**Evaluating the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8 and Economic Growth in Nigeria**

**ABSTRACT**

*In response to the United Nations Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created globally in 2015 with the intention of achieving them by 2030. This study used data from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung to analyses 12 quality indicators in order to assess Nigeria's progress towards achieving objective 8: decent work and economic growth from 2015 to 2022. The results showed moderate economic growth throughout that time, with the average annual growth rate per capita and per employed person in the country scoring 53.9 and 57.8, respectively. Similarly, 57.2 percent of teenagers (those aged 15 to 24) did not have a job, education, or training, indicating a little increase in young people's participation in productive activities. Similar to this, the nation's labour rights compliance score of 69.1 indicates significant progress in protecting and promoting workers' rights of association and collective bargaining, all of which are consistent with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). According to other findings, the unemployment rate had a lower score of 41.5, suggesting that reducing unemployment is a constant challenge. The number of automated teller machines (ATMs) (59.5) and commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults (49.9) are two examples of financial inclusion indicators that show some progress in increasing access to financial services, which promote stability and economic growth. Furthermore, as indicated by its growth rate (59.9) and its share of the total GDP, the tourism industry has made a moderate contribution to economic growth.*

***KEYWORDS:*** Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Economic Growth, Decent Work, Unemployment

1. **INTRODUCTION**

A global accord was instituted to attain seventeen (17) targets, including Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8), from 2015 to 2030 (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2024). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were instituted by the UN in 2015 to improve human welfare and the total quality of life for present and future generations. The primary objectives of SDG 8 are employment, equitable work for all, and sustainable economic growth. A prevalent expression to define the goal is "decent work and inclusive economic growth" (Rai et al., 2018). The objective is to enhance individuals' well-being, dignity, and financial stability by providing meaningful employment opportunities, while ensuring access to equitable salaries, safe working conditions, social protection, and equal opportunity for everyone. SDG 8 underscores the necessity of securing adequate and productive employment opportunities. Ensuring individuals possess employment and make substantial contributions to economic advancement is integral to this. Productive employment fosters skill enhancement, innovation, and comprehensive prosperity. Accomplishing this objective necessitated substantial effort and dedication at both national and international levels. According to a 2023 study by the International Labour Organization (ILO), both the unemployment rate and the jobs gap rate—the percentage of unemployed persons who are interested in finding work—have dropped from pre-pandemic levels. Global unemployment was 5.1% in 2023, a minor decline from the 5.3% rate in 2022. Similarly, labor market participation rates and the worldwide jobs gap also improved in 2023. But the survey also projects that the global unemployment rate and job market would continue to deteriorate in 2024. According to an ILO estimate from 2023, an additional two million people are anticipated to be seeking employment, increasing the worldwide unemployment rate from 5.1% in 2023 to 5.2% in 2024.

It is impossible to achieve the goals of raising worker productivity, lowering the unemployment rate, and enhancing access to financial services and benefits, particularly in emerging nations like Nigeria. To do this, it is essential to promote employment creation and entrepreneurship. The best courses of action are to end human trafficking, slavery, and forced labor. By 2030, the objective is to ensure there is productive employment and decent work for all. Achieving SDG Goal 8 is also crucial for guaranteeing inclusion and eliminating all types of poverty because decent work is a direct and long-term means of escaping poverty. Achieving Goal 8 requires progress toward other SDGs, such as Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 3 (good health and well-being), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 10 (reducing inequalities), and Goal 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), and vice versa. (ECA, 2021).

Nigeria's economy has not grown quickly enough or inclusively enough to support the expanding formal economy's workforce while also offering good jobs. Most workers are employed in the informal sector, which has lower wages and productivity, less social security, and a high rate of working poverty. Women outnumber men in the estimated 86% of jobs in the unorganized sector. The government's attempts to eradicate poverty and guarantee prosperity for everyone on the continent are hampered by the lack of enough full, productive, and dignified jobs (ECA, 2021). Nigeria continues to face significant unemployment, poverty, and income inequality in spite of its economic expansion and wealth of natural resources. This impedes the attainment of equitable economic growth and decent work. Nigeria was placed 43rd (of 52nd) and 159th (of 162nd) with 46.4% in the 2019 continental and worldwide rankings of nations with decent work and inclusive economic growth, respectively. These rankings show that Nigeria is less than halfway to reaching objective 8 (SDSN, 2019). With 82 million people living below the poverty line of 1.90 per day, the country's poverty rate is predicted to reach 40% (World Bank, 2022).

Additionally, youth unemployment was 42.5% in 2021, while the nation's unemployment rate rose from 18.1% in 2020 to 21.7% in 2021 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Additionally, there is a notable gender disparity in employment, with 16.4% of males and 26.6% of women unemployed (NBS, 2021). Wages have decreased as a result of their inability to keep up with inflation. The country still has an extremely high rate of vulnerable and informal employment. 70% of workers are thought to work in informal jobs (NBS, 2021).There is no social protection, no job security, and no fair working conditions in this unorganized sector. The living conditions of the inhabitants are characterized by these negative indices. All these had led to poor economic growth in Nigeria. This necessitated continuous research on the extent of the country’s performance in achieving the decent work and improved and sustainable economic growth in the country.

Even though previous and current administrations have intervened to address these issues, Nigeria continues to face formidable obstacles in securing decent jobs, encouraging entrepreneurship, and guaranteeing equitable access to economic opportunities for all, especially for women, youth, and marginalized groups like low wages and job security, despite the implementation of laws and programs that appear to have little effect. The attainment of sustainable development goals has been the subject of numerous research [see Fayomi et al. (2019); Lawrence (2020); Halkos & Gkampoura, E. C. (2021)]. It may be an error, nonetheless, that researchers have not yet conducted an empirical assessment of Nigeria's progress toward attaining SDG 8. Thus, the following goals are the focus of this study. Nigeria's progress toward attaining Sustainable Development Goal 8, which calls for decent work and economic growth by 2030, should be assessed first. The second step is to identify potential obstacles to achieving SDG 8, and the last step is to recommend appropriate policies to the government to address the various challenges towards actualizing the SDG 8 goal.

The reminder for the paper is as follows: The review of the literature is covered in Section two. The paper's approach is covered in Section three. The data analysis for the paper is covered in Section four. The conclusion and policy recommendations are presented in the fifth part.

1. **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.1 Conceptual framework**

According to Mitra (2016), sustainable development seeks to ensure that progress is made in a way that promotes people's well-being now while preserving the prospects for future human well-being. In other words, according to Rickels et al. (2016), "sustainable development requires that wealth, in a comprehensive sense, should not decrease over time." Innovation is essential to improving the economy, ecology, and sociology in order to boost progress. According to Ukko, Saunila, Rantala, and Havukainen (2019), "sustainable innovation refers to the generation of new ideas, goods, services, processes, or management systems that can deal with environmental problems, whereas traditional innovation relates to the development of new products, materials, processes, services, and organizational forms to gain competitive advantage." In conclusion, sustainable development aims to accomplish progress without compromising the future prosperity of a nation.

The advancement of packed and industrious employment, decent work for all, and unrelenting, broad, and sustainable economic progress are the goals of Sustainable Development Goal 8: decent work and economic growth. The International Labor Organization defines decent work as providing "employment opportunities; adequate earnings and productive work; decent working time; combining work, family and personal life; elimination of harmful jobs; stability and security of work; equal opportunity and treatment in employment; safe work environment; social security; and social dialogue, employers and workers representation" (ILO, 2013).

In an environment of freedom, justice, security, and human dignity, decent employment provides both men and women with the opportunity to obtain decent and productive work (ILO, 1999). Six characteristics of good labor are implied in this statement. The first two characteristics (opportunities for employment and freedom of choice of employment) are related to the availability of jobs and the acceptability of the type of labour involved. According to Bescond et al., the other four dimensions—productive work, equity, security, and dignity at work—all pertain to how decent the work is. It is employment that upholds the fundamental rights of human beings, as well as the rights of workers with regard to compensation and safety conditions at work, as well as the preservation of the worker's physical and mental integrity while doing their duties (UN, 2015). Its main focuses are social protection, employment creation, workplace rights, and social discourse. Employment prospects, sufficient income and productive work, decent working hours, balancing work, family, and personal life, permanence and safety of employment, the same chance and treatment at work, safe working conditions, social security, social dialogue, and employers' and workers' representation are the ten substantive components that operationalize these conditions (Jonas et al. 2018).

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| **ECONOMIC GROWTH** |

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework

Conversely, inclusive economic growth suggests that everyone has access to opportunities and that the advantages of economic advancement are shared equitably throughout society. By giving everyone in a society equal access to economic opportunities and resources, it seeks to guarantee that everyone can take part in, contribute to, and profit from economic prosperity. In addition to raising GDP overall, inclusive growth places a strong emphasis on lowering unemployment, poverty, and income inequality. Alongside promoting equal rights and opportunities for marginalized populations, it involves enhancing access to financial, healthcare, and educational services (International Monetary Fund, 2020). This type of growth integrates ecological balance and environmental considerations with economic policymaking to ensure the proper management of natural resources for future generations (United Nations, 2020).

**2.2 Theoretical Review**

**The Human Capital Theory**

According to human capital theory, we must invest in people's knowledge, abilities, and skills if we want to support economic growth and advancement. It argues that research, education, and economic growth are interconnected and offers strategies for enhancing research, higher education, and innovative thinking. Employees are viewed as important resources that boost creativity and efficiency. Establishing education, training, and skill development programs allows firms to increase human capital and economic growth. Good employment opportunities, a supportive workplace, and acquiring new skills are believed to make workers more innovative, adaptable, and productive, all of which contribute to economic growth. Also, Schmid, Kolesnikov, and Youtie (2017) contend that "education, research, and economic development are closely intertwined" and devised an economic development plan that prioritized enhancing the region's capacity for higher education, research, and innovation. The human capital hypothesis underscores the significance of investing in human development as a crucial driver of economic growth. Emphasizing sound labour practices that enhance economies, businesses, and human capital can facilitate sustained success. With these different educational programs introduced to labor force in Nigeria, decent work is guaranteed to promote economic growth through higher productivity. Hence, the goal of SDG is attained.

**Efficiency Wage Theory**

The hypothesis states that higher wages boost productivity and growth. Fair compensation above market equilibrium motivates workers to work more, be more productive, and be happier at work. This idea states that fair pay, benefits, and good working conditions attract and retain skilled workers and enhance production. The efficiency wage premise suggests that moral labour practices may boost economic growth such that businesses may be more inventive, efficient, and competitive by providing equitable treatment, job security, and compensation. Increased output, lower prices, and higher consumer demand can boost economic growth. Thus, a decent job and economic growth are linked since a good work environment with fair pay and circumstances can boost productivity and boost a nation's economy.

**Structural Transformation Theory**

This theory accentuates how labor moves from low productivity to high productivity industries, resulting in general economic progress. Because they guarantee that workers have access to high-quality employment opportunities that enhance the economy's overall productivity and competitiveness, decent jobs are essential to this process. Also,, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's capacity approach emphasizes the significance of allowing people to realize their full potential and lead satisfying lives because good occupations are crucial for developing people's potential and giving them the means and chances to fully engage in economic activity and support society's general expansion and advancement.

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* 1. **Empirical Review**

A number of studies have looked at various facets of accomplishing sustainable development objectives in various settings. As a result, it is important to examine a few of these research to determine the opinions of academics in the relevant field. This will also make it easier to comprehend the empirical methods that have been employed in the literature thus far. Since G20 nations are the fastest growing in the world and their economies account for a large portion of the global economy, Indrė and Silvija's (2020) study empirically examined economic growth and a decent work environment in G20 nations from 2013 to 2018. The study used analysis of qualitative data based on content analysis, comparison, grouping, interpretation, and comparative study of scientific literature. Using the TOPSIS technique, the G20 nations were ranked based on SDG 8 indicators.

The findings demonstrated that, between 2013 and 2018, Japan achieved the greatest economic growth and the finest working conditions. The Republic of Korea is in third place, followed by the United States. SDG 8 "Decent Work and Economic Growth" is examined by Kreinin and Aigner (2021) from the standpoint of strong sustainability as institutions, ideologies, and phenomena. According to the analysis, it does not meet the requirements for robust sustainability. Based on this finding, the study put up a novel paradigm for SDG 8 that aligns with the most recent scientific findings on "Sustainable Work and Economic Degrowth" and strong sustainability.

Ezekiel Oseni and Elizabeth FunmiOsen (2015) investigate how Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) might contribute to inclusive economic growth and development in Nigeria. According to the report, the non-labor-intensive oil industry contributes significantly to the country's GDP and more than 80% of government revenue. The survey also found that immediate and serious action is needed to reduce the population's unemployment rate and poverty level. The establishment of an enabling environment, the supply of pertinent infrastructure, and sufficient financial programs that are conveniently accessible are necessary for the implementation of effective initiatives. The financial system, like any other economy, is crucial to achieving inclusive economic growth in Nigeria. It should support the economy more by removing current lending restrictions that make it impossible for many MSME, the main driver of economic growth, to obtain financing.

Nigerian capital markets, economic growth, and funding for sustainable development were examined in a study by Oluwatosin, Ojijo, and PaLamin (2016). Establishing the capital market's influence on the Nigerian economy's performance and suggesting strategies to strengthen its involvement in domestic resource mobilization for investments in SDG-related activities are the goals of the study. The research used an improved Neoclassical growth model, commonly referred to as the Growth Accounting Framework, to include additional financial and economic variables such capital market development indices and a few indices for measuring macroeconomic volatility. The study found that while the model's stock market development indicators don't significantly affect growth on their own, when taken as a whole, they do have a big effect. In particular, it is determined that all of the explanatory variables are jointly statistically significant at the 5% level of significance and that all of the variables explicitly included in the model account for an estimated 61% of the variations in Real Gross Domestic Product (RGDP).

The study presents a number of tenable policy options, such as the necessity of establishing the necessary regulatory frameworks and policy measures to ensure the Nigerian capital market's continuous development; the establishment of an environment that will encourage more investments in the capital market; the necessity of boosting investor confidence by guaranteeing the stock market's efficiency; and the necessity of expanding the variety and complexity of investment instruments in tandem with developments in other stock markets, as well as the nation's growing investor demands and expectations.

Ehiogu and Chidiebere-Mark (2019) assess the obstacles and opportunities for the growth of Nigeria's agriculture insurance sector in order to accomplish Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8. To accomplish the study's goals, qualitative and conceptual data analysis techniques were used. According to empirical data, the development of the agriculture insurance market is not following a progressive trend, as seen by fluctuations in the market's share of premium income, claims and underwriting income, total assets, total liability, and reserve, among other metrics. The development of agriculture insurance faces several obstacles, such as demand limits that resulted in low earnings for the great majority of the population, post-disaster relief, moral and adverse selection, lack of infrastructural support, and expensive data gathering. According to the paper's conclusion, Nigeria's agriculture insurance sector is still in its infancy and requires immediate attention in order to achieve full economic growth. Among other things, it suggests that Nigeria's farm insurance industry embrace index-based insurance, a new type of insurance that aligns with global best practices and investments in data gathering infrastructure and science-based index building.

Using Enugu State as a case study, Omeh, Ebele, and Ebikabowei (2021) investigate the effects of decent job and computer education on economic growth in Nigeria. A standardized questionnaire was used to randomly pick 250 responders. The data was analyzed using the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) approach. The study's findings demonstrated that economic growth was significantly impacted by computing education. Economic growth was also found to be significantly impacted by social security and employment possibilities. While remunerative employment had a negative and negligible effect on economic growth, working conditions had a positive and negligible effect. In order to promote decent work, computer education, and the development of human and physical capital, the study suggested that supportive policies be adopted. The inclusion of mandatory ICT/computer education classes in the country's one-year National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) program is one specific policy that should be implemented to promote computing education.

In 2019, Crane, Soundararajan, Bloomfield, Spence, and LeBaron investigated the relationship between decent work and economic growth in the garment industry in South India. According to the survey, the industry is at a turning point. Its three primary labor concerns, despite decades of expansion, are labor shortages, competitive threats from lower-cost producing nations, and issues with decent work's reputation. Employers, unions, and employees all share the industry's general perception that wages and working conditions have improved in the cluster and that the most severe kinds of exploitation are now less common. But there are still many different ways that exploitation occurs. The most prevalent types of exploitation are verbal abuse, absence of contracts, health and safety breaches, physical and mobility restrictions, poor wages, gender discrimination, and limited chances for collective bargaining and association. Some, but not much, evidence of child labor, forced labor, and bonded labor exists. According to the paper, the industry and its stakeholders should collaborate to develop a shared Vision 2030 and associated goals in order to address decent employment and economic growth in the sector. It ought to be applied to foster consensus on a common strategy and provide the cluster with a means of external branding. A multi-stakeholder committee should be formed to manage the Vision 2030 initiative. According to the paper, this process should be formalized, made inclusive, and supervised by an independent body or chair. Vision 2030 should prioritize freedom of mobility, health and safety, and the growth of worker-driven social responsibility.

Between 2010 and 2018–19, Nwanakwere and Ogwumike (2020) examined Nigeria's progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8. They assessed each indicator's performance across the country using the methodology of Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). According to the data, Nigeria is only halfway to reaching SDG 8, and all indicators are struggling to meet the goals. The experts recommended increasing R&D and technology investment to increase innovation and production efficiency which previous studies failed to consider in their research. This may be as a result of an oversight. Therefore, this current paper captured increased innovation and production efficiency.

1. **METHODOLOGY**

In accordance with the Sustainable Development Report (2019), the SDG Index and Dashboards Report by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and the work of Sachs et al. (2023), the study used the methodology of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung to assess Nigeria's progress toward achieving SDG 8: Decent work and Economic growth. Twelve indicators were chosen and examined to serve as the variables and data for the study, as shown in Table 1 under section 3.1. The data spans the years 2015–2022. As seen below, values for each indicator were normalized using Sachs et al., 2019's Min-Max approach:

$$N\_{it}=\frac{N\_{it}-Xmin}{Xmax-Xmin}×100$$

Where N is the normalized value following rescaling, max and min represent the upper and lower boundaries, respectively, and x is the raw data value. All rescaled variables were guaranteed to be stated as ascending variables by the rescaling equation; higher values indicated greater performance. This made it simple to understand and compare the rescaled data across all indicators: A nation with a score of 75 has traveled three-quarters of the way from worst to best, while a nation with a score of 50 is halfway to reaching the ideal value. By standardizing the indicators, performance reviews can be conducted using a consistent measuring metric. Additionally, the percentage of the normalized scores is calculated, indicating the overall level of goal achievement by the nation (Sachs et al., 2023). The Sustainable Development Report 2023's threshold values serve as a point of reference. An indicator's performance can be determined by comparing its threshold value with its actual value.

**3.1 Variables, descriptions and sources of data**

Table 1: The variables, descriptions, and the sources of data employed in this study

|  |  |  |
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| **Variables** | **Description** | **Source** |
| Annual growth rate per capital | It is the change in the value of measurement | WDI, (2023) |
| Annual growth rate per employed person | It is the annual percentage change in real gross domestic product per employed person | WDI, (2023) |
| Informal employment | Employment that are neither taxed or monitored by the government | ILO, (2023) |
| Unemployment rate | An estimated percentage of the labor force that is unemployed but available and actively looking for work, based on modeling. | ILO, (2023) |
| Youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training | The perchance of youth without a job, education, or training (NEET). | WDI, (2023) |
|  Freedom of association and collective bargaining  | It is the degree to which a country complies with labor rights. According to national laws and International Labor Organization (ILO) texts, broken down by sex and immigration status | WDI, (2023) |
| Direct GDP from tourism as a percentage of GDP overall and as a growth rate | This is the percentage of a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that is directly contributed by the tourism industry | World Travels and Tourism Council, (2023) |
| Number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 +adults | This measures the availability of banking services in a country relative to its adult population | WDI, (2023) |
| Number of Automated Teller Machine ATM  | Total number of functional Automated Teller Machine available in the country | WDI, (2023) |
| Adult with account with a commercial bank or any money- service provider | What percent of adults aged fifteen or older say they have an account at a bank or other financial institution (either alone or with someone else) or have used mobile banking services in the last 12 months? | WDI, (2023) |
| Trade-related aid promises and payments | It is the initiative encourages developing country governments and donors to recognize the role that trade can play in development. | OECD, (2023) |
| Existence of a national youth employment strategy that has been designed and put into action. | It is the various policies and strategies designed by the government to ensure that youths employments are created |  |

1. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 2 : the normalized scores for indicators

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S/No. | Indicator  | Score |  | Period |
| 1 | Annual growth rate per capital | 53.9 |  | 2009-2022 |
| 2 | Annual growth rate per employed person | 57.8 |  | 2009-2022 |
| 3 | Informal employment | 56.6 |  | 2009-2022 |
| 4 | Unemployment rate | 41.5 |  | 2009-2022 |
| 5 | Employment ratio to population | 42.5 |  | 2009-2022 |
| 6 | Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training  | 57.2 |  | 2009-2022 |
| 7 | Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status | 69.1 |  | 2009-2022 |
| 8 | Tourism direct GDP as a proportion of total GDP and in growth rate | 59.9 |  | 2009-2022 |
| 9 | Number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults | 49.9 |  | 2009-2022 |
| 10 | Number of Automated Teller Machine ATM  | 59.5 |  | 2009-2022 |
| 11 | Aid for Trade commitments and disbursements | 50.5 | z | 2009-2022 |
| 12 | Existence of a developed and operationalized national strategy for youth employment". |  |  | 2009-2022 |
|  | **Aggregate SDG 8 score** | **55.5** |  | 2009-2022 |

Decreasing stagnating moderately improving on track or achieving SDG

*Source*: Author’s Analysis

**4.1. Discussions of the Normalized Scores**

The performance score of the indicators used in the study is displayed in Table 2. Depending on whether the scores are below, equal to, or over 50 percent, the indicators are either rising, staying the same, or improving somewhat. An indicator is deemed "on track" if its score is greater than 75 percent (Sachs et al., 2023). Additionally, according to the recommendations, indicators with higher normalized scores show significant progress toward reaching SDG 8, especially in the social and economic dimensions. Table 3's usage of threshold values from the Sustainable Development Report 2023 made it possible to evaluate each indicator's performance in relation to predetermined standards. In line with SDG targets like decent work and economic growth, goal 8, the study emphasizes the significance of using normalized data for a clear, comparative analysis (SDSN, 2023; Sachs et al., 2023). The normalized scores for a few chosen indicators that were used to evaluate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG8) between 2015 and 2022 are displayed in Table 3. A considerable improvement is indicated by a score above 50, which shows progress toward the specific targets. The performance of the indicators varies, as the table shows. Moderate economic growth was shown during the period by the yearly growth rates per capita and employed person, which scored 53.9 and 57.8, respectively. The percentage of young people (ages 15 to 24) who are not enrolled in school, work, or training also received a score of 57.2, indicating a slight improvement in getting young people involved in constructive activities. Similar to this, the country's level of labor rights compliance, which scored 69.1, shows that labor rights are being protected and that freedom of association and collective bargaining is being promoted, all of which are in line with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

The unemployment rate, on the other hand, scored lower at 41.5, indicating a continuous difficulty in lowering unemployment. The number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 individuals (49.9) and the number of automated teller machines (ATMs) (59.5), two measures of financial inclusion, indicate a moderate increase in access to financial services, which supports economic growth and stability. Additionally, the growth rate (59.9) and tourism's share of the overall GDP show that tourism has contributed moderately to economic expansion.

Last but not least, the Aid for Trade promises and disbursements score of 50.5 indicates a moderate degree of global support for the growth of trade. This outcome supports the nation's global and continental ranks in the 2023 SDG index reports, placing it 43rd out of 52nd and 146th out of 1626th with 54.3%, respectively. Overall, even though there have been notable advancements, the ratings also point to areas that require more attention and development in order to fully accomplish the SDGs by 2030. Sachs et al., (2023); SDSN (2023).

**Table 3 the thresholds for indicators**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **Optimum** | **Goal achievement** | **Challenges remain** | **Significant challenges remain** | **Major challenges remain** |
| Annual growth rate per capital | 5 | $$\geq 0$$ | $$0>X\geq -1.5$$(X= -1.1) | $$1.5>X\geq -3$$ | $$<-3$$ |
| Unemployment rate | 0.5 | $$<5$$ | $$5<X\leq 7.5$$(X=5.1) | $$7.5<X\leq 10$$ | $$>10$$ |
| Adult with account  | 100 | $$\geq 80$$ | $$80>X\geq 65$$ | $$65>X\geq 50$$ | $$<50$$(X=47.44) |
| Proportion of youth not in employment, education and training | 8.1 | $$<10$$ | $$10<X\leq 12.5$$ | $$12.5<X\leq 15$$ | $$>15$$(X=18.65) |
| Labour right | 0.85 | 0.7 | $$0.7>X\geq 0.6$$ | $$0.6>X\geq 0.5$$ | $$<0.5$$(X= -0.9) |
| Employment to population ratio | 77.8 | 60 | $$60>X\geq 55$$ | $$55>X\geq 50$$ | $$<50$$ |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  Goal Achievement | Challenges remain |  Significant challenges remain |  Major challenges remain |

*Note*: Values in parenthesis are for the actual indicators

*Source*: Author’s Analysis

According to Table 3, indicators continue to encounter difficulties in reaching SDG 8. Achieving this goal is significantly hampered by the employment population ratio, the percentage of adults with an account, the percentage of adolescents not in education, employment, or training, and the degree of national compliance with labor rights. Nonetheless, this indicates that the nation is not moving far enough toward accomplishing Sustainable Development Goal 8.

1. **CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

In promoting globally sustainable development goals that are expected to enhance decent life, favorable climatic condition, sustainable environment and so on, the United Nations proposed 17 SDG goals to be achieved globally by 2030. In line with these goals, this paper aimed to evaluate the progress of Nigeria in achieving SDG 8, that is decent work and economic growth from 2015 to 2022. The study reveals that:

1. the country has made moderate progress toward achieving SDG 8, with normalized scores above 50 for most indicators, signifying moderate improvements in economic growth, youth engagement, labor rights, and financial inclusion from 2015 to 2022. However, challenges persist, particularly in reducing the unemployment rate and expanding access to financial services.
2. The increase in unemployment rate is a serious issue that the government needs to pay a serious attention to because this can result in number of crimes such as theft, insecurity, poverty, and other social vices as it is currently witnessing in Nigeria.

While significant strides have been made in some areas, continued efforts are necessary to address the remaining challenges and fully achieve the SDGs by 2030. However, based on the findings, the following recommendations are further offered to improve progress towards SDG 8.

1. Job creation programs should be enhanced; implementation of targeted policies to create more jobs, especially for vulnerable groups. This will to some extent address the persistent challenge of a high unemployment rate.
2. Financial access should be improved by expanding the number of commercial bank branches and ATMs in underserved areas to enhance financial inclusion and support economic stability.
3. Youths employment initiatives should be strengthened by investing in education and training programs tailored to market needs to further reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training.
4. Informal employment transition should be supported by developing policies that facilitate the shift from informal to formal employment, thereby providing better job security and social protections.
5. Tourism development should be promoted by leveraging the moderate role of tourism in economic growth. This can be achieved by enhancing tourism infrastructure and marketing to boost its contribution to GDP.
6. Trade support should also be enhanced by increasing Aid for Trade commitments and ensuring effective disbursements to support trade development and integration into the global economy.

**DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)**

Author(s) hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.).

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