfully elaborated by one of the participants:

...Unquestionably, youth restiveness in Nigeria is related to high unemployment caused by governance shortcomings. An idle mind is the devil's workshop; for those young people are not working, how do you expect them not to have been manipulated by being given money? Let me tell you, the lack of jobs made them engage in restive behaviors to make ends meet...(An Interview with participant in category KII-C, 2025).

Another participant shared a similarly personal account, highlighting the direct impact of unemployment on bad attitudes and behaviours:

...Personally, the financial struggles brought on by political shortcomings have profoundly changed my attitude to life and behaviour. Whether it's the difficulty of finding a job, the rising cost of living, or the uncertainty of the future, many of us have had to navigate the harsh reality of a failing economy. These encounters have bred restive activities among teens as a survival strategy...(An Interview with participant in category KII-A, 2025).

Contrary to the conclusions of economic-based literature,

which attribute socioeconomic conditions (unemployment and poverty) as the sole drivers of youth restiveness [2, 5, 12, 15, 18, 73, 76], the findings of this study align closely with hybrid-based literature, which shows that unemployment, in combination with political influence by politicians, significantly contributes to youth involvement in restive activities [29, 35, 69, 80]. Thus, both sets of evidence demonstrate that socioeconomic factor, in combination with political factor are primary causal factors of youth restiveness in Gombe Metropolis. This alignment underscores that the Gombe experience

reflects a broader national trend linking youth unemployment and political exploitation to violent behavior.

4.4. Analysis of the Effect of Youth Restiveness on Socioeconomic Development in Gombe Metropolis

H₀₂: Unemployment-induced restiveness has a significant effect on socioeconomic development in Gombe metropolis.

Table 5. Effect of youth-restiveness on socioeconomic development in Gombe metropolis.

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Chi-square (χ^2)	p-value
Youth restiveness has increased crime and insecurity	Strongly Agreed	178	44.9	140.22	<0.0001
	Agreed	128	32.3		
	Disagreed	67	16.9		
	Strongly Disagreed	23	5.8		
	Total	396	100		
Youth restiveness has reduced business and commercial activities	Strongly Agreed	149	37.6	78.72	
	Agreed	122	30.8		
	Disagreed	94	23.7		
	Strongly Disagreed	31	7.8		
	Total	396	100		
Youth restiveness has led to destruction of public and private properties	Strongly Agreed	196	49.5	165.34	<0.0001
	Agreed	137	34.6		
	Disagreed	54	13.6		
	Strongly Disagreed	9	2.3		
	Total	396	100		
The presence of Kalare groups discourages investors and slows economic growth	Strongly Agreed	198	50.0	182.48	<0.0001
	Agreed	150	37.9		
	Disagreed	45	11.4		
	Strongly Disagreed	3	0.8		
	Total	396	100		
Youth restiveness has disrupted education and other social services	Strongly Agreed	125	31.6	59.55	<0.0001
	Agreed	187	47.2		
	Disagreed	67	16.9		

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Chi-square (χ^2)	p-value
	Strongly Disagreed	17	4.3		
	Total	396	100		

p-values significant at 0.05 level; df = 3
Source: Field Survey (October, 2025)

Table 5 shows that 77.2% (combining strongly agreed and agreed) of respondents observed increased crime and insecurity, 68.4% highlighted reduced commercial activities, and 84.1% (combining strongly agreed and agreed) noted destruction of infrastructure and property. Moreover, 87.9% (combining strongly agreed and agreed) believed that the activities of *Kalare* groups discourage investors and slow economic growth, while 78.8% (combining strongly agreed and agreed) reported disruption of education and social services. The chi-square results indicate that unemployment-induced youth restiveness has a statistically significant and multidimensional negative effect on socioeconomic development in Gombe metropolis, revealing that youth restiveness increases crime and insecurity ($\chi^2 = 140.22$, $p < 0.0001$), reduces business and commercial activities ($\chi^2 = 78.72$, $p < 0.0001$), leads to the destruction of public and private properties ($\chi^2 = 165.34$, $p < 0.0001$), discourages investors and slows economic growth due to the presence of *Kalare* groups ($\chi^2 = 182.48$, $p < 0.0001$), and disrupts education and other social services ($\chi^2 = 59.55$, $p < 0.0001$). Since p-value all the indicators are below 0.005, therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected, and confirming that youth restiveness, driven by unemployment, is a critical factor undermining both economic and social development.

Qualitative findings complemented this picture, as interviewees described looting, harassment, robbery, and violent clashes as common features of restiveness that erode social cohesion, increase poverty, and weaken human capital development. One participant vividly described these effects:

“...In our community, the restive activities of the youth affect socio-economic development through several concerns: low production due to disruption of production activities, near breakdown of law and order, increased crime rates, heightened intra-ethnic hostilities, harassment of prospective developers (investors), and other criminal tendencies...(An Interview with participant in category KII-E, 2025).

These findings align with Abonyi et al. [2], who documented that rising unemployment in Nigeria correlates with increased insecurity, business decline, and destruction of property, thereby discouraging investment. Similarly, a 2024 study in Bauchi State linked youth unemployment to disruptions in education, economic decline, and growing poverty [70]. Such evidence affirms that the socio-economic disruptions seen in Gombe are part of a nationwide pattern driven by unemployment-related restiveness.

4.5. Analysis of the Impact and Challenges of the Government Interventions

H_{03} : There is no significant relationship between implementation challenges of and its effectiveness in government interventions in mitigating unemployment and youth restiveness in Gombe metropolis.

Table 6. Impact and Challenges of the government interventions in mitigating unemployment and youth restiveness in Gombe Metropolis.

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Chi-square (χ^2)	p-value
	Strongly Agreed	21	5.3	167.09	<0.0001
Government employment programs have provided adequate jobs for youths	Agreed	120	30.3		
	Disagreed	163	41.2		
	Strongly Disagreed	92	23.2		
Total		396	100		
Security strategy (Operation Hatara) has reduced youth restiveness	Strongly Agreed	102	25.8	44.61	<0.0001

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Chi-square (χ^2)	p-value
Total	Agreed	167	42.2	64.46	<0.0001
	Disagreed	85	21.5		
	Strongly Dis-agreed	42	10.6		
		396	100		
Corruption and mismanagement reduce the impact of government programs	Strongly Agreed	85	21.5	87.91	<0.0001
	Agreed	179	45.2		
	Disagreed	104	26.3		
	Strongly Dis-agreed	28	7.1		
Total		396	100		
Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation of programs weakens their effectiveness	Strongly Agreed	95	24.0	93.49	<0.0001
	Agreed	202	51.0		
	Disagreed	78	19.7		
	Strongly Dis-agreed	21	5.3		
Total		396	100		
Inadequate funding of government interventions limits their success	Strongly Agreed	104	26.3	93.49	<0.0001
	Agreed	192	48.5		
	Disagreed	73	18.4		
	Strongly Dis-agreed	27	6.8		
Total		396	100		

p-values significant at 0.05 level; df = 3

Source: Field Survey (October, 2025)

Table 6 shows that government interventions have been structurally ineffective and poorly implemented, with only 35.6% of respondents felt government programmes created meaningful employment, while 64.4% disagreed. Although 68.0% acknowledged some improvement through security operations such as *Operation Hatara*, most believed such measures were insufficient. Additionally, 66.7% cited corruption, 75.0% mentioned poor monitoring, and 74.8% highlighted inadequate funding as major obstacles. The chi-square results indicate that there is a statistically significant and negative relationship between implementation challenges and the effectiveness of government interventions in mitigating unemployment and youth restiveness in Gombe metropolis. Since the p-value in all the indicators are below 0.005, therefore, hypothesis (H_{03}) is rejected, confirming that a significant rela-

tionship between implementation challenges and the effectiveness of government interventions in addressing unemployment-induced youth restiveness and related insecurity.

This finding further reinforced by Qualitative results, as participants described government programmes as politicized, poorly coordinated, and unsustainable, with an over-reliance on military crackdowns instead of addressing root causes like poverty and lack of skills. One participant remarked:

...The government has relied solely on security solutions. To me, there is no purely security-based remedy to the problem of high unemployment and restiveness. The failure of the government to address the root causes of restiveness has continually undermined its efforts...(An Interview with participant in category KII-H, 2025).

Another participant from Gombe State Agency for Social Services candidly describe that:

...Unless the government does something about the level of poverty and unemployment in the state, we will be wasting our time because we don't have the capacity as an agency to engage all the youths on the streets. Sadly, if these youths continue to move around doing nothing, Kalare will not end—that is the reality...(An Interview with participant in category KII-G, 2025).

Another participant also added that:

...Both in the past and the present, the youth empowerment programmes were politicized; only a few loyalists to the ruling party and politicians were recruited. Some of these GOSTEC you see are my friends, but they are now lucky to have joined the programme. I have nothing against the programme, but there is nothing I can do. I have no certificate, no sponsor if I go back to school, and as such, I have to look for money from the politicians during elections, and after elections, I have to follow them to their houses doing....(An Interview with participant in category KII-A, 2025).

Both sets of findings thus demonstrate that government efforts have failed largely due to corruption, poor design, inadequate resources, and overemphasis on security responses rather than socio-economic empowerment. These findings align with Omoju et al. [62], who revealed that national youth-employment policies often fail due to weak institutional capacity, poor oversight, inadequate funding, and lack of inclusivity. Akpan and Eminue [9] similarly noted that insufficient facilities and resources limit the success of skills development programmes. Together, these findings indicate that structural and governance weaknesses undermine the effectiveness of youth-targeted interventions across Nigeria.

5. Conclusion

This paper presents an empirical analysis of the causal relationship between unemployment and the youth restiveness in Gombe metropolis, moving traditional lens. The study provide compelling evidence that youth restiveness is structurally driven by socioeconomic factors by poverty and unemployment, in combined with political factor, including political influence by politicians, and institutionally sustained by corruption, lack institutional capacity, poor funding, and politicization among others. The study found a statistically significant, though weak relationship between unemployment and youth restiveness, whereas political influence by politicians exhibits a strong statistically significant relationship with youth restiveness in Gombe Metropolis, revealing that socioeconomic factors and political factors are key drivers of the youth participation in Kalare menace. Qualitative insights confirmed that many youths, deprived of livelihood opportunities combined with political exploitation, are easily lured into violence and political thuggery. This supports Marxist theory of political economy. The findings further revealed that unemployment-induced restiveness has devastating socioeconomic impacts, including increased crime, insecurity, and destruction of property, which collectively discourage investment and hinder

human capital development. Moreover, government efforts to curb the menace were found largely ineffective due to corruption, poor policy implementation, inadequate funding, and an overreliance on security operations rather than empowerment programmes. If the Kalare menace is not decisively and holistically addressed, it has the potential to metamorphose into a full-blown terrorist group in the future, following the pattern of other violent movements in Nigeria that began as loosely organized gangs but evolved into extremist organisations due to state neglect and socio-economic frustration.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence linking structural unemployment to youth restiveness and political violence in Northern Nigeria. It advances understanding of how economic exclusion, weak governance, and failed interventions sustain violent youth subcultures. From a policy standpoint, the findings underscore the urgent need for integrated strategies that combine economic empowerment, vocational training, education reform, and community-based rehabilitation. Policymakers should prioritise sustainable youth employment programmes, transparency in implementation, and inclusive dialogue mechanisms that engage traditional leaders, families, and civil society. Beyond economic empowerment, psychosocial support and civic education should be embedded into reintegration frameworks to rebuild trust and social cohesion. Future research should expand on this study by examining the psychological drivers of youth restiveness, the role of digital networks in mobilization, and the long-term impacts of government responses across the region. Only through a holistic, evidence-based, and participatory approach can Gombe and Nigeria at large prevent the Kalare phenomenon from evolving into a broader security and terrorist threat.

6. Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained, the following actionable recommendations were proposed:

- 1) Implement Comprehensive Youth Employment and Skills Development Programs: The Gombe State Government, in collaboration with private sector partners and development agencies, should establish well-structured vocational and entrepreneurial training centres to equip youths with employable skills. These programmes must be adequately funded, continuously monitored, and tailored to local economic realities to ensure sustainability and long-term impact.
- 2) Promote Transparent and Inclusive Economic Empowerment Initiatives: Empowerment and micro-credit schemes should be designed with clear selection criteria and transparency mechanisms to eliminate political bias and corruption. Community-based organizations and traditional institutions should be actively involved in identifying genuine beneficiaries and monitoring project implementation.
- 3) Strengthen Institutional Coordination and Policy Implementation: There is a need for effective coordination

among government ministries, security agencies, and civil society organizations to ensure coherent policy execution. Establishing an inter-agency task force on youth restiveness and employment could enhance information sharing, accountability, and policy coherence.

- 4) Enhance Community Engagement and Reorientation Campaigns: The government and civil society groups should intensify behavioural reorientation campaigns that promote peacebuilding, civic responsibility, and moral discipline among youths. Community leaders, religious institutions, and schools should be mobilized to mentor and rehabilitate ex-Kalare members, fostering social reintegration and positive role modelling.
- 5) Adopt a Preventive Security and Intelligence-Driven Approach: Security responses to the Kalare menace should shift from reactive crackdowns to intelligence-led, preventive strategies that address root causes. This includes early warning systems, community policing, and rehabilitation programmes for at-risk youths. Failure to implement such proactive measures may allow the Kalare groups to evolve into organized criminal or terrorist networks in the future.

Abbreviations

AYM	Arewa Youth Movement
BAY States	Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOYAE	Foundation for Youth Awakening and Empowerment
GOSTEC	Gombe State Security, Traffic and Environmental Corps
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
KII	Key Informant Interview
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NSCDC	Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps
OPC	Odua People's Congress
TES	Tolba Empowerment Scheme
YESSO	Youth Employment and Social Support Operation

Author Contributions

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Bob Odey Ushie: Data curation, methodology, project administration, funding acquisition, validation

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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